Factors influencing customer experience value in shopping malls

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: Shopping malls are relatively new in Ghana. However, the sector faces severe competition as a large proportion of consumers shop in the informal retail market. Furthermore, several consumers perceive products and services in the shopping malls as expensive compared with those in the informal retail market. To overcome these challenges, and to remain competitive and sustainable, shopping malls in Ghana must prioritise customer experience value. Currently, no research exists that has investigated the factors influencing customer experience value in shopping malls in Ghana. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the factors that influence customer experience value in shopping malls in Ghana.

Design/methodology/approach: A field survey was conducted in two cities in Ghana (Accra and Kumasi) where the four country's biggest shopping malls are located. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify the potential respondents and the quantitative research methodology was used for analysis of the data. Overall, 500 usable questionnaires were included in the data analysis.

Findings: The findings of the study showed that service encounter, experience realms, utilitarian value and hedonic value are factors that influence customer experience value (EV) in shopping malls in Ghana.

Recommendations/value: It is recommended that shopping mall managers, in order to create experience value for their customers on their visit to the mall, should attempt to stage all four factors in order to attract more customers.

> **Managerial implications:** For shopping malls to remain competitive and sustainable, it is important for the managers of malls to prioritise the factors that influence customer experience value.

Keywords

Customer experience value; Experience realms; Ghana; Hedonic value; Service encounter; Shopping mall; Utilitarian value

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JEL Classification: L81

1.   INTRODUCTION

As one of the fastest-growing economies in the world (Ansong *et al*., 2019), Ghana serves as an area of opportunity for shopping mall developers (Eduful, 2019). In September 2017, the economy of Ghana expanded for the fifth successive quarter by 9.3 percent compared to 4.3 percent in September 2016 (World Bank Group, 2018). Ghana's economy recorded an expansion in GDP growth of 6.5 percent in 2019 and attracted a modest growth of 1.1 percent in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic (World Bank, 2021). However, GDP was anticipated to increase by 5.9 percent in 2021 due to potential oil discoveries and growth in the mining sector (Nordea, 2020). Current statistics show growth in Ghana's real GDP of 4.71 percent in the year 2021 and a further increase of 6.17 percent to be attained in 2022 (Statista, 2022). The continuing growth in Ghana's economy presents an opportunity for investors of shopping malls in the country to succeed.

Although the existence of shopping malls in Ghana is fairly new (Eduful, 2019), their popularity has thrived over the past 10 years in attracting consumers who previously relied on the informal retail sector for their household products and services. Just as is the case in other countries, shopping malls in Ghana have become a convenient place for many individuals and families who do not only visit to shop (Heffner & Twardzik, 2015), but also to gather to meet people and to socialise (Eyiah-Botwe *et al.,* 2015; Quagraine *et al.,* 2016). The latter is an indication that shopping malls in Ghana are gradually increasing their 'foot print' and market share in the formal retail market. Authors have put forward that to attract more customers, it is vital to enhance the experience value provided to customers (Hoyer *et al.,* 2020).

Experience value represents the worth of the service, as it is perceived by the customer and formed through the experiences, dialogues and relations of the people who interact with the organisation's product or service (Manschot & Sleeswijk, 2011). Furthermore, customers do not just visit a shopping mall to purchase products and services alone, but also to obtain inspiration

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for their visit, release stress, feel the serenity of the shopping mall and overcome boredom and isolation (Idoko *et al*., 2019).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Approximately 95 percent of retail trading occurs in the informal sector of Ghana (Alhadeff & Acheampong, 2022). This suggests that the informal sector controls a sizable market share in the retail market in Ghana. Shopping malls in Ghana are in intense competition with the informal retail sector for a share of the retail market (Anku & Ahorbo, 2017). However, Ghanaian consumers perceive products and services on sale at the shopping malls as expensive compared with the informal retail market (Deloitte, 2016). Price sensitivities have the potential to affect customer utilisation and sustainability of shopping malls in Ghana. Apart from the latter, no research has been conducted on the customer experience of value of shopping malls in Ghana, although a plethora of studies have been conducted on shopping malls across the globe (Keng *et al.,* 2007; El-Adly & Eid, 2016; Idoko *et al.,* 2019). Research conducted by Diallo *et al.,* (2018), Phiri and Mcwabe, (2013) and El-Adly and Eid, (2016) recommend that, due to industry and cultural differences across countries, there is a need for further research on customer experience value in specific countries to enhance positive behavioural intentions. This study responds to the call. Furthermore, Prashar *et al.,* (2017) put forward that the more value the customer experiences, the more s/he becomes satisfied, remains loyal and spreads positive information about the experience. It is therefore argued that knowing the factors that influence the experience value of shoppers within shopping malls in Ghana may provide useful information to shopping mall managers in the formulation of marketing strategies to enhance their sustainability and competitiveness in the retail sector. Thus, the aim of the present study is to investigate the factors that influence customer experience value in shopping malls in Ghana. The findings will also contribute to the literature on customer experience value and assist managers of shopping malls in different cultures across the world to enhance the experience that they offer to shoppers.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses the literature on experience value which is the theoretical foundation of the study. Furthermore, literature on the proposed factors measured in the study are offered.

3.1 Experience value

Experience value forms the theoretical foundation of the current study. The importance of customer experience value is widely acknowledged in scholarly research due to its influence on

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customer satisfaction and competitive advantage (Blocker *et al.,* 2011; Amoah *et al.,* 2016; Echchakoui, 2016). Experience value is multidimensional and entails cognitive, affective and intellectual experiential offerings (Chiu *et al.,* 2014; Sadachar & Fiore 2018; Ahn *et al.,* 2019). Sadachar and Fiore, (2018) confirm the four experiential realms originally put forward by Pine and Gilmore (1999) as components of an experiential offering. Pine and Gilmore, (1999) conceptualised the 4Es to be education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics experiences. The 4Es enhance experience value (Sadachar & Fiore, 2018).

Several other researchers have recognised hedonic and utilitarian value as key constructs of customer experience value (Carpenter & Moore, 2009; Jung-Choo *et al.,* 2012; Anderson *et al*., 2014; Chung 2015). Previous research findings have established that both hedonic and utilitarian value influence customer satisfaction (Van Oppen *et al.,* 2005; Kesari & Atulkar, 2016; Varshneya & Das, 2017). Customers could also derive experience value through the provision of a lively environment such as fun and joy (Ahn *et al*., 2019). Experience value, therefore, comprises multiple dimensions such as functional/utilitarian, emotional/hedonic and social dimensions (Lee & Min, 2013). From the customer's standpoint, attaining experience value is the ultimate goal for a complete and successful shopping experience (Davis & Hodges, 2012; El-Adly & Eid, 2016). Equally, customers are prioritising the experience value that they obtain from shopping when they visit various shopping malls (Juwaheer *et al.,* 2013). The above discussions demonstrate that prior research did not have consensus on exactly how customer experience value should be measured and the studies were tailored to specific countries as there are several factors influencing customer experience. Experience value, in this study, is operationalised as the value derived from a four-factor construct, namely service encounters, the experience realms, utilitarian value and hedonic value (Keng *et al.,* 2007; Kesari & Atulkar, 2016; Sadachar & Fiore, 2018). The relevant literature that provides support for the proposed four factors is presented and discussed in the subsequent sections.

3.2   Service encounter

A service encounter refers to the "moment of truth" where a customer expresses his / her perception based on the service received (Zhou *et al.,* 2019). In this study, three indicators were identified as core components of service encounter, namely efficiency, service excellence and playfulness (Keng *et al.,* 2007; Jayasankaraprasad & Kumar, 2012; Cetinsoz 2019). Efficiency refers to the ability, capability and professionalism of service providers, such as the staff, to provide unique and accurate interactive shopping services to shoppers. Efficiency enables service

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providers to deliver the greatest number of outputs while employing the least number of economic resources such as time and effort (Amoah, 2016; Estriegana *et al.,* 2019; Bagshaw, 2020). One of the key responsibilities of service providers is to ensure that employees/staff are equipped to deliver accurate service excellence to customers (Martyn & Anderson, 2018). Service excellence delivered by employees to customers is deemed to enhance customer satisfaction (Hamid *et al.,* 2016; Ahn *et al.,* 2019). Service excellence is the degree to which the service provider's services meet the required expectations of the customers through the demonstration of service promises and expertise (Ahn *et al.,* 2017; Taylor *et al.,* 2018). In the current study, service excellence refers to the employees'/staff's necessary action, expertise and suitable approaches exhibited when interacting with customers during their shopping experience. In the context of the current study, playfulness refers to the attractiveness and activities within the physical environment of the shopping mall which create pleasure, cheerfulness and curiosity for the shoppers. Activities within the shopping environment that allow customers to have fun and pleasure are acknowledged as playfulness (Byun *et al.,* 2017; Ahn *et al.,* 2019). Several researchers have established that there is a significant relationship between service encounter and customer experience value (Keng *et al.,* 2007; Gupta *et al.,* 2012; Barnes *et al.,* 2020). The current study anticipates establishing the applicability and influence of service encounter on customer experience value within selected shopping malls in Ghana. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H₁: *There is a significant relationship between service encounter and customer experience value.*

3.3   Experience realms

The concept of experience realms was adopted from Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Sadachar and Fiore (2018). In this study, four measuring indicators were identified as components of the experience realms, namely education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Sadachar & Fiore, 2018). Education refers to the knowledge acquired by shoppers through their shopping activities, relating to such topics as being introduced to new products, new fashion, new songs, being exposed to cultural diversity and product demonstrations which enhance new skills and present new ideas. Entertainment includes exposure to music, movies, games, kids play areas and a live band. The purpose of entertainment in service delivery is to enhance customers' happiness, release their stress and to facilitate the customers' interest and concentration on the activities of the service providers (Atulkar & Kesari, 2017; Chen & Lin, 2018). Escapism refers to a deliberate attempt of an individual or shopper to divert their attention from

normal daily routine activities. Service providers' ability to engage customers, shoppers or visitors in various activities on offer will enable customers to immerse themselves in the experience (Amoah *et al.,* 2018). Esthetics focuses on the beauty, symbols, architectural designs, artworks, good scent and craftsmanship in and around the shopping mall environment which appeal to the shoppers and encourage them to stay longer and shop more. A number of researchers (Sadachar & Fiore, 2015; Ji & Lee, 2017; Sadachar & Fiore, 2018) have found a significant relationship between the experience realms and customer experience value.   This study anticipates establishing the applicability and influence of the four realms of experience (education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics) on customer experience value with shopping malls in Ghana. Therefore, it is hypothesised in the current study that:

H_2:   *There is a significant relationship between experience realms and customer experience value.*

3.4   Utilitarian value

Utilitarian value comprises those tangible, physical elements of the shopping mall that influence the shopping experiences of customers (Albayrak *et al.,* 2016). Utilitarian value reflects the functional and task-related shopping experience of the shopper's visits to the mall as a means to an end (Picot-Coupey *et al.,* 2021). Utilitarian value includes monetary saving, selection and convenience value as perceived by the shoppers (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). In this study, three measuring indicators were identified from the literature as core components of utilitarian value, namely monetary saving, selection and convenience (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). Monetary saving includes tangible rewards such as money-saving, discount coupons, cash-backs, cash rebates and discounted sales (Mimouni-Chaabane & Volle, 2010; Radder *et al.,* 2015). In this study, monetary saving refers to direct or indirect benefits that customers gain during their visit to the shopping mall, which allows them to spend less money than expected. Selection in this study refers to the freedom of choice of the shoppers to choose from a wide variety of products such as apparel, stationery, groceries, household products and services such as banking, ATM, cinema, food court, amusement area for kids and sitting areas within the shopping mall. Convenience in this study refers to the ability of the service provider to offer a variety of products and services to shoppers, which include easy access to the mall's physical environments such as easy parking space for shoppers without wasting time and energy. The ratio of input to time, energy, information search, mall's operating hours, location of products and the effort spent in relation to the output of obtaining a product or a service from the shopping mall refers to convenience to the customers

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(Seiders *et al.,* 2000; Khare, 2011; Deb, 2012; Anning-Dorson *et al.,* 2013). From the literature, only a few studies (Eun-Ju & Overby, 2004; Van Oppen *et al.,* 2005) have found a significant relationship between utilitarian value and customer experience value. The current study envisages establishing the applicability and influence of utilitarian value on customer experience value with shopping malls in Ghana. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated for the current study.

H_3:   There is a significant relationship between utilitarian value and customer experience value.

3.5   Hedonic value

Hedonic value is the value attained from the multisensory, fantasy and affective aspects of the shopping experience (Bakirtas *et al.,* 2015). In the current study, three measuring indicators were identified as core components of hedonic value, namely exploration, place attachment and social status (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). Exploration refers to a shopper's deliberate strategy and motive to find exactly what customers are looking for in the mall by focusing on discovering different routes and paths within the tenant mix to understand what is trending, prevailing on the market and eventually decide on what he or she is interested in (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016; Atulkar & Kesari, 2017). In this study, place attachment is the customer's desire to associate with a shop or visit a shopping mall to which they are emotionally attached, or which enables them to feel at home every time that they visit the mall. Place attachment is a customer's evaluation of positive association with and loyalty to a retail outlet or shopping mall due to the excellence and effective delivery of products and services which generate comfort (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). Customers seeking social status are attracted to the retail sector, specifically shopping malls that offer quality branded products, branded items and service ranges at prime locations to boost their social standing (Atulkar & Kesari, 2017; Deb, 2012). Social status in this study refers to the individual shopper's attainment of respect, social value, honour, lifestyle, personality trait, capability, reputation and self-esteem within society, which is formed as a result of shopping at the mall. In this study hedonic value is embodied by exploration, place attachment and social status to influence customer experience value within the selected shopping malls in Ghana. Varshneya and Das (2017) and Van Oppen *et al.,* (2005) found that hedonic value has a significant relationship with customer experience value. This study anticipates establishing the applicability and influence of hedonic value on customer experience value within selected shopping malls in Ghana. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H_4:   There is a significant relationship between hedonic value and customer experience *value.*

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Based on the preceding literature, Figure 1 presents a proposed hypothesised model for the study.

Figure 1: **Proposed hypothesised model of factors influencing customer experience value in shopping malls**
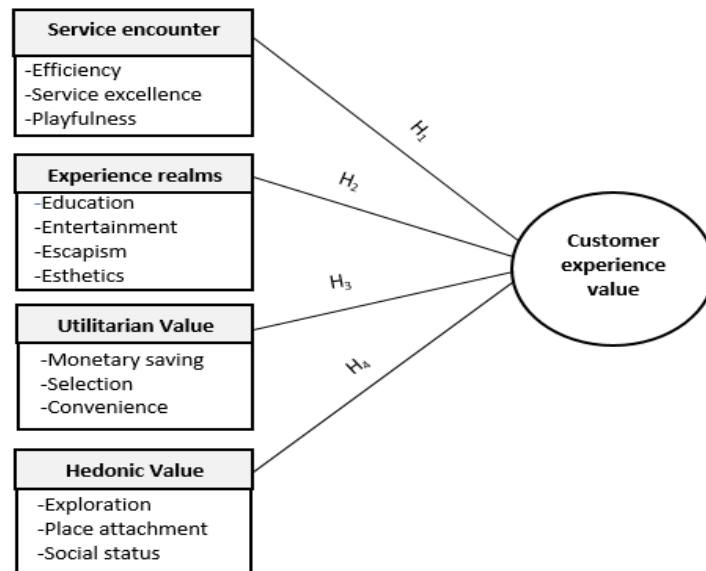
Source: Researcher's own

4.   METHODOLOGY

4.1   Measurement

A quantitative research methodology was adopted in the study to be able to analyse the data using statistical techniques. The study measured the four factors measuring customer experience value as a second order factor which involves (service encounter, experience realms, utilitarian value and hedonic value). A multi-item scale was adapted from previous research studies. Service encounter items were adapted from studies conducted by Walls, (2013) and Keng *et al.,* (2007). The items measuring experience realms were adapted from studies by Güzel, (2014) and Sadachar and Fiore, (2018). Utilitarian value items were adapted from Kesari and Atulkar, (2016), Chandon *et al.,* (2000) and Idoko *et al.,* (2019). Finally, hedonic value items were adapted from studies conducted by Khare, (2011), and Kesari and Atulkar, (2016) and Idoko *et al.,* (2019). The target respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with 34 items using a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree).

4.2   Sample plan and procedures

To ensure face and content validity the following actions were embarked upon. Firstly, the survey instrument was carefully reviewed by two subject experts who are professionals in the subject area on customer experiences from two public universities in Ghana.   A pretest was conducted with 50 respondents who were shoppers of the selected shopping malls to ascertain whether the instrument could be easily understood and to safeguard the reliability of the instrument. There was no need for further amendment of the measurement instrument after the pretest was conducted. The study utilised purposive sampling and mall intercept techniques to recruit the target population for the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Neuman, 2014; Wilson, 2014).

By utilising the mall intercept technique, the 500 questionnaires were self-administered to mall shoppers. Ten field workers were trained to assist the respondents to complete the questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed and collected from four selected shopping malls in Ghana, namely West Hills Mall (n=125); Accra Mall (n=125); Achimota (n=125); and Kumasi Mall (n =125). After cleaning the raw data, 14 of the questionnaires were found to be not usable due to errors. Some of the errors included no indication of gender, age or nationality; respondents selecting more than one answer; or no variation in the selection of an answer to the statements. Therefore, an additional 14 questionnaires were collected from two of the selected shopping malls with the help of two trained field workers. This resulted in a total of 500 usable questionnaires obtained for the study, meeting the desired target. The sample size was considered suitable because it fits the recommendations and guidelines of Bartlett *et al.,* (2001), Gay *et al.,* (2012), El-Adly and Eid (2016) and Taherdoost (2017). These authors recommend a sample of 500 for studies employing Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

The sample was selected from all the visitors to the mall who had shopped or visited the selected shopping malls during the time of the data collection process. In other words, the target population consisted of shoppers who had shopped at the selected shopping malls or participated in any other related activities such as entertainment, including those who were visiting the mall for the first time. The target respondents were selected from shoppers entering the mall and those exiting the mall between the hours of 10:00 to 18:00 GMT, from Monday to Sunday. The data was collected between December 2020 and February 2021. Considering the large size of the target population sampled, the services of trained field workers were engaged to help in the administering of the questionnaires during the data collection. Only potential respondents at least 18 years of age were selected for the completion of the questionnaires. The limit on age was

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deemed pivotal as individuals aged less than 18 years are legally considered as minors with inadequate capacity for independent decision making in the Ghanaian setting (Idoko *et al.,* 2019).

The data obtained were edited, coded and captured on an MS Excel spreadsheet. Thereafter, IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and IBM SPSS AMOS were employed to process the gathered data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the report in the study. The demographic profile, descriptive analysis of items and internal consistency of the items were determined. The inferential statistical component of the analysis consisted of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Model (SEM), which were used to examine the model fit.

5.   RESULTS

5.1   Demographic profile and descriptive statistics of the items

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. The results indicate that 46.4 percent were male while 53.6 percent were female. The age group between 18-30 years who are mainly the youth were the most represented in the study. The vast majority of the respondents (90.8%) were Ghanaians. Only 9.2 percent of the respondents were foreign nationals. Almost half of the respondents, which represent 48.2 percent of the sample, possessed a diploma/degree while 13.8 percent of the respondents possessed a post-graduate qualification. More than a third (35%) of the respondents were employed in the private sector. The results indicate that a large proportion of the respondents visited the shopping mall only once in a while (41.2%), while 29 percent of the respondents normally frequented the shopping mall twice a month.

Table 1:   **Demographic characteristics of the sample**

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	232	46.4
	Female	268	53.6
Age	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
Nationality	Ghanaian	454	90.8
	Foreign national	46	9.2
Highest education	Less than high school	31	6.2
	High school	159	31.8
	Diploma/Degree	241	48.2
	Post-graduate qualification	69	13.8
Occupation	Self-employed	99	19.8
	Government sector employment	54	10.8
	Private sector employment	175	35.0
	Student	151	30.2
	Unemployed	21	4.2
Shopping frequency	My first visit	36	7.2
	At least once a week	113	22.6
	Twice a month	145	29.0
	Once in a while	206	41.2

Source: Compiled from statistical results of the study

Table 2 presents the mean score and standard deviation values of all the questions, measuring the proposed four factors in the study. The results indicate that the four factors, namely service encounter, experience realms, utilitarian value and hedonic value had a mean score ranging from 3.76 to 4.21 and a standard deviation ranging between 0.751 and 1.082. The statement that *the shopping mall settings (e.g. mall layout, beauty, decoration, fixtures and lighting) are very attractive to me* attracted the highest mean score (M=4.21) and the statement that *while shopping at this shopping mall, I am able to temporarily forget about all my problems* attracted the lowest mean score of 3.76. Both statements measured the experience realms factor.   Based on the mean scores, the results suggest a very high level of respondents' agreement with all the statements, although some of the factors scored higher than others.

Table 2:   **Descriptive information for question used in the study**

	Questions	Means	SD
Service encounter	Employees of this shopping mall are consistently courteous and polite to shoppers.	3.88	0.857
	The interaction of the shops' staff with me at this shopping mall is unique.	3.89	0.883

	Shopping at this mall makes my life easier.	3.94	0.958
	Staff in most of the shops in this shopping mall offer friendly services.	3.98	0.853
	When I think of this shopping mall, I think of service excellence.	4.04	0.779
	I think this shopping mall is excellent in the products and services that it offers.	4.03	0.779
	I feel playful when I shop at this shopping mall.	4.04	0.826
	I enjoy shopping at this shopping mall because it has several fun activities.	4.11	0.807
Experience realms	I learn a lot (e.g. new things, ideas) during my visits to this shopping mall.	4.05	0.825
	My visits to this shopping mall are a real learning experience.	4.02	0.834
	All of the activities at this shopping mall are fun and joyful.	4.01	0.868
	I feel excited (e.g. music, taking selfie pictures and hanging out) at this shopping mall.	4.19	0.794
	When I visit this shopping mall, I feel as though I am living in a different time or place.	3.96	0.956
	This shopping mall is a good place to go to when I am feeling stressed.	4.12	0.823
	While shopping at this shopping mall, I am able to temporarily forget about all my problems.	3.76	1.082
	I feel a sense of harmony with the surroundings of this shopping mall.	4.11	0.782
	The shopping mall settings (e.g. mall layout, beauty, decoration, fixtures and lighting) are very attractive to me.	4.21	0.767
Utilitarian value	I visit this shopping mall to get competitive prices.	3.7	0.967
	This shopping mall offers me quality products at discounted rates.	3.98	0.904
	I visit this shopping mall to save my time spent on searching for products.	4.07	0.801
	This shopping mall offers a variety of spacious retail stores under one roof.	4.09	0.815
	I can make the best choice because this shopping mall offers a variety of brands, products and services. `	4.12	0.751
	This shopping mall's operating hours are suitable to my schedule.	3.99	0.839
	The location of this shopping mall is convenient to my work/ home.	3.79	0.989
	The parking space at this shopping mall is sufficient and practical (e.g. well demarcated parking).	4.15	0.766
	The facilities such as ATM, washrooms, and cleanliness of the facilities attract me to visit this shopping mall.	4.09	0.856
Hedonic value	This shopping mall is a good place to discover what is new (e.g. new products, fashion, technology).	4.21	0.793
	Most of the stores in this shopping mall create curiosity and excitement for the products and services that they offer.	4.11	0.812
	I feel a sense of adventure (exploring) while shopping at this shopping mall.	3.95	0.825
	I know this place (shopping mall) very well.	4.01	0.848

I miss this place (shopping mall) when I am not here.	3.78	0.984
I feel secure in this place (shopping mall).	4.08	0.791
I shop at this shopping mall to enhance my social status and self-esteem.	3.9	0.901
shop from this shopping mall to maintain my personal lifestyle.	3.9	0.893

Note: SD= Standard deviation

Source: Compiled from statistical results of the study

5.2   Assessment of the measurement model

5.2.1 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Hypothesis testing

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), composite reliability can be used to determine convergent validity, indicated by a value greater than 0.7. Based on the composite reliability values provided in Table 3, service encounter, experience realm and utilitarian value had composite reliability values greater than the indicated by a value greater than 0.7 Hedonic value has a composite reliability of 0.66 which is greater than the exploratory threshold. Due to these results, convergent validity was assumed. Discriminant validity was assessed, and it was found that discriminant validity was obtained for service encounter (AVE=0.502). The discriminant validity for experience realm (AVE=0.474), utilitarian value (AVE=0.474) and hedonic value (AVE=0.442) was just not achieved as the comparisons of the square-root of the AVE to the correlations were extremely close and therefore, the factors were kept in the study due to the fact that the model fit was adequate and the composite reliability was appropriate. The assessment of the model is presented in Table 3.

Table 3:   Assessment of the measurement model

Factors	Parameters (sig)	CMIN/df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	CR	α
Service Encounter	All significant	3.234	0.92	0.067	0.0461	0.722	0.716
Experience Realm	All significant	2.936	0.918	0.062	0.0451	0.705	0.695
Utilitarian Value	All significant	2.339	0.933	0.052	0.0412	0.739	0.701
Hedonic Value	All significant	1.608	0.98	0.035	0.0331	0.66	0.684

*CR – Composite Reliability, α – Cronbach alpha

Source: Compiled from statistical results of the study

In determining the internal consistency of the measuring instrument in this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were utilised. This study adopted the recommendation of Hulin *et al.,* (2001)

and Ursachi *et al.,* (2015) of a generally accepted rule that a Cronbach alpha of 0.6-0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability while a Cronbach alpha of above 0.70 indicates a very good level. All the factors in this study had Cronbach alpha scores of above 0.60. Therefore, the items measuring the various factors (Table 3) in the study are deemed to be acceptable and demonstrate good internal consistency (Hulin *et al.,* 2001; Ursachi *et al*., 2015).

As illustrated in the literature section of the study, experience value was a multidimensional construct that comprised four factors, namely service encounter, experience realms, utilitarian value and hedonic value. A CFA was conducted to confirm the proposed factors and hypotheses of the study. The results of the CFA provided sufficient empirical support for the four factors measuring the customer experience value.

5.3   Assessment of the structural model.

5.3.1 Second-order factor- CFA

Experience value was identified as a second-order factor which comprised four factors. The second-order CFA model fit indices for experience value are presented in Figure 2 below. Recommended cut-offs for good model fits are CMIN/df =< 3.00; GFI => 0.95; CFI => 0.95; SRMR =< 0.05; RMSEA =< 0.08, Hoelter > 200 while cut-offs for adequate model fit are CMIN/df =< 5.00; GFI = > 0.90; CFI => 0.90; SRMR = < 0.08; RMSEA =< 0.10. These cut-offs are just rules of thumb and are not strict rules, the goodness-of-fit indices should be close to these cut-offs to be able to declare that the model has a good fit (Hair *et al.,* 2019). The composite reliability for the second-order factor was 0.928 and Cronbach alpha value was 0.875. Therefore, convergent validity and reliability was found to be appropriate. The results of the regression weights for experience value are reported in Table 4.

**Table 4:**   **Results of the hypothesis (sem regression weights)**

Hypo-thesis	Path	Statement of hypothesis	Estimate	S.E.	C.R	p-value	Results
H$_1$	SE <--- EV	SE has a significant influence on EV	1			***	Supported
H$_2$	ER <---EV	ER has a significant influence on EV	1.273	0.194	6.572	***	Supported
H$_3$	UV <---EV	UV has a significant influence on EV	0.927	0.176	5.272	***	Supported
H$_4$	HV<--- EV	HV has a significant influence on EV	1.215	0.183	6.642	***	Supported

Source: Compiled from statistical results of the study

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Note: SE= service encounter, ER= experience realms, UV= utilitarian value, HV= hedonic value, EV= experience value. *** p < 0.01.

Based on the results, the second order factor model for experience value is displayed in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2:   Second order factor model- experience value
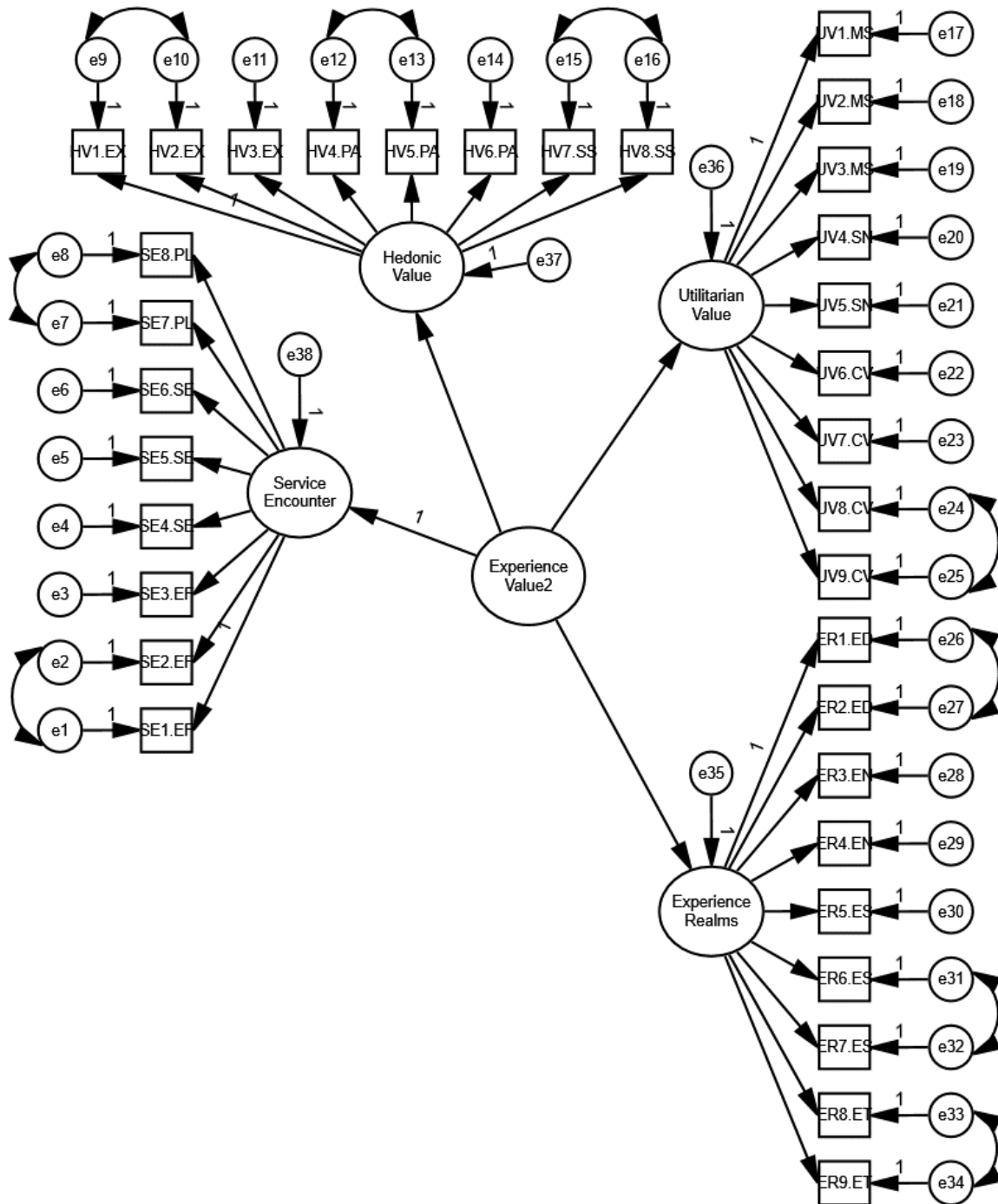
Source: Compiled from statistical results of the study

The results of the Chi-square (χ^2) was 1016.791. The CMIN/df of 1.978 was within the threshold of < 3.00 indicating a good fit, while SRMR indicated a value of 0.053 which was also within the required threshold (< 0.05 or < 0.08). The recommended cut-off for both GFI and AGFI is generally 0.9 (Shevlin et al., 2000; Araya *et al.,* 2013). The GFI and AGFI exhibited a model fit of 0.889 and 0.872 respectively which are within the recommended cut-off values. The CFI showed a value of 0.845, slightly below the recommended threshold of Goodness-of-fit index, however still considered an adequate model fit. The RMSEA showed a good fit for the model as it equals 0.044, well within the recommended value of less than < 0.10. The model fit indices in the current study indicated an acceptable fit of the measurement model. All the CFAs showed reasonable validity of the factor structures, as all the indices were within the recommended thresholds of goodness-of-fit indices or cut-offs for adequate model fit. The second-order CFA results revealed that the proposed model could well predict customer experience value in the context of selected shopping malls in Ghana.

6.   DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study investigated the factors influencing customer experience value within shopping malls in Ghana. Results of the study (see assessment of the measurement model in Table 3 and regression weights in Table 4) indicate adequate evidence to confirm the significant relationships between the four factors and customer experience value. The empirical results presented in Table 3 and Table 4 confirm that there is a significant relationship between service encounter and experience value. This result is consistent with previous studies that have also established that there is a significant relationship between service encounter and customer experience value (Keng *et al.,* 2007; Gupta *et al.,* 2012; Barnes *et al.,* 2020). This is an indication that, in the context of shopping malls, service encountered in the form of efficiency and service excellence offered by the service provider and employees, as well as a welcoming and playful environment, influence customer experience value.

Similarly, the results of the regression weight and correlation analysis confirmed that there is a significant positive relationship between experience realms and experience value. The results of the current study are consistent with previous studies (Sadachar & Fiore, 2015; Ji & Lee, 2017; Sadachar & Fiore, 2018) who found a significant relationship between experience realms and customer experience value. Based on the results, this study has demonstrated that the experience value derived by the shoppers is influenced by the experience realms activities when they visit the shopping malls. It can therefore be argued that in the context of shopping malls in

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Ghana, customer experience value is measured by experience realms which comprise education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics.

Furthermore, this study envisaged establishing the relationship between utilitarian value and customer experience value within shopping malls. The results confirmed that there is indeed a significant relationship between utilitarian value and experience value. The results are consistent with previous studies who also found a significant relationship (Eun-Ju & Overby, 2004; Van Oppen *et al*., 2005). This is an indication that, in the context of the current study, three measuring indicators are core components of utilitarian value, namely monetary saving, selection and convenience which together measure experience value.

Finally, the current study anticipated establishing whether hedonic value influenced customer experience value within shopping malls in Ghana. Based on the results, this study has confirmed that there is a significant relationship between hedonic value and experience value. The results are consistent with previous studies (Van Oppen *et al.,* 2005; Varshneya & Das, 2017). This implies that, in the context of shopping malls in Ghana, hedonic value, embodied by exploration, place attachment and social status, influences customer experience value. The results in the study suggest that hypotheses H_1, H_2, H_3 and H_4, formulated for the study, are not rejected.

7.   MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

As mentioned earlier, shopping malls are fairly new in Ghana and face intense competition from the traditional informal retail sector as over 96 percent of retail trading activities occur in the informal sector. Therefore, for shopping malls to remain competitive and sustainable, it is important to prioritise the factors that influence customer experience value. Customer experience value has been found to be beneficial in contributing to customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Amoah *et al*., 2016). Thus, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the factors that influence customer experience value within shopping malls in Ghana. The current study confirmed that service encounter (efficiency, service excellence and playfulness), experience realms (education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics), utilitarian value (monetary savings, selection and convenience) and hedonic value (exploration, place attachment and social status) influence customer experience value. The managerial implications of the research study are offered.

Firstly, based on the empirical SEM results, it was confirmed that there is a significant relationship between service encounter and experience value. This implies that, in the context of shopping malls, service encounter in the form of efficiency and service excellence offered by the service

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provider and employees, as well as a welcoming and playful environment, influence customer experience value. Therefore, the following suggestions should be prioritised by shopping mall managers to enhance the components of service encounters: training of staff, staff should be polite, the provision of efficient and friendly services and provision of friendly services. However, for shopping malls to offer enhanced experience value for their customers using service encounter, resources should be geared towards playfulness activities because that is the strength of the mall. It is the playfulness activities of the shopping mall that attract shoppers to the mall and influence their experience value. Playfulness can be achieved through the provision of fun, cheerful, playful and joyful activities. The shopping mall managers should also improve the efficiency of the staff within the mall. To remain competitive, shopping mall managers in Ghana should focus on the three service encounter measuring indicators, namely efficiency, service excellence and playfulness to offer customer experience value.

Secondly, from the empirical results, it was confirmed that experience realms significantly influence customer experience value. Based on the results, this study has demonstrated that the experience value derived by the shoppers is influenced by the experience realms activities when they visit the shopping malls. It can therefore be argued that in the context of shopping malls in Ghana, customer experience value is measured by experience realms which comprise education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics. Therefore, it is recommended that shopping mall managers can concentrate more on experience reams activities in order to create experience value for shoppers on their visit to the shopping malls. For example, shopping mall managers could concentrate on esthetics activities such as the shopping mall settings which include the mall layout, beauty, decoration, fixtures and lighting to attract shoppers to the mall. Also, entertainment activities should be a non-negotiable aspect of the shopping mall activities offered to customers. Shoppers may be excited in the shopping malls because of entertainment activities such as music, taking selfie pictures and hanging out at the shopping mall.

Thirdly, the study further demonstrated that in the context of shopping malls in Ghana utilitarian value significantly influences customer experience value. Therefore, it is recommended that shopping mall managers could concentrate on utilitarian value activities of the mall such as convenience activities of the mall. This includes the provision of adequate parking space at the mall with clearly demarcated parking. It is also recommended that the shopping mall managers offer a variety of brands, products and services which will allow shoppers to make the best choice to increase their experience value through product selection.

Finally, based on the empirical results, it was confirmed that there is a significant relationship between hedonic value and experience value. This implies that as far as hedonic value is concerned, most of the visitors to the various shopping malls in Ghana do so because they seek to explore the shopping malls to attain experience value. Therefore, it is recommended that shopping malls should introduce new products, new fashions and technology so that shoppers can explore and discover what is new in the market. Shopping mall managers should also create adventurous activities and innovations that promote customer curiosity and excitement for the products and services that they offer. It is recommended that shopping mall managers also boost the security at the mall because when customers feel secure at the shopping mall, they become attached to those shopping malls.

8.   LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the purpose of this study was achieved, no research study is without limitations. The four selected shopping malls were selected from the two major cities in Ghana. These two cities are Accra, the Ghanaian capital, and Kumasi in the Ashanti region, the second largest city in Ghana. The selection of four out of the nine shopping malls in Ghana served as a limitation in the study. It is recommended that future research should repeat the current study in the remaining shopping malls and in different cities. Since the current study adopted a quantitative research method, future research can be conducted in the context of shopping malls in Ghana to define and refine customer experience value using a qualitative in-depth study.

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