

Why do Females Shop? Dimensions of Females Shopping Experience

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Abstract

Shopping is an enjoyable moment in the life of a female shopper. It has a special meaning and status for females. It is often said that shopping and females are complementary to each other. Females assign a variety of reasons for shopping. With the changing role and status of female in the society, the reasons to shop are also increasing. The present study has tried to find an answer to a very important question, "why do females shop?" Literature suggests that joy of shopping is the most important motive for a female shopper. A survey of 321 Indian females suggested that the reasons could be described in terms of five dimensions of shopping experience namely special, enjoyment, delight, leisure and recreation. These dimensions collectively describe the sources of joy for Indian female shoppers. The study presents insights for practitioners and researchers.

Keywords: Females Shopping Experience, Women Buying Behaviour; Shopping

Introduction

Females and shopping are closely intertwined to each other. Most of the females enjoy shopping, whether it is for food, grocery, household items, fashion, or for lifestyle products. Female shopping has gained a momentum in recent times due to females' changing financial and social status, educational levels, career aspirations, media usage, exposure to information, use of modern electronic gadgets, and greater participation in workforce. Her traditional role as mother, wife, and home maker has also undergone change. She is an earner for the family, has greater say in family decision making, occupies important roles in the organisation and society, and has her personal lifestyle requirements. It has been observed that females generally enjoy shopping, spend more time and money during their shopping trip (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003).

Emergence of malls, shopping centres, new format retail outlets, and exclusive stores has provided a wide range of choices to female shoppers offering a safe, convenient, comfortable, enjoyable and pleasurable place to engage in shopping. It offers utilitarian as well as hedonic value to female shoppers. Marketers make all possible efforts by designing innovative marketing strategies to attract and serve female shoppers. It is one of the largest customer segments for marketers because females not only shop for themselves, but also for home and other family members. Shopping is also a socialising activity for them as they enjoy shopping with friends.

The purpose of the present study is to find motives for shopping and analyse dimensions of shopping experience for female buyers. The paper discusses the nature of shopping experience, difference between male and female shopping behaviour, and dimensions of female shopping experience followed by research methodology, data analysis and conclusion of the study. The study also presents implications for marketers and researchers.

Shopping Experience

Shopping experience has its roots in the emergence of experience economy. Pine and Gilmore (1998) in their pioneering work argued that experiences emerge from the customer interaction with the clues present in the form of people, objects, and processes. They are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even at spiritual level. Schmitt (1999) explained that experiences occur as a result of encountering, undergoing or living through things, which provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational values.

Shopping has been referred to as a fun, pleasurable activity that leads to feelings of 'joy' (Jin & Sternquist, 2004). It is also described as a form of sensory experience.

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Music, lights, colours, displays, fragrances, and many more ambient elements shape up shoppers' mood and behaviour. Fiore and Kim (2007) explained that the shopping experience entails consumer processes (e.g. product evaluation, attitude formation) and responses (e.g. satisfaction, or purchase behaviour) affected by aspects of the shopping environment (e.g. brick-and-mortar retail store, shopping centre, catalogue, and online store), situation, and consumer characteristics. They further argued that integrative nature of shopping experience incorporates components from both hedonic experience and utilitarian experience. Shopping experience is the sum total of sensorial, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses produced during the entire process of shopping involving an integrated series of interaction with people, objects, processes and environment in a retail outlet (Bagdare and Jain, 2013). A large number of environmental and organisational factors affect the constitution, nature and intensity of shopping experience.

Female versus Male Shoppers

Females display a different shopping behaviour as compared to males. A large number of studies have established the role of gender in explaining the difference between male and female buying process and patterns (Coley & Burgess, 2003; Kuruvilla, Joshi, & Shah, 2009; Kotzé, North, Stols, & Venter, 2012; Kraft & Weber, 2012). It is found that males and females differ in terms of influence of external factors, decision making process, buying decisions, product categories and purchase preferences. Coley and Burgess (2003) reported that males and females were found to be significantly different with regard to affective process components (irresistible urge to buy, positive buying emotion and mood management) and cognitive process components (cognitive deliberations and unplanned buying). They further observed that significant differences were found between males and females in the frequency with which they were purchasing different product categories. Kuruvilla *et al.* (2009) also reported that females have a more positive attitude to mall shopping and that they purchase fashion related categories more often than males. It was also found during the study that females enjoy window shopping greater than males. In another study, Kraft and Weber (2012) found that males and females traditionally approach purchasing decisions very differently, females look to satisfy long term needs and wants while males are shorter sighted and look at satisfying immediate or short term needs and wants.

Studies have also reported that females enjoy shopping more than males do (Kotzé *et al.*, 2012).

Dimensions of Female Shopping Experience

Shopping is an important activity in the life of a female. Most of the females find shopping as entertaining, enjoying, relaxing, refreshing, and satisfying activity. They shop when they need to buy products for themselves or for others or even act as shopping companion for friends or family members. It is established in many studies that females enjoy shopping. Bakewell and Mitchell (2003) observed that females consider shopping as leisure and enjoyable activity while purchasing clothes, cosmetics, footwear and jewellery. With the emergence of new format retail stores, females prefer to shop at malls. They may be engaged in actual buying of the products or sometimes they may be doing window shopping. In a study of female fashion shoppers, Michon, Yu, Smith, and Chebat (2008) found that the perception of mall environment (relaxed, comfortable, cheerful, colourful, stimulating, lively, bright, and interesting) significantly influences product perceptions (style, assortment, and quality), hedonic shopping experience (enjoyment, adventure, excitement, escape, and joy), and approach behaviour (liking, exploring, and spending more money). Kotzé *et al.* (2012) identified the sources of shopping enjoyment as "shopping to socialize, shopping for bargains, shopping for gratification, shopping for entertainment, shopping for others, shopping to browse, shopping for exercise and shopping for sensory stimulation". They found that females score significantly higher on all the sources of shopping enjoyment. McCarville *et al.* (2013) reported that females consider shopping as entertaining, rewarding, and self motivating activity and use terms such as "fun," "thrill," "excitement", and "satisfaction" to describe their shopping experience.

In an important study on female shoppers, Pine (2009) found that shopping emerges as the means by which females manage and regulate their emotions. Females shop more when emotions, both positive and negative, are running high. A significant proportion of females spends money to cheer them up. Shopping provides these females with momentary pleasure. Jin and Sternquist (2004) also reported that females experience positive emotional arousal and even joy through their shopping activity. McCarville *et al.* (2013) observed that shopping represented escape from the boredom and routine of everyday life of females and the need to find an activity that was more interesting, stimulating or engaging.

Shopping is increasingly seen as a leisure activity by females and, as such, fulfils a role in family and social life (Woodruffe, 1997). Hart, Farrell, Stachow, Reed, and Cadogan (2007) found that, for females, enjoyment is related to shopping as a leisure activity which includes elements of browsing and investing time. Shopping is listed as one of their top five leisure activities by female shoppers which bring fun and enjoyment, lack of obligation, freedom of choice, intrinsic motivation, challenge, satisfaction, relaxation and escape from the demands of everyday life. Moreover, there is often a personal and emotional connection to desired leisure activities (McCarville *et al.*, 2013). They further reported that females found shopping as a desirable, positive, and rewarding form of leisure.

Dholakia (1999) argued that shopping is a major source of relaxation and further observed that the female shoppers are inclined towards recreational and expressive nature of shopping at the mall. Shopping acts as a “Feel Good” factor for females. It has been observed that females spend more time in shopping and for them entire process of shopping is important. Kraft and Weber (2012) reported that females prefer to shop at a relaxed pace when they actually go to a store. They further reported that females examine merchandise, compare items and prices, ask questions, try things on, and then make purchases.

Based on the reported studies it can be understood that shopping is an emotionally involving activity for female

shoppers offering both utilitarian as well as hedonic benefits. Pine (2009) opined that emotions seem to be both the cause and the consequence of spending money for many females. Most female shoppers consider shopping as a source of enjoyment, relaxation, socialisation, happiness, comfort, leisure, relaxation, pleasure, excitement, fulfilment etc. It is also a means of personal expression for them. The present study has been undertaken to empirically validate the reasons for shopping among Indian Females.

Methodology

The present research is explanatory in nature as it tries to identify the major reasons for female shopping. The respondents for the present study were females in the age group 21-48. Sample unit represented a female shopper in the mall. The data were collected with the help of a semantic differential scale having 18 pairs of bipolar items. The scale was carefully developed on the basis of items identified from the review of literature related to the reasons for shopping by females. It has high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = .816) and content validity. The responses were measured using seven point semantic differential scale for each pair of items. The data were collected from the city of Indore (India) using mall intercept survey from three different malls. A total of 321 valid responses were obtained (Table 1). The data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis.

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	21 to 28	181	56.4	56.4	56.4
	31 to 38	104	32.4	32.4	88.8
	41 to 48	36	11.2	11.2	100.0
	Total	321	100.0	100.0	
Occupation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	service	150	46.7	46.7	46.7
	business	37	11.5	11.5	58.3
	student	72	22.4	22.4	80.7
	housewife	62	19.3	19.3	100.0
	Total	321	100.0	100.0	
Income					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than 30	62	19.3	19.3	19.3
	40 to 60	114	35.5	35.5	54.8
	70 to 90	100	31.2	31.2	86.0
	100 and above	45	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	321	100.0	100.0	

Results and Discussions

The data were initially checked for sample adequacy through KMO and Bartlett’s Test. It was found to be significant and adequate in the light of obtained scores (Table 2). The data were analysed for factor constitution through Exploratory Factor Analysis technique. Principle Component- Varimax Rotation Method was applied for understanding the factor constitution. Five items were removed due to cross loading or low factor loading scores. Remaining 13 items converged into five factors such as special, enjoyment, delight, leisure and recreation, with

a total variance of 70.916% (Tables 3 and 4). A brief discussion of all the factors is presented below:

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett’s Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.766
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1263.955
	Df	78
	Sig.	.000

Table 3: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.125	31.732	31.732	2.070	15.924	15.924
2	1.687	12.980	44.712	1.961	15.088	31.012
3	1.238	9.524	54.236	1.890	14.536	45.548
4	1.165	8.961	63.197	1.685	12.958	58.506
5	1.004	7.719	70.916	1.613	12.410	70.916
6	.681	5.238	76.154			
7	.639	4.913	81.067			
8	.549	4.222	85.288			
9	.490	3.767	89.055			
10	.434	3.340	92.395			
11	.375	2.883	95.278			
12	.310	2.382	97.660			
13	.304	2.340	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component				
	Special	Enjoyment	Delight	Leisure	Recreation
Memorable	.837				
Wonderful	.782				
Unique	.776				
Happy		.835			
Good		.830			
Exciting		.625			
Satisfying			.843		
Pleasurable			.782		
Comfortable			.566		
Relaxing				.846	
Refreshing				.765	
Entertaining					.839
Involving					.725

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Special: The first factor has a total variance of 15.924% consisting of three variables – Memorable (Factor Loading - 0.837), Wonderful (Factor Loading - 0.782), and Unique (Factor Loading - 0.776). All these three variables collectively represent special status of shopping in the life of females. Shopping is considered as an important activity, which amazes the females, often bring surprises and lead to pleasurable memories. Females look for novelty and excitement while they shop. Each shopping trip is a special experience for the females.

Enjoyment: The second factor has a total variance of 15.088% consisting of three variables – Happy (Factor Loading - 0.835), Good (Factor Loading - 0.830), and Exciting (Factor Loading - 0.625). The “Feel Good” factor coupled with derived happiness and excitement makes the shopping experience enjoyable. Most of the studies have reported that females enjoy their shopping trips. Shopping is truly a matter of joy for female shoppers.

Delight: The third factor has a total variance of 14.536% consisting of three variables – Satisfying (Factor Loading - 0.843), Pleasurable (Factor Loading - 0.782), and Comfortable (Factor Loading - 0.566). Shopping is a highly gratifying and pleasurable activity for females. It gives them sensory stimulation and creates a zone of comfort. Different elements of retail stores contribute to sensory experience. Females derive a sense of delight from their shopping trip.

Leisure: The fourth factor has a total variance of 12.958.088% consisting of two variables – Relaxing (Factor Loading - 0.846), and Refreshing (Factor Loading - 0.765). After a busy, hectic and stressful life, females shopping as escape for leisure. They find shopping as a relaxing and refreshing experience. It acts as a stress buster which helps them in regulating their emotions.

Recreation: The last factor has a total variance of 12.41% consisting of two variables – Entertaining (Factor Loading - 0.839) and Involving (Factor Loading - 0.725). It has been widely reported that shopping is recreational experience for all the females. They are found to be highly involved in shopping and also feel entertained in the whole process.

The results of the study are in line with the earlier reported studies which have described shopping experience for females as a source of enjoyment, relaxation,

socialisation, happiness, comfort, leisure, relaxation, pleasure, excitement, fulfilment, and personal expression (Dholakia, 1999; Mitchell, 2003; Jin & Sternquist, 2004; Michon *et al.*, 2008; Pine 2009; McCarville *et al.*, 2013). Indian females engage in shopping for wide range of reasons, most of which are related to psychological or emotional responses. Whether they shop for self or others, shopping is an enjoyable experience for them. All the five factors emerged in the present study – special; enjoyment; delight; leisure; and recreation, collectively describe the Joy of shopping among female shoppers.

Conclusion

Females represent a vast majority of shoppers in malls or shopping centres. The present study brings important insights into female shopping experience by bringing an answer to a very important question, why do females shop? Shopping is an important activity in the life of females. It has been described as one of the most important leisure activity and source of joy. Female shoppers draw utilitarian as well as hedonic benefits from shopping. It is an escape from their routine life and also help in regulating emotional ups and downs. A major contribution of the present study is that Indian female shoppers tend to behave similar to their western counterpart in terms of describing their reasons to shop. The study reveals five dimensions namely special, enjoyment, delight, leisure and recreation which collectively describe shopping experience for Indian female shoppers.

The study was centred on female shoppers as they are more active shoppers as compared to males. An exploration of the dimensions of female shopping experience can help the retailers in designing their retailing components which can enhance the joy of shopping for females. Retailers can find out newer ways of bringing novelty in shopping environment to attract female shoppers. The study also presents some important issues for future research. Shopping as an important activity for emotional regulation by females requires further exploration. There is also a need for exploration different components of retail store which result in causing an emotional high or low. Female shoppers’ perception of utilitarian versus hedonic benefits from shopping is an important area for future research and practice.

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