Antecedents to the Perceived Value of a Shopping Mall: 
A Comparison between Teenage and Adult Consumers

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Abstract
This research empirically analyzes the differences between adult and teenage consumers as to how they evaluate a shopping mall. It investigates the antecedents to the perceived value of a shopping mall and compares the results obtained with the two groups. The effects of atmosphere, self-congruity and merchandise quality are examined focusing on the moderator impact of the generation (e.g. adult versus teenager). Findings indicate that, mall atmosphere positively affects merchandise perceived quality for both adults and teenagers. However, as expected, the impact of atmosphere on self-congruity is only significant for teenagers. Moreover, the authors suggest the self-congruity and perceived quality relationship to be in the opposite directions for teenagers and adults. More specifically, self-congruity positively affects teenagers’ perceptions of quality and quality positively affects adults’ experience of self-congruity. Finally, mall atmosphere, self-congruity and merchandise quality positively affect the perceived value of the mall for both adult and teenage consumers. These results are interpreted in terms of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Introduction
Representing 60 million consumers in America (Neuborne and Kerwin, 1999), Generation Y is the most important demographic cohort after the baby-boomer generation (Foot and Stoffman, 2000). Born between 1980 and 1995 (Foot and Stoffman, 2000), these young consumers are today between 13 and 28 years old and many of them are presently teenagers (Morton, 2002). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are approximately 30 million teenagers (13-19 years old) in America.
Important not only in number, teenagers have important buying power. Generation Y is the group of teenagers having the most money ever to spent - 51% more than the teenagers in 1995 (Morton, 2002). According to Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU) estimates, America’s teenagers were predicted to spend 159 million in 2005 and the average teenager spends more than 100 dollars per week (Zollo, 2004).

Distinctive characteristics of the teenage market are well recognized in marketing (Zollo, 2004). They have specific lifestyles, motivations and values (Zollo, 1999). Consequently, the traditional marketing strategies used with baby-boomers would not be efficient with young consumers (Bao and Shao, 2002; Neuborne and Kerwin, 1999). Moreover, the distinctive buying habits they display today will likely follow them as they enter the high-spending years of young adulthood (Neuborne and Kerwin 1999).

Teenagers are important consumers for shopping malls. Teenagers enjoy shopping. It is for them exciting, interesting and fun (Taylor and Cosenza, 2002). According to Mediamark Research Inc.’s Teen Market Profile (2004), teenagers mainly shop at the shopping mall and visit the mall more frequently than other age group consumers. Interestingly, they would still prefer to shop in the stores of a mall than on Internet or by catalogue (Quart, 2004) - 44% of teenagers would be frequenting the mall during the weekend (Zollo, 2004).

These statistics are especially interesting in a context where traditional shopping malls market tends to be saturated (Doherty, 1991) and even in decline as the competition from a variety of retail formats gets stronger than ever (Barnes, 2005). Faced with this strong competition, the shopping mall environment is recognized as a capital attribute to offer an exciting shopping experience to consumers (e.g. Wakefield and Baker, 1998). Although the influence of the
retail environment on consumers’ attitudes and behaviours has been a research area of great interest in the last decades (see Turley and Milliman, 2000 for a review), the effects of the environment on teenagers’ responses has received little attention. Therefore, the purpose of this study is twofold: first, to investigate the mechanism by which the mall atmosphere affects the mall perceived value through self-congruity and merchandise perceived quality and, second, to compare the results obtained with teenage and adult consumers.

Theoretical background and research hypotheses

We first investigate the relationships underlying the mechanism by which the atmosphere influences the mall perceived value for both adult and teenage consumers (H1 to H4). We will afterwards focus on the moderator impact of the generation (H5 to H8). In other words, we will examine how the generation to which the consumer belongs (e.g. teenager versus adult) influences this mechanism.

Mall atmosphere and perceived quality

The concept “atmospherics” comes from Kotler (1973) who defined “atmospherics” as the conscious designing of space to create certain effects on buyers. “Atmospherics” contributes to the retail environment quality and represents a considerable differentiation aspect within the marketing strategy. It influences consumers’ cognitive (e.g. beliefs, categorization, symbolic meaning), emotional (e.g. mood, attitude) and physiological (e.g. pain, comfort, etc.) responses which in return generate approach and avoidance behaviours (Bitner, 1992). The atmosphere of a store can thus be used by retailers as an effective message-creating medium in order to give information to their consumers (Kotler, 1973).

According to the inference theory (Nisbett and Ross, 1981), consumers use information that is available to them (e.g. atmospherics cues) as a basis for evaluating unavailable, missing or difficult to evaluate information (e.g. price and quality) (Baker, 1998; Huber and McCann,
Several articles have indeed demonstrated that consumers infer quality of merchandise based on store atmosphere (e.g. Baker and al., 2002; Baker, Grewal and Parasuraman, 1994; Espinoza and al., 2004; Mazursky and Jacoby, 1985; Olshavsky, 1985). In a shopping mall context, Chebat & Michon (2003) and Michon, Chebat & Turley (2005) found that the ambient scent in a shopping mall environment influenced the perception of product quality through the perception of the mall atmosphere. The shopping mall plays the role of a global packaging for the products sold (Chebat and Michon, 2003).

**H1: Mall atmosphere positively affects perceived quality of merchandise offered at the mall for both (a) adult consumers and (b) teenage consumers.**

*Mall atmosphere and self-congruity*

Consumers’ evaluation of products, brands and stores are not only determined by functional criteria, as quality, but also by symbolic or value-expressive evaluation criteria, as self-congruity (e.g. Kressmann and al., 2006; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy and al., 1991). Symbolic criteria refer to the stereotypic images of users of a product or a store (e.g. younger versus older consumers). Stereotypic patron image and shopper’s self-concept are compared, resulting in self-congruity. Self-congruity is thus defined, in a retail context, as the matching process between shoppers’ self-concept and patron image. Several environment cues such as, atmospheric cues, location cues, merchandise cues, price cues and promotions cues, influence consumers’ impressions of the typical patrons of a store (Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg; 2000).

Chebat, Sirgy and St-James (2006) demonstrated, in a shopping mall context, that the effect of mall image on store image can be explained by self-congruity. They found that upscale malls
generated higher levels of self-congruity which in return enhanced store quality perceptions. Moreover, El-Hedhli, Chebat and Sirgy (2008) analyzed how different dimensions of mall image influenced self-congruity, commitment to the mall and mall loyalty. They found that self-congruity was determined by mall environment, product quality, and service quality perceptions.

**H2**: *Mall atmosphere positively affects self-congruity for both (a) adult consumers and (b) teenage consumers.*

*Perceived value of a mall*

The positive relationship between merchandise perceived quality and merchandise perceived value is well established in the literature (e.g. Baker and al., 2002; Espinoza and al., 2004; Zeithaml, 1988). Moreover, Bolton and Drew (1991) showed the positive relationship between service quality and perceived value of the service.

**H3**: *Perceived quality of merchandise offered at the mall positively affects mall perceived value for both (a) adult consumers and (b) teenage consumers.*

Several studies have also demonstrated that self-congruity enhances consumer’s store image evaluation, patronage intentions, mall commitment and store/mall loyalty (Bellenger, Steinberg and Stanton, 1976; Chebat, Sirgy and St-James, 2006; El-Hedhli, Chebat and Sirgy, 2008; Sirgy and al, 1991; Sirgy and Samli, 1985; Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg, 2000).

**H4**: *Self-congruity positively affects mall perceived value for both (a) adult consumers and (b) teenage consumers.*
Generation as moderator

We propose that the mechanism by which the mall atmosphere affects the mall perceived value varies depending on the generation to which the consumer belongs (e.g. teenager versus adult). Our moderation hypotheses are based on Petty and Cacioppo (1986)’s Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM).

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986)’s Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), there are two distinct routes to persuasion leading to an attitude change: the central route and the peripheral route to persuasion. The central route implies the processing of the message issue-relevant arguments (central merits) and requires additional cognitive effort. On the other hand, peripheral cues (e.g. expertise of the source) can affect consumer’s attitude without a depth processing of the message arguments. The motivation and the ability to process can moderate the route to persuasion by increasing or decreasing the message arguments (e.g. central cues) processing. In other words, depending on consumers’ motivation and ability to process, peripheral cues are more or less important determinants of persuasion. When individuals don’t have the motivation and the ability (e.g. necessary skills) to process message issue-relevant arguments, they base their evaluation on peripheral cues that are easier to evaluate.

ELM application

As mentioned earlier, the atmosphere of a store can be used by retailers as a message-creating medium in order to give information to their consumers (Kotler, 1973). Furthermore, according to the ELM, an information message can be processed using peripheral or central
cues, which in return affect consumers’ attitude. Merchandise quality can be considered as a central cue (e.g. central merit cue) and self-congruity as a peripheral cue in our study context. Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg (2000) proposed some moderating variables to the impact of self-congruity and functional congruity on retail patronage, including knowledge and prior experience. Functional congruity is defined as the matching process between functional attributes (e.g. quality) and shoppers’ ideal utilitarian store attributes. According to the authors, a consumer having more experience and knowledge is better equipped to evaluate stores’ functional attributes. On the other hand, novice shoppers may not be able to evaluate the utilitarian criteria and thus rely on more simplistic cues, such as patron image. Thus, functional criteria (e.g. quality) have more impact than self-congruity on experienced consumers’ behaviours and the opposite for less experienced consumers.

Given their age, teenagers are usually less experienced consumers than adults and acquire functional consumption-skills as they get older (Moschis and Churchill, 1979; Moschis and Moore, 1978; Shim, 1996). Mallalieu and Palan (2006) investigated teenagers’ competence in a retail setting. They interviewed 31 teenage girls (13-14 years) and found that young consumers were aware of brands, were conscious of store images and had clear preferences for some stores. However, many had trouble making purchase decision, were not confident in their purchases, needed advice to help them make their decisions and were unwilling or unable to efficiently use all the information available in the retail environment. For instance, many avoid some stores and were not comfortable in interacting with salespeople. The authors concluded that: “as teenagers acquire more expertise and experience as shoppers and as they mature mentally in term of brain function, many of self-confidence and self-control issues that seem to affect their ability to utilize retail resources effectively may diminish”.
We thus propose that peripheral cues (e.g. self-congruency) are more important determinants of persuasion than central cues (e.g. merchandise quality) for teenagers when they process the available information in the retail environment. On the other hand, peripheral cues are less important determinants of persuasion than central cues for adults.

Moreover, the social and hedonic dimensions of shopping are very important for young consumers. Shopping malls represent social and experiential meeting places for young consumers where they like to spend their free time and to hang out with friends (Haytko and Baker, 2004; Taylor and Cosenza, 2002; Wilhelm and Mottner, 2005; Zollo, 2004). Indeed, being with friends is what teenagers like the most about shopping (Tootelian and Gaedeke, 1992) and peers represent their main source of information for making purchase decisions (Mallalieu and Palan, 2006; Moschis and Moore, 1978) in product categories including clothes and accessories, food consumed outside the home and gifts (Tootelian and Gaedeke, 1992).

Mangleburg, Doney and Bristol (2004) examined why teenagers mainly shop with friends. They analyzed the relationship between friends’ social influence and teenagers’ retailing attitudes and behaviours. Interestingly, they found that shopping with friends provides information to teenagers by which they evaluate retail phenomena, aids them in defining positive identities and, consequently, improves their shopping ability (e.g. better evaluation of the retail environment).
On the other hand, some studies carried out with adults have demonstrated that consumers’ evaluations and behaviours are more influenced by functional congruity (e.g. functional criteria) than by self-congruity (e.g. Sirgy and al, 1991; Sirgy and Samli, 1985).

Based on past literature, we argue that teenagers are more motivated to process value-expressive evaluative criteria, (e.g. self-congruity) than utilitarian criteria (e.g. merchandise quality) when they process the available information in the retail environment in contrast to adult consumers.

We thus propose that the generation to which the consumer belongs moderates the relationship between the atmosphere and the perceived value of the mall.

\[ H5: \text{The mediating impact of self-congruity to the relationship between atmosphere and perceived value of the mall is more important for teenage than for adult consumers.} \]

\[ H6: \text{The mediating impact of perceived merchandise quality to the relationship between atmosphere and perceived value of the mall is more important for adult than for teenage consumers.} \]

\textit{Quality and self-congruity}

As mentioned earlier, different cues available in the environment (e.g. atmosphere and quality) are used by consumers to make inferences about patrons of a store (Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg, 2000). The perceived quality of products offered at the mall was also shown to predict self-congruity (El-Hedhli, Chebat and Sirgy, 2008). Perceived merchandise quality would thus influence self-congruity.
However, we also find support in the literature for the inverse relationship. Functional congruity is biased by self-congruity. Shoppers who experience self-congruity evaluate store functional attributes in a more favourable way than those who experience self-incongruity (Sirgy and al., 1991; Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg, 2000). This biasing effect was also demonstrated in a mall context. Chebat, Sirgy and St-James (2006) found that the higher the self-congruity the more likely the stores in a mall were perceived as having high quality.

As we argue that adult consumers have the motivation and the ability to process central quality cues, we suggest that they use this information to make inferences about patrons of a store. Their quality perceptions thus affect their self-congruity experience.

*H7: Perceived quality of merchandise positively affects self-congruity for adult consumers.*

As we argue that teenagers don’t have the motivation and the necessary skills to process central functional cues, such as merchandise quality, we suggest that their quality perceptions are biased by their experience of self-congruity.

*H8: Self-congruity positively affects merchandise perceived quality for teenage consumers.*

Our conceptual model is graphically presented in Figure 1. As examined in past research, we analyze the impact of mall atmosphere on mall perceived value through merchandise quality and self-congruity. However, we argue that the mediating impact of these evaluative criteria is moderated by the generation to which the consumer belongs. More specifically, we argue that the mediating impact of perceived merchandise quality is more important for adults than for teenagers. On the other hand, self-congruity is more important for teenagers for adults. Based on our moderation hypotheses, we
posit the self-congruity and perceived quality relationship to be in the opposite directions for teenagers and adults.

**FIGURE 1**
Conceptual framework

Method

*Data collection and sample*

The study took place in an urban North-American shopping mall. Data were collected during seven days, from March 31 to April 6, 2003 (opening to the closing hours). Mall intercept technique was used to administer the questionnaire. Participants were intercepted at the mall while they were shopping and asked to complete a survey. The questionnaire was developed in both French and English. Measurement indicators included in the questionnaire were first translated into French and then translated back into English. In order to obtain a representative sample, data were collected about the daily and weekly average patronage distribution of the mall.

In total, 265 usable questionnaires were obtained: 153 adults (25 to 64 years old) and 112 teenagers (16 to 18 years old). Seventy percent of the adult participants were between the age of 25 and 34. The adult sample contained 77 men and 76 women whereas the teenage sample
contained 23 men and 89 women. Slightly more participants were French-speaking in both adult (63%) and teenage (66%) samples. The distribution of English-speaking and French-speaking shoppers was similar between the adult and the teenage samples ($\chi^2 = 0.20$, $df=1$, $p=0.70$). However, the gender distribution was significantly different in the two groups ($\chi^2=24.43$, $df=1$, $p=0.00$). Some multiple regressions were thus conducted to control for the potential impact of gender. For each of the studied relationship, the direct and moderator impacts of both generation and gender were simultaneously investigated. Gender was found to have no direct or moderator impact, except for a direct impact on the perceived value of the mall ($b=-0.279$, $p=0.08$). Men evaluated the mall more positively than did women.

**Measurement**

Three items from Fisher’s (1974) environmental quality scale were used to measure the mall perceived atmosphere. Self-congruity was measured with two items adapted from Sirgy and al. (1997). Merchandise perceived quality offered at the mall was measured with three items adapted from Bellizzi, Crowley and Hasty (1983). All these latter items were measured with 7-point scales. Finally, mall perceived value was measured with a 10-point bipolar scale adapted from Bolton and Drew (1991) measuring the overall evaluation of the shopping mall. Sociodemographic variables were also included in the questionnaire. Measurement indicators, including confirmatory factor analysis loadings, are presented in table 1.
### TABLE 1
Measurement indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor loadings</th>
<th>Coefficient alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mall atmosphere</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher (1974) – 3 items (7-point scales)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to which point is each one of the following adjectives appropriate with what you perceived today of the environment of this shopping center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Boring / Stimulating</td>
<td>T: 0.738; A: 0.872</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dull / Bright</td>
<td>T: 0.740; A: 0.836</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uninteresting / Interesting</td>
<td>T: 0.770; A: 0.909</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Merchandise perceived quality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellizzi, Crowley and Hasty (1983) – 3 items (7-point scales)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How would you qualify the style of the products proposed in this shopping center:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdated / Up to date</td>
<td>T: 0.674; A: 0.821</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is the product selection of this shopping center Inadequate / Adequate</td>
<td>T: 0.673; A: 0.872</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The quality of the products available in this shopping center in rather:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low / High</td>
<td>T: 0.694; A: 0.764</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-congruity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirgy and al. (1997) – 2 items (7-point scales)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can identify with the typical customer who shops at this shopping mall</td>
<td>T: 0.935; A: 0.879</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The typical customers at this shopping mall are very much like me</td>
<td>T: 0.782; A: 0.832</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mall perceived value</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolton and Drew (1991) – 1 item (10-point scale)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Globally, is your evaluation of the shopping centre? Clearly below your/ Clearly above your expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: 0.79; A: 0.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: 0.71; A: 0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T: 0.82; A : 0.85</td>
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</table>

A= Adults; T= Teenagers

### Analysis and results

We used EQS (6.1 for Windows) to estimate a structural equation model (e.g. figure 1) with the maximum likelihood estimation (ML) method. Moreover, to analyze the differences
between adult and teenage consumers, we estimated a multigroup model with latent means. This way, we could compare the means for the same latent variable between the two groups (Bollen, 1989). Teenage and adult samples were pooled together and the latent means were fixed at 0 for the reference group - adults. Given that perceived value of the mall was measured with only one indicator, the error variance of this variable was fixed at 0.

The model shows excellent goodness of fit (Method = ML; $\chi^2 = 66.475, df=56, p= 0.16; CFI=0.991; \text{RMSEA}=0.042, \text{SRMR}= 0.044$). Only the latent mean of merchandise quality was significantly different between adults and teenagers. It was higher for teenagers. The multigroup analysis was then conducted to test whether the structural parameters were changing across the two groups. An invariant model structure between teenagers and adults was first assumed, except for the direction of the relationship between self-congruity and perceived quality. The Lagrange multiplier (LM) test accepted all constraints except the one linking atmosphere and identification. This constraint was thus released.

As recommended by Kline (2005) for a multigroup analysis, the unstandardized coefficients are presented in figure 1. The results show that mall atmosphere significantly affects merchandise perceived quality for both adults and teenagers ($\beta=0.555, t=8.590$). H1(a)(b) is supported. However, the effect of atmosphere on self-congruity is only significant for the teenage group ($\beta_{\text{teens}}=0.807, t=5.00; \beta_{\text{adults}}=-0.022, t=-0.159$). H2(a) is not supported and H2(b) supported. Furthermore, self-congruity positively affects teenagers’ perceptions of quality ($\beta=0.144, t=2.44$) and quality positively affects adult’s experience of self-congruity ($\beta=0.709, t=4.16$). H7 and H8 are thus supported. Finally, mall atmosphere ($\beta=0.260, t=2.744$), self-congruity ($\beta=0.429, t=6.305$) and perceived quality ($\beta=0.626, t=4.701$) positively affect the perceived value of the mall for both adult and teenage consumers. The
impact of atmosphere on perceived value is thus partially mediated by self-congruity and quality. These results also support H3 and H4.

Even if the opposite direction of the relationship between quality and self-congruity for adult and teenage consumers was supported by the results, to avoid any doubt, we estimated two other models in which quality positively affects self-congruity and the opposite for both adults and teenagers. These models were found to be statistically equivalent but didn’t fit our conceptual framework. They were thus not retained.

**FIGURE 2**

*Multigroup Path Analysis*

*Unstandardized Coefficients with Test Statistics (*t*-value)*

A = Adults; T = Teenagers
All paths constrained except otherwise indicated

(METHOD = ML; $\chi^2 = 66.475$, df=56, $p$ = 0.16; CFI=0.991; RMSEA=0.042, SRMR = 0.044)

Moreover, H5 and H6 test the moderated mediation relationships between mall atmosphere and mall value, though self-congruity and merchandise quality. According to Muller, Judd and Yzerbyt (2005) moderated mediation happens if the mediating process that is responsible
for producing the effect of the independent on the depending variable depends on the value of a moderator variable. As mentioned earlier, the impact of atmosphere on self-congruity is only significant for teenagers ($\beta_{\text{teens}}=0.807$, $t=5.00$; $\beta_{\text{adults}}=-0.022$, $t=-0.159$). The mediating impact of self-congruity is thus more important for teenage than for adult consumers. H5 is supported. However, mall atmosphere affects mall perceived value through perceived quality for both adults and teenagers. Thus, the mediating impact of perceived merchandise quality is not more important for adult than for teenage consumers. H6 is not supported.

**Discussion**

Mall atmosphere is an effective message-creating medium (Kotler, 1973) for mall managers by which they can effectively give information to their consumers. Indeed, consistent with past research, the atmosphere of a mall provides information to consumers on mall typical patrons (e.g. Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg, 2000) (e.g. directly for teenagers and indirectly for adults through quality) and merchandise quality (e.g. Chebat and Michon, 2003), which in return influence their mall value perceptions. However, adult and teenage consumers don’t use the environmental information in the same way. In other words, the mechanism by which the perceived atmosphere of the mall influences the mall perceived value differs depending on the generation to which the consumer belongs.

Self-congruity is the central element explaining the differences between the two groups. Consistent with past studies, self-congruity plays an important complementary role (e.g. Sirgy and al., 1991) when adults evaluate a shopping mall, but quality is the central element influencing their value perceptions. The information provided through the mall atmosphere is decoded in terms of central merchandise quality cues, which in return are used by adult consumers to make inferences about the typical patrons. Adult consumers use the central
route to persuasion implying the deep processing of the message issue-relevant arguments, as quality cues (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

On the other hand, self-congruity plays a central role and quality a secondary role for teenagers. The information provided through the mall atmosphere is decoded by teenagers in terms of both symbolic cues (e.g. self-congruity) and utilitarian cues (e.g. merchandise quality). Because teenagers are usually less knowledgeable consumers than adults and the social dimension of shopping is very important for young consumers, we argue that teenagers don’t have the motivation and the necessary skills to process central functional cues, such as merchandise quality, independently of the peripheral cue self-congruity (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). We thus suggest that teenagers’ quality perceptions are biased by their self-congruity experience meaning that teenagers are more likely to evaluate merchandise quality in a favourable way when they experience self-congruity. This partly explains that merchandise perceived quality is judged as higher by teenagers than by adults.

Consistent with past research (e.g. Mangleburg, Doney and Bristol, 2004; Wilhelm and Mottner, 2005), these findings highlight the importance to teenagers of patronizing teen friendly malls where they can identify themselves with the typical consumer. Obviously, a shopping mall cannot target only teenage or adult consumers. For this reason, creating different sections in the shopping mall (e.g. teen friendly sections and adult sections) could represent an effective solution. Adult sections could be developed in order to encourage adults’ favourable quality inferences (e.g. restaurants and stores targeting adult consumers) and teenage sections to enhance teenagers’ self-congruity experience (e.g. young salespeople, young music).
Finally, findings indicate a direct impact of atmosphere on mall perceived value, which suggest that the atmosphere is an evaluative criterion by itself. This result is consistent with past literature. The environmental experience was indeed shown to be an important mall choice criterion (Bellenger, Robertson and Greenberg, 1977; Bearden, 1977; Gentry and Burns, 1977; Wakefield and Baker, 1998).

**Future research and limits**

Additional research would be necessary to confirm and generalize these findings. Our moderation hypotheses are based on the proposition that teenage and adult consumers don’t have the same shopping motivations and don’t process the information provided through the mall atmosphere in the same way (e.g. central versus peripheral processing). However, these propositions are theory driven and were not directly tested. An interesting future study could then compare and measure teenagers’ and adults’ hedonic and utilitarian shopping motivation. The need for cognition could be also investigated. Directly examining these questions would provide a robust theoretical explanation to the observed differences between adult and teenage markets.

In addition, our findings and past research indicate that self-congruity is a central concept to the understanding of teenagers’ shopping attitudes and behaviours. However, self-congruity has, to our knowledge, never been empirically studied with a teenage population. Further research could then investigate in a more detailed way the antecedents (e.g. store design, employees’ characteristics, type of music) to teenagers’ self-congruity experience and its impact on their shopping behaviour (e.g. money spent, shopping frequency).
Finally, the value construct was measured with only one item assessing the overall evaluation of the shopping mall. Future research could investigate how adults and teenagers evaluate the hedonic and utilitarian values of a shopping mall. Past studies suggest that teenage shoppers could potentially be more hedonic than adult shoppers (e.g. Taylor and Cosenza, 2002).

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