Shopping Mall Experience

1. Introduction

Shopping is an intriguing activity that customers undertake every day in retail shops, supermarkets, shopping malls, and other open markets. It should be noted that customer experience can negatively or positively impact the business since it determines whether the customer will return. Shopping mall experience, just like other businesses, takes into consideration the interaction between the customer and the organization. Customer experience is embedded in the time factor, in which the product interaction between the mall and the customer must take place over the duration of their relationship. It is imperative to note that the interaction between the mall and the customer is made up of three major parts namely, the customer journey, the environments that the customers experience during the experience, and the brand touchpoints that the customers interact with. In essence, the good customer shopping experience can be construed as the personal experience when all the touchpoints match the customer's expectations. The shopping experience is greatly affected by a myriad of factors including promotions, shopper's needs, interest, and expectations, touchpoint with the shopping ambiance including digital and physical environments, use of facilities, and customer service. Other factors include mall layout, efficiency in moving about, neatness, amenities, operating hours, payment methods, and ease of finding what they need.

Literature Review

According to Kwon et al. (2016), customer shopping experience encompasses the customer’s involvement at various levels, including sensorial, emotional, rational, and spiritual. It is contributed by not only the customers' values but also the organization like mall providing the experience. Most notably, in today’s competitive climate, providing customers with the best experience involves more than just the innovative products and low prices because it includes all the points of contact the customer has with the business, products, and services. As the author argues, customer or shopping experience has become one of the vital strategies that retail businesses employ to remain competitive in the market. According to Kwon et al. (2016), customer shopping experience involves adding value for the customers purchasing products by taking into consideration the customer participation ad connection through controlling the aspects of the experience.

Physical Environment

Touchpoints such as facilities or the physical environments where the malls are located can contribute significantly to the shopping experience of the customers. Since most of the retail stores are located in shopping areas like malls, it is important for shopping malls to be mindful of their reputation because a bad reputation can negatively affect the retail shops. A study conducted by Melero et al. (2017) indicated that the customer's opinion concerning a shopping mall could negatively or positively affect the opinion of the retail shops operating within the area. Malls with fancy facilities and fascinating physical environments tend to provide an excellent opportunity for the stores to have a deeper connection with their customers, which in turn offers a positive or good shopping mall experiences. As a result, the shopping centers will be more

likely to benefit from their customers' loyalty and retention.

Promotions

Another factor that affects the shopping mall experience is the promotion that is incorporated in the malls. By actively engaging customers in promotion services, they tend to develop a positive customer shopping experience. According to Lee and Tsai (2013), incorporating promotions in the malls tends to develop a greater competitive advantage than other shopping centers. In their article, the author says that promotions help to capture new customers and retain the existing ones. This behavioral culture cultivates positive customer experience, which further increases the chances that the customers will make continued purchases in these particular malls and develop brand loyalty. Kukar-Kinney et al. (2012) states that brand loyalty plays a crucial role in making the customers advocates leading to a long-term relationship between the mall and the customers. The promotions also enhance word-of-mouth turning the customer into a touchpoint for the business. A study on how deals and promotions affect every part of shopping experience shows that two-thirds of the consumers that were surveyed purchased products that they originally did not intend to buy due to the influence of the promotions or discount. The study further shows that 80% of the consumers said that they were encouraged to make a first-time purchase with new businesses if the shop offered them a discount or had some promotions on their products. To this regard, malls should ensure that they use the new customer offers and promotions to attract new customers. Having promotions occasionally encourage the customers to buy goods that they did not intend to buy. Indeed, promotions affect the shopping mall experience positively.

Mall Layout

Mall layout plays a critical role in influencing customer shopping behavior since it coupled with efficiency in moving about while shopping. Mall layout design contributes significantly to the uniqueness of the store. The interior, as well as the exterior of the mall, relays different messages on the shopping center to the customers (Van, 2012). When it comes to designing shopping malls, space management is one of the top priorities. Both the non-selling and selling areas need to be spacious for easy movement of the customers when shopping. Since customers love their shopping process to be easy and satisfying, the shopping environment should be pleasant, wide, and easy to find their preferred mechanizes with sufficient products. Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma (2013) argue that customer shopping experience will rise if there are good fixtures in the mall layout design. This includes the arrangement of the product categories, arrangements of the points of sales, and the fixtures. The author further points out that customer shopping experience tends to increase when there comfortable exists in the mall. This encompasses the packing as well as the delivery of goods, and more importantly, the movement of trolleys. Therefore, having narrow and small pathways reduces the customer shopping experience in that particular mall. Whereas, having spacious pathways facilitates easy movement, hence, elevates shopping mall experience of the customers.

Moreover, good arrangements of the products on the shelves makes it easier for the customers to find what they need faster than when the products are not arranged in an unorderly manner. This is further coupled with the mall layout, whereby having a spacious shopping environment, the workers tend to arrange the products at one place, and hence they can be found much easier. By customers being able to find what they need, they get encouraged to purchase more,

have a good shopping time, and enjoy the moment in the mall. Consequently, this increases their shopping experiences.

Customer Service

Regarding customer service, Srivastava and Kaul (2014) argue that a larger percentage of the post-sales customer experiences is embedded in the customer engagement center. Incorporating technology in the contact center increases the ability of the customer service center to align with the changing needs of the customers. According to the Srivastava and Kaul (2014), the contact service centers are equipped with functionality ranging from the work optimization abilities, smart rooting to omnichannel support. The author further points out that some of the businesses offer additional information to the customers upon their request. Not being able to rise to the customers' demands, the customer service centers risk weakening or breaking their relationships with the customers. It is, therefore, quite obvious that having a more responsive and effective customer service centers helps in creating long term customers and attract new ones. This, in turn, creates a positive shopping mall experiences of the customers. However, when the customer service centers are non-responsive, do not attend to the customers' demand, and cannot rise to the changing needs of the customers, then the business develops negative shopping experiences in the customers, which can have a severe effect on the businesses.

Additionally, the mode of payment methods that the businesses use can have a big impact on the customers' shopping experience. As Khan (2017) advises the business owners to choose the appropriate payment method that will work or favor a large number of customers. When they choose well, they more likely to attract more customers, but when they choose poorly, they will lose customers and risk losing the business. According to Khan (2017), having a variety of payment methods create a great experience from the beginning to the end of the shopping period. Therefore, the shopping malls need to employ different payment methods so that they can increase the customers' shopping experience, which in turn increases their purchasing power leading to more profit for the business.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Shopping is an intriguing activity that customers undertake every day in retail shops, supermarkets, shopping malls, and other open markets. To this regard, malls should ensure that they use the new customer offers and promotions to attract new customers. Mall layout plays a critical role in influencing customer shopping behavior since it coupled with efficiency in moving about while shopping. Moreover, good arrangements of the products on the shelves makes it easier for the customers to find what they need faster than when the products are not arranged in an unorderly manner. By customers being able to find what they need, they get encouraged to purchase more, have a good shopping time, and enjoy the moment in the mall.

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