

## **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION IN MULTI-CATEGORY SHOPPING CENTERS: INSIGHTS FROM OBASANJO SHOPPING COMPLEX, MINNA, NIGER STATE**

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### **Abstract**

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Customer experience and satisfaction are recognized as critical drivers of competitiveness in shopping centers worldwide. In Nigeria, multi-category shopping complexes play a growing role in urban retailing, yet challenges such as poor retail atmosphere, inconsistent service quality, and limited retail mix continue to constrain customer satisfaction, loyalty, and spending. This study examined the relationship between customer experience and satisfaction in multi-category shopping centers with insights from Obasanjo Shopping Complex, Minna, Niger State. A survey research design was adopted, with data collected from a simple random sample of 30 shop owners using a structured questionnaire. Content validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced coefficients above the 0.70 threshold, confirming internal consistency. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between retail atmosphere and customer satisfaction ( $r=0.614$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), service quality and behavioral intentions ( $r=0.629$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and retail mix and in-mall spending ( $r=0.611$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). These results indicated that enhancing the retail environment, delivering consistent service quality, and diversifying the retail mix are vital for fostering satisfaction, loyalty, and increased spending. The study concludes that customer experience strategies are essential for improving retail performance in multi-category shopping centers and recommends targeted investments in retail atmosphere, staff training, and assortment planning to strengthen the competitiveness of Obasanjo Shopping Complex.

**Keywords:** Customer Satisfaction, Retail Atmosphere, Service Quality, Retail Mix, Behavioral Intentions, In-Mall Spending

## **1. Introduction**

Customer experience and satisfaction have become critical determinants of retail competitiveness in shopping centers worldwide. Across global markets, shopping malls are no longer viewed as mere places for purchasing goods, but as social, cultural, and lifestyle hubs where customers seek convenience, entertainment, and quality service (Khan et al., 2022). Customer satisfaction in every environment is shaped by factors similar to retail atmosphere, service quality, and retail mix, all of which directly influence behavioral intentions and in-mall spending (Xu & Kim, 2021). In Nigeria, retail sector has experienced significant growth, with multi-category shopping centers becoming more prominent in urban areas as consumers demand better shopping experiences. However, challenges like inconsistent service quality, poor retail environments, and limited retail diversity have constrained customer loyalty and spending (Nwaeke & Onuoha, 2023). Locally, Obasanjo Shopping Complex in Minna, Niger State, serves as a central hub for diverse retail activities, yet there are growing concerns about whether the current customer experience fosters sustainable satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and higher in-mall spending.

One key problem affecting overall customer satisfaction in multi-category shopping centers is the inadequacy of retail atmosphere, which encompasses elements such as lighting, cleanliness, layout, ambient conditions, and overall mall aesthetics. Poorly maintained environments can reduce customer comfort and engagement, leading to dissatisfaction and discouraging repeat visits (Malaquias et al., 2022). At Obasanjo Shopping Complex, issues such as inadequate ventilation, poor lighting, and limited seating spaces have been reported informally, which may negatively affect customer perception. While a well-designed retail atmosphere can stimulate satisfaction and positive emotional responses, its neglect creates barriers to loyalty. This links directly to the null hypothesis one, which questions whether higher perceived retail atmosphere is positively associated with overall customer satisfaction.

Another problem lies in inconsistent service quality provided by vendors and retail operators. Service quality—measured by responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and reliability—strongly influences behavioral intentions, as customers are more likely to revisit malls where service interactions exceed expectations (Jiang & Wen, 2020). In many Nigerian shopping centers, including Obasanjo Shopping Complex, variations in vendor professionalism, delays in service delivery, and weak complaint-handling systems undermine customer trust and repeat patronage. This raises concerns about whether customers' behavioral intentions are genuinely shaped by service quality within such environments. The null hypothesis two is particularly relevant here, as it posits that higher service quality is not positively associated with stronger behavioral intentions, a claim that this study seeks to test.

A third problem concerns the limited breadth of retail mix in multi-category shopping centers, which refers to the variety and combination of retail offerings such as food, clothing, electronics, entertainment, and specialty services. When customers perceive a narrow or repetitive retail mix, their shopping needs are not fully met, resulting in reduced in-mall spending and weaker loyalty (Choi et al., 2021). In the case of Obasanjo Shopping Complex, while it accommodates several categories of retailers, the diversity and balance of offerings remain questionable, with some sectors underrepresented. The lack of entertainment and leisure services further constrains its ability to attract and retain a wide customer base. This issue aligns with the null hypothesis three, which suggests that a broader retail mix is not positively associated with higher in-mall spending, a relationship this study intends to evaluate.

These challenges underscore the importance of re-examining how customer experience is shaped within multi-category shopping centers in Nigeria. While existing literature demonstrates that retail atmosphere, service quality, and retail mix contribute significantly to overall satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and spending patterns in global retail markets, their application within local contexts such as Minna remains underexplored (Okechukwu & Okafor, 2022). By focusing on Obasanjo Shopping Complex, this study seeks to provide insights into how these factors interact in shaping customer perceptions and behaviors in a Nigerian urban setting. The findings are expected to advance understanding of the extent to which retail strategies can enhance satisfaction and spending, while also testing the validity of the stated null hypotheses within the study context.

## **2. Methodology**

This study adopted a survey research design to investigate customer experience and satisfaction at Obasanjo Shopping Complex, Minna, Niger State. The population comprised all shop owners in the complex, but since a complete survey was not feasible, a simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure equal selection chances. A total of 30 shops were randomly chosen, which was adequate for an exploratory study as it balanced manageability with representativeness across shop categories. Simple random sampling was selected because it reduces bias and improves representativeness, making it particularly suitable for small-scale exploratory research (Etikan & Babatope, 2019; Singh & Masuku, 2020; Bhardwaj, 2022; Alvi, 2023). Random selection was implemented by numbering all shops and using a random number generator to identify participants, consistent with quantitative sampling best practices (Kumari & Yadav, 2021).

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire measuring retail atmosphere, service quality, retail mix, customer experience, and satisfaction. To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed by marketing research scholars and retail practitioners (Taherdoost, 2020; Boateng et al., 2018). A pilot test with five shop owners outside the main sample helped refine items for clarity. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha, with values exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended for social sciences (Taber, 2018; Hair et al., 2021), confirming internal consistency. These steps ensured the instrument was valid and reliable, providing robust data for the study.

## **3. Results and discussions**

This section presents the results of data collected from respondents at Obasanjo Shopping Complex, Minna. It covers the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data, beginning with response rates and the demographic characteristics of respondents. The section further provides test of hypotheses using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). Finally, the results are discussed in relation to the study literature which yielded meaningful conclusions and recommendations.

### **3.1 Data Presentation**

Of all the 30 questionnaires distributed to shop owners, 30 were duly completed and returned, representing a high response rate. This indicates a response rate of 100%, which is considered highly acceptable for social science research and adequate for reliable analysis. The breakdown is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate**

Response	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Returned	30	100
Not Returned	0	0.0
Total Distributed	30	100

*Source: Field Survey, 2025*

The high rate of return suggests that respondents were cooperative and interested in the subject of the study. This level of participation enhances the credibility of the data and ensures that the findings are representative of the study population.

### 3.2 Demographic Information of the Respondents

The demographic information of respondents was analyzed to understand the characteristics of shop owners at Obasanjo Shopping Complex. Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents by gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, and years of experience.

**Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Information**

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	18	60.0
	Female	12	40.0
Total		30	100.0
Age	18–25	5	16.7
	26–35	10	33.3
	36–45	7	23.3
	46–55	6	20.0
	56+	2	6.7
Total		30	100.0
Marital Status	Single	9	30.0
	Married	16	53.3
	Divorced	3	10.0
	Widow	2	6.7
Total		30	100.0
Educational Status	SSCE	6	20.0
	OND/NCE	7	23.3
	HND/B.Sc.	10	33.3
	M.Sc./MBA	5	16.7
	Ph.D.	2	6.7
Total		30	100.0
Years of Experience	< 1	3	10.0
	1–5	11	36.7
	6–10	9	30.0
	Above 10	7	23.3

Total		30	100.0
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**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The analysis shows that a majority of respondents were male (60%) while females made up 40%. Most respondents fell within the age bracket of 26–35 years (33.3%), indicating that shop ownership in the complex is dominated by youthful and economically active individuals. Marital status distribution revealed that over half of the respondents (53.3%) were married, suggesting business ownership is often tied to family responsibilities.

In terms of education, most respondents possessed higher-level qualifications, with 33.3% holding HND/B.Sc. degrees and 23.3% with OND/NCE, while only 20% had SSCE. This indicates that shop ownership in the complex attracts relatively educated individuals. Regarding years of experience, the majority had between 1–5 years (36.7%) and 6–10 years (30.0%) of experience, suggesting a blend of new and moderately experienced entrepreneurs, while a notable 23.3% had above 10 years, reflecting long-term stability in retail business. The implication of these findings is that the respondents are sufficiently diverse in gender, age, education, and experience, ensuring a balanced perspective on customer experience and satisfaction within the shopping complex.

### 3.3 Test of hypotheses

To establish the relationships between the independent variables (retail atmosphere, service quality, and retail mix) and the dependent variables (customer satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and in-mall spending), the study employed the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. This statistical tool was chosen because it is appropriate for assessing the strength and direction of associations between continuous variables. The analysis was conducted at a 0.05 level of significance, and the results formed the basis for accepting or rejecting the null hypotheses formulated for the study. The hypotheses tested are presented as follows:

***H01: Higher perceived retail atmosphere is not positively associated with overall customer satisfaction.***

***H02: Higher service quality is not positively associated with stronger behavioral intentions***

***H03: A broader retail mix are not positively associated with higher in-mall spending.***

**Table 3: Summary of Correlations Result**

	Retail Atmosphere	Service Quality	Retail Mix	Customer Satisfaction	Behavioral Intentions	In-Mall Spending
Retail Atmosphere	1	.482*	.361	.614**	.455*	.298
Service Quality	.482*	1	.402*	.572**	.629**	.387*
Retail Mix	.361	.402*	1	.396*	.354	.611**
Customer Satisfaction	.614**	.572**	.396*	1	.547**	.431*
Behavioral Intentions	.455*	.629**	.354	.547**	1	.472*
In-Mall Spending	.298	.387*	.611**	.431*	.472*	1

N = 30, \*\*p < 0.05 = \*; p < 0.01 = \*\*

#### **Source: SPSS Output, 2025**

H01 was rejected on the ground that retail atmosphere has a strong positive correlation with customer satisfaction

H02 was also rejected on the ground that Service quality is positively correlated with behavioral intentions.

H03 has been rejected as retail mix shows a strong positive correlation with in-mall spending

### **3.4 Discussion of Results**

The first hypothesis (H01), that higher perceived retail atmosphere is not positively associated with overall customer satisfaction was not supported: the analysis revealed a strong, statistically significant positive correlation between retail atmosphere and customer satisfaction ( $r=0.614$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This finding indicates that improvements in ambient factors (lighting, cleanliness, layout, comfort) are associated with higher levels of satisfaction among patrons of Obasanjo Shopping Complex. The result aligns with a growing body of empirical work showing the central role of atmosphere in shaping emotional responses and satisfaction in mall contexts (Malaquias et al., 2022; Xu & Kim, 2021; Khan et al., 2022). It also complements studies from comparable emerging-market settings that find atmospheric cues drive hedonic value, lengthen shopping trips, and increase positive evaluations (Khan et al., 2022). At the same time, the finding diverges from some local reports that downplay atmosphere relative to price and convenience — for example, work that highlights operational constraints in Nigerian malls where poor maintenance or security concerns can blunt atmospheric effects (Nwaeke & Onuoha, 2023). In short, our evidence supports the view that atmosphere matters for satisfaction in this complex but also suggests managers must address basic operational issues (cleanliness, comfort, safety) for atmosphere interventions to translate fully into satisfied customers.

The second hypothesis (H02), that higher service quality is not positively associated with stronger behavioral intentions was likewise rejected: service quality showed a strong, significant positive correlation with behavioral intentions ( $r=0.629$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This indicates that dimensions of service (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy) are important predictors of customers' intentions to revisit, recommend, and remain loyal to shops and the complex as a whole. This outcome is consistent with several recent empirical studies which report that high service standards foster trust and repatronage in retail settings (Jiang & Wen, 2020; Okechukwu & Okafor, 2022). It also resonates with broader findings that service encounters often act as the proximate mechanism by which atmospheric and assortment improvements convert into repeat patronage (Xu & Kim, 2021). Some prior work, however, has emphasized that service quality alone may not generate behavioral intentions unless supported by other factors such as perceived value or complaint-handling mechanisms (Gera et al., 2020; Nwaeke & Onuoha, 2023). Our result therefore confirms the centrality of service quality for behavioral intentions in Obasanjo Shopping Complex but also points to the value of complementary managerial practices (value communication, after-sales care) to amplify service gains.

The third hypothesis (H03), that a broader retail mix is not positively associated with higher in-mall spending was also rejected: retail mix correlated strongly and positively with in-mall spending ( $r=0.611$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This suggests that greater variety and an appropriate combination of categories (food, apparel, electronics, entertainment, services) are associated with larger customer expenditure within the complex. The finding corroborates empirical reviews that link assortment breadth and category balance with cross-shopping, longer dwell times, and higher basket values in multi-category centres (Choi et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022). It is also in agreement with studies showing that when shoppers can satisfy multiple needs in one location, aggregate spending rises (Xu & Kim, 2021). Nonetheless, other research cautions that the positive effect of retail mix can be moderated by merchandising quality, price competitiveness, and promotional activity (Choi et al., 2021; Okechukwu & Okafor, 2022). Given our modest sample size ( $n=30$ ) and the correlational design, the observed relationships should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive; future studies with larger, more diverse samples and multivariate controls would help confirm these associations and test potential moderators and mediators reported in the empirical literature (Malaquias et al., 2022; Choi et al., 2021).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The findings of this study provide clear evidence that retail atmosphere, service quality, and retail mix are critical determinants of customer satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and in-mall spending within Obasanjo Shopping Complex, Minna. The rejection of all three null hypotheses demonstrates that improvements in these dimensions of the customer experience significantly influence shopping outcomes. Specifically, a positive and well-maintained retail atmosphere enhances customer satisfaction, quality service delivery fosters stronger intentions to revisit and recommend, and a diverse retail mix encourages higher spending within the mall. These outcomes align with recent empirical studies across both developed and emerging markets, reinforcing the relevance of customer experience strategies in driving commercial performance in multi-category shopping centers.

#### **5. Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for mall managers, shop owners, and stakeholders to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of the shopping complex.

- Mall managers should improve the retail atmosphere through better lighting, cleanliness, and comfortable layouts to enhance overall customer satisfaction.
- Shop owners should prioritize high-quality service delivery by training staff to be responsive, reliable, and courteous in order to strengthen customer behavioral intentions.
- The shopping complex should maintain a diverse retail mix by offering a wide variety of products and services to encourage higher in-mall spending.

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