An Exploratory Study on the Shopper Experience of Shopping Malls Using Photo Elicitation Interviews

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Abstract

Shopping malls in Korea have grown in size and number, and their one-stop convenience has expanded to include various retail stores, service outlets, and entertainment providers. This study closely examines the shoppers' experience in a shopping mall. Using the photo elicitation interview (PEI) method, this study aims to provide deeper understanding of the subjective perceptions and context of shopping mall users. Ten shopping mall users participated in this study. They visited a shopping mall and took photos from their points of view about the shopping experience, and later participated in a personal interview. Convenience, excitement, relaxation, and socialization are the major themes of a pleasant shopping mall experience. Crowdedness and ineffective store design are the major themes of an unpleasant shopping mall experience. Core contents of each pleasant and unpleasant theme are presented. Given the current retail environment where shopping malls are continuously expanding, understanding the behavior and perception of consumers related to shopping malls is important in designing and providing a compelling experience in shopping malls.

I. Introduction

Consumption patterns are becoming considerably more flexible due to improved income levels, increased leisure time, and diversified lifestyles. While consumption behaviors in the past were simply driven by primary needs focused on the necessity of products, consumers in modern society pursue value in the very act of consuming and show behaviors expressing individual personalities through consumption. With this change in consumer behavior, a new cluster-type distribution channel, the shopping mall[1], has emerged. A shopping mall includes a variety of retail stores, restaurants, and entertainment elements. Furthermore, diversity, size, and

number of shopping malls are further expanding due to lifestyle-centered trends and the malling phenomenon, which is a form of cultural consumption involving both shopping and leisure at a shopping mall. With the increasing number of consumers engaging in malling, heightened preference is observed among consumers for shopping malls (Hwang & Park, 2013). Over the years, shopping malls in Korea have grown larger, and their one-stop convenience has expanded to include service outlets (e.g., hospitals, hotels) and entertainment providers (e.g., movie theaters, amusement parks).

Consumers today go beyond the pursuit of functionality and efficiency of consumption itself and seek emotional and experiential consumption. Consumers want to be provided with products and services that stimulate their sensibility and emotions and are suited to their lifestyles. In addition, with the heightened accessibility of information, consumers no longer view themselves as passive receivers of messages delivered by marketers. Instead, consumers actively obtain information about goods and services themselves and seek to acquire the values and sensibility they pursue through their consumer experiences. In his book Experiential Marketing, Bernd H. Schmitt points out that a conversion is underway in the current market from the past traditional marketing, which has been focused on the characteristics and benefits of producers, to a new experiential marketing, such as marketing campaigns through which communication with products can be felt and experienced by consumers (Schmitt, 1999). Accordingly, shopping mall managers are breaking away from the existing marketing strategies of emphasizing the functionality of products and services with a focus on logical and rational purchasing decisions of consumers, and are increasingly recognizing the need for enhancing user experience strategies (Lee, 2015). Experience, therefore, is being recognized as a critical element of differentiation strategy for the shopping malls. Given the current retail environment in which shopping malls are continuously expanding, understanding the behavior and perception of consumers related to shopping malls is important in designing and providing a compelling user experience. The underlying determinations of the shopping mall experience, which is related to retail patronage, are important in helping retailers and shopping mall managers to provide a basis for bundling a successful strategy to generate sales and attract shoppers. However, there has been little research on the behavior and perception of consumers toward shopping malls, particularly in the context of the consumption pattern changes that have taken place in recent decades.

Therefore, this study closely examines the positive and unpleasant experiences of consumers occurring in a shopping mall. Using the photo-elicitation interview (PEI) method, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding for the subjective perceptions and context of shopping mall users and, thereby, contribute to the establishment of effective user experience strategies for shopping malls.

II. Literature Review

1. Shopping Mall

1) Definition and Elements of Shopping Malls

Through the filtering of postmodernism, diversified lifestyles, changes in values, and the emergence of a new consumption paradigm have changed the modern-day environment into one that is oriented to consumers and flexible production (Park, Baek, & Shim, 2010). Consequently, the development of multi-purpose commercial facilities, where entertainment, eating and drinking, and sales converge , has become a global trend. More people are paying attention to the new form of consumption called malling—that is, enjoying a variety of activities such as meeting, dining, playing games, engaging in entertainment, and strolling in a shopping mall (Hwang et al., 2013). In a broad sense, the term shopping mall refers to a shopping culture space where cultural experiences made available by various tenants are added to existing commercial shopping facilities to enable malling-type consumption. A shopping mall is a place in which a large number of

retail stores are clustered. Although various retail stores are grouped in a shopping mall as needed, they share the same theme and present a sense of unity as one shopping mall instead of being independent of one another. In a shopping mall, on the other hand, the entire facility is managed based on leases, making it possible to operate the whole mall under a unified theme (Park et al., 2010).

In general, a shopping mall includes three essential elements: a retailing element that induces consumption activities; a dining element that extends consumption activities; and an entertainment element that induces consumption activities (Levy, Weitz, & Grewal, 2013). Retailing elements encourage consumption through product-learning; dining elements encourage physiological consumption; and entertainment elements encourage diverse experience consumption types. Each element results in expanding the geographical commercial area of the shopping mall, extending the users' stay time, and expanding the bracket of consumers.

2) Shopping Malls is Korea

The current status of major shopping malls in Korea is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Major Shopping Malls in Korea

Name(Location)	Open year/ Area	Components	Special Features
COEX Mall (Samseong-dong, Seoul)	2000/ 463,000 m²	Shopping mall, department store, theater, hotel, aquarium, etc. connected to an exhibition hall and airport terminal	-Top business town in Seoul based on the best commercial and transportation conditions
Central City (Banpo-dong, Seoul)	2000/ 25,500m²	-Performs various functions such as express bus terminal, shopping, and leisure	-Transportation connecting Seoul and other parts of the country
Lafesta (Ilsan-si, Gyeonggi-do)	2003/ 69,000m²	- 150 famous Korean and international fashion brands -Restaurants, beauty clinics, movie theaters, games, and characters stores	-The first street shopping mall and a multiplex shopping mall in Korea.
l'Park Mall (Yongsan-gu, Seoul)	2005/ 264,000m²	-Fashion hall, living hall and culture hall, Emart, digital specialty store, and fashion street	-l'Park Mall was the first Korean shopping mall that acquired the ISO 9001 certification(2007)
Times Square (Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul)	2009/ 370,000m²	-Marriott Hotel, offices, Shinsegae department store, CGV Multiplex, Emart, Gyobo bookstore, restaurants, global SPA brands	-Landmark in the southwest area of Seoul -Fulfills the lifestyles of diverse age groups
Garden 5 (Munjeong-dong, Seoul)	2010/ 420, 700m²	-Consists of areas for life, work, tool, expression, and dream	-Lagging behind in attracting visitors due to lack of facilities that younger generations would enjoy
D-Cube City (Sillim-dong, Seoul)	2011/ 350,000m²	-A 51-story building that consists of housing, hotel, office space, D-Cube Department Store, D-Cube Art Center, D-Cube Park, etc.	-The first residential-business-commercial complex in Korea applied with hybrid method
LotteWorld Mall (Jamsil, Seoul)	2014/ 826,450 m²	-Shopping: Avenuel (luxury department stores), Dutyferee shop, Shopping mall, Hi-mart, Lotte mart -Enternatinment: Lotte cinema, Aquarium, Concert hall	- Largest shopping mall in South Korea. -Offers a wide-range of entertainment facilities, such as a movie theater, aquarium, and concert hall.
Starfield Hanam (Hanam, Gyeonggi-do)	2016/ 459,498 m²	-750 stores -Entertainment: Youngpoong book store, Megabox, Playtime, Aquafield, -Food: gourmet street, eatopia -Specialized stores: electromart, toy kingdom. baby cirlce.PK market, -Emart traders, Shinsegae department store	- 2nd largest shopping mall in Korea. -Offers wide range of entertainment facilities (e.g., Aquafield, Sport monster, Mega box) and specialty stores.

2. Shopper Mall Experience

In the early 1980s, several researchers argued that the goal of much consumption activity is to obtain a satisfying experiences rather than to obtain goods (Hirschman, 1984; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Westbrook and Blake (1985) viewed shopping motivation as a mixture of experiential motives such as pleasant experiences and leisure, and product-related motives. A shopping space is transforming into an area that provides leisure and entertainment, through which consumption is induced (Park et al., 2010).

Researchers have emphasized that there is a distinction between shopping and buying in contemporary consumer society (Backstrom, 2006; Biba, Des Rosiers, Theriault, & Villeneuve, 2006; Eastlick, Lotz, & Shim, 1998; Kang & Kim, 1999). Buying mainly means acquisition of goods or services, while shopping includes recreational-oriented behavior. Tsai (2010) pointed out that shopping behavior usually comes with "a generous supply of free time, a flexible amount of funds and a certain aimlessness" (p. 322).

Experience includes primary activities of everyday life such as seeing, hearing, feeling, and thinking, and all other activities that involve other people. This experience is created not only by those elements that the retailer can control (e.g., service interface, retail atmosphere, assortment, price), but also by elements that are outside of the retailer's control (e.g., influence of others, purpose of shopping). Experience in consumption activity reflects the consumer's specific and diverse emotional expressions about a product, such as a familiarity the consumer feels about a product or the expertise he/she has to use the product skillfully. User experience refers to the continuous interaction between the consumer and the brand, including the consumer's cognitive and emotional responses, actual sensations, feelings, perceptions, and behavioral responses to the brand (You & Park, 2015). In the current market environment where production and consumption are becoming flexible based on increasing diversity, brands

should strengthen their competitiveness through closer interaction with consumers. In the case of a shopping mall seeking to establish itself as experiential, the need for interaction with consumers is important.

Schmitt (1999) explored how companies create experiential marketing by having customers sense, feel, think, act, and relate to a company and its brands. Recent definitions of customer experience include that:

> The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual) (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007, p. 397).

Tsai (2010) argues that the entertainment experience of a shopping mall consists of four factors: exhilaration, exploration, relaxation, and socialization experiences. The exhilaration experience includes joy, pleasure, fantasy, and excitement. Curiosity, pleasant and meaningful new discovery, and acquisition of educational information are examples of the exploration experience. The relaxation experience includes relieving stress, mental and physical stability, leisurely walking, and shopping without special purpose. The socialization experience refers to social-identity strengthening, and activity with family members or friends.

3. Photo Elicitation Interview (PEI)

PEI is a visual research method that was first suggested and performed by Collier (as cited in Magnini, 2006). In PEI, the interviewer/researcher elicits discussions from the information providers (interviewee, study participant) through photos or other forms of visual images. The advantage of PEI is that more specific and accurate data can be obtained through the photos that serve as facilitators of conversation during the interview. In addition, since PEI is more participant-centered than

researcher-centered compared to other research methods, it elicits vivid descriptions of experiences from the participant, which can be used in the study (Loeffler, 2004; Kwon, 2007).

PEI is a method aimed at understanding the lives and experiences of people through their vivid narratives and has been widely used in areas including public health and educational research in Korea. Kwon (2007) presented data advocating photo-elicitation research in qualitative research areas by comparing in-depth interviews and PEI for research on leisure activities of seniors. Kim and Im (2013) researched with three participants to understand what it means for high school student-athletes to combine study with sports activities. They analyzed the lives of student-athletes by using the researchers' participatory observations, conducting PEI using photo data of the participants, and collecting related documented data. These previous studies pointed out that PEI is better than the general in-depth interview in eliciting from the study participants more detailed and voluntary discussions about their experiences and their rich and delicate emotions experienced through such activities.

Some studies on fashion history (e.g., Oh & Choi, 2017) or on analyzing fashion designers or fashion trends (e.g., Yim & Istook, 2017) have used photos as the source of data. In some qualitative research, photos were used as stimuli for interviews (Park, 2004). In PEI, photos are used to elicit response and discussion from interviewees. Shopping malls enable various interactions between consumers and brands, and are equipped with many elements to facilitate such interactions. A closer examination on these elements and how the consumers interact with them provides a deeper understanding about the shopping behavior and environment in shopping malls. However, most of the previous studies related to shopping malls involve surveys with consumers, analysis of space, or moving line of a specific shopping mall. In this study, qualitative research was conducted using PEI to probe the diverse experiences of consumers using a shopping mall.

III. Research Methods

1. Selection of Research Participants

For this study, university students who satisfy the following two conditions were recruited through an announcement on the university bulletin board: 1) male or female university students in their 20s who have experience of visiting shopping malls; 2) willing take pictures and participate in an interview. As a qualitative research method, PEI has been conducted with a small number of research participants, between three and eight, in previous studies (Kim & Im, 2013; Lee & Chang, 2013). According to precedents, ten research participants were selected for this study. The characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 2.

2. Data Collection

1) Sourcing photographs
Data for this study was collected through PEI in order to better understand the specific and contextual situations of the diverse and complex user experiences occurring in a shopping mall. The research participants were asked to visit a shopping mall (e.g ., Yeongdeungpo Times Square), and take pictures from his/her point of view along with brief explanations about each photograph. First, the participants were asked to take photos that reflected their viewpoints on the research questions (e.g., 'The most pleasant experience while in the shopping mall is OOO.' 'The experience I want to remember last is OOO.' 'The shopping mall is OOO.' etc.). They were asked to then fill out an assigned report form within one day of taking the photos (attach photos, provide keywords and reasons for taking the pictures) and send it to the researcher via email.

2) Selecting the photographs
After gathering the reports, the researchers categorized and analyzed them according to theme, experience, and keyword. The primary data prepared through this

Table 2. Participants Characteristics

	Participants									
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**
Sex/ Age	Female/ 23	Female/ 24	Female/ 24	Female/ 22	Female/ 24	Male/ 25	Male/ 24	Male 20	Male/ 22	Female/ 20
College	Design	Humanities	Humanities	Design	Design	Engineering	Engineering	Business	Business	Business
Monthly Shopping Frequency	5	1-2	5	3	3	2	3	4	2	4
Visited Shopping Mall	Times square, IFC mall, Coex mall, I'Park Mall, Square One	Times square, Coex mall, Square One	Times square, IFC mall, Coex mall, I'Park Mall	Times Square, IFC mall	Times Square, Coex mall D-Cube City	Times Square, Coex mall,	Times square, Coex mall, Starfield	Times Square, D-Cube City	Times Square, Coex mall, Starfield	Times Square, D-Cube City, Coex mall, Starfield
Participated Shopping Mall Elements	Shopping, Movie	Shopping, Dining/ Cafe	Shopping, Movie	Movie	Meeting place (Café)	Shopping, Movie	Movie Meeting place (Café)	Shopping, Movie	Movie Dining/ Cafe	Shopping, Dining/ Cafe

process were used as reference in the in-depth interviews.

3) Conducting interview

The interviews were conducted at locations previously informed to the participants (e.g., seminar room) during May to July in 2017. Based on the previous qualitative research (Cha & Lee, 2004; Park, 2004), a semi-structured interview was conducted to elucidate the different levels of complex experiences while staying within the bounds of the topic . At the beginning of the interview, the researchers lightened the atmosphere by asking questions about shopping or trends to form rapport with the participants. During the main part of the interview, the researchers asked questions about the topic and provided ample time for the participants to freely talk about their shopping mall experiences. When a participant was responding to a question, the researchers showed him/her photos and encouraging him/her to verbalize his/her thoughts and feelings, to give detailed explanations about the photo, and to elaborate on the reasons for such thoughts or feelings. The numbers of stimuli the participants pointed out during interviews were recorded. The average interview lasted about 40– 50 minutes, and every interview was recorded and transcribed.

3. Data Analysis

In this study, the data obtained through PEI were analyzed in four steps: 1) transcription, 2) coding by topic/theme, 3) semantic categorization, and 4) generation of meaning. In the first step, following the PEI, the researchers transcribed the interview recording on the same day to keep a vivid memory of the participants' gestures, behaviors, and responses and prepare for the follow-up work that reflects them (Dempsey & Tucker, 1994; Kolb, 2008). The transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants to check for any errors and ensure their authenticity. In the

second step, the researchers repeatedly read the transcripts and identified the contents or keywords that frequently appeared in the interview. In the third step, the keywords were categorized by logical associations, conceptual-theoretical integrability, and similarity. During the process, we independently identified the themes for each question and categorized these themes into meaningful groups. Once the categories were established, interview data was sorted into different categories for further comparison. Researchers compared individual results and discussed discrepancies until a consensus was reached. For instance, one researcher categorized *dining attraction* under *excitement* factor, while other researchers categorized it under *convenience* factor after 1st analysis. Three researchers discussed this discrepancy, and finally, all researchers agreed to categorize it under *convenience* factor. In the last step, the categorized contents were divided largely into pleasant and unpleasant experiences. In addition, a key phrase that represents the respective experience by each theme/topic was selected.

The validity and reliability of the study were checked and established through triangulation, including on-site observation during the study period and advice from fellow researchers and experts on the study. The method was adopted to prevent any bias or internal errors resulting from a single study, a single source of data, or a single researcher. First, as for on-site observation, the researchers personally visited the target shopping mall and also gathered information about the situation and background of the place through informal conversations with the participants about their previous experiences of visiting the site. In this manner, the researchers conducted advance preparation for the PEI and ex-post facto checking. In addition, the validity of the arbitrary analysis and the results drawn from the interview was checked through "member check." In other words, the interview transcripts were sent to the research participants to check whether there were any errors in the contents of the interview, and were corrected or complemented accordingly. Finally, fellow researchers and experts were involved in checking

whether there was any distortion in interpreting the interview contents.

IV. Results

1. Pleasant Shopping Experience

The participants experienced various positive elements of the shopping mall in the process of using the shopping mall. Among them, the most frequently mentioned element was the all-in-one convenient experience of being able to do everything in the shopping mall. The participants also expressed excitement factor themes showing that the various events and the structural features of the shopping mall offered pleasant experiences. Relaxation and socialization factors were also mentioned as major components of a pleasant shopping mall experience. Shoppers' pleasant shopping mall experiences by theme and topic are summarized as follows.

1) Convenience
(1) All-In-One convenience: Everything in one space
All participants commented on the all-in-one experience. They responded that the most special and convenient element of the shopping mall is that they can enjoy a variety of experiences such as shopping, dining, and entertainment at one place and not simply the fact that fashion brands are clustered in the shopping mall. In particular, participants who perceived clothing shopping as an act requiring time investment responded that it is an important experience element to be able to shop for clothing products while visiting the place for other purposes(i.e., without having to invest separate time for shopping).

It's obvious, but the fact that you can do everything in one place is great. Normally, people do all those things by making appointments and going out to difference places, and since all the places are gathered together, it's convenient that everything can be taken care of in one place and

there is no need to go outside of the shopping mall. (Participant B)

The most interesting feature of the all-in-one experience was that all five female participants mentioned the place where road shop cosmetics brands were clustered (Figure 1). They responded that it was convenient to compare and experience brands before purchasing, particularly for bulk purchase during the regular sale period, which is a characteristic of road shop brands, since all the brands are all at one place.

I found it convenient to do shopping because all the cosmetic brands were located at one place. I think this is one of the pros of shopping malls. It is very convenient for women to be able to visit road shop brands in one visit. In department stores, there are only luxury brands, and we can't compare products from road shop brands. (Participant D)

In addition to shopping for cosmetics, participants commented a lot about clinics (Figure 2) and various entertainment facilities such as movie theaters. They especially mentioned that the medical facilities such as oriental medicine clinics and pharmacies are convenient experiences.

It was the first time I had seen an oriental medicine clinic in such a location, so it felt quite unique.[. . .] I would not necessarily go to a shopping mall to go to an oriental medicine clinic, but now that I know that there is a clinic there, the next time I need to visit a clinic I think that I will look for a clinic inside a shopping mall, because I can enjoy a whole lot more facilities than simply visiting the clinic. (Participant F)

(2) Reliable dining attractions
The participants responded that the various tenants of the shopping mall offered good experiences. The most talked-about was the dining places (i.e. specialty restaurants, food court, gourmet restaurants). Participants indicated that their impression of the restaurants in the mall is that they must be "qualified" restaurants to be included as mall tenants. Many (n=6) mentioned restaurants as one of the major reasons to visit shopping malls.

When I see a restaurant set up here, I somehow feel that it is a proven place. In fact, the best experience I had the day I took the picture was visiting that restaurant. For one, the taste is proven [. . .] and because the mall usually screens the tenants wanting to lease before letting them in. Besides, there were a lot

Figure 1. Cosmetic Stores Clustered at One Area in Shopping Mall

Figure 2. Oriental Medicine Clinic in Shopping Mall

of positive reviews of the place. Most of the restaurants on the same floor are those people like, and although they are slightly pricey, you can manage to find a place that is relatively affordable. (Participant A)

2) Excitement
(1) Entertaining events
The participants mentioned their pleasant experiences with events such as pop-up stores and company events, which change periodically in great variety. Most of the events took place in the central area in malls. This place was perceived as a constantly changing space of diversity. Participants responded that they had a pleasant experience in participating in the events themselves as well as in their joy of watching other people enjoy even when they are not participating.

The mall has various events to attract people [. . .] On those special days, they have special events. So, if you don't have specific plans for going out on such days, you can just go to a shopping mall because there are various events going on, which is great. (Participant D)

I thought that the pop-up stores were very well made. [. . .] About once a month, there are pop-up stores with different themes. The most memorable pop-up store was the Ikea pop-up store, which was so much fun to visit. (Participant E)

(2) Interesting tenants
The participants responded that visiting and shopping around interesting retail stores that they could not find in most department stores offered a pleasant experience. In shopping malls, unique select shops targeting specific consumer groups (i.e., male consumers, bike riders, outdoor campers) are a differentiating factor for shopping malls, and makes them attractive places to shoppers.

Starfield has a special store for men. You can see various electronic products and toys [. . .] It is really heaven for men. I usually go shopping online, so when I go to a shopping mall, I go there because of those interesting stores where I can test many items by myself. (Participant G)

Recently, I went to a "Sports monster" where you can play games and sports. There was a wide variety of games including VR game consoles, climbing, and screen soccer games…even trampolines. It was my first time to try a VR game, but it was really thrilling. Lots of people were having fun, ranging from children to 40s [. . .] I hate shopping [. . .] But I really like to go to shopping malls to visit these kinds of interesting places. (Participant I)

(3) Attractive store design
One of the features of shopping malls is that the customers' moving line is meticulously calculated from the design stage in order to have the customers remain in the mall for a long time and effectively enjoy the variety of things to do and see. The participants responded that they had a pleasant experience at the main entrance or main squares into the shopping mall. This response from the participants supports the study finding by Yoon & Park (2012), who reported that shopping malls use glass in the ceiling design of atrium, where all kinds of cultural events take place, to ensure the users' pleasant malling experience.

It is a spatial feature that can be felt only in Times Square. When I first visited the place, I was awed because it is a building structure not easily found in Korea. I think I look up at it every time I visit. It was an eye-pleasing sight. (Participant E)

The participants responded that this open spatial structure not only provides visual pleasure, but also convenient experience when using the mall (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Attractive Store Design and Structure

They reported that the interesting structure and store design was convenient in that they can easily recognize the location of a specific brand without looking at a map or having to search for it, since all the floors, from the first floor to the top floors, are within their view.

The center structure of Times Square is open and clear, which allows you to see which brands are located on which floors. So, unlike I'Park, where everything is blocked and it's difficult to find a specific brand, at Times Square, all the brand logos can be seen as you go up the escalator. So, it was great that I didn't have to search for places on my smart phone nor or look for signs to find my way around even when I get got hungry while shopping. (Participant A).

3) Relaxation
(1) Browsing without specific purpose
The respondents said that it was a pleasant experience to look around shopping malls without any purpose. They sometimes come to shop malls to shop or to visit restaurants, but when they don't do much, they often visit to cheer for themselves up or feel less uncomfortable when they feel down.

What I liked most was that I could shop without shopping being the main thing. It's interesting

that, even when I don't set a separate time for shopping, I can still do shopping while I am out to meet someone or stopping by to get something to eat. (Participant C)

I feel better when I stop by the shopping mall and browse from here and there. I do not come to buy goods by all means. Just when I feels like it, I go to shopping mall…I see new items, look around, drink coffee…Then I feel better. This is one way to relax for me. (Participant J)

Respondents who are interested in clothing mentioned that they visit shopping malls to look around the trends, new merchandise and check prices. Usually, they do not buy clothing items at the shopping mall, though they think it is a good place to collect information.

I am interested in fashion, so I like to go shopping malls [. . .] if I go to a shopping mall, I always stop by my favorite brand stores to see new items. Since I am student, I always shop during the sale time. But I like to look what kind of product come out and what items are popular… There are many people in the shopping mall and stores, so I feel less pressured in a shopping mall when I shop without buying anything from the store. (Participant H)

(2) Shopper friendly resting area
The participants also talked a lot about the resting space. They said that they get easily tired because of the large space of the mall but found it pleasant to use the resting areas that are stationed around the mall.

My legs tend to hurt because Times Square is so large. Even if you know the locations of the shops you want to visit, walking around shopping malls tend to take longer than walking around other regular shopping malls. I took the picture because it was one of the good experiences to be

able to take a seat anywhere and rest whenever I got tired. (Participant C)

4) Socialization experience
(1) Quality time spent with family
Contrary to the expectations of the researchers, most of the participants mentioned their emotional experiences in the shopping mall. Participants used terms such as family, 'men and women of all ages, and various generations and took pictures of children playing and running or a scene of a mother and a daughter having a conversion, and also talked about their memorable experiences related to these pictures (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. A family Spending Quality Time at the Shopping Mall

It's the plaza before you enter Times Square. The weather was nice. And seeing that people who came out with their families were having a good time playing, I thought, 'there are spaces that even children can enjoy.' This made me think about the meaning of a shopping mall. I think that people go to the mall not just for shopping, but to visit these sorts of facilities as well as to do some shopping. (Participant A)

This result was somewhat unexpected considering the fact that all the participants were in their early 20s. They expressed an emotional experience of feeling their family, albeit indirectly, from watching the children or the visitors who came with their family members. This

response suggests that a shopping mall is not simply a space for shopping and entertainment, but also a space for sharing emotional experience and leisure activities with family members.

You would think that [mostly] people in their 20s or 30s would go to shopping malls, but there are actually people of various generations. I think it is a space that can be used by everyone, from the elderly to the young children. (Participant F)

(2) Hanging out with friends
Many respondents mentioned that they use the shopping mall as an appointment place with their friends at the mall. Since one of the major tenants in a shopping mall is the movie theater, respondents mentioned that they meet friends at the mall to go to the movies and, after watching movies, spend most of time at the mall with their friends. In addition, since shopping malls are usually located in convenient locations for public transportation and provide indoor shopping area, people use the shopping mall as a meeting place and spend time there shopping, eating, and entertaining.

I often go to a shopping mall with my friends. I watch movies and spend time eating lunch and spending time with friends. There are many places to see in the shopping mall, and there are many eating places⋯And it is connected to a subway station⋯so it is very a convenient place to meet with friends. (Participant J)

2. Unpleasant Shopping Mall Experience

Among the participants' responses, congestion caused by the crowd, inconvenient moving lines, and ambiguous signage were frequently mentioned as unpleasant experiences.

1) Crowdedness: Too many people everywhere
Most of the participants expressed their discomfort and

inconvenience with the crowd. It was found that shopping malls that become crowded during certain period of time were considerably stressful for the users. The participants mentioned that congestion in the shopping mall due to the crowds not only causes them physical inconvenience in using the space but is also an unpleasant experience because just looking at a space filled with a crowd of people makes them feel uncomfortable (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. Crowded Shopping Mall

There are too many people. Personally, I don't like it when there are too many people, and there was a lot more than I thought there would be. It is nice to have an event going on in the central area, but because of the event the usually spacious area was full of people and it was kind of disconcerting. No matter which floor or which escalator I was on, it was full of people. (Participant B)

It was also found that having to wait continuously to use the facilities in the mall due to the crowd can be an unpleasant experience for users who visit the shopping mall for convenience and speed of use. Commenting on the inconvenience of having to wait to use every facility and service, the participants pointed out that service personnel should be increased at certain times when the mall becomes crowded.

I had to wait to buy a ticket at the counter; I had to wait to do the self-ticketing; I even had to wait 30 minutes at a restaurant. So, I put my name on the waitlist and tried to do something during that time, but it was the same situation wherever I went. [. . .] The reason I go to shopping malls is to take care of multiple things at once, but it turned out I actually had to wait a lot. (Participant C)

2) Inconvenience
(1) Ineffective store layout
A considerable number of unpleasant experiences due to the spatial structure of the shopping mall were mentioned. Some participants pointed out the inconvenience of using the shopping mall because of the ambiguous boundary between the shopping mall and the department store.

The boundary between Times Square and Shinsegae Department Store is so vague and there are no specific signs. There are events where if you bring a receipt from one of the Times Square restaurants, they give you a discount, but because the border between Times Square and Shinsegae is ambiguous, it is confusing when you are trying to figure out which shops are a part of Times Square. (Participant A)

All of the participants commented on unpleasant experiences due to the inefficient store layout. Many of those unpleasant experiences were related to the escalator and traffic pattern. They said that they felt inconvenience moving around due to the limited number of escalators and the ineffective spatial arrangement of the facility.

The escalators are set up in a way that you have to make a big circle to the other side to get on the escalator again. I know most escalators are set up that way, but each floor is so large, and you have to walk quite a distance to move between

floors, and it seems that there are too few means of transportation between floors. There are elevators, but the waiting time is too long. Even the escalators take time because they are full of people. It is a space designed for people to roam around freely, but in reality, it is hard to do so. (Participant C)

The moving line from the outside into the shopping mall was also mentioned as an unpleasant experience. This indicates that the moving line from the public transportation to the shopping mall as well as the moving line inside the shopping mall are both considered as aspects of store design. It was found that it is an important element of a shopping mall to secure convenient access to the mall for users visiting the mall using various means of transportation.

I took the subway, and it was confusing to find my way around the minute I got out of the station. I went the wrong way, so I went back to go through the underground shopping mall, but I got confused again. I don't think they put any consideration into that aspect. Most of my friends take the subway, and it would be convenient if there were directions and signs that guide you from the station. (Participant B)

(2) Ineffective Signage

The participants took many photos of signage and also mentioned them during the interview as unpleasant elements of shopping mall. Their negative comments were about the inefficient use of signage, which should serve the role of giving guidance and direction about using the facilities and spaces. The ineffective design of the signage itself and the inadequate placement of the signs were pointed out as ineffective signage elements (See Figure 6).

As I walked around the mall, I saw the signs hanging above. They were hanging from the high ceiling. My friend who visited the mall with me is

not that tall, and she said she could barely see the signs. Besides, the font size was too small to be legible… and it felt like the signs did not make any difference and were completely inefficient. I'd rather have the signs on the floor. The signs need to be at places that match the eye level of the users. (Participant E)

The sign that indicates the location of the restroom was at the deep corner, and it was difficult for me to find the restroom [. . .] I think people will find it useful if there are direction signs placed at the entrance. Also, that direction sign was too complicated. I don't think the signage system is efficient. It felt like I was in a shanty town trying to find a house by the address. (Participant F)

Figure 6. Highly-Positioned Signage

(3) Lack of "Free" resting space

Using resting spaces was mentioned as a pleasant experience, but some participants also mentioned the unpleasant experience with resting space. They pointed out that free resting spaces in the shopping mall are not sufficient to adequately accommodate the variety of shoppers and are ineffectively located without considering shopper traffic.

There are spaces for sitting and resting, but the

spaces that were actually available were limited because all the spaces were being used by elderly people. As you can see in the picture, the rest areas are concentrated around the escalators. If you look around, there are long corridors where there should be more chairs but there were only one or two. (Participant F)

There were many coffee shops and restaurants in the mall, and when I got tired, I could relax with a drink. But there is a time when my legs are tired and I want to sit down and just sit down… not drink coffee… It is not easy to find resting places I can use. (Participant H).

V. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to identify the various levels of experience elements occurring in a shopping mall. In order to examine the users' experiences of a shopping mall, where diverse and complex experiences occur, this study collected data using the visual research method PEI. The results of the study were categorized into pleasant and unpleasant experiences and were analyzed in further detail. The study results are summarized in Table 3.

The most talked about pleasant experience in the shopping mall was convenient shopping experience from the all-in-one convenience based on various establishments of tenants at the mall and from the various dining attractions, from gourmet restaurants to street foods. Secondly, excitement experience from entertaining events in the shopping mall, interesting tenants such as various select shops, and attractive store structure/design based on stores' physical environments were referenced as pleasant experiences. Enjoyable events allow customers to enjoy fun and memorable experiences. In addition, shoppers were entertained through the aesthetic stimulation of shopping malls' window displays, lighting, and architectural structure. Shopping malls with modern facilities are a new playground and cultural space for customers. They are used as a space for customers to relax, and a space of escape from everyday life. The experience from shopping malls provides consumers relaxation experience and socializing opportunities with family members and friends beyond just shopping.

Most unpleasant experiences are related to crowdedness in a shopping mall. Since, shopping malls have become places for leisure and recreational activities, they are very crowded, especially during weekends. Thus, shopping malls should be designed so

Table 3. Shoppers' Experience Elements in Shopping Malls

Experience Type	Experience Factor	Core Content
Pleasant Experience	Convenience	· All-in-one convenience · Reliable dining attractions
	Excitement	· Entertaining events · Interesting tenants · Attractive store design
	Relaxation	· Browsing without specific purpose · Shopping-friendly resting area
	Socialization	· Quality time spent with family · Hanging out with friends
Unpleasant Experience	Crowdedness	· Too many people everywhere
	Inconvenience	· Ineffective store layout · Ineffective signage · Lack of free resting space

that shoppers can shop, even if they are visited by many customers. This is related to the next unpleasant experience factor: ineffective store layout and signage design. At the shopping mall, store layouts are designed from the perspective of the sellers rather than that of the clients   and this design cause customers to walk more in the shopping mall. For the shoppers who have to move store to store, ineffective layouts and signage can be the most inconvenient elements.

According to the results and discussions, this study has the following implications. First, it is necessary to analyze the use patterns and moving line of shopping mall users and to identify and improve the spatial characteristics unique to a facility and any inconvenience thereof to provide more pleasant consumers experience. Secondly, it is necessary to consider from the designing stage elements that differentiate a shopping mall from other similar facilities such as the atrium in Times Square, or discover and develop differentiated elements in existing facility designs. Third, in addition to simple participatory events, emotional experiential marketing that will stimulate the users' emotions can be implemented through detailed analysis of the emotional experiences frequently mentioned as being positive.

This study is significant in that the PEI method was used to probe into the context and experiences of the users and identify the experience elements of shopping malls. An in-depth interview was carried out in a natural atmosphere as the participants freely described the pictures they took at the shopping mall. The successful outcome of PEI in this study confirmed the value and potential of PEI in research areas related to fashion industry and user experience, and it is expected to be used in various fields requiring qualitative data analysis. Like Heisley (2001) contends that visual methods should be adopted as stand-alone approaches rather than just adjunct tools to textual data collection, we think this method could be also an effective approach to understanding   fashion consumers and their experiences.

This study is limited in that the research participants were limited to university students in their 20s. Therefore, it is recommended for future studies to include a wide variety of participants in terms of age and gender and to examine the characteristics relevant to user experiences according to those variables.   In addition, this study examined the experiences of shopping mall users, but did not deal with the experiences relating to buying. Since shopping involves buying, future research should include shoppers' experience in shopping mall stores for buying or returning goods or services.

One   participant   pointed   out   the   increasing homogenization of shopping mall format and store mixes during the interview. Thus, it is also important to research how to differentiate shopping malls in the competitive Korean shopping mall market. In addition, the negative influence of shopping malls to consumers and communities should be researched.

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1) In Korea, the term *multi-complex shopping mall* is used to refer to a *shopping mall* that is defined as one or more buildings forming a complex of shops representing merchandisers and entertainment venues (e.g., movie theaters and restaurants) with interconnecting walkways that enable customers to walk from unit to unit. Since the term *shopping mall* is the more commonly used term in retailing, we used it instead of *complex shopping mall* in this study.