

POLAC ECONOMIC REVIEW (PER)
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
NIGERIA POLICE ACADEMY, WUDIL-KANO

**SHOPPING CONVENIENCE AND REPEAT PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR OF UPSCALE CONSUMERS IN
PORT HARCOURT**

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Abstract

This study examined the link between shopping convenience and repeat purchase behaviour. The study took a multidimensional view of shopping convenience, and decomposed it into decision, access, search, transaction, possession and post-transaction convenience. The study adopted an explanatory research design and collected data via cross-sectional survey in a non-contrived setting, using a structured questionnaire. The population of the study comprised upscale consumers in Port Harcourt. In view of the infinite and flowing nature of this population, a sample of 384 was adopted. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation served as the test statistic, relying on SPSS version 23.0. The study found that all the dimensions of shopping convenience have strong positive nexus with repeat purchase, save search convenience which posted a very strong relationship with repeat purchase. Also, all the relationships were found to be positive and statistically significant. The study concludes that shopping convenience through search, transaction, access, possession, post-transaction and decision convenience strongly relates to repeat purchase of upscale consumers; and that repeat purchase of upscale consumers largely depend on the search, transaction, access, possession, post-transaction and decision convenience provided by retailers. Hence, the study recommends that retailers in Port Harcourt that want to benefit from repeat purchase of upscale consumers should orchestrate retail formats, processes and operations that provide consumers with convenient shopping experience.

Keywords: Repeat Purchase, Search Convenience, Shopping Convenience, Upscale Consumers

Introduction

A combination of economic and socio-cultural factors; as well as increase in consumers' demand for prepurchase, purchase and postpurchase convenience has tasked store retailers to reconsider retail formats, processes and operations (Seiders et al., 2007). In addition, the stress and demands of fast-paced modern-day living increasingly give consumers a sense of time scarcity (Lloyd et al., 2014) which has heightened the premium placed on time; and has aggravated their inclination to prefer quick and easy shopping options (Lloyd et al., 2014; Seiders et al., 2007). In reaction to these concerns, and based on the believe that the growing success of online channels notwithstanding, brick-and-mortar stores will continue to be prominent in consumers' shopping journey (Dekimpe et al., 2020)

since about 90% of all purchases still involve a physical store for one or more stages of the purchase funnel (PlanetRetail, 2016); retailer are shifting resources and contriving strategies to project convenience-focused and customer-centric image (Chang & Polonsky, 2012).

To perform above industry average in the face of increased aggressive competition, at a time of general decline in patronage, attributed to low differentiation; increased paucity of time, and stiff competition from different leisure activities other than shopping (Lloyd et al., 2014; Reimers & Clulow, 2009); store retailers must provide convenient shopping experience for consumers. Convenient shopping experience is widely acknowledged as a driver of customer satisfaction, loyalty and repeat purchase. Duarte et al. (2018) aver that the speed and ease with which consumers can

contact stores and complete transactions significantly influence their purchase decision-making, buying behaviour, satisfaction and repeat-purchase intention. The phenomenon of repeat purchase has been accorded increased attention and relevance by retailers due to its link to business prosperity and sustainability. The interests of researchers have also been piqued by concerns of repeat purchase, especially with regards to how retailers can enlist repeat purchase of consumers.

Shopping convenience describes consumer's perception of limited non-monetary resources such as of effort, time and comfort expended in the process of shopping (Berry et al., 2002). "Convenience" is a construct that entered the marketing lexicon in 1923. It was introduced by Melvin Copeland and was used to classify consumer products. The construct has however found wide application in other areas of marketing. A universal definition of "convenience" is illusive; as different scholars have over the decades, described it differently. Convenience happen when obstacles to the undertaking of an activity are reduced. In marketing discourses, convenience represents a reduction in the expenditure of time and effort by consumers when accessing, searching, transacting, possessing or consuming products either in the analog or digital environment (Bellizi & Hite, 1986). Any purchase episode that satisfies consumers' immediate requirements and also spares time and energy for alternative uses is deemed a convenient shopping experience.

Convenience is a multidimensional construct comprising temporal, spatial and amount/energy dimensions (Gehrt & Yale, 1993), each consisting of several convenience oriented behaviours. Brown (1989) based on the utility theory of economics, advance time, place, acquisition, use and execution as dimensions of convenience. Seiders et al. (2007) proposed a model of convenience consisting decision, access, transaction, benefit, and post-benefit; which in the view of Berry *et al.* (2002) aptly manifest the major activities consumers engage in, in the process of acquiring a service; and specifically reflect perceived expenditure of time and effort in deciding how to obtain a service, have access to, and request for the service, secure the right to use the service, experience the core

benefit of the service and initiate post-transaction contact with the service provider. Dekimpe et al. (2020) on their part proposed search, possession, and transaction convenience as dimensions of convenience that are mostly applicable in store retailing. In this study however, we adopt decision, access, search, transaction, possession and post-transaction convenience as dimensions of shopping convenience. This is an attempt to consolidate the frameworks of Dekimpe et al. (2020) and Seiders et al. (2007).

Decision convenience represents the ease with which consumers make or can make decisions about a store to patronize. Moeller et al. (2009) describes decision convenience as consumer's perceived degree of time and effort saved in deciding to shop at a store. It is determined by the availability of information about available retail stores (Seiders et al., 2007). This dimension of convenience is applicable to the shopping context as consumers can ascertain whether they can find information about a store, and whether it offers what they need.

Access convenience refers to the ease and speed with which consumers can reach or make contact with a retailer. It is an essential dimension of shopping convenience, considering that consumers will not have the opportunity to experience a store if they cannot access it. Access convenience is determined by retailers' physical location, operating hours, availability of parking space, proximity to other stores, remote contact options, etc. (Berry et al., 2002). Access convenience is critical because nothing happens until consumers make contact with the service provider (Keh & Pang, 2010). Due to stress in conveying goods and time considerations, consumers will prefer to shop in stores that are close to their homes or places of work (Gupta, 2015). Consumers also prefer retailers that extend their operating hours to accommodate late shoppers (Yavas, 2003).

Search convenience explicates how effortless and less time-consuming it is to identify desired products in a store. It represents the speed and ease with which consumers identify and select products they wish to buy

on the shelves of a store (Duarte et al., 2018; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010). With technological options, retailers have tools to improve communication with shoppers by reinforcing their capability to provide personalized information to consumers, and assist them to identify and select the right products (Kollmann et al., 2012). Such technological tools provide “psychological benefits to consumers as it prevent them from wasting time by avoiding crowds and reducing waiting time” (Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010). Search convenience facilitates in-store product search, and make the consumer shopping experience journey quicker and easier (Duarte et al., 2018; Kollmann et al., 2012; Seiders et al., 2000).

Transaction convenience describes the effort and time spent to complete a transaction with a service provider, and focuses on how quick, easy and comfortable it is to pay for purchased items, friendly cashiers and well-designed service systems (Colwell et al., 2008). It represents the perceived time and effort required to complete a purchase transaction (Colwell et al., 2008). Duarte et al. (2018) view transaction convenience as the “speed and ease with which consumers can effect or complete transactions.” Stores with quick checkouts and easy return policies rank high in transaction convenience (Seiders et al., 2000). In retailing, transaction convenience also represents stores’ ability to offer one-stop shopping and enable the consumer complete transactions quickly, and without spending much effort.

Possession convenience represents consumers’ expenditure in terms of time and effort in order to purchase and take title to desired products and enjoying the benefits associated with making a purchase (Jiang et al, 2013). In the view of Seiders et al. (2007) possession convenience “is the speed and ease with which consumers can obtain desired products,” which includes factors related to production planning, stocking policy and shipping and delivery times (Duarte et al., 2018). In store shopping, consumers must wait for products to be processed and receipted before they can take possession. The advantage in store retailing however, is that consumers leave the store with the intended product (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). The time required to

complete transactions in a store and take possession of products represents non-monetary cost (Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010). Possession convenience varies in importance across transaction categories (Seiders et al., 2007); and is essential to success of upscale supermarkets because it has the potential to attract and increase store traffic (Ateke & Daddie, 2018).

Post-transaction convenience represents perceived time and effort expenditure required to make contact with a retailer after a transaction, to make inquiries about various aspects of their shopping; including reporting missing goods or perceived discrepancy in charges (Ateke & Daddie, 2018). Consumers may request product upgrade or complain about misfit between purchased items and intended use. Berry *et al.* (2002) describe post-transaction convenience as “consumer's perceived time and effort expenditures when reinitiating contact with a retailer after purchasing a product” (Berry et al., 2002). Post-transaction convenience is important in lieu of difficulties consumers face when returning purchased items or opting to upgrade relationship with retailers (Berry et al., 2002). Post-transaction convenience is also determined by consumers’ need for repair or maintenance service (Berry et al., 2002). Other reasons for the eminence of post-transaction convenience include consumers’ need to resolve transaction problems, lodge complaints, ask for guarantees or change defective products (Duarte et al., 2018; Seiders et al., 2007).

Repeat purchase behaviour describes a situation where consumers readily and willingly patronize a product in a product-class, store, brand or firm after an initial transaction. It is consumers’ disposition to continue to patronize a brand, retail outlet or product in a product-class, in the future (Ateke & Daddie, 2018). Repeat purchase behaviour results from consumers’ cognitive, affective, and physical satisfaction about their experience with a store, brand or product (Nwulu & Asiegbu, 2015); and instigates long term business sustainability and profitability because of its close link to customer loyalty. Higher repeat purchase value tells of a satisfied and well retained customer, and results in higher profitability, as the firm makes savings from new

customer acquisition costs (Nwiepe & Ateke, 2016). Repeat purchase behaviour is also accorded prime attention because it signals consumers' preference; and provides firms with upsell and cross-sell opportunities (Ateke & Daddie, 2018; Ateke & Harcourt, 2018).

Firms induce repeat purchase behaviour by being responsive to customers' requirements; handling customers' issues fairly; taking advantage of feedback from customers to improve value offerings (Nwulu & Asiegbu, 2015); as well as by providing value adding services and designing relished customer experience (Nwiepe & Ateke, 2016). Repeat purchase behaviour is instrumental to long-term customer-brand relationships (Ateke & Daddie, 2018). Customers revisit a store, repurchase a product or repatronize a brand or firm based on the conviction that their interests are advanced in such dealings. Herein, we argue that convenient shopping experiences will reinforce repeat purchase behaviour; and that upscale consumers are more likely to return to a store for more business based on how easy and pleasurable it is to shop from that store. Ateke and Daddie (2018) support this position by stating that retail convenience inform patronage and improve retailers' competitive position.

Today's consumers crave shopping convenience due to scarcity of time and changing lifestyles; and operators of stores must make concerted efforts to design store layouts and operating formats; and also deploy technology to provide convenient shopping experience (Ateke & Daddie, 2018; Negi, 2009). The upsurge in competition require stores to provide easy, comfortable and quick service if they must secure the patronage consumers, and most importantly, enlist repeat patronage (Clulow & Reimers, 2009). Improvement in consumers' standards of living is closely followed by increased value of time; hence, they scout for stores that require minimal expenditure of time and effort (Wang & Hsiao, 2012). Consumers are increasingly becoming less patient in queues; and are indisposed to long waiting periods to receive a service; unless the service is really important or more valuable than the time spent waiting to receive it (Ateke & Daddie, 2018; Wang & Hsiao, 2012). Also, consumers are keen about the length of time a store is

open for business. Operating hours is among the strongest determinants of patronage (Yavas, 2003). The ease of finding the cash-out area and moving through it, is another shopping experience consumer prefer (Dabholkaret al., 2000). The speed and comfort there is in completing transactions, the payment options, friendly employees, and well-designed service systems all influence customers' satisfaction and post-purchase behaviours (Ateke & Daddie, 2018).

Consumers crave convenience; they get upset, and even dissatisfied with stressful shopping. They avoid stores that do not provide convenient shopping experiences. Hence, retailers must improve the ease of shopping in their stores or face decreased patronage that hampers performance and competitive position (Ateke & Daddie, 2018). Extant literature suggests that consumers' craving for shopping convenience is the driver of several innovations in retail formats; and prior studies link convenient shopping experience to customer satisfaction and post-purchase behaviours. Ateke and Daddie (2018) linked retail convenience to supermarkets' ability to expand business with current customers. Gupta (2015) reports that service convenience inform satisfaction and customer loyalty. Hua and Salam (2010) suggests that service convenience relates to service consumption experience, and relational exchange; while Bianchi (2009) provided a framework on consumers' expectation of convenience store attributes in emerging markets. Additionally, Anderson (1972) connected convenience orientation to consumption behaviour. However, these studies failed to connect convenient shopping experience to repeat purchase behaviour of upscale consumers. Hence, they do not provide sufficient succor to operators of stores in the upscale segment, especially in Port Harcourt that face the challenge of enlisting repeat purchase behaviour of consumers. This study therefore sought to join the discourse on convenience by examining its predictive power on repeat purchase behaviour.

The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

H₁: Decision convenience does not relate significantly to repeat purchase behaviour.

H₂: Access convenience does not relate significantly to repeat purchase behaviour.

H₃: Search convenience does not relate significantly to repeat purchase behaviour.

H₄: Transaction convenience does not relate significantly to repeat purchase behaviour.

H₅: Possession convenience does not relate significantly to repeat purchase behaviour.

H₆: post-transaction convenience does not relate significantly to repeat purchase behaviour.

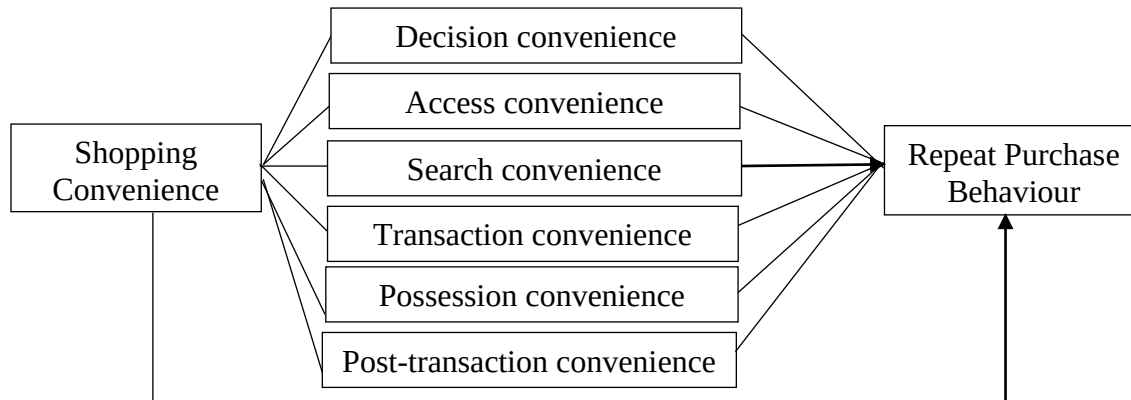


Fig. 1: Conceptual model of shopping convenience and repeat purchase behaviour

Source: Researchers' conceptualization from review of literature

Methodology

This study focused on examining the nexus between shopping convenience and repeat purchase behaviour. The study adopted an explanatory research design wherein, a predictor variable (shopping convenience) is used to explain the criterion variable (repeat purchase behaviour). The study was conducted in non-contrived setting. The population of the study comprised patrons of upscale retail stores in Port Harcourt. This population is an infinite and flowing one, hence the study adopted three hundred and eighty-four (384) as its sample size. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from respondents. The instrument was reviewed by experienced academics and business practitioners with relevant experience on the constructs under investigation for validation; it was also subjected to pilot test using a

small group of respondents. It was adjudged valid before being used in the study. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed via the Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability, with a threshold of 0.7 as the acceptable bench mark. The instrument scaled the test. The result of test of reliability indicated a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.711, 0.761, 0.722, 0.712, 0.791, 0.780 and 0.801 respectively for decision convenience, access convenience, search convenience, transaction convenience, possession convenience, post-transaction convenience and repeat purchase behaviour. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation served as the test statistic. The final analysis of the study was based on data gleaned from the responses of three hundred and twenty-seven (327) respondents. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0 was relied upon for the analyses.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Correlation matrix of Dimensions of shopping convenience and repeat purchase Behaviour
Correlations

		Decision Conv.	Access Conv.	Search Conv.	Transac. Conv.	Possess Conv.	Post-transac. Conv.	Repeat Purchase Beh.
Decision Conv.	Pearson Correlation	1	.428**	.471**	.406**	.305**	.334**	.678**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Access Conv.	Pearson Correlation	.428**	.1	.470**	.436**	.378**	.206**	.778**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.578**	.000	.578**	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Search Conv.	Pearson Correlation	.471**	.470**	1	.570**	.462**	.372**	.802**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Transac. Conv.	Pearson Correlation	.406**	.436**	.570**	1	.528**	.473**	.784**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Possession Conv.	Pearson Correlation	.305**	.378**	.462**	.528**	1	.211**	.727**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Post-transac. Conv.	Pearson Correlation	.334**	.206**	.372**	.473**	.211**	1	.708**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Repeat Purchase beh.	Pearson Correlation	.678**	.778**	.802**	.784**	.727**	.708**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output of data analyses on shopping convenience and repeat purchase behaviour (2022).

The results of test of correlation between shopping convenience and repeat purchase behaviour as indicated on Table 1 shows that all the dimensions of shopping convenience have strong connection with repeat purchase behaviour, with correlation coefficients of 0.678, 0.778, 0.784, 0.727, and 0.708; except search convenience with showed a very strong relationship with repeat purchase, with a correlation coefficient of 0.802. The positive sign of all the correlation coefficients denotes that the connection between shopping convenience and repeat purchase behaviour is positive; while the probability value of 0.000 produced by the test, and which is less than the critical value of 0.05 indicates that the correlation between shopping

convenience and repeat purchase behaviour is statistically significant. The null reject the null hypotheses earlier formulated.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the correlation between shopping convenience and repeat purchase behaviour. The tests conducted to determine that magnitude and direction of relationship between the variables reveals that shopping convenience, through decision, access, search, transaction, possession, and post-transaction convenience, has positive and statistically significant correlation with repeat purchase behaviour. These findings concretize the notion that consumers' craving for convenient shopping experience may be satisfied by

according them stress-free, time-saving quick-response retail service. The findings also suggest that improving the ease with which consumers can shop, results in increased patronage and improved performance and competitiveness for retailers serving upscale consumers (Ateke & Daddie, 2018).

The findings also align with reports of previous studies that link convenient shopping experience to customer satisfaction and positive post-purchase behaviours. The findings directly reinforce the report of Ateke and Daddie (2018) that retail convenience has positive influence on customer expansion in the retail sector; and support the report of Gupta (2015) that service convenience informs customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study holds that customer satisfaction and loyalty inform repeat purchase behaviour. The current findings further corroborate the view that service convenience relates to service consumption experience, and relational exchange (Hua & Salam, 2010); and that consumers' expectation of convenience store attributes is the reason for several innovations in retail formats in emerging markets (Bianchi, 2009).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Advances in technology and consumers' need for easier, more comfortable and less time-consuming shopping experience have driven remarkable innovation in retail formats and operations. The aim of most such innovation is to provide today's time-pressed consumers with

remarkably less time and effort-consuming shopping experiences. Retailers, like most other business undertakings become more innovative in the face of adversity; they figure out creative ways of obtaining and combining resources in ways that adequately align their operations to challenges at hand. New retail formats and processes are usually developed in response to sensed shifts in buying behaviour of consumers. Therefore, retailers become more innovative and competitive by sensing change in consumer behaviour and providing new solutions that meet those changes in response.

This study examined the link between shopping convenience and repeat purchase behaviour of upscale consumers in Port Harcourt. Based on the results of the empirical analysis and the discussion of findings which situated the results within extant literature, the study concludes that shopping convenience strongly relates to repeat purchase behaviour of upscale consumers in Port Harcourt; and that repeat purchase behaviour of upscale consumers in Port Harcourt largely depend on the ability of retailers to provide search, transaction, access, possession, post-transaction and decision convenience. Hence, the study recommends that retailers that desire to elicit or enjoy repeat purchase behaviour of upscale consumers in Port Harcourt should orchestrate retail formats, processes and operations that provide search, transaction, access, possession, post-transaction and decision convenience.

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