The relationship between shopping mall image and congruity on customer behaviour: Evidence from Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Competition is intensifying amongst shopping malls. In response, scholars have advanced various perspectives regarding how to differentiate shopping malls to gain competitive advantage, such as adding or expanding the level of entertainment available (Sit et al., 2003). Others suggest malls satisfy functional wants, which stem from associations one has with the mall (Rintamaki et al., 2006). Herein, a reflective measurement model is tested that explores the relationships between the latent constructs shopping mall image and congruity on customer behaviour. A high-end shopping mall in Indonesia is the context. As hypothesized, shopping mall image had a strong effect on customer behaviour, namely, the likelihood of purchasing, returning to the mall, and spreading positive WOM. However, congruity – captured by the indicator variables ‘self-image congruity’ and ‘congruity with other shoppers’ – had no effect on customer behaviour. We attribute this unexpected finding to Indonesians scoring low on Hofstede’s dimensions of individualism and indulgence. Survey participants indicated that there was high self-image congruity as well as congruity with other shoppers, but were unwilling to admit it affects their shopping behaviour – arguably, that would be self-indulgent and indicate a lack of restraint with respect to controlling their desires.

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1. Introduction

Intense competition amongst shopping malls has forced mall managers to create differentiation between their mall and that of nearby competitors. They start to do this by carefully understanding what their target consumers’ market values are, hence, what drives their shopping behaviour. Over 40 years ago it was recognized that customers at retail establishments seek more than just utilitarian benefits, such as price and convenience (Taub, 1972). Solomon (2002, p. 299) comments: “Shopping malls have tried to gain loyalty of shoppers by appealing to their social motives as well as providing access to desired goods... Malls are becoming giant entertainment centers...” Numerous conceptualizations of what drives customer value have been advanced that vary in their hierarchy (abstract versus concrete drivers) as well as complexity (Rintamaki et al., 2006, and Sit et al., 2003, offer reviews). A failure by management to identify factors that ultimately affect shopping behaviours could very well lead to creating a mall image that is not congruent with the customers’ self-concept. One strategy to create a favourable shopping mall image is by managing attributes inherent to the mall.

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