

THE MALL AS ENTERTAINMENT: EXPLORING TEEN GIRLS' TOTAL SHOPPING EXPERIENCES

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Overview

Teenage girls comprise a market segment of great importance to malls. Research indicates that 88% of girls aged 13–17 years say they love to shop, compared with 55% of Americans aged 21–62 years and that teens make almost 40% more trips to the mall than shoppers in other age groups do. Teenagers also spend \$97.3 billion annually. This generation is very different from the generations that preceded it in terms of racial diversity, growing up in dual-income households and computer usage and literacy. Traditional quantitative measures of retail/mall characteristics and their relationship to patronage behaviors may fail to capture completely the emotional content of the shopping experience. Furthermore, most retail research has been conducted on adults. We use a depth interviewing technique that is designed to “get into the minds” of female teenage shoppers, and allow them to talk about their mall experiences in their own language. The primary purpose of our study is to explore teenage girls’ total shopping

experiences at the mall. A secondary objective is to explore the impact of the Internet on teen girls' shopping behaviors and mall patronage.



■ Introduction

During the 1980s the mall was a popular destination for shopping and recreation; however, recent trends indicate that mall patronage is declining (Pacelle, 1997), and fewer consumers say they go to the mall because they enjoy the experience (Berry, 1996; Chandler, 1995). Academic research has revealed that many consumers are apt to make a decision about where to shop on the basis of their attitudes toward the mall's tenant mix and environment (Finn and Louviere, 1996; Gentry and Burns, 1978). In the retailing literature, there have been numerous studies on the characteristics or images of individual stores that attract customers, but limited research on consumer response to malls has been conducted. Additionally, no academic research examines the mall shopping experience from the point of view of teenage girls.

Teenage girls comprise a market segment of great importance to malls. According to the 1997 Annual Consumer Survey by the retail consulting firm of Kurt Salmon Associates, 88% of girls aged 13–17 years say they love to shop, compared with 55% of Americans ages 21 to 62 (Beck, 1997). Teens make almost 40% more trips to the mall than do shoppers in other age groups (Munk, 1997). Teenagers spend \$97.3 billion annually; almost a third (\$33 billion) of which goes towards clothing (Ebenkamp, 1999). In fact, apparel is the biggest expenditure in a teen girl's budget (Ebenkamp, 1998).

In addition, the number of teens ages 12–17, currently 23.2 million will soar to 26 million within the next five years and this number is expected to increase 10% by 2010 (McCarthy, 1998). *Business Week* recently referred to this group of consumers as "Generation Y" (Neuborne and Kerwin, 1999). This new generation, currently in their teen years, is believed to be the biggest thing to hit marketers since the baby boomers. J. Walker Smith, a managing partner at Yankelovich Partners Inc., says, "This is not about teenage marketing. It's about the coming of age of a generation." (Neuborne and Kerwin, 1999).

As the initial stage of this new group hits the marketplace, its members are making it clear that firms hoping to win their hearts and wallets will have to learn to think like they do, and not like the generations that preceded them. This generation is very different. It is racially diverse in

that one in three is not Caucasian. One in four lives in a single parent household. Three in four have working mothers. These kids have been computer and Internet literate since nursery school (Neuborne and Kerwin, 1999). In addition, the favorite "hangout" for this group of young consumers is the local mall, and they are willing and able to spend money.

Prior research has suggested that emotion is a driving force behind why and where people shop (e.g., Dawson, Bloch and Ridgway, 1990; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Babin and Darden, 1996). Furthermore, it is expected that the retail economy will be increasingly driven by experience as opposed to transactions (Welles, 1999). Traditional quantitative measures of retail characteristics and their relationships to patronage behaviors may fail to capture completely the emotional/experiential content of the mall visit. Furthermore, most retail research has been conducted on adult samples. Giving teens scales to measure retail image and shopping behaviors that were developed for the adult market could lead to serious error in the validity of the data collected.

Thus, marketing researchers need to start over to determine the best way to measure teens' shopping experiences. This will require "getting into the mind of the customer" through depth interviewing techniques. These techniques are superior to quantitative survey methods for uncovering the emotional and experiential motives for shopping, and they allow the teens to talk about their shopping experiences in their own language.

The primary purpose of this study is to explore teenage girls' total experiences at the mall, focusing on clothes shopping. We will develop an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the mall and of entertainment within the context of the total shopping experience from the unique perspective of the teenage girl. Such understanding can provide marketing guidance to mall developers and designers.

Many of today's teens also surf the Internet to examine many products including clothing, books and CDs, but do they buy? It is important for mall developers to understand the impact of the Internet on traditional store retailing, particularly for a group that is so comfortable with the medium. Uppermost in many retailers' minds is the question of how much the Internet will supplant stores and malls in the future. We found no research on how the Internet might impact traditional retail shopping, particularly clothes shopping, among teenage girls. Therefore, to fulfill a secondary research objective, we asked teenage girls to share their attitudes and opinions about shopping on the Internet.

■ Method

Given that the key issue of the proposed project involved studying the total shopping experience from the unique viewpoint of teenage girls, a

traditional survey was unlikely to provide the depth needed to understand their perceptions. Thus, the data for this study were collected through phenomenological depth interviews with 22 volunteer participants. The participants were selected not by age but by the socio-cultural environmental influence of education. Thus, the participants were grouped according to the designators of middle-school, high-school and college. The age ranges represented in the study are 12–19. Interviews were conducted in two cities: Denver, Colorado and Fort Worth, Texas. Participants included Caucasians, African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans.

The interviews followed the phenomenological format, i.e., they focused on the perspectives of the participants (Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989). The primary aim of this type of qualitative investigation is to understand experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel or perceive it. The depth-interview method offered the opportunity to gain insight into the teen girls' subjective experience of shopping. As a result, the course of the interview dialogue was set largely by the participant, i.e., the interviewer's questions were formulated in concert with the participant's reflections and were directed at bringing about more thorough descriptions of specific experiences. The only interviewer-initiated portion of the interview was the opening question: "When I say clothes shopping, what comes to mind?" However, over the course of the interviews, we developed new questions that directed the participants to focus more on the key research topics. One such question was: "If you could create your ultimate mall, what would you put in it?"

Each interview was conducted on a one-to-one basis with the participant and interviewer. The average length of the interview was one hour. Interviews with high-school and college girls were easy to schedule and complete. Interviews with middle-school girls provided a challenge. Girls this age tend to be shy in front of strangers and without the social support network of their friends. Thus, we developed a new way to gain their trust and get them to "open-up" during the interviews by asking a group of friends to participate together. We invited them to a pool party, providing them food, drinks and a pool to play in. Then we brought one participant at a time into the house to complete the interview. The girls were not allowed to discuss the interview or the study while they were in the company of other participants. This party method worked to make each participant feel comfortable in the surroundings and with the researchers.

The interviews were recorded on audiotapes and transcribed verbatim. The analyses of the verbatim interview transcripts involved a narrative, part-to-whole reading strategy by which we developed a holistic understanding of each transcript, while noting similarities and differences across transcripts.

■ Limitations

As with any qualitative research project, the trade-off exists between number of subjects and "richness" and depth of data. The average number of participants in academic research articles utilizing depth-interviewing methods is 15 (e.g., *Journal of Consumer Research*). However, the amount of data generated by this low number of participants is extensive. While we have a large amount of data, it cannot be generalized to the entire population of teenage girls in the United States. Thus, this research has the limitation of addressing only the perceptions of the current group of participants at the current time. However, it may be argued that this group of teens is not significantly different from other teens in their cohort.

■ Results

This section is divided into five major parts, based upon the five categories of results: mall use, mall behavior, characteristics of favorite malls, the "ideal mall," and Internet use. Tables 1–3 contain a list of the participants

TABLE 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL RESPONDENTS

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Dual Income Household
Brooke	12	Caucasian	X
Jessica	12	Caucasian	
Reagain	12	Caucasian	X
Marcy	12	Caucasian	X
Khaki	12	Caucasian	X
Michele	14	Caucasian	
Chelsea	13	Caucasian	X
Haley	12	Caucasian	X

TABLE 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH SCHOOL RESPONDENTS

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Dual Income Household
Crosby	14	Caucasian	X
Amy	15	Hispanic	X
Jenny	17	Hispanic	X
Kenna	17	Caucasian	X
Mattie	18	Caucasian	
Veronica	17	Hispanic	X
Jessie	14	Hispanic	X

TABLE 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLEGE RESPONDENTS

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Dual Income Household
McKenzie	19	African American	X
Nicole	18	Caucasian	X
Laura	19	Caucasian	X
Alexis	18	Mixed	X
Brenda	19	Caucasian	X
Tanya	17	African American	X
Brett	17	Caucasian	X

in each educational grouping, along with basic demographic characteristics. The names are pseudonyms chosen by the participants. In each section the results are discussed by educational grouping and across groupings.

Mall Use

The initial question posed to participants in this study was: "When I say clothes shopping, what comes to mind?" This is a very general question designed to provide initial entry into the subject. The responses, however, proved quite interesting. Among the youngest girls, "the mall" was far and away the chosen response (four of eight). In high-school, "the mall" tied with mentions of specific stores (three participants each). Two in this group said "fun" in answer to our entry question. However, by college, "the mall" receives only one mention, while specific stores and specific clothes (e.g., shirts) receive the most mentions. This supports the fact that malls are an integral part of growing up for young girls.

Middle-school girls reported going to the mall an average of every other weekend, or twice a month during the school year. Several of the girls mentioned that this goes up to every week in the summer months. The average length of stay at the mall is two to three hours. Four of the eight participants in this group shop at least two malls on a regular basis, two shop three malls, one shops four malls and one shops five malls. The majority of the time they visit the mall with their mothers, although they also visit with friends (dropped off and picked up by parents). There is a very important reason for shopping with mom, as is evidenced in this example:

I go with my mom and my friends . . . Well, like she'll [mom] let me go like whatever time we get there, and then she'll tell me to meet her back at the food court like two or three hours later and see if we found anything. And then she'll go back to the stores with me and buy it. (Khaki)

One interesting finding from this research is that although the middle-school girls didn't carry lots of money with them on every trip, they did take note of all of the things they wanted at their favorite stores. Then, they would convince their mothers to purchase the items for them on the next shopping visit. This result suggests that young teens that "hang out" at the mall still represent significant sales, even when it isn't obvious on a given visit.

High-school girls are more frequent mall visitors and they spend more time at the mall than younger girls. Our respondents reported going to the mall at least once a week and spending an average of 3 to 4 hours per visit. They also shop more than one mall on a regular basis, with three participants shopping two malls, two shopping three malls, one shopping four malls and one shopping five malls. Again, this is on a regular basis. These girls also go with mom and friends to the mall. However, several of them mentioned shopping with siblings, particularly sisters. Similar to the middle-school girls, the high-school girls know how to shop without mom actually present:

My little sister likes to go with her friends, um, so I go with my mom a lot. And because usually she's the one buying it, she takes me. But other than that, I go with my friends. And usually when I go with my friends, it's not so much as a buying thing. We go buying things, we try them on, we put them on hold, we meet people. It's not so much buying; it's more looking and browsing, picking out what we like, and then I usually end up going back with my mom. So it's usually friends and my mom. (Kenna)

The college girls have somewhat different habits than the younger girls. They reported visiting a mall nearly every week; however, they reported staying in the mall an average of two hours. Several of the participants said that their mall shopping has become an "in and out" experience only when they need something. Because of the demands of college life, they no longer had the free time to devote to shopping. At the same time, they also mentioned that they do take time out occasionally for a mega-shopping trip and that they shop far more often when they are home on school breaks. Five of the seven participants reported shopping two malls on a regular basis, one shopped four and one shopped five. The girl who reported shopping five malls claims that her shopping is "power shopping" in that she makes a day of it, hitting several malls in the process.

Quite different from the other educational groups, these girls shopped with friends or alone. Only two mentioned shopping with mom. This could be due to the fact that several participants are away from home at college. However, this was the only group that mentioned shopping

alone and six of the eight participants did so. We would not expect middle-school girls to shop alone; however, we would have expected some high-school girls to shop alone, but none did.

Um, [I go with] friends. A lot of times, it's interesting, because a lot of times now that I'm in college, I'll just run by myself if I have to go get a pair of jeans. Like in high-school, there was a lot more—it was a lot more fun to go with friends to the mall, and go buy, pick out clothes and stuff. But here, it's either I don't have the money or I don't have the time. But, again, I have a car, so it's easy for me to just jump in the car and run if I need something. It's usually not "let's go shop"—I don't think I've been probably once in the year and a half I've been here to just go shopping. (Laura)

In sum, the results of this research suggest that teenage girls shop at more than one mall on a regular basis. High-school girls spend the most time at the mall. This isn't surprising given that younger girls must follow the schedule of whoever provides transportation and college girls have less time for shopping. All of the girls shop with their mothers because moms buy things. Even if mom isn't present, girls select products to be purchased later.

Mall Behavior

When asked about what they do at the mall, teenage girls, no matter the age, said the same things. They all shop, eat at the food court and hang out with friends. The extent to which they do these things does differ by age.

Middle-school girls are particularly cognizant of the social aspects of mall patronage. To a participant, they talked about walking around, browsing and hanging out with friends.

Michele: I go with my friends just to hang out and walk around and stuff.

Int.: So, on an average weekend trip, how many friends do you think you see in the mall?

Michele: Probably about 10, 15. That's pretty much what we do, just 'cause you want to see your friends and everything. It doesn't cost any money. I mean instead of going to someone's house or something, everyone just meets up at the mall and walks around and talks.

The other key activity for middle-school girls is looking for "cute" or "hot" boys. Several girls reported that they walk up and down the mall looking for boys. They go in stores that have both boy's and girl's sections and hang out around the food court hoping to see these boys. However,

they NEVER speak to the boys they see. As Reagan put it: "We're only 12."

All of the participants reported eating or drinking something at the food court nearly every time they visit the mall. Middle-school girls' favorite places to eat were Chick-Fil-A, Frullati, Chinese food and Subway.

High-school girls are also into the social aspects of the mall. They mentioned hanging out with friends as a primary reason for going to the mall. They do similar things to middle-schoolers in that they browse, walk around, eat and talk with friends. However, the high-school girls differ from the middle-school girls in the experience of the social aspects of the mall. They actually talk to the boys they meet. For example:

Kenna: Just going, meeting new people, um, seeing new things, new atmosphere.

Int.: Okay. So meeting new people—like salespeople, or . . . ?

Kenna: No, just like guys. Um, the salespeople—a lot of my friends work at malls and so you go in there and talk to them, and then you end up going out with them afterwards and their friends go, so you meet the people that they're going with. So you end up meeting actually a lot of new people and hanging out with some more people than you were . . . Meeting people. Usually like we meet people if we're at the food court eating maybe. And, there's some—it's more or less meeting guys versus girls up at the mall. Um, you might run into people you know but you already know them. Guys you don't know—they just happen to come up and walk up to you and start talking to you about stuff. And you end up walking in the mall with them, or shopping. I mean, so, yeah, it's—we meet a lot of people up there. Not a lot of high-class people, but people.

Int.: Interesting. But no one that you would like date or anything?

Kenna: I have dated a couple of them, but they were more—they didn't end up being high-class. But then they turned out to be not nice people, so we just stopped. But, yeah, I've dated a couple of the people I've met at malls. But, you know, it's not like I meet them and I go out with them. I don't like leave the mall with them. My parents meet them before I go out with them, and I talk to them like on the phone for a couple of weeks before I go out with them and stuff like that, so . . . You meet people, but you have to be careful who you meet.

They also try on a lot of clothes. Many of the girls reported going into nearly every store and looking at the new styles and trying on clothing whether they had money or not.

Clothes first. I go for the clothes first. Um, maybe go in to—we usually eat lunch there. We'll usually make like a day-trip or something like that,

because we hate going back and forth, back and forth, like that. So we'll make it a day-trip, and we'll get something to eat and sometimes we'll go to like music stores and CD stores and stuff like that. But mostly it's just like we'll go around to like those first stores that we like and stuff, and we'll see what they have, and then if we like it we'll go back. We're very cautious shoppers in my family. We don't like buy anything spur-of-the-moment type thing. (Mattie)

The high-school girls are also frequent purchasers at the food court. They enjoy drinks at Frullati and Orange Julius, ice cream at Dip 'n Dots, and food at Chick-Fil-A, Japanese and Chinese restaurants and snacks at Paradise cookies and the pretzel store. Every girl reported getting something to eat or drink nearly every time she visited a mall.

The college girls differed from both of the other groups, primarily because they reported being time-constrained. As such, their average visit was quite different. For example:

Um, I start at one end of the mall and walk all the way around the mall and see every store. But I don't go in most, or if I don't see anything in there, then I don't go. And I have an Orange Julius, and then I go home. (Brett)

This is not to say that all mall visits are the in-and-out variety described above. If the college girl goes on a weekend "power shop," this is what she does:

Alexis: We'd probably leave for the mall around 12:00, because that's when everything is open, and everything is kind of ready for business, you know, that sort of thing. Um, hop in the car, go, and when we get there, we're probably going to come in through a department store. And whatever department store we come in, bad or good, we always end up looking around in that department store. Because the way they have you walk through—they have you walk through the cosmetic section, and the juniors' section is always next to that. So we always end up going there for a while. Then we'll probably shop for a couple of hours. Um, we do it in a pretty pattern way. We usually walk around the mall, each floor, if there are more than one floor. We go to the stores that we like or new stores that attract us. Then we'll probably get—we're usually hungry around 3:00 or 4:00, so we'll go grab something to eat. Um, even though it's not really important, but you got to say it, is that girls our age are looking for the guys at the mall. So there's always got to be like scoping-out-the-guy time. And then you go back to shopping, um, and then you're in the constant scope for guys at the mall. And that's a lot of it. That's a lot of the stores. You know you were asking about

the stores and stuff—where the cool stores are. You're not going to meet a guy in like the grandma's—grandma store. You know you're not going to meet them there.

Int.: Like Dillard's?

Alexis: Yeah. You're not going to meet them in Dillard's or Foley's or anything. But if you go to places like The Buckle or Wet Seal, you'll meet them there, you know. So, um, I think that has a lot to do with the stores that we go into. Good or not.

Int.: Well, it doesn't have to. There's not judgment here. I just want to know what you do, and that's all right. Do you scope out guys at the food court, too, or do you just . . . ?

Alexis: Big time, because that's the only place you're sitting down and actually eating. So, especially in The Parks Mall here, you walk around the mall and you see somebody, and then everyone gravitates towards the food court, because you're going to eat. Everyone obviously, of course, students get hungry all the time. So we're sitting there, and if you sit facing the escalators where you come up at The Parks Mall, you see everyone come up. And then everyone sees you, so everyone tries to get that front table. You know, if you look, the whole place can be empty, but those front tables are full of girls.

Six out of the eight girls reported getting something at the food court nearly every time they visit. As is evident from the quote above, the food court is not always for food. Yet, these girls purchase instead of just loitering. Their favorite places are the same as the younger girls: Chick-Fil-A, Chinese food, Subway, Frullati and the cookie shop.

In sum, teenage girls spend time at the mall shopping, hanging out with friends and enjoying the social aspect of meeting/dating members of the opposite sex. Even when they don't have money, they shop and select things to buy as soon as they have money. They are also frequent visitors to the food court.

Characteristics of Favorite Malls

Each of the participants was asked to discuss their favorite mall and the characteristics of the mall that made it a favorite.

All of the middle-school girls mentioned "having a lot of stores" as the top criterion in picking a favorite mall. "Having my favorite stores" was a close second. Convenience and "big" were tied for third. No other descriptor was mentioned by more than one participant. Five of eight middle-school participants selected Hulen Mall in Fort Worth as their favorite. The girls who selected this mall all mentioned the outstanding food court, primarily because of the variety of choices (12).

It's just bigger, and it has better stores. It has a lot more stores . . . Like it has Gadzooks and Limited Too and everything. (Khaki)

Hulen. They have like all my favorite stores. I like Gap Kids because I'm not really into the regular stores. I'm still kind of at the very high of the . . . I'm not in junior's yet. I like Limited Too, and I love Bath and Body Works, and I love going to the Disney store. I just like looking at everything and all the stuff . . . And, um, I like Foot Action, or whatever that shoe store is. And, um, Old Navy is kind of over there. I really like Old Navy . . . And, it's clean. I don't like shopping in dirty places. (Reagain)

Another girl selected Grapevine Mills mall, which is one of the Mills Corporation outlet malls.

Chelsea: Grapevine . . . Just 'cause there's so much more stores; it's just like a bigger place, and there are stores that you have to go different places for. Like, I don't know, it's, I don't know, it's cooler, I like it better.

Int.: Ok. For example, what stores?

Chelsea: Um, Abercrombie & Fitch; there's a store, there's a mall in Fort Worth, I think, I don't know which one it is, that has Abercrombie & Fitch, and the mall that I go to, the Parks Mall, doesn't have it. It has like really cool clothes. And Grapevine has it. And they have like jewelry stores that I like . . . Jewelry Junction. Parks has it, but it's not very big.

Int.: Ok. What else about Grapevine do you like?

Chelsea: Um, I don't know, it's just so big, you don't get to go through the whole thing. Like one day you can go through half of it and the other day you can go through another half. It's just . . . and there are a whole bunch of people, it's just really crowded and stuff. I like it. I like the way it's built. Like, you can go like all the way through a store to get to another one, and it's not just like a big pathway with stores on the sides. Its just like built a lot different.

While these girls are very young, they do know something about mall atmosphere and design. They were given the opportunity to comment on both positive and negative aspects of malls they have shopped and they didn't disappoint.

Khaki: I like how they have the big tall trees in the middle that they have lined up and everything. It looks really cool. And then around Christmas when they decorate it. It looks really pretty. I like the bright lights.

Int.: Anything else about the inside of the mall itself?

Khaki: Actually it has a big, spacious, a lot of room. You're not crowded in there.

Chelsea: Yeah, I think they could be like, um, well, ok, it's really hard to find. There are stores on the sides, but there are little ones in the middle. You can never find them, 'cause they're not on the map. I haven't seen them. Like Jewelry Junction and that balloon place and the jewelry place. You can't ever find them, unless you just happen to walk by them you know. And like True Colors and stuff, unless you happen to walk by, you can't find them 'cause they're not really easy to find and they're not on the map. So I don't like how those are laid out. They should be on the map or a big sign, not just a little one.

Int.: Ok. So if you could change something about the mall besides that, what would you change?

Chelsea: I would change the way, oh, ok, you know how like Dillard's and Foley's and stuff, you usually have to go through those—there's like two ways to go in besides going through those. I would put like Dillard's, Foley's, JC Penney's, or whatever, all on one side. Like, where you'd go in there on one side and then a big pathway and then all the stores on this side. Where it's more like long, and like everywhere. I think that works better.

The high-school girls were able better to articulate what they liked about their favorite malls. However, “have a lot of stores” was again the top descriptor used, followed by “have my favorite stores” and “close to home.” Every participant evaluated the food court at their favorite mall. Most of the participants mentioned size of the mall, and the size of stores as important.

Park Meadows [large, new mall in Littleton, Colorado] is my favorite. It's real big and like fancy and stuff. And they have a lot of designer stores that you don't have at [local mall] . . . I guess the stores are more expensive and like they have a variety of stores and it seems like updated.” (Jessie)

The Parks [large, older mall in Arlington, Texas] is my favorite. It just has a lot of different variety in stores. Like, if I want to dress crazy, like I can go to Wet Seal or Gadzooks and get some really fun clothes. But if I want to like dress conservative or I was going on an interview or something, somewhere that I needed to look nice, I can go to Agaci, or I can go to like different places. Or if I just want to go and want to dress casual, like in khakis, I can go to American Eagle and Gap. And it's right over there by Old Navy so it's really close to like those kind of places. It's a really good location; it's really close to everything and people I know and stuff. I like the Frullati. I like the fruit drinks. I'll go to the food court and we'll eat. I like the Japanese food. That or Chick-Fil-A. (Crosby)

Villa Italia [large, newly renovated mall in Denver, Colorado]. Because it has more stores and it has two levels . . . two levels matters because it has more stores in it and the stores are bigger . . . They also have like glass elevators and fancy stairs and stuff like that. (Veronica)

Two of the girls provided nice comparisons of the two malls they shop most often:

I would have to say Vista Ridge [is my favorite] in Lewisville [Texas]. Because the stores are a little bit more reasonable than like Grapevine Mills . . . Price-wise. They used to advertise Grapevine Mills as this big outlet mall and a real high-quality outlet mall. Well, when they said that they meant high in price. I mean, it's not—it's a nice mall, but it's a very expensive mall. I found a lot of the exact same stores; I mean a lot of the exact same things at Vista Ridge for lower, cost-wise. But I like the way that the mall's built better. It's two-story, it's not as loud, it's not as crowded, it's brighter. I'm not into—Grapevine Mills doesn't have a lot of windows, and I like a lot of light. I don't like to feel like I'm closed in somewhere. And walking on hardwood floors where everything echoes and is bouncing off everywhere versus walking in—the whole like ceiling of Vista Ridge is, you know, like glass and it's very bright and it's very airy and it's very quiet, it's a lot quieter. And I just like the aspect of it, the appearance better. (Kenna)

Um, Grapevine Mills has more of a vital? feel to it, I guess. It's bright, it's all one story, it's very spacious – it's not all packed in. It's very spread out. There's lots of colors, like purple and pink and orange and blue. It's like some areas of the hallway are carpeted, some aren't. It's not bland, I guess. And Vista Ridge is more traditional, I guess. It's two stories, um, it's got, you know, the water fountain at the center of the mall and the big clock near the elevator. You know, just the white walls and the windows and stuff like that. (Mattie)

These girls also had suggestions of ways to improve the malls they currently shop.

I'd design it different on the inside, because it's like plain, I think . . . Get rid of those balloons in the middle. And like re-do the floors with tiles, so it's not so plain. I'd put in like bright colors, because it would seem more open, and it would attract people more, because it's bright . . . And like I'd put like those skylight things, so you could see the sky instead of just looking up and seeing the ceiling . . . I'd have the glass elevators and the spiral staircases, pretty neat . . . the space to walk has to be wider. (Veronica)

All of the suggestions and evaluations provided by the high-school girls suggest that mall design and atmosphere is very important. Of course, tenant mix is a key criterion in selecting a favorite mall, but “brightness” and “openness” seem to affect how satisfied a shopper is with the mall itself.

The college students also chose their idea mall based upon “having

lots of stores” and a “wide variety of stores.” The second most mentioned factors were “nice restaurants” and “closer to home.” The college students were split in their choice of favorite mall between the mall that is close to where they live and the “upscale” mall on the other side of town.

Um, Westminster Mall [Colorado] is pretty good, because it's not like Cherry Creek and Park Meadows and everything, where like with DKNY stores that every sweater's like \$300. It's more reasonable. So if I'm actually going to go shopping to spend money, I'll usually go to Westminster. And then, but I like Cherry Creek and all of those malls. (Brett)

My favorite mall? I really like the Galleria in Dallas, although it's like on the high end, like a lot more expensive than most. It was just really nice. And I've been to the one in Houston, too, with the ice-skating rink and just—the atmosphere's really neat, how they have everything. But it's a lot more on the high end as compared to like Hulen or the malls in Lincoln [Nebraska]. Beyond necessity in most of them. Um, I just like the atmosphere. Like there's so many people, and like the restaurants are a lot nicer. I guess it just depends what you're looking for. And like I know they have a lot more designer stores. But I'm not really into the designer—it was just neat, because in Nebraska they don't have any of that at all. Like the ice-skating rinks or any of that type of stuff, they don't have. So I guess I liked it because it was different. But as far as like shopping needs, I didn't really buy that much there. Plus I was like with my mom, and we hit the sale racks. (Brenda)

From the quotes above, it is apparent that the local mall is a favorite because it offers an acceptable number of stores and is convenient and affordable. However, the unique features provided in the upscale malls, like the Galleria's ice rink, make the shopping experience different from the everyday. This makes the upscale mall rank high for shopping trips, even though these students rarely spend money at the upscale mall. One individual provided the best insight into the charm of the Galleria:

Alexis: Galleria . . . because of the variety of the stores, but also because of the quality. The quality of the stores and the way they're laid out. In North Park, they have a lot of stores, too, but its not as fancy and they're not—the displays aren't as nice, aren't as well done, aren't as well set up. But if you go to the Galleria and go into like, um, Nordstrom's—every mannequin that they have is perfectly dressed, accessorized, hats, shoes, everything. Then the clothes are not even too far behind it. They're just right there, you know. And it's difficult like when you're in North Park and you see something in the window, you have to go all the way back in the store and like look for it, you

know. It's annoying. So it's better—I like it better when there's a mannequin and the clothes are behind it, you know, because then you're right there.

Int.: Okay, so when you say layout, that's kind of what you mean? It's like the way it's laid out?

Alexis: Yeah . . . All of them [the stores in the Galleria do that]. I can't think of one that doesn't. Even if they don't—like in *The Gap*, the mannequins are in the middle of the table, and the clothes are laid out around the table.

Int.: Um, any other features of the Galleria that you really, you know, that you really like?

Alexis: Everything is there. You have a food court, a nice food court—it's not just fast food. You have like *La Madeleine*, you have, uh, like *Bennigan's* there, and you have a movie theater there, you have an ice-skating rink there, you have a Mexican restaurant there—*Mi Cocina*—really nice. So they have and then they even have pizza — *Sbarro*. And if you're going to go to the mall for pizza, that's probably the best you're going to get—at *Sbarro's*. So they have everything. Everything they have is good quality. They have *Marble Slab Creamery* — it's really good. So everything there—nothing's like not going to be good in the food court, you know. They have really good quality food. And we like that, because that way you can make a day out of it. You don't have to go elsewhere . . . If I'm going to go to the Galleria, we're going to stay at the Galleria. It's going to be a day thing. There's no way you can get through *Macy's* in less than a day.

Alexis' description of why the Galleria is her favorite mall encompasses many of the key issues, such as tenant mix, food court and entertainment options. However, her initial comments about the "layout" of the stores and the mall are the most interesting. It suggests that the quality image of the mall must be carried through everything in the mall, i.e., the common areas and the individual stores.

When asked to make suggestions for improvements to the malls they shopped, the college students mentioned parking as an important thing.

Parking. There has got to be enough parking at the mall. It's ridiculous if there's not. You don't even want to go. There are many times, many times my mother and I have looked at our community mall for parking, and we just can't find enough and we just leave. Because it's just ridiculous. If you can't find parking, or if you have to trek—suppose you get there at 3:00 and you know you're going to spend a couple of hours there, and you have to trek all the way from point A way, way, way out. . . . Also, even if we're at Grapevine Mills, we don't want to walk three miles to get to our car. That's not only dangerous, but it's just not practical. So that's another thing. That's it. (Alexis)

Another concern mentioned by several of the college girls was the layout of the mall itself, particularly the entrances and exits and ability to get between the top and bottom level. For example:

The only thing—there's one thing that I find real inconvenient is that you have to go to the ends to get to stairways. And there's one that's in the middle. And like, I don't know, it's like you don't want to walk all the way. There seems like there should be more stairs somewhere and more escalators somewhere. But that's the only thing really, to me, that they could add to the mall, besides just more stores if they want to do that. (McKenzie)

In sum, teenage girls across educational groupings have similar likes and dislikes in mall design. Having a large number of stores and particularly the stores that teens frequent seems to be the key criterion of whether a mall is preferred. However, there are a number of mall atmospherics that influence the teens' evaluations as well. Teens like a mall that is two levels, bright and open. They like malls that have multiple food options in the food court, since they tend to purchase something on every visit. Parking is also a concern, not only for security reasons but also because lack of it has caused them to leave a mall they would otherwise have patronized.

Ideal Mall

After discussing the characteristics of their favorite malls, the interview turned to letting them "wish." The question asked was "If you could design your ideal mall, no limits, anything goes, what would you put into it?" The middle-school girls were the least articulate at doing this, however, every participant was able to provide some insight into this important topic.

The middle-school girls chose to focus first on the food court, and four of eight participants mentioned putting more in the food court (more variety in food selections). The second thing they focused on was "lots of stores," particularly shoe stores. Third, they discussed having a movie theater in the mall (not across the parking lot). Finally, they want the Old Navy store in the mall. They like Old Navy but find it dangerous to walk across the parking lot to the Old Navy location. Each of these mall design issues was mentioned by several participants. The remaining things these girls would put in their "ideal" mall were only mentioned by a single participant: water park/theme park, arcade, activity/craft area, actual restaurants, indoor swimming pool, kid's museum, laser tag/air hockey, a day care center, and one of our favorites, "a hot guy place." Haley provides a good example:

It would be pretty big. It would have an indoor swimming pool in it, and you had to be a member of it, so like not everyone at the mall would be in it. It wouldn't be that crowded. And it would have a water slide, and downstairs it would have like a kids' museum, where it had stuff you could do downstairs. And it would have a little day care in case you had babies, but with highly trained workers there—not just any teenager that wanted to apply for a job there. Because it wouldn't be very safe to leave your kid there. Then it would have The Limited II, The Gap, and stores. It would have a really big food court with ice cream shops in it and hamburger places. And then it would have—it would have food from all around the world. Like you could get food up there that they eat in Australia or in China. And it wouldn't really have like the main department store—like Dillard's or anything. It would just really have different stores.

Jessica provided another good example of including everything you could dream of:

I'd have like a section where you could go and have like a little water park—like a Six Flags theme park type thing, and then a big, huge arcade. And I'd have, hold on, I don't know . . . when you ask people what stores they like—it starts with an R. Um, no it starts with S. I'd take a survey of like a bunch of kids and ask them to name all the stores they like and put all the stores in there. And I would like have bunch of bunch stores in there. And I'd have all sorts of food places . . . It would have McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, Arby's, a Chinese food restaurant, um, Chick-Fil-A, Chicken Express, Golden Chicken. It would have KFC, all sorts of restaurants. And then it would have like a couple of eat-in restaurants . . . Like Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Rainforest Café. My favorite is Red Lobster . . . I would put in Abercrombie & Finch, The Limited Too, Claire's, Icing, Gadzooks, Gap, Gap Kids, Old Navy. I'd put in a Pacific Sunwear, Delilah's. I'd put in a bunch of shoe stores. I'd put in a Nine West, I'd put in a Doc Martens store, um, regular Limited, Banana Republic, J. Crew, and like a Foot Action, and a Nike and Adidas store. I'd put in like a sports, like an Oshman's. Stuff like that. All sorts of stores . . . I'd put in a Bobbie Brown . . . it's—they just started opening. It's a place where you can get all sorts of nail polishes, makeup, all sorts of things. But they only have them in Dallas. They have them in like the Galleria. And then I'd have a Clinique store and a, all those little things that they have in the big department stores. And I'd have . . . I'd have a big movie theater like Tinseltown.

The high-school girls also had a lot to say about their “ideal” mall. The most often mentioned thing among this age group was a movie theater (again in the mall, not outside of it). The second most discussed

thing was the food court. As one participant put it “for men who get cranky after two minutes being in a store.” Participants in this group mentioned that healthy alternatives in the food court are needed, something like a salad bar. As with the middle schoolers, number and size of stores was mentioned again. However the high-school girls wanted all the main department stores, while the middle-school girls didn’t readily mention the department stores. When it came to specific design issues, the girls mentioned getting rid of the crowds by making the aisles wider; adding more benches and nice furniture for sitting down in the mall; skylights for openness, water fountains and glass elevators. With respect to tenant mix, these girls discussed that the “ideal” mall would provide a mixture of expensive and inexpensive stores, so that there would be something for everyone. In the following quote, Jessie shows her thinking on this subject:

I’d do Lord & Taylor because that attracts a lot of the people, real expensive. Um, Dillard’s, Foley’s—even though I may not, still a lot of people shop there. Probably a lot of girls’ stores, because there’s a lot of teenage girls that go to the mall.

One of the most interesting things that several participants mentioned was the desire for at least two levels. The desire for a multi-level mall was expressed across educational groupings. For example:

Because it gives you more of a different outlook. Because when you have one floor, it’s like you’re walking in circles. When you have different floors, you can kind of fluctuate up and down, and there’s a different atmosphere. You can look up or you can look down. When you’re at a one-floor solid, you have stores all around you—it’s not like stores on just the sides and you have an aisle. But it’s stores all the way around you. And you just—like when I go to Grapevine Mills, I get dizzy walking around there because you’re walking in circles and you see the exact same stores over and over and over. And it’s sickening almost, because you’re like “Okay, I’ve walked in this circle about ten times now.” And just the fluctuation of it. I’d probably do a three-story because, um, when I used to live in California, there was a seven-story mall, and like one floor was babies’ strictly, one was men’s, one was women’s, one was teenagers’, one was an ice-skating rink, one was a bowling alley, one was a putt-putt golf. And so, I mean, it was really neat. But I would do that and maybe do like, um, men’s on one floor, women’s on another, and like sporting stuff and activities and outside things and odds and ends on the top floor. Just to give it more of a balance, so you’re not going everywhere to look for things, but it also has the fluctuation of you can go up and down instead of just having lines of things. (Kenna)

Some of the most interesting recommendations of tenants came from this group. Several mentioned a coffee shop, like Starbucks. They specifically said they wanted a sit-down, hangout coffee shop, not like a Gloria Jeans. They suggested a drug store, such as Walgreen's, so that they can pick up hair care items and cosmetics while doing all of their other shopping. They also mentioned that guys would like a Checker Auto Parts store and a sports store that had big screen televisions broadcasting their games all day ("so you could just leave your husband there").

College girls also had myriad suggestions for their "ideal" mall. All seven participants in this group mentioned movie theaters first. While having a movie theater is important, where it is located is just as important to these girls. As with all of the others, they want the movie theater attached to the mall.

Alexis: It's a lot more convenient, like especially in Irving Mall over here. It's a lot more convenient for us to go there if we're going to see a movie, because there's a big movie theater in there. Um, and we can like, uh, go see the movie and not have to leave, especially with my roommate's car, who's not so dependable. And even if she did have a car and we weren't worried about conserving money and gas and stuff, and so we'd probably stay there. Grapevine Mills is a really nice one because their theater is massive. So we really like Grapevine Mills, too.

Int.: So sometimes you will make a day of doing shopping and then maybe going to see a movie if the movie theater's right there?

Alexis: Yeah, and only if the movie theater's right there, because \$6 for a movie is a lot if you're paying gas on top of that, so it's almost not worth it.

Int.: I guess you've been—that's, um, and I don't know how many other malls, but they have a theater that's adjacent to it. So you just kind of walk across the parking lot. Would you do that?

Alexis: That still makes it almost too hard. Because when you're in the mall, you've eaten, you're full. You do not want to walk across the mall. And you don't want to move your car from point A to point B for no reason, and you don't want to walk across the way. It's just too much of a hassle. We're lazy people. I mean, you want it right there. If I'm going, you know, I want to be able to walk to it and not have to leave the outdoors, especially for weather conditions and stuff. That means a lot, especially in the winter.

Laura feels that having the movie attached to the mall is great, but putting it by the food court is even better. Laura is an advocate of a multi-level mall:

I like how the Galleria has their atrium set up and then right across is the movie theater, because it's so convenient to just go down and grab a bite and

then go to the movie. The whole bottom level is the whole food court with tables and then the movie theater. So, you know, if I were going—if I ever wanted to go see a movie, I would choose the Galleria over a movie theater, because I could go and grab something to eat real fast without making an extra stop, with lots of choices, and then go right over to the theater.

All seven participants discussed the food court and how their ideal mall would have a better food court, with a wide variety of foods and a combination of sit down and fast food restaurants. Several participants suggested a bar and grill place, such as T.G.I. Fridays or Chili's, where people could go after work. They also wanted a "nice" restaurant with a laid-back atmosphere. These things are in addition to the traditional fast food, which needs to have numerous options. The college girls agreed with the high-school girls that the "ideal" mall would contain a nice mixture of expensive and inexpensive stores as the following quote from Alexis summarizes:

I'd put two department stores, like a J.C. Penney and like a Sak's. And the reason I'd make them so different is because one—I think the contrast will serve everyone's needs. Like the Mervyn's and stuff—get away. It's just like—there's no use, you're not really going to find the clothes you want. They don't have as big of a selection. They don't carry the cosmetics and what not. In Sak's you can carry—like I'll put maybe a Sak's and a Foley's, because Foley's has really good sales, and Sak's has really good quality.

With respect to mall design features and additional entertainment options, these girls were rather creative, as McKenzie shows:

For sports people, I'd put in an indoor batting cage and indoor basketball courts, tennis courts, and . . . This would be a huge mall. On the top—I went to one mall that had the track on the top. Because you know how people like to walk the mile there in the morning; they'd have it open. There would be people walking, instead of, you know, dodging people that are shopping. They had their own track to do that . . . Um, of course the arcade for like when the parents are trying to get shopping done. Like "Go down to the arcade and we'll come and get you when we're finished. Here take the money and, you know, go." . . . Um, I'll put a nursery in there for the little ones, because sometimes they can—not be in the way, but you could get more stuff done if you, you know, had the nursery for them to be taken care of while you do your shopping . . . Oh, since the Internet is so popular, I'd have a store more like an isolated, like a room, just for like a room of computers, and you can just come and be on the Internet. If you don't know much about

it, you can just come in there and just explore it. It would have helpers that, you know, help you guide yourself on the Internet and stuff . . . That's about it, I guess. Of course food stores, and maybe even a library to check out books when you're there . . . I'd have intercoms in case anybody is like missing.

Tanya suggested that the décor should reflect regional differences:

I'd make it kind of Western-like—make them feel like they're in Texas. Because a lot of people come visit Texas a lot, and, um, cowboy hats and stuff. I like this store in the West End (Dallas)—like they have all these boots and stuff, and their seats are made out of bootskin and stuff like that. And it has little horns on the—the chair legs are horns. And they have like cow hair and stuff—all the seats are made like that.

One of the most interesting suggestions was provided by Alexis, who wanted to solve several of the other girls' complaints about lack of benches and places to just sit.

For entertainment, I'd have a movie theater up there and an arcade. And then, um, a sitting area. Like a sitting area, but designed for conversation. I don't know if you've ever been to New York, but they have like in their parks, they have like these tables that have built-in checker—you know, checker tables and things like that. Things like that I would have there. Not necessarily are teenagers going to play checkers, but it starts up a conversation. You're sitting at a table, the layout is nice, it's comfortable, it's cozy. And I'd have a TV in there.

Really comfortable chairs, especially in that sitting area. Almost like sturdy, sturdy, sturdy recliners. It would be like—no, not the recliner look, but something that people could, obviously people that [hate] traffic, especially my mom. I need something comfortable, but not those hard chairs. Not hard at all. They'd be like . . . A sitting room. Um, to sit and talk. Yeah, because when you're in the entertainment place or when you're in the food place or the store place, I'm just thinking about the whole dating thing. You know, you always want sometimes—a lot of like younger kids, like when I was little, in sixth grade, I got dropped off at the mall. You know and I didn't get a chance to sit and talk or — lots of stuff happens at the mall. You get tired, you're with your family, some families on Friday after Thanksgiving, they make a big deal about—you know, you want to sit down, and there's never enough benches. If you meet a guy and you want to talk to him, at least you can sit down and not be in the middle of the mall with people passing. It would just be a comfortable room to relax.

With respect to entertainment options, these girls mentioned lots of options: roller coasters, roller skating rinks, putt putt golf, bowling alleys and a game room with pool tables. They suggested that the arcades should not be purely for little kids and that putting pool tables in and “upscaling” the arcade to a “game room” would make it appealing and a way to keep guys interested in the mall.

In sum, teenage girls have a pretty good idea about what attracts them to, and keeps them in, a mall. Of course, the number and variety of stores is important to everyone. So is the availability of a good food court (with lots of different options) and an attached movie theater. Beyond these things, they think that comfortable surroundings, as defined by width of aisles and nice furniture to sit down are very important.

Internet Use

A secondary objective of this research project was to explore the impact of the Internet on teenage girls' shopping habits and mall patronage. It was expected that the majority, if not all, of the participants in this study would have surfed clothing sites on the Internet and possibly purchased products over the Internet. This was not the case.

Among the middle-school participants, home computers were prevalent. Every participant had at least one computer in her home, three had two computers and one had three computers. Only one participant in this age group didn't use the computer on a regular basis. Several of these girls mentioned that they use the computer to e-mail friends and chat (most often on AOL). A couple of the girls had surfed clothing web sites, particularly The Gap. As would be expected in this educational group (where an adult would have to provide a credit card), only one participant actually purchased a product from the Internet, a CD. Three of the respondents discussed fears of shopping over the Internet. For example:

I don't buy anything, because my mom's not really crazy on that idea . . . because she's heard stories like something about someone can get your credit card number. So, she doesn't really like that; she doesn't feel secure. (Reagain)

I don't trust the Internet. I don't know. I just heard bad stuff about it. And like, when I get it, I like to see it and be able to try it on to make sure it fits and make sure I look right in it. And then I don't know for sure if they're going to send it to me or not. (Marcy)

My friend one time bought something off the Internet, and it was like \$30 and she never got it. She mailed them the money and she never got what she ordered. (Brooke)

Among the high-school girls, Internet usage was different. Every one of the participants had a computer at home. However, no one had more than one. Four of eight participants reported that they don't use the computer at all. Three of them use it for school papers or e-mail. Only one participant in this group actually surfs the Internet and that is only for research papers. Several of the respondents reported that being able to see the clothes and try on the clothes is the most important thing, and thus, they thought they would never purchase clothing over the Internet. For example:

I just feel better if I can like see the things in person, instead of like, just seeing pictures and stuff. Like, I don't like to shop in catalogs either, because I guess my mom's kind of taught me not to trust it . . . well, not like not trust it, but it's better to see things in person, try them on, and get a feel for them and stuff. (Mattie)

The college girls were somewhat split in their Internet usage. Two reported that they had no computers and little experience with computers. These two respondents were Hispanic girls from low-income households, which may explain this result. On the other end of the spectrum, three of the respondents had their own computers and a fourth, Alexis, had two computers of her own, a laptop and a desktop. These girls do a lot of Internet surfing and have been to many clothing sites. Only one individual, Tanya has purchased clothing online.

Tanya: I shop on Delia's site . . . I browse Wet Seal, Victoria's Secret. I looked at Dillard's stuff, but I didn't like some of their clothes in there. I like the store better.

Int.: How much of your clothing shopping would you say you do on the Internet?

Tanya: About 30% . . . some of the stuff they have on the Internet, they don't have at the stores.

This group used the same explanations as the others about why they don't shop over the Internet, i.e., fears about credit card problems and bad products, and the desire to see, touch, feel and try on clothing. For example:

I [browsed the Gap's web site] was just curious, because I had never gotten anything over the Internet. And I do have a lot of friends who, you know, we'll go check our mail and they'll get big boxes from J. Crew. Which I don't think I would do, just because I don't trust as much as me going and actually trying it on. Because I'm probably going to send it back. (Laura)

"I've browsed the sites. It's just it's complicated to get through all the screens and credit card numbers and stuff like that." (Alexis)

I'm scared to . . . Well, they don't rip you off or anything, but like for instance, my boyfriend works at Mike's Camera in Boulder, and people all the time are selling gray market cameras on the Internet that aren't real Nikons. And then they'll bring them into the store and want them repaired and they can't repair them because they're not real. (Brett)

In sum, the results of this research suggest that Internet shopping is not as prevalent among teenage girls as it may be in the rest of the population. They remain cautious and approach the Internet as a shopping vehicle with fear. Given the importance of fashion and clothing to this market (Thompson and Haytko, 1997) it is not surprising that they are firm believers in trying on clothing prior to purchase.

■ Discussion and Implications

Our research offers unique, in-depth insights into teenage girls' total experiences at the mall. Using their own words, these participants have shared their thoughts and feelings about the mall as a place for entertainment and shopping. We also gained a greater understanding about the perspective teen girls have of the Internet in the context of shopping for clothing. Several themes emerged from the interviews that could provide food for thought for mall developers and designers who are interested in attracting this segment of the market.

Our research indicates that despite the overall decline in mall shopping in the last decade, teen girls may offer an important and growing market for malls. Furthermore, these girls are likely to be profitable customers because they spend money, especially on clothing items at the mall. While many of the girls talked about the social aspects of going to the mall, they also buy merchandise, typically with Mom's money. Many of the girls go to the mall with their moms for the express purpose of buying clothing. However, even time spent cruising the mall with friends includes browsing and trying on clothes, which they will later bring their moms back to purchase.

The mother-daughter shopping duo that emerged from our interviews is an important demographic for mall management to recognize and target. Many of the girls (in all three school groups) said they shopped with their moms *in addition to* their friends, mainly because mom has the money to buy clothing. Understanding this shopping dynamic might suggest marketing activities designed to bring moms and daughters together to the mall. For example, stores and/or mall management could

create special mother-daughter events such as mother-daughter facials, or mother-daughter fashion shows. These events may attract teen girls and their moms to the mall, and while there, they may also buy.

Another intriguing finding is that the teen girls' segment may actually be broken into three segments based on school cohort groups (middle-school, high-school and college). There were some similarities among girls in all three groups, but there were also some differences. For example, the middle-school girls reported that they spent a lot of time looking at boys while they were at the mall, but never approached or spoke to the boys. The high-school and college girls, on the other hand, not only talked with the boys, but some even ended up dating boys they met at the mall. College girls tended to spend less time at the mall, because they were busier than the younger girls, and tended to go to the mall alone more than did the middle-school and high-school girls. High-school girls were the most frequent mall visitors, and spent the most time at the mall compared to the other two groups. Understanding the differences between the three school groups of girls may be helpful in a mall's market segmentation strategy.

For teen girls, the mall is a gathering place that offers multiple forms of entertainment. The middle-school and high-school girls in particular viewed the mall as a free place to hang out with their friends, and to meet new people. For the younger, middle-school group, being dropped off at the mall and/or being allowed to go off on their own with friends for several hours gave them an important sense of freedom.

Significantly, teen girls do not view shopping and entertainment as two separate types of activities—they perceive shopping, especially for clothing (including browsing, trying on and buying), as a *form* of entertainment. Along with shopping, girls in all three groups found entertainment in experiencing the food court, socializing with friends and boy-friends, and looking at/meeting boys (some of whom the high-school and college girls later dated). Mall management could create special events that would attract teen girls (and the boys they like to look at/meet!) to the mall, in addition to (or rather than) the events that typically cater to young children (e.g., Santa Claus at Christmas) or adults (e.g., cars showcased in mall aisles).

Few of the girls had anything to do with arcades, and the ones that did usually watched as their male friends played the games. An attached movie theater was mentioned often, either as something they liked about a mall, or wished a mall would have. A theater attached to the mall was preferred to one that was close, but not attached (e.g., across the parking lot or down the street) because of security and convenience issues. Furthermore, when asked to design their ideal mall, most girls mentioned including different types of entertainment, such as a bowling alley, a roller

coaster, laser tag and an indoor track installed at the top of the mall. A mall that has a fun, upbeat, happy atmosphere would be important to support the entertainment role the mall plays for these girls. Also, mall management interested in marketing to teen girls could research what types of permanent forms of entertainment they would participate in.

The girls had very definite ideas about what they liked, or would like to see in terms of mall atmosphere and design. These ideas suggest that mall developers and designers could rethink the way malls are laid out and designed. For example, the girls suggested that locating stores together that are targeted to similar customer groups would make it easier to get around the mall and to find the stores they are looking for. This finding is consistent with research showing an increasing number of customers consider malls that spread complementary tenants throughout the mall to have a less convenient design (Cavanaugh, 1996). A recent study found that adult customers preferred some form (merchandise, price or lifestyle) of concept clustering (LeHew and Cushman, 1998). At least one mall owner has already built a mall based on this design concept. General Growth Properties Inc. has recently opened a mall, RiverTown Crossings, in Grandville, Michigan, in which competing stores such as Abercrombie Kids, Gap Kids and Gymboree are clustered together (Coleman, 2000).

Other mall design issues that were mentioned included multiple points of access to a second level, rather than escalators or stairs located only at the end points of the mall. A number of the participants suggested adding more places to rest (benches, comfortable chairs, a sitting room, etc.). A rested customer might spend more time at the mall than one who is tired. A preference for light, spaciousness, wide aisles/walkways and soft colors was noted by some of the girls. One suggested that a mall should incorporate design elements that reflect the region in which it is located, an idea that could offer a competitive advantage for shoppers weary of the generic mall formula (design and stores) that can be found anywhere from California to New York.

Many malls are targeted to specific demographic markets. For example, an everyday, or "mass market" mall, typically has a good number of stores that offer lower-priced merchandise (e.g., Sears, J.C. Penney's, Mervyn's). On the other hand, a more upscale mall may contain mainly higher-end stores (e.g., Saks Fifth Avenue, Nordstrom's). Our research suggests that a potentially successful tenant-mix strategy would be for malls to have stores at both ends of the price/quality spectrum to offer more variety and attract shoppers who may be interested in both high and lower-end merchandise.

Finally, our results suggest that the Internet is not likely to replace mall patronage for teenage girls. This is consistent with research conducted by NFO Interactive, a Greenwich, Connecticut, research firm,

showing that while nearly 50% of teenagers are online, only 18% have purchased something (Crockett, 1999). Currently, many of the girls said they did not like to shop on the Internet because of mistrust and security issues, and /or because they did not spend much time on the computer. As teenagers (and their parents) become more familiar with buying from Web sites, these concerns may disappear. However, the Internet has two important disadvantages compared to the mall. First, the girls want to try on clothes (their major mall purchase category) when they shop to check for fit and quality, or just for the entertainment of trying on new styles. Second, the mall offers many forms of entertainment for teen girls that the Internet cannot match.

These findings may suggest a different interpretation of the Internet's role in teen girls' clothing shopping. The NFO Interactive study cited in the previous paragraph found that about 50% of teens have used the Internet to shop for items before going to purchase them at a retail store (Crockett, 1999). Thus, instead of being seen as a competitive threat to brick-and-mortar stores and malls, the Internet could be designed to play a complementary role, and perhaps even become a powerful promotional tool. For example, General Growth Properties Inc., the nation's second-largest mall owner, is establishing an online site called Mallibu so that customers anywhere in the U.S. can purchase goods electronically from a store in one of the company's 135 malls (Coleman and Gumbel, 1999). For a single, or regional mall, this concept might be modified so that teens (and other customers) could browse the site to see what products (or selected products) the mall stores have available, and they could then make their purchases when they go to the mall. Mall management could also use this type of site to promote sales or special events that might draw teens to the mall.

■ Implications for Future Research

This study suggests several avenues for future research that can further enhance malls'/retailers' understanding of the teenage girls' market. With the depth interview method used in this study, we have laid the groundwork for more extensive qualitative and quantitative research on this important demographic group. Our research uncovered a number of themes or categories underlying teen girls' mall experiences that can be explored further. For example, using the themes identified through this study, researchers could conduct a number of focus groups in different areas of the country, and/ or on different ethnic groups to broaden understanding of these themes. A quantitative survey could be developed using the information this study uncovered to examine what is important to a larger, representative sample of teen girls.

Because we detected several differences between the three school cohort groups, it might be worthwhile to conduct more research based not only on age, but also on school groups (middle-school, high-school and college) as the basis for creating market segments. In terms of demographics, it would also be interesting to explore in more depth the relationship and decision-making dynamics that exist between mothers and daughters when they comprise a "shopping team."

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