

## Passengers' shopping motivations and commercial activities at airports – The moderating effects of time pressure and impulse buying tendency

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### H I G H L I G H T S

- ▶ The paper examines shoppers motives and their impacts on airport commercial activities.
- ▶ Data are derived from a sample of shoppers at Taiwan's Taoyuan International Airport.
- ▶ Three key factors were found impacting airport commercial activities.
- ▶ Two moderating variables of time pressure and predisposition to impulse buying were found.

### A R T I C L E I N F O

#### Article history:

Received 28 November 2011

Accepted 29 September 2012

#### Keywords:

Shopping motivations  
Time pressure  
Impulse buying tendency  
Commercial activities  
Airport

### A B S T R A C T

The contribution of retailing to total airport revenue is becoming more important. This study examines the relationship between passengers' shopping motivations and their commercial activities at airports, as well as the moderating effects of time pressure and impulse buying on this relationship. A sample of passenger survey data was collected at Taiwan's Taoyuan International Airport. Three shopping motivations, namely, "favorable price and quality", "environment and communication", and "culture and atmosphere," are identified based on the results of factor analysis. The results reveal that passenger shopping motivations have positive impacts on commercial activities at the airport, and furthermore both time pressure and impulse buying tendency moderate the relationship between shopping motivations and commercial activities.

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### 1. Introduction

As shopping is one of the most popular activities that travelers engage in at airports, retailing thus plays an important role in airport operations (Crawford & Melewar, 2003), and is a valuable source of revenue (Geuens, Vantomme, & Brengman, 2004; Rowley & Slack, 1999). Many airports are thus engaging in initiatives to enlarge and enhance their commercial offerings, with some reporting that non-aviation revenues account for as much as 53 percent of total revenues (Castillo-Manzano, 2009; Graham, 2009; Painvin, 2011; Zhang & Zhang, 1997). Such non-aviation revenues come not only from air passengers, but also from airport employees and visitors, due to the growth of airport-linked business (Kasarda, 2008). A better understanding of the relationship between

travelers' shopping motivations and their commercial activities within an airport could provide airport operators with useful operational and strategic insights, and this is one of the reasons for the current study.

Airports are unique retailing environments in which travelers experience feelings of anxiety, stress and excitement, which can make them react in unusual ways, and thus they are unlike general shoppers in a high street situation. Many travelers suffer from a certain degree of anxiety and/or have certain expectations about their journeys (Crawford & Melewar, 2003; Newman & Lloyd-Jones, 1999), and while waiting for their flights are able to engage in various activities, with the two most popular being shopping and eating (Geuens et al., 2004; Kim & Shin, 2001). Passengers are likely to feel time pressure in an airport for several reasons, such as the security checks, the often long distances between passport control and the gates, and the generally non-familiar environment, which can be very disorienting. To avoid this, many people now arrive very early for their flights, and thus there has been an increase in passenger "dwell time", the time spent within the terminal building prior to departure, and identified as a 'happy hour' by

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Thomas (1997). In addition, airports provide an environment that can trigger passengers' impulsive buying behaviors, with highly impulsive shoppers being especially receptive to sudden, unexpected buying ideas (Omar & Kent, 2001). Geuens et al. (2004) argue that almost 60 percent of air travelers can be categorized as impulsive buyers, while Topping (2010) estimates that 27 percent of airport purchases are made on impulse. This environment has attracted the interest of many major retailers (Grant, 2006). Therefore, we postulate time pressure and the impulse buying tendency act as salient two personal characteristics of passengers in their commercial activities in an airport context.

In this study we investigate the relationship between passengers' shopping motivations and commercial activities within an airport environment. Furthermore, the moderating effects of passengers' time pressure and impulse buying tendency on the motivation–activity relationship are also examined to provide more insights into air passengers' shopping behavior.

## 2. Conceptual background and hypothesis development

### 2.1. Shopping motivation

When contrasted with daily shopping routines and venues, the exotic stimuli and situations provided by an airport may evoke shopping motivations that differ from those for general shopping. Geuens et al. (2004) categorize four different types of airport shopping motivations: (1) functional motivation (such as a good price, convenience and quality shopping); (2) experiential motivation (such as promotions and buying to indulge oneself); (3) airport-atmosphere-related motivation (such as impulse purchasing, pre-planned purchases and purchasing out of boredom); and (4) airport-infrastructure-related motivation (such as service in the shops, and multilingual staff and promotional materials). Their results show that 35 percent of airport users are converted to purchasers, reflecting the influences of the airport environment and the psychological factors of air travel in passenger purchasing behavior. In addition, gift buying, either for a friend or to take advantage of duty-free offers (Omar & Kent, 2001) is one dominant shopping aim in the airport retailing context (Perng, Chow, & Liao, 2010). Therefore, we propose our first hypothesis, as follows:

**H1.** Passengers' shopping motivations have a positive effect on their commercial activities within an airport.

### 2.2. Time pressure

Time pressure is widely viewed and treated as a situational variable affecting consumers' decision-making within a store environment (Herrington & Capella, 1995; Iyer, 1989; Vermeir & Van Kenhove, 2005). Bowes (2002) identifies time and emotion as two of the key factors affecting passengers' shopping behaviors within an international airport terminal. In particular, after arriving at the airport and receiving their boarding passes, the passengers' excitement remains high while their stress levels are reduced (Thomas, 1997). According to the "travel stress curve", passengers' stress levels vary during the time spent at the airport (Scholvinck, 2000). The curve identifies the period between 'immigration' and 'pre-flight security' as the 'captive customer segment,' because the stress level decreases significantly during this period and encourages passengers to engage in commercial activities. According to Kim and Kim (2008), the level of time pressure significantly moderates the influence of shopping enjoyment on the browsing mode. Holiday and leisure travelers are found to spend more of their time in the terminal compared to business travelers, who

usually experience higher levels of time pressure (Tosic, 1992). In addition, Torres, Domínguez, Valdés, and Aza (2005) find out that business travelers tend to consume more than vacation travelers when the boarding time is less than 45 min. Therefore, we propose our second hypothesis, as follows:

**H2.** Passengers' time pressure moderates the relationship between shopping motivations and commercial activities within an airport.

### 2.3. Impulse buying tendency

Impulse buying behavior refers to an unplanned and spur-of-the-moment decision to purchase (McGoldrick, 1990). Non-economic reasons, such as fun, fantasy and social or emotional gratification, may trigger consumers to purchase impulsively (Hausman, 2000). Consumer shopping behavior may change due to the exciting and non-home atmosphere of travel. Thomas (1997) examines how emotional shifts in terms of the level of stress and excitement affect travelers' impulsive buying behavior in an airport environment. After receiving their boarding passes, passengers experience lower stress levels, but experience a period of high excitement, referred to as a 'happy hour' (Scholvinck, 2000; Thomas, 1997). Due to the different psychological effects of travelers' varied travel experiences and normative traits, impulse shopping behavior is expected to vary significantly among customer segments. Therefore, understanding and manipulating passengers' impulse buying tendencies are two ways to enhance the financial performance of airports (Omar & Kent, 2001). Therefore, we propose our third hypothesis, as follows:

**H3.** Passengers' impulse buying tendency moderates the relationship between shopping motivations and commercial activities within an airport.

Fig. 1 presents the model of our hypotheses.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants and procedure

A self-administered questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect data from air passengers at Taiwan's Taoyuan International Airport from January 20 to February 12, 2011. Due to the unavailability of an air passenger population, we employed the convenience sampling method to collect survey data. The questionnaire was distributed to potential respondents after their willingness to take part in the survey was ascertained. A total of 630 questionnaires were distributed, and 600 usable samples were obtained after deleting incomplete ones, yielding a response rate of 95.2%.

The sample consisted of 45.7% males and 54.3% females. The majority of respondents (55.3%) were aged between 21 and 40.

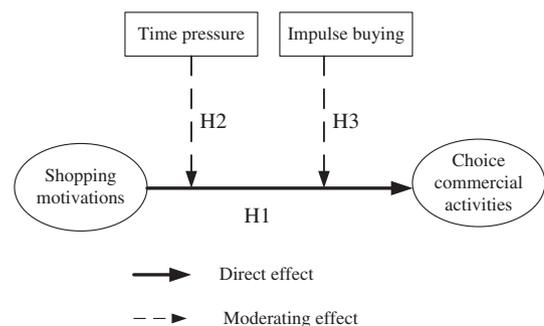


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

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