

Increasing consumer uptake of shopping malls through utilitarian value, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions

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Keywords	Abstract
Utilitarian value Customer satisfaction Behavioural intentions, Shopping malls Ghana	Informal traditional open-air market system dominates trading activities in Ghana. Shopping malls have emerged as an alternative, formalised, and competitive sector. The contribution of trading in shopping malls to Ghana's economy is not limited to job creation but also amplifies the beautification of the cities where they operate and the attraction of multinational companies. Despite these contributions, consumer uptake of shopping at shopping malls in Ghana is still very low. Most retail shops operating in shopping malls in Ghana have closed their businesses due to low demand. Thus, there is a need to explore how to sustain the sector by increasing consumer uptake of shopping malls in Ghana. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of utilitarian value on customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions within shopping malls in Ghana. The target population involved consumers who have visited or shopped in a shopping mall in Accra or Kumasi, two of the largest cities in Ghana. With a total of 500 usable questionnaires in the data analysis, the study found that utilitarian value significantly influences customer satisfaction but not behavioural intentions within the context of shopping malls in Ghana. Customer satisfaction, however, significantly influences behavioural intentions. Within the given results, it is recommended that shopping mall managers focus on pertinent factors such as monetary savings, selection, and convenience that contribute to utilitarian value and enhance customer satisfaction.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Ghana's retail industry is diverse and has been projected to grow by 14.6% from 2024–2031 (Data Intelligence 2024). In Africa, Ghana is ranked the 11th largest grocery retail market and the second largest in West Africa after Nigeria (Data Intelligence 2024). In terms of total sales, the food retail sector comprises supermarkets (4%), convenience stores and small grocery stores (36%), and traditional open-air markets (60%) (Data Intelligence 2024). The traditional open-air market is where buyers and sellers have a common place where they trade, and customers have an opportunity to negotiate prices with sellers before goods are exchanged.

With the open-air market system, sellers have their own small shops; sometimes, goods are hung on structures or tables in the open air, and others display their products on the floor. Several consumers in Ghana patronise their products and services from the open-air market due to convenience and affordability. The traditional open-air market contributes to socio-economic development, especially in job creation (Fadairo et al., 2019). The sector is predominantly not regulated, and factors such as inadequate infrastructural resources, lack of access to urban market waste, and complicated administrative procedures have been identified as challenges affecting the formalisation and integration of open-air markets in Ghana (Essien & Spocter, 2023).

Shopping malls form part of supermarkets and offer another platform where different retailers converge to sell their products and services. Some shopping malls are completely enclosed and shielded from the sun. Consumers visit shopping malls with varied intentions, such as purchasing goods or services, hanging out with friends and families, or simply shopping for "window shopping." Compared to the traditional open-air market, shopping malls are relatively new in Ghana. They provide "convenience, efficiency, hygienic, and modernity" to cities in Ghana (Eduful & Eduful, 2022). The economic contributions of shopping malls in Ghana are immense. For instance, a study conducted by Eduful (2021) on the economic impacts of shopping malls using the city of Accra as a case study found that shopping malls created 31% of new jobs in 2021 for the unemployed, who are largely those who have completed secondary school. In addition, several of the retail businesses trading in the shopping malls are from multinational companies that have been formalised and registered (FrontierView, 2017). Thus, the sector facilitates formal businesses, which can enhance government gains on taxation.

1.2. Problem investigated

Shopping malls in Ghana require more consumer traffic to ensure a sustainable business. However, the large informal open-air market system hinders its ability to attract a broad base of Ghanaian consumers. Wealthier and middle-upper-income consumers still buy from the informal markets mainly because they perceive the

products and services offered by multinational companies within the shopping malls as overpriced (FrontierView 2017). Consumers, through reviews, have also complained about poor services (e.g., attitude of employees and poor sanitation) at some shopping malls in Ghana (Tripadvisor 2020). Adequate car parking has also been reported as a challenge. Furthermore, the increased competition among retailers within the shopping malls also generates a consumer sense of adaptation where they shop for the best value (Hinson et al. 2012; Adeola, Adisa, Moradeyo & Ibelegbu 2023). The question that arises is: how can shopping mall managers in Ghana increase consumer uptake of shopping malls in Ghana in an effort to sustain the sector?

1.3 Research Objective

This study aims to investigate whether, by prioritising the provision of utilitarian value, consumers shopping from shopping malls in Ghana will be satisfied and will repurchase from them. Thus, the study sought to investigate the relationship between utilitarian value, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions with shopping malls in Ghana. The desire of shopping malls to provide value could enhance customer satisfaction and positive behavioural intentions to sustain the shopping mall industry in Ghana.

2. Literature review

2.1. Perceived utilitarian value (UV)

This study finds its origin in the customer value-based theory. Value refers to the benefits customers receive in comparison with the price paid (Zeithaml, 1988). When the costs exceed the benefits, the customer will be dissatisfied, and vice versa (Zeithaml, 1988). Holbrook (1999) is of the view that customer value is “an interactive relativistic preference experience.” This implies that the relationship that exists between the consumer and the product differs between people and manifests through the heart of the consumption experience (Holbrook, 1999). Perceived value can be classified into two categories: hedonic and utilitarian value. Hedonic value is based on a subjective assessment, such as pleasing and emotional experiences of a product or service and focuses on elements such as fun (Evelina et al. 2020).

With utilitarian value, customers base their decision to purchase by objectively assessing the benefits of the product or service (Evelina et al., 2020). Utilitarian value captures customers' evaluation of the functional advantages of a good or service (Bae & Jeon, 2022). Aspects such as price reduction, services, time savings, and product choices are considered functional benefits. Thus, utilitarian value is assessed based on rational and objective decisions (Bae & Jeon, 2022; Evelina et al., 2020; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Consistent with other studies, aspects of utilitarian value dimensions such as monetary savings, selection, and convenience are measured in this study (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). Monetary savings involve rewards, reduction in price, competitive prices of products or services at the shopping mall, refunds, rebates, “black market day”, or bulk purchase at a discount

rate that customers enjoy while shopping (Chandon, et al., 2000; Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). A customer also perceives utilitarian value at a shopping mall when the time spent on searching for a product or service is beneficial when compared to the cost incurred (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). A positive view of the functional benefits, such as being served on time and efficient delivery of services, translates into customer satisfaction (Hayu et al., 2023). In a survey conducted by Evelina et al. (2020) on e-commerce consumers in Indonesia, the authors found that utilitarian value positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction.

2.2. Customer Satisfaction (CS)

One of the central aims of many organisations is to survive through fostering customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has two levels, namely the conceptual and operational levels of satisfaction (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982). Conceptually, customer satisfaction is the eventual outcome of purchase and usage resulting from the customer's comparison between the cost and rewards of the purchases. Operationally, customer satisfaction is linked to a person's attitude and can be measured as the sum of the processes and attributes of the product or service. The processes that motivate the response to customer satisfaction are psychologically complex (Churchill & Suprenant, 1982). Hence, Grey and Boshoff (2004) and Wang, Lu, and Tan (2018) argue that customer satisfaction is not inherent in the product but rather the individual's perceptions towards the products or service attributes that are compatible with that individual. Thus, customer satisfaction seems to be idiosyncratic and, as a construct, is formed through the interaction of perceptual understandings of the product or service and consumer expectations of that product or service (Grey & Boshoff, 2004). Oliver (1980) initiated the cognitive model, which highlights the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. In his work, he argues that satisfaction occurs due to the customer's prior expectation level and perception (Oliver, 1980). When the customer's perception exceeds expectations, the customer is inclined to be satisfied (Oliver, 1980). This study relied on cognitive theory by focusing on the post-purchase evaluation of the value received by the consumer. A favourable customer experience leads to positive behavioural intentions such as loyalty to a product or firm (Vannarajah & Medis, 2020).

2.3. Behavioural intentions (BI)

Behavioural intentions refer to the possibility that a customer may behave in a certain manner, such as revisiting or referring a customer after purchasing a product or service (Ladhari et al., 2017). In other words, behavioural intentions involve the process of making a purchase decision (Herawati et al., 2019). It also indicates that a customer will remain with the service provider and will resist competitors' tactics (Qadir, 2018; Wu et al., 2018). Behavioural intentions can, therefore, be described as the outcome of customer satisfaction resulting in either a positive or a negative behavioural decision (Khan & Choudhury, 2016). We argue that when shopping malls in Ghana are able to provide utilitarian value, customers will be satisfied and

consequently display positive behavioural intentions, such as returning to the shopping and buying more goods or services or referring friends and family to also shop at the shopping malls. Based on the above discussions, the following hypothesised framework with hypotheses was formulated for the study.

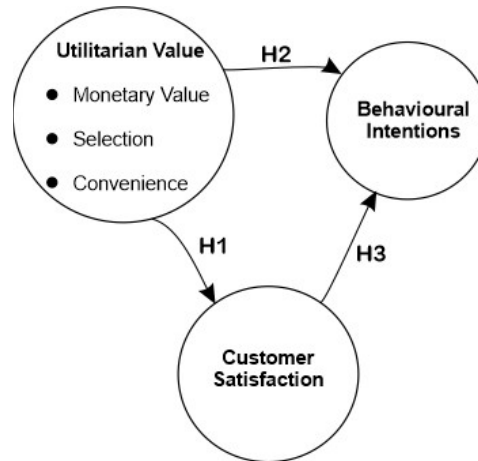


Figure 1: A hypothesised framework

Source: Authors' own compilation based on literature reviewed

3. Research methodology

The study embraced quantitative methodology to apply statistics to analyse the data (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). The target population includes customers who have visited or shopped at shopping malls in Ghana. However, due to logistical constraints, Accra and Kumasi shopping malls were selected as the study sites. The rationale behind selecting these two shopping malls was that they are the two biggest shopping malls in Ghana, and most consumers shop from these places. A survey method through convenience nonprobability sampling was used to recruit the respondents. Respondents were approached to complete the questionnaires as they entered or existed in the shopping malls. The questionnaire consists of two sections (sections A and B). Section A contained a five-point Likert scale type of question, while Section B was used to collect customer demographic statistics. Utilitarian value was measured using items that stem from monetary value, selection, and convenience. Nine (9) items were sourced from previously validated studies to measure utilitarian value (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016; Chandon et al., 2000; Idoko et al., 2019; El Hedhli et al., 2013). Customer satisfaction was measured using eight (8) items from previous studies (Füller & Matzler, 2008; Albayrak, 2018; Fajriyati et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019; Bohl, 2012; Han et al., 2019). Behavioural intentions were measured using eight (8) items from previous studies (El-Adly & Eid, 2016; Konuk, 2019). All the items in the questionnaire were adapted from previous studies to suit the current study focus. To ensure face validity, the items were further reviewed by two subject experts in retailing and marketing from a public university in Ghana and South Africa. The subject experts recommended minor changes in the initial questionnaire. The initial questionnaire was pilot tested with fifty (50) potential respondents. The outcome of the pilot study necessitated some questions in the

questionnaire being reworded and others being merged. Based on the recommendations by Gay et al. (2012), Bartlett et al. (2001), and Taherdoost (2017), the sample size of the study was 500, and the response rate was 100%.

3.1. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- H₁: There is a significant relationship between utilitarian value and customer satisfaction within shopping malls in Ghana.
- H₂: There is a significant relationship between utilitarian value and behavioural intentions within shopping malls in Ghana.
- H₃: There is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions within shopping malls in Ghana.

3.2. Ethics

The study is part of a comprehensive study of shopping malls in Ghana. Before the data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional ethics committee of the university where the study was registered. Only respondents who had signed the consent form were allowed to complete the questionnaire. The institution's approved ethics number is H20-BES-MRK-137.

4. Results and Findings

4.1. Profile of the respondents

In Table 1, the demographic statistics of the respondents who participated in the study are presented. Over half of the respondents (53.6%) were female, and 72.6% of the respondents were 18-40 years of age. More than half of the respondents (62%) hold a degree or postgraduate qualification. Respondents employed in the private sector (35%) dominated the sample. 41.2% of the respondents had visited the shopping mall once in a while (41.2%) or twice a month (29%).

Table 1: Demographics statistics

		Gender	Age	Highest Education	Occupation	Shopping frequency
N	Valid	500	500	500	500	500
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Gender						
	Male	46.4%				
	Female	53.6%				
Age						
	18-30 yrs		44.6%			
	31-40 yrs		28.0%			
	41-50 yrs		15.6%			
	51-59 yrs		7.8%			
	60+yrs		4.0%			
Education						
	Less than High Sch			6.2%		
	High School			31.8%		
	Diploma/Degree			48.2%		
	Post-graduate			13.8%		
Occupation						
	Self-employed				19.8%	
	Government sector				10.8%	
	Private sector				35.0%	
	Student				30.2%	
	Unemployed				4.2%	
Frequency of visits to the shopping mall						
	My first visit					7.2%
	At least once a week					22.6%
	Twice a month					29.0%
	Once in a while					41.2%

Source: Authors' own construction based on data collected

4.2. Measurement of Internal consistency

As indicated in Table 2, the items measuring each construct were subjected to reliability scrutiny using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Nine (9) items used to measure utilitarian value had a Cronbach alpha of 0.701. Customer satisfaction, measured using eight (8) items, had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.691. Behavioural intentions with eight (8) had a Cronbach alpha of 0.757. The Cronbach's alphas attained satisfy the recommendation by Hulin et al. (2001) and Ursachi, Horodnic, and Zait (2015) that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.60 to 0.70 represents an acceptable level of reliability, and 0.70 and above represents as good reliability.

Table 2: Reliability test

Factors	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Utilitarian value (UV)	9	0.701
Customer satisfaction (CS)	8	0.691
Behavioural intentions (BI)	8	0.757

Source: Authors' own construction based on data collected

4.3. Validity test

Captured in Table 3 are the model fit indices. The observed CMIN/df is 2.339, within the acceptable threshold of <3.00. The SRMR recorded 0.0554, within the required threshold of <0.05 or <0.08. The GFI indicates 0.954, slightly above the recommended threshold but considered an adequate model fit. The NFI equals 0.772, the TLI reflects 0.835, the CFI exhibits 0.853, and the RMSEA indicates 0.052. The observed fit indices met the minimum threshold and adequately confirm the validity of the items and related constructs (Thakkar 2020; Xia & Yang 2019).

Table 3: Model fit summary

Indices	CMIN/df	SRMR	GFI	NFI	TLI	CFI
Observed	2.332	0.0554	0.902	0.772	0.835	0.853

Source: Authors' own construction based on data collected

Table 4 presents the regression weights testing the relationships among the constructs. The results show a significant relationship between utilitarian value and customer satisfaction (SE=0.192, CR=5.136). Similarly, the relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (SE = 0.141, CR = 3.829) is significant. The results further indicate that the relationship between utilitarian value and behavioural intentions (SE = 0.134, CR = 1.005) is not significant.

Table 4: Regression weights

Hypotheses	Relationships	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Decision
H ₁	CS <--- UV	0.985	0.192	5.136	***	Significant; H ₁ is supported, therefore accept H ₁
H ₂	BI <--- UV	0.135	0.134	1.005	0.315	Not significant; H ₂ is not supported, therefore reject H ₂
H ₃	BI <--- CS	0.539	0.141	3.829	***	Significant; H ₃ is supported, therefore accept H ₃

***P<0.001

Source: Authors' own construction based on data collected

The results in Table 4 show that hypothesis H₁ (There is a significant relationship between utilitarian value and customer satisfaction within shopping malls in Ghana) can be accepted because a strong significant relation exists ($r=0.99$; $p\leq 0.05$).

Hypothesis H₂ (There is a significant relationship between utilitarian value and behavioural intentions within shopping malls in Ghana) is rejected. There is no significant correlation between the variables ($r=0.13$; $p\geq 0.05$).

Hypothesis H₃ (There is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions within shopping malls in Ghana) can also be accepted because a strong, significant relationship exists between these variables ($r=0.54$; $p\leq 0.05$). Figure 2 reflects the SEM diagram.

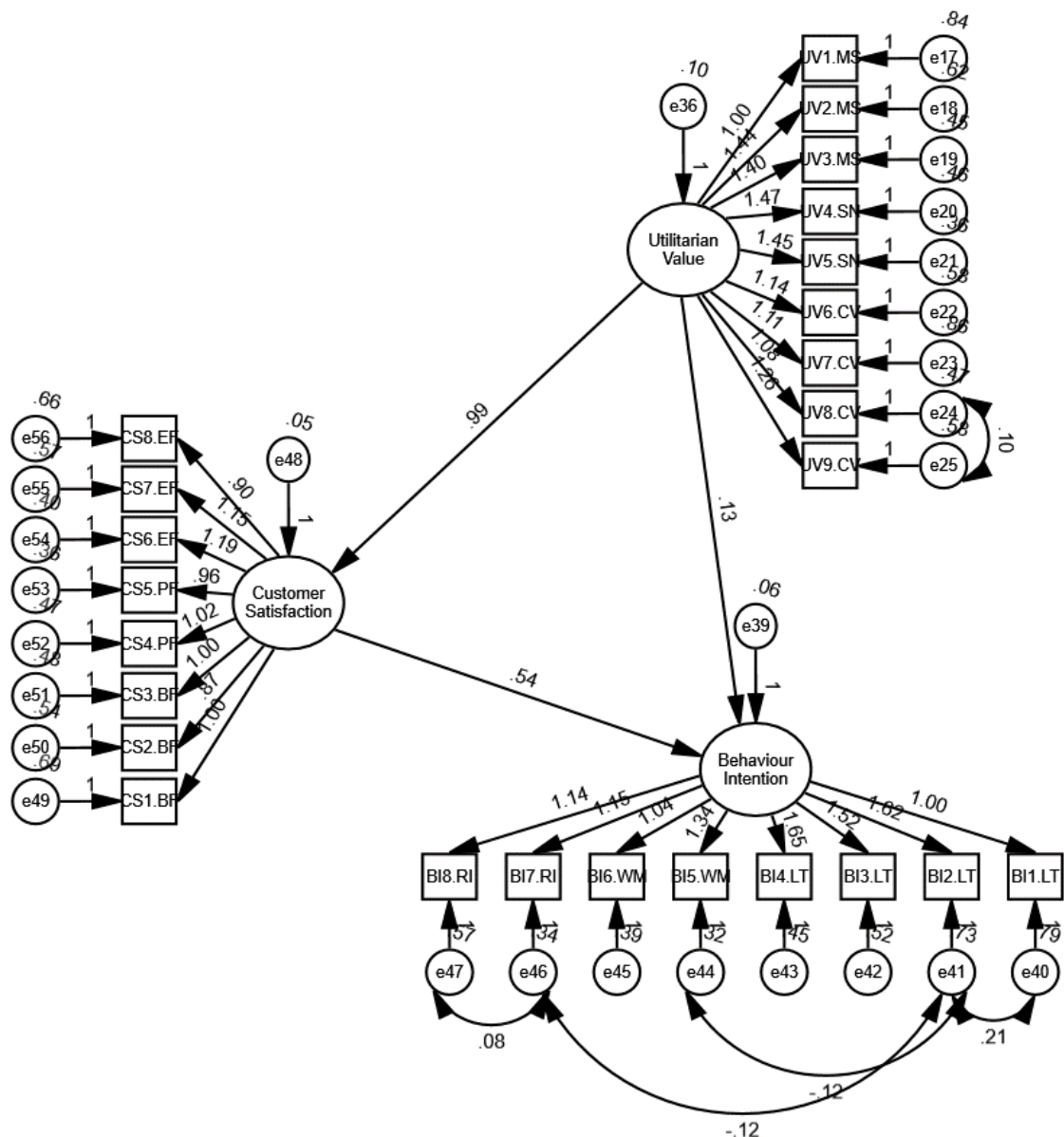


Figure 2: SEM diagram

Source: Authors' own construction based on data collected

5. Managerial Implications

The study found a significant relationship between utilitarian value and customer satisfaction. Shopping mall managers should attempt to create an experience for consumers that incorporates monetary value, availability, and selection. It is recommended to focus on providing consumers with facilities that will allow them to save time when visiting the mall. Aspects such as sufficient and well-organised car parking areas, automated facilities that will assist consumers in navigating and locating specific retail shops, and the provision of chatbot applications and facilities that consumers would be able to utilise to chat with a representative to gain information about services within the shopping mall are also recommended. Shopping mall managers should also motivate their tenant retailers to offer perpetual price discounts to stimulate consumer traffic. In order to provide consumers with convenience, it is suggested that shopping mall managers strive to attract tenant retailers that will offer various services and provide different product choices. Shopping mall managers should ensure that consumers are always satisfied when shopping, as a satisfied consumer will revisit to purchase from the shopping mall. The physical facilities of the shopping mall should be maintained and functional. Painting, lighting, and internal decorations in the shopping mall should be maintained and designed to be attractive to Ghanaian consumers.

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

Sustaining the growth of shopping malls would provide an immense opportunity for Ghana's economy to grow. Formalised shopping mall operations will attract multinational companies to invest and establish their footprint in the country. The overarching aim of this study is to explore how the sector can increase the uptake of consumers shopping in shopping malls to ensure its sustainability. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the relationship between utilitarian value, satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. The data indicates a significant relationship between utilitarian value and customer satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis H_1 is supported. The findings align with a study conducted by Evelina et al. (2020), who established within the context of e-commerce consumers in Indonesia that utilitarian values positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction. This suggests that by offering consumers utilitarian value, consumers are likely to be satisfied. The study also revealed that the relationship between utilitarian value and behavioural intention is insignificant. Thus, hypothesis H_2 is not supported. The findings suggest that offering utilitarian value would not necessarily contribute to consumers positive behavioural intentions, such as revisiting the shopping mall, spreading positive word-of-mouth messages about the mall to friends or family members, or repurchasing from the shopping mall. The results further established a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions within the context of shopping malls in Ghana. Hypothesis H_3 is therefore supported as it corroborates similar findings by

Vannarajah and Medis (2020) that favourable customer satisfaction positively influences behavioural intentions. It does imply that by ensuring that consumers are satisfied, there is a potential that the consumer will have a positive behavioural intention towards the shopping mall.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge by adding to existing literature on perceived utilitarian value, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. By establishing that utilitarian value influences customer satisfaction, shopping mall managers should prioritise offering unique functional services so that consumers will appreciate their relevance compared to the services offered in Ghana's traditional open-air market system. It is also important that shopping mall managers introduce innovative strategies that will enhance customer satisfaction to be able to facilitate positive behavioural intentions.

Though the study has made unique findings that will assist shopping mall managers, certain limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, only two shopping malls were selected from two regions in Ghana for the study. Thus, the findings should be generalised with caution. Future researchers should consider expanding the study scope to generalise the findings. Secondly, the study focused on only utilitarian value as a study construct. Future research should consider other factors, such as hedonic value and its influence on satisfaction and behavioural intentions within shopping malls.

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