

# Determining the Motivational Factors of South African Consumers when Visiting Regional Malls.

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Consumer experience, consumer motivation, regional malls, traditional retail and E-Commerce.

## Abstract

The retail industry is changing quickly and for businesses to stay competitive, they must adjust to changing consumer attitudes, preferences, and demographics. The study aims to clarify the variables influencing consumer expectations and keep them drawn to regional malls in South Africa. The study examines the relationship between expectations and experiences as it relates to consumer motivation in the setting of trips to regional malls. The research further employs an inclusive methodology, consistent with the interpretative research paradigm facilitating a comprehensive investigation of consumer behavior. This study explores a range of elements that Influence consumer choices, such as entertainment, social interactions, retail options and convenience. The results provide a comprehensive understanding of the various elements influencing consumer motivations and open the door for customer approaches to improve consumer experience in the retail environment.

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# **1. Introduction**

The retail market is rapidly changing, and retailers must adjust to new demographics, attitudes, and preferences to stay relevant (Wertz, 2018:1). This study aimed to address the uncertainty, regarding consumers' motivation to continue to frequent malls amidst the rise of E-Commerce by researching current consumer trends in South Africa. The study was conducted in Johannesburg due to the diversity and size of the Cosmopolitan area. Worldwide, there is a need for physical stores to preserve their relevance as a place of experience, given the rise in the number of physical retail establishments closing in recent years (Childs et al., 2020:263).

## **1.1. Background**

Experience has long been recognized as a critical path to profitability for retailers (Muthiah & Suja, 2017:86; Batat, 2019), and during this background to the study, the researcher aimed to familiarise the reader with the problems retailers may face in the future.

Shopping malls are described as one or more buildings that constitute a complex of stores with connected corridors and open spaces (Mendilcioglu & Moazemi-Goudarzi, 2019:239). Shopping malls can be distinguished from a convenience mall (a strip of convenience stores easily accessible from the parking lot) and a regional mall (an enclosed area with many retailers, restaurants, and entertainment facilities). It is considered that the retail sector is now driven mainly by online sales (e-commerce) (Zhao et al., 2019:378). However, in South Africa, e-commerce contributes less than 2% of all retail sales (Deloitte, 2019:7), resulting in the remainder of the consumers still purchasing their products more traditionally. Malls are part of the South African consumer culture (Writer, 2022:1); despite this, several comparisons between malls and e-commerce must be considered.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Despite the previous research on consumer motivation, a problem faced by many retail organizations, especially in the South African context, is understanding the pull factors consumers have that encourage them to continue supporting retail outlets and the experience they wish to encounter. The factors driving shifts in consumer behaviour remain unknown (Childs et al., 2020:263). The cultural and ethnic diversity of South Africa makes it more difficult than usual to meet unmet expectations because the needs of the segment of the

market will differ from the needs of the other components (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:72). Considering this uncertainty, this study aimed to identify the general consumer pull factors that drive buying motivation in regional malls and how management can use this information to increase purchasing intention through improved experience.

This problem exists due to the need for increased convenience by consumers. Thus, the problem identified in this study was that current retailers need an understanding of the pull factors that drive South African consumers to still frequent regional malls amidst the rise in popularity of e-commerce and how to optimise these pull factors to increase buying motivation.

### **1.3. Research objectives**

Primary objective:

The main objective of this study was to identify the primary consumer motivational pull factors for continuing to frequent regional malls in the South African context.

Secondary objective:

Objective 1: to identify how the consumer experience in retail organizations influences their buying motivation.

Objective 2: to compare the difference in motivation for online and traditional shopping.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Retailers must constantly adapt to new attitudes, interests, and demographics to stay relevant in the rapidly evolving retail sector. Experience has long been recognised as a critical path to profitability for retailers (Muthiah & Suja, 2017:86). With this preliminary literature review.. This was achieved by examining previous research on consumer motivation and experience and how this affects buying. During this literature review, the following topics are discussed: 1) the current retail environment in South Africa, 2) a comparison between e-commerce and traditional retail, 3) consumer experience and motivation, and 4) the effects of experience on the retail environment.

## 2.2 Motivation

Motivation is a central concept in consumer behaviour research, which seeks to explain why people behave as they do. A motive is just a cause for acting in a certain way, involving a person either moving to one behaviour or being separated from another (Mpinganjira et al., 2014:35; Sethna & Blythe, 2019).

Table 2.1. elaborates on the different types of consumer motivation.

**Table 2.2.1: Elaboration on consumer motives**

<b>Primary motives</b>	The factors that influence a product class's buying.
<b>Secondary motives</b>	These are the explanations for choosing a specific brand.
<b>Rational motives</b>	These motivations are grounded in logic or a logical evaluation of the person's circumstances.
<b>Emotional motives</b>	Motives related to attitudes about the brand.
<b>Conscious motives</b>	These are the motivations that are known to consumers.
<b>Dormant motives</b>	These motivations function subconsciously.

**Source:** (Sethna & Blythe, 2019)

Consumer motivation research looks for these underlying attitudes, feelings, and behaviours regarding the use of products, services, or brands because consumers are not always conscious of the reasons behind their actions (Schiffman et al., 2014:92; Sethna & Blythe, 2019). Marketers can analyse the key factors determining whether consumers purchase a product by looking at their motivation (Lamb et al., 2019:102). These key factors are explained by Sethna and Blythe (2019) as motivation and behaviour are driven by needs, and motivation can come from social, artistic, and pleasure desires as well as from physical and practical necessities, which help to shape consumer behaviour around drive and hedonism.

Understanding the interplay between motivation and emotion is crucial in influencing consumer behaviour and driving marketing success, as highlighted by Mpinganjira et al. (2014:35). By leveraging these emotions effectively, companies can retain their existing consumer base and attract new ones, increasing consumer spending (Childs et al., 2020:263).

### **2.2.2. Consumer experience**

Consumer experience is the result of a consumer's multifaceted, holistic, and subjective reaction to a brand's goods and services (Moliterno & Zamith, 2021:2). This is not limited to the consumers' interaction with the products and services but to the entire atmosphere during the shopping experience (Batat, 2019; Childs et al., 2020:263). The experiential components surrounding the products and services and the consumption experience add value to the shopping experience (Schmitt & Zarantonell, 2013:25; Batat, 2019).

Understanding this dynamic is crucial for organizations seeking to enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty, as positive store exposure increases store loyalty and the perception of comparative advantage for traditional retail consumers (Theledi & Mudzanani, 2020:208).

### **2.2.3. Motivational pull factors**

It is suggested that shopping motives influence how consumers perceive the qualities of retail outlets and how they feel about them (Rajagopal, 2009:103).

Pull factors are the motivators that attract people to do a specific act and have a positive connection (Mortinez et al., 2023:2). Instead of only satisfying their bare minimum requirements for goods and services, it refers to the elements that entice consumers to a particular business or mall (Mortinez et al., 2023:2). Retailers must consider motivational pull factors since they affect consumer behaviour and can affect whether a consumer chooses to visit their store or mall (Calvo-Porrá & Levy-Mangin, 2018:110).

### **2.2.4. Consumer Motivation in South Africa**

Due to the varying needs of the different market segments, it becomes more difficult to cater to their specific requirements. As highlighted by Schiffman et al. (2014:72), the cultural and ethnic diversity of South Africa contributes to these differences in consumer needs. Several factors motivate consumers in South Africa, and understanding these factors is crucial for organizations operating in the market. These factors include:

- **Price:** The value and advantages of the product or service influence price perception, which is essential in the consumer decision-making process (Mangolele & Zulu, 2022:39).
- **Quality:** The calibre of the goods that South African consumers buy also influences their purchasing decisions.

- **Convenience:** When asked which products consumers wish were on the market but are not, 40% of South African consumers want products that make their lives easier, 36% said they would welcome more products that are convenient to use, 25% said products for small families and households, and 20% said products tailored to a specific need (Paterson, 2018).
- **Brand loyalty:** Loyalty is a fervent desire to continue using favourable goods and services (Theledi & Mudzanani, 2020:206). A brand's reputation and perceived quality influence South African consumers to be brand loyal.
- **Social and cultural factors:** In South Africa, social and cultural issues also affect consumer motivation. Malls are part of the South African consumer culture (BusinessTech, 2022:1).

### 2.3. Origin of malls

The modern shopping mall, a central hub for retail, leisure, and social activities, has become an integral part of the urban landscape worldwide. However, the mall's concept and evolution can be traced back to specific origins. Exploring the historical context and early influences behind the creation of malls sheds light on how they have transformed over time and become a significant aspect of modern society.

#### 2.3.1. United States of America

The modern-day mall originated from architect Victor Gruen, who was born in Austria and moved to America after Germany annexed Austria in 1938 (Bogost, 2018). Gruen envisioned a modern-day town square with ample on-site parking and a group of shops connected by a common area modeled after European cities (Heath, 2022). Most suburban malls had limited transportation options (Karonesh, 2022). Many in Europe consider the Main Taunus Centre's opening in 1964 to be the beginning of the history of modern shopping malls (Bitzer, 2015). The Brent Cross Shopping Centre in London opened its doors in 1976. In the 1970s, shopping centers grew in popularity (Historical England, 2023).

#### 2.3.3. Africa

In Africa, the development of shopping malls has been characterized by varying degrees of success and challenges. The mall development landscape in South Africa has experienced significant growth and transformation. With more than 2000 shopping centers covering over 23 million square meters of formal retail space, South Africa has the sixth-highest number of shopping centers in the world (Masajada, 2021:8). The primary justification for adopting the American model of retail development is urbanization and high levels of motor car ownership (Prinsloo, 2010:1).

The retail environment was impacted significantly by the accelerated development of shopping malls in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including Maponya Mall in Soweto and Gateway Theatre of Shopping in Umhlanga (Masajada, 2021:8). These developments have shaped the retail environment in South Africa, contributing to its dynamic and evolving mall culture. The development of shopping malls in these areas demonstrates the concept's global significance and transformative capacity by influencing consumer behaviour and retail environments.

#### **2.4. Evolution of malls**

Several things, such as improvements in architecture and design, changes in consumer behaviour, and the incorporation of technology, have fuelled this progress (Hänninen, 2018:153).

One key aspect of this evolution of modern malls has emerged as the contemporary equivalent of traditional town centres in many communities. According to Hänninen (2018:153), malls have become the go-to destination for consumers seeking diverse products, consistent quality, and a wide selection. Through cutting-edge establishments like gaming areas, movie theatres, amusement parks, hotels, and food courts, people can now enjoy more immersive experiences (Karunesh, 2022). Some malls are so big that they are entire communities.

The traditional appeal and relevance of malls have come into question as concerns about their intrinsic outdatedness and the decline of brick-and-mortar retail have surfaced (Lin, 2021:2). Furthermore, the retail sector has experienced a shift with the rise of e-commerce, which is the predominant driving force behind the industry (Zhao et al., 2019:378). Dead malls have

drawn much attention, and their presence has created several problems for local and regional development (Lin, 2021:2).

## **2.5. The evolution from traditional retail to e-commerce**

E-commerce is electronic commerce and refers to exchanging products and services over the World Wide Web (WWW) (Zande, 2023). There is a multitude of e-commerce benefits. Compared to traditional retail, e-commerce has a cheaper entry cost, employs fewer people, and allows businesses to reach customers directly by reducing the need for intermediaries.

E-commerce enables consumers to browse and compare a variety of goods and services, buy them whenever and wherever they like, and have the goods delivered to their preferred location (Majumdar et al., 2020:63). Zande (2023) also mentioned a few disadvantages to e-commerce as limited interaction with customers, no ability to try-and-buy, lack of instant gratification, unreliable technology and security breaches, and stiff competition.

## **2.6. The evolution of South Africa's retail environment**

South Africa's retail landscape is varied and dynamic, combining both contemporary and conventional retail concepts. With about 60 million citizens living in nine provinces and speaking 11 official languages, South Africa is a vast, complicated, and dynamic country. Its population is diversified in terms of race, culture, and socioeconomic status (Masajada, 2021:3).

Large regional malls and smaller neighborhood retail centers may be found in most urban locations in South Africa, a country with a long history of shopping mall culture (Prinsloo, 2016:2).

## **2.7. Types of malls**

The classification of planned suburban shopping centres is hierarchical (Prinsloo, 2016:2). Understanding the different types of malls provides essential insights into the range of options available to consumers and the strategies utilized by developers to create enticing retail destinations. There are eight types of malls, classified by the International Council of Shopping Centres (SA Retail, 2015):



- **Neighbourhood mall**
- **Community hall**
- **Region mall**
- **Super-regional wealthy**
- **Fashion mall**
- **Power centre**
- **Festival centre**

### **2.7.1. Regional malls**

These distinct types of malls contribute to the eclectic retail landscape, providing consumers with multiple shopping experiences and highlighting the creativity and adaptability of developers in meeting consumer needs. Regional malls, characterised by their wide selection of services and general merchandise, serve as a destination for consumers from a wider geographic area, attracting people from neighbouring towns and cities to shop in these enclosed centres (Prinsloo, 2016:17; Agarwal, 2023). It is constructed around at least one full-size department store and frequently several speciality stores and boutiques, multiple restaurants, and possibly a movie theatre (Britannica, 2023).

### **2.7.2. Regional malls in South Africa**

The principle of regional malls remains consistent worldwide, including in South Africa, where they are frequently sizable shopping malls housing a variety of establishments, such as big anchor stores, speciality shops, dining establishments, and entertainment venues (Prinsloo, 2016:17). A quarter of South Africa's retail market, or R293.8 billion, is influenced by online product research and discovery (Rhuimte, 2022). The retail and food service sectors in South Africa also offer significant employment prospects, with regional malls acting as important employers for a sizable number of people (Teuteberg, 2021:1), which is a crucial industry for a country facing an increased unemployment rate.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The aspects that impacted the choice of each method and technique were explored and clarified. The problem found in this study was that, despite the popularity of e-commerce, South African consumers continue to frequent regional malls, and current retailers lack knowledge of how to maximize these pull factors to improve purchase motivation.

The study's primary objective was to "determine the motivating factors of South African consumers when visiting regional malls." The secondary objectives were as follows:

1. To determine how the consumer experience in retail businesses affected their purchasing motivation.
2. To compare the motivations for online and traditional shopping.

#### **3.2. Research Approach**

The selection between quantitative and qualitative research methods is a methodological one. With qualitative research, the researcher can carefully study people's experiences using non-numerical data collection methods (Bryman & Bell, 2014:31; Hennink et al., 2020). Qualitative research methods in the social sciences examine social and cultural phenomena. The data collection sources comprise participant observations, interviews, questionnaires, records, texts, and the researcher's feelings and impressions (Jackson et al., 2007:23; Myers, 2019:2). Data gathering procedures such as interviews and participant observation are part of the research plan. Most qualitative research methods use interviews as their preferred tool (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:92; Myers, 2019:10).

#### **3.3. Research design**

A research design offers a framework for data collection and analysis, and decisions regarding the importance of various aspects of the research process are reflected in the choice of research design (Abbott & McKinney, 2013:33; Flick, 2022:1). In this study, a qualitative approach with convenience sampling, where a semi-structured interview style was used, provided a flexible yet systematic approach to asking the questions to the participants. Motivational research, like other qualitative research methodologies, provides essential

knowledge that may be used to inform future research, which could use more prominent and representative consumer samples (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:94).

### **3.3.1. Empirical study**

This study used an exploratory research method to investigate the research questions. Experimental research does not aim to provide definite answers to existing problems. Instead, it seeks only to explore the research questions (Swedberg, 2020:17). This study aimed to determine why consumers still visit regional malls amidst the rise of e-commerce.

## **3.4. Target population and sampling**

### **3.4.1. Target population**

The population is the set or group of all the units to whom the research's findings are to be applied (Bryman & Bell, 2014:381; Shukla, 2020:1). Most people in the general public are consumers. In the case of this study, it was consumers living in the Johannesburg area, who visited a regional mall. The researcher aimed to include participants that range in age, gender, and ethnicity.

### **3.4.2. Sampling strategy**

#### **3.1.1.1. Sampling frame**

A sample frame is simply a collection of source materials from which the sample was drawn (Turner, 2003:3; Maison, 2018:1). These participants had to be frequent mall visitors, at least once a month, willing to participate in the study voluntarily.

The following were the inclusion criteria for the participants:

- Individuals had to have a disposable income to spend at regional shopping malls.
- The participants had to be individuals who could make the purchasing decisions for their households.
- Participants must be at least 18, regardless of gender or ethnicity.

#### **3.1.1.2. Sampling method**

Given the nature of the study, the sample population for this study was determined using a non-probability convenience sampling approach. Non-probability sampling refers to sampling processes in which people within a population do not have an equal chance of being chosen for participation in a study (Bryman & Bell, 2014:380; Shukla, 2020:6). The sampling method consisted of the researcher inviting participants that shop at Clearwater Mall regularly to participate in the semi-structured interview.

### **3.1.1.3. Sampling size**

The number of participants was calculated using saturation plus one. Saturation is when gathering more data no longer generates fresh or significant insights (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022:1). The researcher maintained data collection until saturation, plus one participant, was reached to confirm complete saturation. In the case of this study, saturation was suspected at eight participants, and a ninth participant was interviewed to establish saturation plus one.

## **3.5. Data collection**

### **3.5.1. Critical literature review data**

The study's critical review utilised the following sources: NWULIB, EBSCO-host, Google Scholar, and The South African Council for Shopping Centre Conference notes. These sources encompassed journal articles, dissertations and papers, books, news, and internet articles.

### **3.5.2. Interviews**

The participants were invited to participate in the interview by the researcher. They were selected based on the inclusion criteria specified above. Informed consent was given verbally and recorded by each participant at the beginning of the interview. The interviews were held mainly at Clearwater Mall.

### **3.1.1.4. Pilot study**

A pilot study with two participants determined the interview schedule's clarity. The pilot study identified no apparent problems with questionnaire coherence or clarity. An extra question was added to the interview schedule in response.

### **3.6. Data analysis**

The study of qualitative data comprises analysing textual data and employing methodologies such as content and theme analysis to arrive at research conclusions. This study conducted a textual analysis of journal articles and participant interview responses.

#### **3.6.1. Secondary data analysis**

The researcher examined the literature on the origin of malls and the expansion of malls. This technique demonstrated how different countries and world areas view regional malls and how consumer experience influenced their motivation to visit malls.

#### **3.6.2. Primary data analysis**

The thematic analysis of the participants' transcribed interviews provided a deep and complex insight into South African consumers' viewpoints, particularly those related to Clearwater Mall. A thematic analysis is a technique for finding patterns or themes in data and reporting those findings (Lockmiller, 2021:2029).

## **4. Results and Findings**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretations following the participant interviews. The interviews were conducted using the approved Interview guide with each participant at the Clearwater Mall.

### **4.2. Section 1: Main pull factors towards a regional mall**

The first two questions also ensure that the participants comply with the minimum interview requirements for this study. The following discussion of the data reduction and found themes includes a thematic analysis of the interview guide questions.

#### 4.2.1. Question 1: How often do you frequent a mall per month on average?

Table 4.1 displays the averages of the participants' visiting frequency to malls.

**Table 4.1: Participant frequency of mall visits**

One time per month – 4 visits
2-3 times per month – 4 visits
6-8 times per month – 4 visits
15 times per month - 1 visit

#### 4.2.2. Question 2: Which malls do you visit regularly?

The participants' transcribed interviews were color-coded to identify similar categories between the participants. Table 4.2 identified the following categories.

**Table 4.2: Malls frequented by participants**

Participant:	Answer:	Categories:
Participant 1	Clearwater, because it is the closest to me. Does Monte Casino count as a mall? (Yes). I go there about once a month as well.	Clearwater Monte Casino
Participant 2	Mostly Clearwater.	Clearwater
Participant 3	Clearwater, I work close to Fourways, so I go to Fourways Mall sometimes, but mostly Clearwater.	Clearwater Fourways
Participant 4	Clearwater, it is the only mall we come to.	Clearwater
Participant 5	The closest one to me, so when I am in Roodepoort, it is Clearwater; when I am in Rivonia, I go to either Sandton or Mall of Africa, and when I am in Centurion, I go to Centurion Mall.	Clearwater Sandton Mall of Africa Centurion Mall
Participant 6	Most of the time, it is more enormous malls with various shops. We go to Menlyn, Sandton, and probably Clearwater Mall.	Clearwater Sandton Menlyn
Participant 7	Randburg mall Clearwater Rivonia - close to their office	Clearwater Randburg mall Rivonia

<b>Participant:</b>	<b>Answer:</b>	<b>Categories:</b>
Participant 8	Mall of Africa Clearwater	Clearwater Mall of Africa
Participant 9	Clearwater, Cresta, and Northgate sometimes.	Clearwater Cresta Northgate

By further reducing the provided information from the participants, the malls can be categorized according to distance from Clearwater. Table 4.3 shares this information.

**Table 4.3: Extracted themes for malls according to distance**

<b>Categories:</b>	<b>Themes:</b>
Clearwater - 9	Clearwater - 9
Monte Casino - 1	Malls within 30km from Clearwater - 10
Fourways - 1	Malls further than 30km from Clearwater - 2
Sandton - 2	
Mall of Africa - 2	
Centurion Mall - 1	
Menlyn - 1	
Randburg Mall - 1	
Rivonia - 1	
Cresta - 1	
Northgate - 1	

The themes are identified in Table 4.3. will be further discussed in the sections below.

#### **4.2.2.1. Theme 1: Clearwater Mall**

The first identified theme was whether the participants visited Clearwater Mall, as this was part of the inclusion criteria. All nine participants stated that they visit Clearwater Mall monthly. Participant 4 said: *“Clearwater is the only mall we come to.”*

#### **4.2.2.2. Theme 2: Malls within 30km of Clearwater Mall**

Assuming the participant of this study resides close to Clearwater Mall, the following statement from **Participant 5**: *“The closest one to me, so when I am in Roodepoort, it is Clearwater; when I am in Rivonia, I go to either Sandton or Mall of Africa, and when I am in Centurion, I go to Centurion Mall.”*

### **Theme 3: Malls further than 30km from Clearwater Mall**

**Participant 5** said: *“The closest one to me, so when I am in Roodepoort, it is Clearwater. When I am in Rivonia, I go to either Sandton or Mall of Africa, and when I am in Centurion, I go to Centurion Mall.”*

#### **4.2.3. Question 3: What is the purpose of your visit usually?**

Three distinct themes emerged from the participants: general, specialized, and social activities.

##### **4.2.3.1. Theme 1: General purchases**

**Participant 2** stated the following: *“We have groceries to get. We will look at some electronics. We need a new washing machine, which is one of the things we need to get. As well as a couple of basic things, cigarettes, and stuff like that.”*

##### **4.2.3.2. Theme 2: Specialized purchases**

The participants mentioned specific items they aimed to purchase during their visit to the mall, such as a washing machine, as with Participant 2. They note that they prefer to buy these products at a mall to compare their size requirements

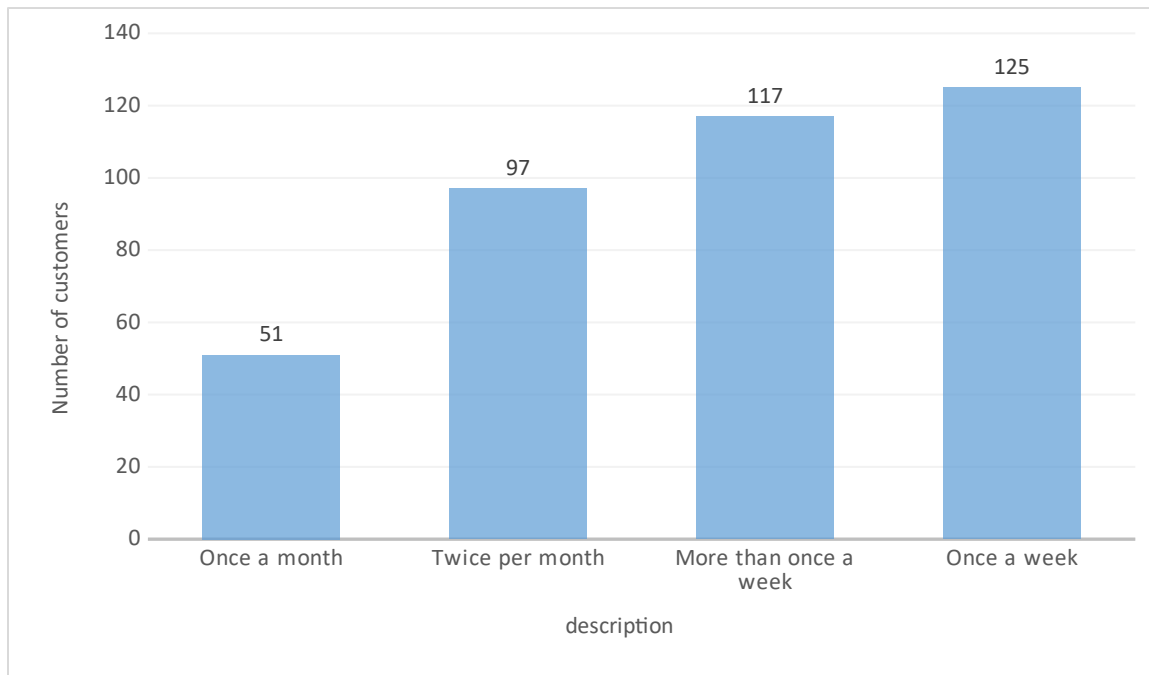
##### **04.2.3.3. Theme 3: Social Activities**

**Participant 3** said: *“I have to go to Woolworths, do a few shopping bits, go to Pick n Pay, and get out of the house.”*

#### **4.2.4. Question 4: How often do you visit a mall for the reason stated in the previous question?**

The following figure illustrates data gathered by Ntlhe (2020:278) on the frequency of shopper visits to malls in South Africa and can be used as a gauge for the answers the participants gave in this study:





**Figure 4.1: Frequency of visits of shopping malls**

Source: Ntlhe (2020:278)

#### 4.2.4.1. Theme 1: Monthly

**Participant 1:** *“For month-end purchases, once a month. Well, Monte Casino has many entertainment options, so we go to Monte Casino for entertainment. Otherwise, I will return to it when we run low on some stuff, and it is only available in stores.”*

#### 4.2.4.2. Theme 2: Weekly

According to the study by Ntlhe (2020:278), 32 per cent of participants visit a mall at least once a week. As **Participant 7** said: *“It will probably be about twice a week to buy groceries.”*

#### 4.2.4.3. Theme 3: Yearly

**Participant 5:** *“I maybe go once a year at most to browse, but not even. To buy something specific, it is more regular.”*

#### **4.2.5. Question 5: What aspects do you consider when selecting which mall you plan to visit?**

This question identified which factors affected participants' decisions on which malls to visit for their social and shopping activities. Two prominent and equally significant themes – mall-related and store-related considerations

##### **4.2.5.1. Theme 1: Mall related**

The four attributes in a mall's image are merchandising, accessibility, service, and atmosphere (North & Kotze, 2004:37; Makitha, 2023:51).

Participants mentioned a variety of other elements under mall-related, including:

- **Proximity**
- **Accessibility**
- **Mall layout**
- **Safety**
- **Not too crowded**
- **Entertainment**

**Participant 3:** *“I know the mall's layout very well, and it is easily accessible; if I need to go to Pick-n-Pay, I know how to get to Woolworths, so I think it is knowledge of knowing where to find what is in a mall.”* This quote from Participant 3 mentioned the previously discussed aspects.

##### **4.2.5.2. Theme 2: Store-related**

This theme is centred on the elements specific to each store in the mall that significantly impact participants' preferences and decisions. The participants noted several factors under store-related aspects, including:

- **Specials**
- **Variety**
- **Offered products and services**

#### **4.3. Section 2: Consumer experience**

The thematic analysis reduction conducted for this section revealed compelling themes that encapsulated the essence of these experiences through the following questions: defining a positive mall experience, identifying negative mall experiences, and aspirations for the ideal mall experience.

#### **4.3.1. Question 6: How would you describe a good mall experience?**

The focus on participants' descriptions of what makes a good mall experience allowed the researcher to investigate the environment of consumer experience in malls.

##### **4.3.1.1. Theme 1: Mall related**

The following elements were identified from the participants' responses:

- **Not too crowded**
- **Efficient wayfinding**
- **Convenient parking**
- **Safety and security**
- **Proximity of shops**
- **Cleanliness**
- **Safe flooring**
- **Climate control**
- **Kids section**

##### **4.3.1.2. Theme 2: Store-related**

Some participants called attention to the following store-related elements that enhanced a satisfying experience:

- **No queues**
- **Staff who are attentive and friendly**
- **Finding what you are looking for**
- **Interesting shops**
- **Good specials**

**Participant 2:** *“A quick one. If the staff are friendly and if they have stock of everything I am looking for, that will help.”*

#### **4.3.2. Question 7: What do you consider to be a bad experience in a mall?**

The question formed part of the ongoing investigation of the complex nature of consumer experience in malls.

#### **4.3.2.1. Theme 1: Mall-related**

While certain factors, such as crowding, cleanliness, or safety, reflected those linked with a positive mall experience in a negative perspective, this analysis will concentrate on categories that participants identified as contributing to a negative mall experience:

- Limited shops
- Feeling rushed

**Participant 6:** *“A bad experience will be like small corridors, with many people walking and bumping into each other. We must be super vigilant about our phones and the things we buy. I would not say I like feeling rushed. When I go to a mall, I like to feel relaxed and make an outing out of it, but it does not need to add extra stress to my life.”*

#### **4.3.2.2. Theme 2: Store-related**

Many store-related aspects contributed negatively to the mall experience.

- Closed stores when expected to be open
- Busy unpacking or cleaning

**Participant 3:** *“People cleaning the mall or unpacking goods in shops make it not easily accessible. If you go to Pick-n-Pay and people are packing out new products in your way, I find that uncomfortable.”*

#### **4.3.3. Question 8: What do you wish to encounter more of in a mall?**

Participants were asked to describe their ideal shopping experience at a mall and identify the components they felt would make their trips more enjoyable

##### **4.3.3.1. Theme 1: Store-specific**

This theme is centered on a mall's store selection and highlights participants' keen interest in the variety and arrangement of stores in the retail setting.

Participants emphasized several elements related to this matter, such as:

- **Varied store selection**
- **Consistency of in-store location**

- **Proximity of similar stores**
- **New products and marketing**
- **Consistency in products**

#### 4.3.3.2. Theme 2: Events in the mall

Participants emphasized several elements related to this theme, such as:

- **Pop-up shops:** Participants seemed to appreciate the idea of pop-up shops, which are transient and distinctive retail experiences. This was also clear from **Participant 1 answer:** *“Pop-up stands. I get interested in the pop-up stands that open in the mall. So, when there is a Lego day, it is fun to come through when you walk in and see these fantastic things. What I like about a pop-up stand is it is very interactive”*.
- **Themed and interactive activities:** Including themed and interactive activities indicates a desire for captivating, immersive experiences that align with themes or events.
- **Entertainment:** Participants expressed a need for entertainment alternatives within the mall and a preference for leisure and amusement locations.
- **Children’s play area:** The availability of a designated children’s play area was requested, indicating a need for family-friendly services and places that accommodate younger consumers.

#### 4.3.3.3. Theme 3: Fixed mall elements

Participants expressed their expectations for some necessary mall amenities, stressing numerous crucial components under this theme:

- **More open air:**
- **Security:**
- **Enough space:**

### 4.4. Section 3: E-commerce and traditional retail

This study of participant’s online shopping habits offers insightful information on the changing retail environment and consumer preferences. The study that follows these findings seeks to detect trends and driving forces that shed light on how consumers use online shopping.

#### 4.4.1. Question 9: Do you make use of online shopping?

The initial question in e-commerce exploration was simple: Did participants shop online? Of all the participants, five said they make use of online shopping, while four did not make use of online shopping.

## **5. Managerial Implications**

Retail businesses should understand and encourage the social component of mall visits. Creating areas for conversation and shared experiences can improve the motivation of consumers. It would not be recommended for stores to limit or eliminate staff interaction with the customers and build on personal customer service within the malls. Retailers should develop sensory-rich environments where customers can interact, feel, and touch products to satisfy the physical demand. Packaging could hinder the need for physically evaluating a product and should be designed with this need in mind.

## **6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research**

This article concludes with a comprehensive summary of the study's limitations, an analysis of how well the results align with the original objectives, and several recommendations for additional research. Essential insights into the motivating factors that pull consumers to regional malls in South Africa have been achieved. The researcher emphasised how important social interactions and sensory experiences are for shaping consumer motivation. Additionally, the critical role that consumer experience plays in driving purchasing motivation, the differences between traditional and online shopping motives, and strategic recommendations for improving consumer experience have all been discussed. These findings provide retailers with practical suggestions on improving the consumer experience and creating a vibrant retail market.

In conclusion, the problem identified, and the various objectives have been successfully achieved. The study's findings had important managerial implications that can assist the traditional retail sector to remain competitive and understand its audience better.

This knowledge helps us better understand consumer behavior and provide insightful information for future research projects in the retail sector. Consumers choose which malls and stores to visit. The study further noted that the primary motivations for people to shop online are convenience and product familiarity. On the other hand, physical retail motivations

are more subjective and include the need to make physical contact with the products, gauge texture and size, and discover new offerings and additional mall settings. Participants indicated that they want spacious and comfortable malls, free of crowds which make them feel hurried.

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