

# MANAGING THE SHOPPING CENTER AMBIENCE ATTRIBUTES BY USING IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS: THE CASE FROM SERBIA

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This paper examined customers' perceived importance and performance of shopping center ambience on the examples of the Mercator shopping center and Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center in Novi Sad, Serbia. The shopping center ambience was examined through exterior and interior attributes. It was found that a number of them are very important to customers and their shopping behavior. According to the present research, the most important exterior attributes are: address and location, parking availability, congestion and traffic, exterior display windows and entrances. The most important interior attributes are: cleanliness, temperature, merchandise, lighting, music, scents, absence of tobacco smoke, width of aisles and P.A. usage. The paper also provided information for two studied shopping centers with ambience attributes that performed well or not and everything was presented on the importance-performance grids, which can serve managers as guidelines for further development.

JEL classification: L81, M30

Keywords: shopping center ambience; importance-performance analysis; Mercator, Sad Novi Bazaar; Serbia

## Introduction

Shopping centers all around the world have become popular places for shopping. However, Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson (1994) discovered that from the customers' viewpoint, shopping centers are not only places for shopping but also for other activities such as entertainment, recreation, etc. Shopping center companies have to compete with Internet based e-shopping and small format stores, so they need to attract customers by creating a pleasant shopping experience in order to keep the customers in the shopping center longer, get them to spend more money and come again (Wakefield, And Baker, 1998). Modern customers usually don't have much time and they want to buy everything in one place. Scientists emphasize that many customers make their decisions about the shopping place based on their relation towards the mix of stores, prices of merchandise and the ambience of the retail facility (Fin and Louviere, 1996). Because of this, there is a need to determine which shopping center ambience attributes are the most important to customers regarding their shopping behavior and that is the main aim of this research.

In addition, by using the matrix of importance-performance analysis to the case of two shopping centers in Novi Sad, we will try to explain how the quality of individual ambience attributes should be reconciled according to their significance. Managers of shopping centers should focus on improving the quality of ambience attributes that are crucial to customers. Otherwise, they can spend a lot of financial and other resources to enhance the attributes that are less important, which is leading to incorrect allocation of resources, wrong and bad business investments. In order to prevent that, this kind of research and application of importance-performance analysis is a very useful tool, especially for the management of shopping centers.

The authors of this research used the examples of Mercator and Sad Novi Bazaar shopping centers in Novi Sad in Serbia. Comparisons will be made between these shopping centers, where it is assumed that the ambience attributes of Mercator shopping center will be evaluated significantly better in terms of quality (performance) than the Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center. On the other hand, the assumption is that the importance of ambience

attributes does not depend on the particular shopping center, and that the importance of individual ambience attributes in both shopping centers will be equally rated, without significant statistical differences. It is also assumed that most of the ambience attributes of shopping centers are very important to the customer shopping behavior. So, the basic hypotheses of this research are:

H1: The performance of most ambience attributes of the shopping center Mercator will be evaluated significantly higher than the performance of the Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center.

H2: The importance of most ambience attributes for customer behavior will be evaluated equally (without statistically significant differences) in both shopping centers.

H3: Most ambience attributes of shopping centers will be evaluated as highly important for customer behavior.

### Literature review

Research in environmental psychology deals with the interaction of the physical environment and behavior in different facilities (house, school, office, prison etc.). Based on this, the stimulus organism response S-O-R paradigm was created (Mehrabian and Russell 1974). The paradigm was also applied in the case of a retail facility. In this context, ambience is the stimulus (S), which leads to internal assessment of the customers (O) and results in a certain behavior/response (R) (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974, Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). The consumers can react to ambience in the way of one of two behaviors: approach or avoidance (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Approach is seen as a positive response to ambience, such as a desire to stay and explore. Avoidance means the absence of the desire to stay in a retail facility.

Research dealing with shopping center ambience took into consideration different kinds of stimuli such as music, colors, crowds, etc. and observed their influence on the evaluation (e.g. satisfaction) and the wide range of behaviors such as the amount of time and money spent, consumer loyalty, etc. (Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Chebat and Michon 2003; Stoel, Wickliffe and Lee, 2004; Keng, Huang, Zheng and Hsu, 2007).

Berman and Evans (1995) divided ambient stimuli or attributes into four categories: external variables, general interior variables, layout and design variables, points of purchase and decoration variables. Authors Turley and Milliman (2000) added a fifth category related to human resources. Based on the mentioned researchers,

this research encompassed the first two categories of ambience, i.e. the exterior and the interior of a shopping center.

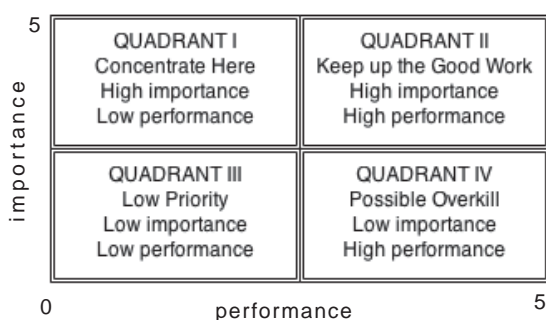
The first thing that grasps the consumers' attention while approaching a retail facility is the exterior. If the exterior is not attractive, the consumers will not enter the facility, and the other ambience attributes cannot be even considered. Exterior attributes have been sparingly dealt with in scientific research. Edward and Shackley (1992) examined the influence of exterior display windows, Pinto and Leonidas (1994) examined the influence of parking lots and location on the perception of quality, and Grossbart, Mittelstaedt, Curtis and Rogers (1975) the influence of macro environment on shopping behavior. Interior attributes have been dealt with far more in research. Spangerber, Crowley and Henderson (1996) specifically dealt with researching the scent of a retail facility on consumer behavior, where they examined the scent of flowers, spices, trees, citrus fruit and mint. They discovered that the differences in shopping behavior exist far more in cases of absence or presence of a scent, rather than between different kinds of scents. Bellizzi and Hitte (1992) researched the influence of color of a retail facility on shopping behavior, where they established that the color blue causes higher sales than the color red. Yalch and Spangerberg (1990) analyzed the presence of music in retail facilities and discovered that it should be in accordance with the age of targeted consumer group. The influence of lighting in retail facilities has been specifically researched by Areni and Kim (1994). There are studies dealing with examining the influence of a larger group of ambience attributes on consumer behavior and not just one kind such as the above mentioned research (Baker, Levy and Grewal, 1992; Baker, Grewal and Parasuraman, 1994; Stoel, Wickliffe and Lee, 2004). However, there are very few scientific research studies based on the identification of ambience attributes of shopping malls which influence consumer behavior to the highest extent. Due to this fact, a need for this kind of research arose.

### Importance-performance analysis

Importance-performance analysis (IPA) is the base for multi-attribute models. Martilla and James (1977) used IPA technique in the car industry. Later on, it became a widely used method of managers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of brands, products and services, in various industries. It also had a wide application in the tourism and hotel industry (Evans and Chon, 1989; Hudson and Shephard, 1998; Chu and Choi, 2000).

The processing of importance-performance analysis is presented graphically in the form of a coordinate grid divided into four quadrants. The Y-axis represents the importance of the chosen attributes perceived by the test subjects, and the X-axis represents the productive performance of these attributes. The four identified quadrants are: Concentrate here, Keep up the Good Work, Low Priority and Possible Overkill (Martilla and James, 1977).

**Figure 1** Coordinate grid of Importance-performance analysis



Source: Adapted from Chu and Choi, 2000

The first quadrant “Concentrate Here” contains the attributes which are highly important to the consumers, but have low performance. This tells the management that they must focus on these attributes in order to improve them and lead them to quadrant II, which contains the attributes which are very important to the consumers and also have a high performance. The management is handling the attributes located in quadrant II well, and the message to continue doing so is passed on. The quadrant “Low Priority” contains attributes with low performance but also low importance to the consumers. Although the performance of attributes in this quadrant is low, the managers need not worry, as their importance is also perceived as low. Finally, the fourth quadrant contains attributes of low importance but of high performance. Considering that these attributes are less important to the consumers, the management can reduce the funding spent on the performance of these attributes and divert them to other attributes, specifically the ones located in quadrant II (Evans and Chon, 1989; Hudson and Shephard, 1998; Chu and Choi, 2000).

### Research locations

This research has been conducted in two shopping centers in the city of Novi Sad in Serbia. The Mercator

shopping center is part of the Mercator Group, a leading retail store chain in the region of Southeast Europe. In Serbia, Mercator – the second largest retail chain – has developed a very strong and evenly distributed network of stores in the market. In Novi Sad it is located two kilometers from the city center in a busy part of the city. It has a big underground parking area where one may park for free. In the center is a hypermarket, many stores with famous worldwide brands, restaurant, cafes, play area for children and other services. It is a popular place for shopping among Novi Sad citizens.

The Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center is located in the city center in a very busy area. It is not part of a retail chain. Within the center, there is no parking area. It is fully adapted for a modern lifestyle. Like Mercator, it contains a hypermarket, stores with famous brands, cafes, playground area for children and gum.

### Methods

For data collection, a questionnaire was utilized; it had two parts. The first part dealt with determining the socio-demographic characteristics of examinees, and the second part was comprised of 12 exterior attributes and 14 interior attributes of shopping centers, which together create ambience. The consumers needed to determine the importance of ambience attributes to their consumer behavior in the shopping center and grade attributes’ performance. These attributes are identified on the overview or relevant literature (Berman and Evans, 1995; Turley and Milliman, 2000). Each attribute was graded on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 signifying “least important” and 5 “most important” in the section dealing with importance, and with 1 meaning “I completely disagree” and 5 “I completely agree” in the section dealing with performance.

### Sample

The data were collected from January till March of 2013. The questionnaires were distributed via Internet to the consumers of the Mercator and Sad Novi Bazaar shopping centers, as well as via direct communication with the consumers on site. The sample comprised of 247 examinees in total (124 consumers in the Mercator shopping center and 123 consumers in the Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center). The socio-demographic characteristics of examinees can be seen in Table 1.

### Data analysis

Data processing has been conducted in the statistical software program SPSS 11.5. Descriptive analysis

**Table 1 Profile of examinees in the “Mercator” shopping center (N=124) and in the “Sad Novi Bazaar” shopping center (N=123)**

Socio-demographic characteristics		Percent in “Mercator” shopping center	Percent in “Sad Novi Bazaar” shopping center
<b>Sex</b>	Male	30.6%	41. %
	Female	69.4%	58. %
<b>Age</b>	Up to 20 yrs	8.9%	6.5%
	21-30 yrs	62.1%	62.6%
	31-40 yrs	12.9%	14.6%
	41-50 yrs	7.3%	4.1%
	51-60 yrs	3.2%	8.9%
	Over 60 yrs	5.6%	3.3%
<b>Education</b>	Elementary school	0.8%	0%
	High school	32.3%	26.0%
	College	12.9%	13.0%
	Bachelor studies	28.2%	28.5%
	Master studies	18.5%	23.6%
	PhD studies	7.3%	8.9%
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	70.2%	70.7%
	Married	24.2%	22.8%
	Common law marriage	3.2%	2.4%
	Divorced	0.8%	1.6%
	Widowed	1.6%	2.4%
<b>Monthly income</b>	up to 17.740 RSD	46.8%	46.3%
	17.741-40.562 RSD	28.2%	19.5%
	40.563-63.384 RSD	14.5%	19.5%
	63.385 RSD and over	10.5%	14.6%

Source: author

was used to process socio-demographic data. Arithmetic means and standard deviation were used to analyze the scores of individual ambience attributes of Mercator and Sad Novi Bazaar. The T-test was used to compare the ambience scores of Mercator and Sad Novi Bazaar, while reliability of data was checked through Cronbach’s alpha model. The results of importance-performance analysis are graphically shown on the importance-performance coordinate grid.

## Results

The mean scores of performance of shopping center ambience attributes were in the range of 3.36 to 4.38 in the Mercator shopping center and from 2.47 to 4.31 in the Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center. The mean scores of importance of shopping center ambience attributes were in the range of 3.32 to 4.69 in the Mercator shopping center and from 3.00 to 4.59 in the Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center.

**Table 2 Application of importance-performance analysis for ambience research in shopping center Mercator and shopping center Sad Novi Bazaar in Novi Sad**

Ambience attributes of shopping centers	Mercator				Sad Novi Bazaar			
	Importance		Performance		Importance		Performance	
	Mean	Std. D	Mean	Std. D	Mean	Std. D	Mean	Std. D
Exterior signs	3.89	1.128	3.73	0.955	3.71	1.226	3.56	0.959
Entrances	4.15	0.934	4.06	0.917	4.12	0.988	3.66	0.948
Exterior display windows	3.99	1.040	3.64	0.999	4.04	1.051	3.41	1.032
Height of building	3.32	1.193	4.06	0.872	3.00	1.221	3.78	0.937
Size of building	3.85	1.087	4.06	0.931	3.49	1.133	3.70	0.868
Color of building	3.43	1.177	3.92	0.934	3.18	1.194	3.56	1.110
Address and location	4.33	0.960	4.32	0.781	4.31	0.993	4.30	0.932
Architectural style	3.48	1.193	3.77	0.995	3.42	1.187	3.56	1.103
Surrounding area	3.87	1.044	3.69	1.023	3.84	1.066	3.85	1.099
Parking availability	4.09	1.307	4.04	1.077	4.03	1.280	2.68	1.169
Congestion and traffic	4.00	1.148	3.36	1.092	4.03	1.187	2.47	1.089
Exterior walls	3.39	1.153	3.65	0.930	3.06	1.140	3.36	1.049
Flooring and carpeting	3.34	1.189	3.63	1.016	3.34	1.151	3.32	1.066
Color schemes	3.54	1.150	3.77	0.989	3.41	1.108	3.46	0.908
Lighting	4.27	0.940	4.17	0.960	4.06	1.027	3.87	0.958
Music	4.24	0.957	3.94	0.965	4.00	1.101	3.62	0.996
P.A. usage	3.97	1.066	3.91	0.954	3.91	1.056	3.72	0.954
Scents	4.21	1.038	3.81	1.010	4.07	1.042	3.56	0.851
Absence of tobacco smoke	4.35	1.091	4.38	0.916	4.34	1.100	4.31	0.888
Width of aisles	4.16	1.007	4.26	0.901	4.07	1.010	3.87	0.905
Wall composition and decoration	3.61	1.128	3.81	1.064	3.47	1.081	3.49	0.918
Ceiling composition	3.35	0.934	3.56	1.107	3.02	1.177	3.31	0.959
Temperature	4.48	1.040	4.14	0.940	4.22	0.996	3.98	0.849
Space design and allocation	3.86	1.193	3.94	0.913	3.89	1.007	3.73	0.821
Merchandise and its layout	4.27	1.087	3.89	0.956	4.29	0.939	3.74	0.948
Cleanliness	4.69	1.177	4.26	0.835	4.59	0.799	4.20	0.778
Total	3.92	1.087	3.91	0.962	3.80	1.086	3.61	0.965

Source: author

The best performed ambience attributes in Mercator were: absence of tobacco smoke (M=4.38), location and address (M=4.32), cleanliness (M=4.26), width of aisles (M=4.26), lighting (M=4.17) and temperature (M=4.14). The worst performed ambient attributes in Mercator were: congestion and traffic (M=3.36), ceiling compositions (M=3.56), exterior display windows (M=3.64), exterior signs (M=3.73), architectural style (M=3.77) and color schemes (M=3.77). The most important ambient attributes for consumer behavior in the Mercator shopping center are: cleanliness (M=4.69), temperature (M=4.48), absence of tobacco smoke

(M=4.35), location and address (M=4.33), lighting (M=4.27), merchandise and its layout (M=4.27).

The best performed ambience attributes in Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center were: absence of tobacco smoke (M=4.31), location and address (M=4.30), cleanliness (M=4.20), temperature (M= 3.98), lighting (M=3.87), width of aisles (M=3.87). The worst performed ambient attributes in Sad Novi Bazaar were: congestion and traffic (M=2.47), parking availability (M= 2.68), ceiling compositions (M=3.31), flooring and carpeting (M=3.32), exterior walls (M=3.36) and exterior display windows (M=3.41). The most important ambient

**Table 3 Comparison of ambient attributes of shopping center Mercator and shopping center Sad Novi Bazaar in Novi Sad**

Ambient attributes of shopping centers	Importance		Performance	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Exterior signs	1.199	0.232	1.419	0.157
Entrances	0.190	0.850	3.420	<b>0.001</b>
Exterior display windows	-0.366	0.715	1.722	0.086
Height of building	2.099	<b>0.037</b>	2.467	<b>0.014</b>
Size of building	2.597	<b>0.010</b>	3.119	<b>0.002</b>
Color of building	1.647	0.101	2.747	<b>0.006</b>
Address and location	0.175	0.862	0.119	0.842
Architectural style	0.403	0.687	1.596	0.112
Surrounding area	0.250	0.803	-1.245	0.214
Parking availability	0.341	0.733	9.491	<b>0.000</b>
Congestion and traffic	-0.219	0.827	6.423	<b>0.000</b>
Exterior walls	2.263	<b>0.025</b>	2.279	<b>0.024</b>
Flooring and carpeting	-0.018	0.985	2.355	<b>0.019</b>
Color schemes	0.931	0.353	2.506	<b>0.013</b>
Lighting	1.734	0.084	2.453	<b>0.015</b>
Music	1.842	0.067	2.609	<b>0.010</b>
P.A. usage	0.423	0.672	1.613	0.108
Scents	1.032	0.303	2.066	<b>0.040</b>
Absence of tobacco smoke	0.096	0.924	0.610	0.542
Width of aisles	0.687	0.493	3.379	<b>0.001</b>
Wall composition and decoration	1.011	0.313	2.519	<b>0.012</b>
Ceiling composition	2.233	<b>0.026</b>	1.878	0.062
Temperature	2.216	<b>0.027</b>	1.345	0.108
Space design and allocation	-0.230	0.818	1.917	0.056
Merchandise and its layout	-0.216	0.830	1.215	0.225
Cleanliness	1.038	0.300	0.534	0.594

Source: author

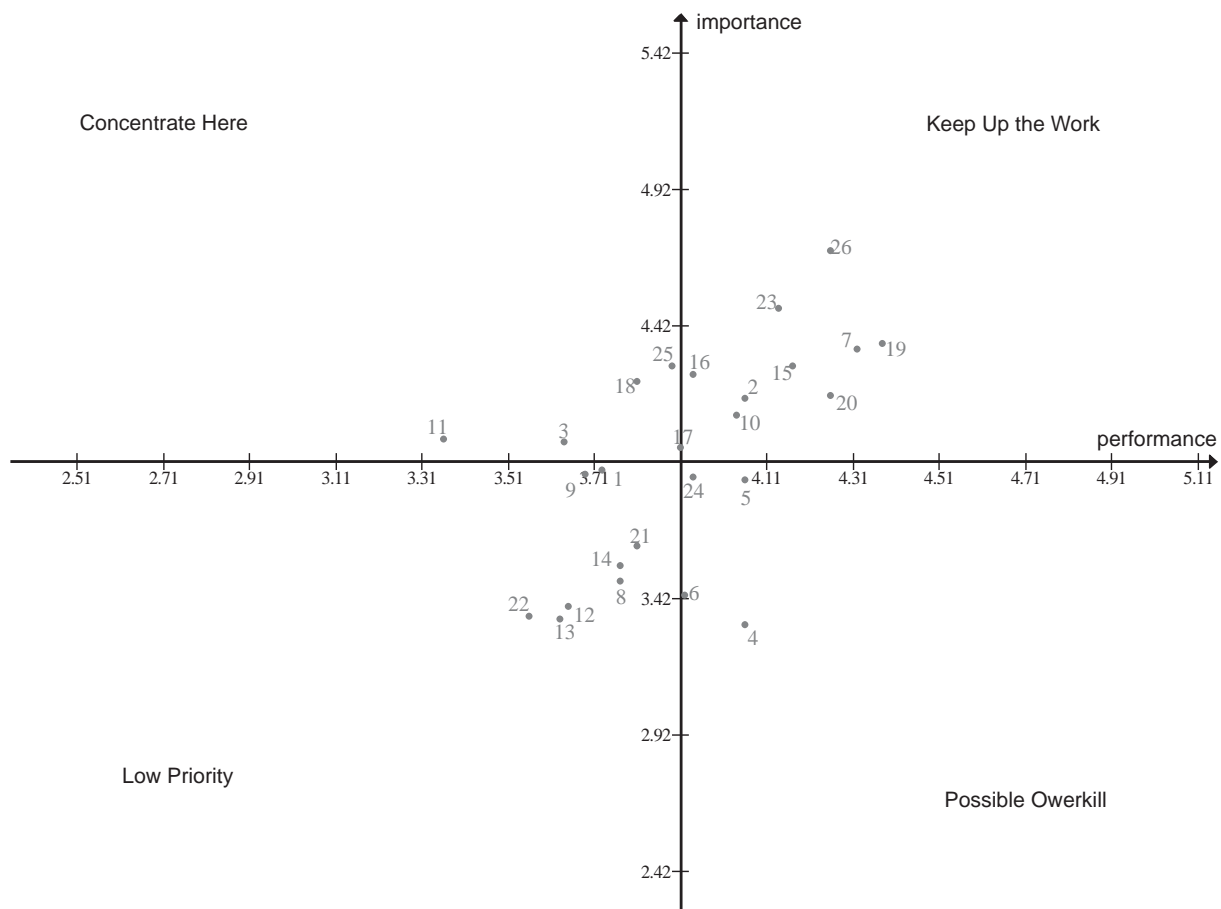
attributes to consumer behavior in the Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center are: cleanliness ( $M=4.59$ ), absence of tobacco smoke ( $M=4.34$ ), location and address ( $M=4.31$ ), merchandise and its layout ( $M=4.29$ ), temperature ( $M=4.22$ ) and entrances ( $M=4.12$ ).

Reliability analysis (Cronbach alpha) has been conducted to test the internal reliability of exterior and interior attributes. For exterior attributes, Cronbach alpha was 0.8806, and for interior attributes 0.9215, which confirms reliability.

**Hypothesis 1:** Hypothesis 1 predicted that the performance of most ambience attributes of the Mercator shopping center would be better evaluated than the performance of ambience attributes of the Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center. As can be seen in Table 3, the differences in performance of ambience attributes of

the shopping centers exist in 14 out of 26 exterior and interior attributes and these are: entrances, height and size of building, color of building, parking availability, congestion and traffic, exterior walls, flooring and carpeting, color schemes, lighting, music, scents, width of aisles, wall composition and decoration, and all are in favor of the Mercator shopping center. Thus, H1 has been confirmed.

**Hypothesis 2:** Statistically significant differences in the importance of shopping center ambience attributes for customer behavior were observed in only five attributes: height and size of building, exterior walls, ceiling compositions and temperature (Table 3). The hypothesis concerning equal importance of most ambience attributes for consumer behavior no matter which shopping center is in question has been confirmed.

**Figure 2 Importance-performance grid of ambient attributes of Mercator**

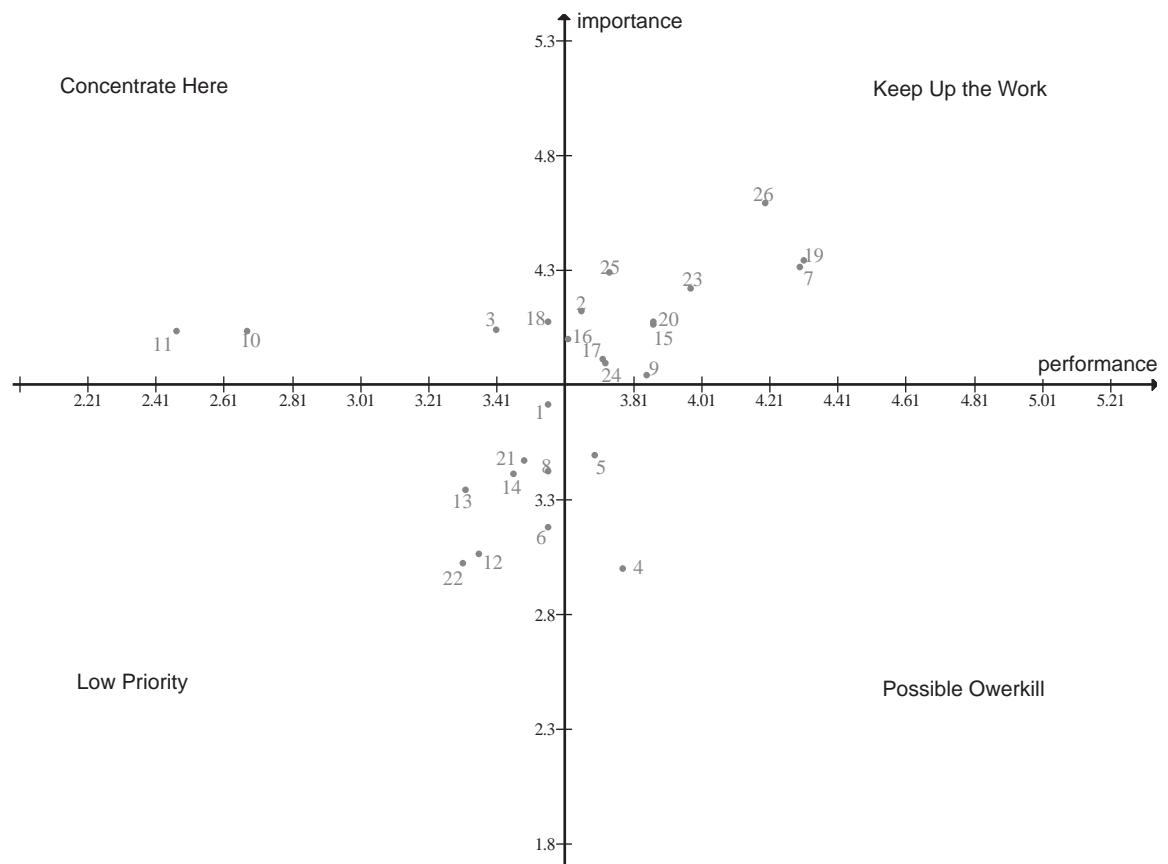
1- Exterior signs, 2- Entrances, 3- Exterior display windows, 4- Height of building, 5- Size of building, 6- Color of building, 7- Address and location, 8- Architectural style, 9- Surrounding area, 10- Parking availability, 11- Congestion and traffic, 12- Exterior walls, 13- Flooring and carpeting, 14- Color schemes, 15- Lighting, 16- Music, 17- P.A. usage, 18- Scents, 19- Absence of tobacco smoke, 20- Width of aisles, 21- Wall composition and decoration, 22- Ceiling composition, 23- Temperature, 24- Space design and allocation, 25- Merchandise and its layout, 26- Cleanliness

Source: author

IPA results are shown in the IP coordinate system. In Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, the X-axis represents the performance results of shopping center ambience attributes, and Y-axis represents importance results of shopping center ambience attributes. The cutoff point is the mean value of performance and importance of all ambient attributes. In the case of Mercator, the cutoff point is  $X=3.91$ ,  $Y=3.92$ . In the case of Sad Novi Bazaar, it is  $X=3.61$  and  $Y=3.80$ .

In the analysis of Mercator, in the quadrant **Concentrate Here**, there are four ambience attributes: exterior display windows, congestion and traffic, scents and merchandise and its layout. These are precisely the attributes which managers need to pay close attention in order to improve them, since they are important to

consumer behavior. In the quadrant **Keep Up the Good Work**, there are nine ambient attributes of Mercator: P.A usage, entrances, location and address, parking availability, lighting, music, absence of tobacco smoke, aisles width, temperature and cleanliness. Managers are encouraged to keep up the good work, since they are already correctly dealing with these attributes which are at the same time important for consumer behavior. In the **Low Priority** quadrant there are: exterior signs, architectural style, surrounding area, exterior walls, flooring and carpeting, color schemes, wall composition and decoration, ceiling compositions. In the case of Mercator, the **Possible Owerkill** quadrant contains: space design and allocation, color of building, height of building and size of building.

**Figure 3 Importance-performance grid of ambient attributes of Sad Novi Bazaar**

1- Exterior signs, 2- Entrances, 3- Exterior display windows, 4- Height of building, 5- Size of building, 6- Color of building, 7- Address and location, 8- Architectural style, 9- Surrounding area, 10- Parking availability, 11- Congestion and traffic, 12- Exterior walls, 13- Flooring and carpeting, 14- Color schemes, 15- Lighting, 16- Music, 17- P.A. usage, 18- Scents, 19- Absence of tobacco smoke, 20- Width of aisles, 21- Wall composition and decoration, 22- Ceiling composition, 23- Temperature, 24- Space design and allocation, 25- Merchandise and its layout, 26- Cleanliness

Source: author

On the other hand, the Sad Novi Bazaar shopping center has four ambience attributes which need improvement since they are important for consumer behavior. This particularly refers to parking availability and congestion and traffic, which have a particularly low performance score. In the **Concentrate Here** quadrant there are: exterior display windows, parking availability, congestion and traffic and scents. Complements are in order for attributes located in the **Keep Up the Good Work** quadrant: entrances, location and address, surrounding area, lighting, absence of tobacco smoke, aisle width, music, PA usage, merchandise and its layout, space design and allocation, temperature and cleanliness. The remaining attributes do not have a high importance for consumers and are located in the **Low Priority** quadrant: exterior signs, color of building, architectural

style, exterior walls, flooring and carpeting, color schemes, wall composition and decoration and ceiling composition. Although the consumers are satisfied with the height and the size of the building, it is not important for their consumer behavior and therefore, it is located in the **Possible Overkill** quadrant.

On the example of both shopping centers, it can be seen that the same 14 ambience attributes are located in the first two quadrants (containing attributes with the highest importance for consumer behavior). Although there are no statistically significant differences in the perceived importance of *space design and allocated* attribute, due to different cutoff points in the coordinate systems, in the case of Mercator it is important and in the case of Sad Novi Bazaar, it is less important for consumer behavior. Likewise, the *surrounding area* attribute of

a shopping center is evaluated as less important in the case of Mercator, and as important in the case of Sad Novi Bazaar.

**Hypothesis 3:** The hypothesis that most ambience attributes (exterior and interior) are important for consumer behavior is accepted, because more than half of the ambience attributes of the shopping center are in the first and second quadrants.

Reviewing the IP matrix of the Mercator and Sad Novi Bazaar shopping centers, we can see that the ambience attributes are most concentrated in the Keep up the work or Low priority quadrants. This means that the attributes that are important to customers have a good quality, and those that are less important have a worse quality. This shows that Mercator and Sad Novi Bazaar allocate their resources very well and improve the quality of the most important ambience attributes for customer shopping behavior, which is, of course, the priority.

### Managerial Implications

This study dealt with the identification of the most important exterior and interior attributes (ambience) of shopping centers for customer behavior using the importance-performance analysis. For that propose, research was conducted in two shopping centers in Novi Sad in Serbia. The results of the ambience attribute importance can be applicable in the whole Serbian market and in neighboring countries that have customers with similar characteristics.

It was found that the most important external elements are: location and address, parking availability, congestion and traffic, exterior window displays and entrances. Shopping center companies should have this in mind when they build and design their facilities. Errors in these attributes are difficult to repair later. From the interior attributes, the most important are: temperature, cleanliness, lighting, music, scents, absence of tobacco smoke, aisle width, PA usage and merchandise and its layout. Since these attributes are very important to customers, shopping center companies must be very careful in their operating in order to create customer satisfaction.

In practical terms, this research has helped the shopping center companies of Mercator and Sad Novi Bazaar in Novi Sad to determine the quality of their ambience attributes from a consumer perspective, and depending on the importance of these attributes for consumers, to make the effort to improve them. It can be seen that these two shopping centers perform well the important ambience attributes since only four of them in both centers are in the quadrant **Concentrate here**. These

two shopping centers can be used as benchmarks for other shopping center companies regarding ambience performance.

Further research can deal with the importance of other categories of ambience such as allocation and design of elements, points of purchase, decoration and human resources (Berman and Evans, 1995; Turley and Milliman, 2000).

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