Why visiting lifestyle centers? Alternative variables of attraction through structural equation modeling

¿Por qué visitar lifestyle centers? Variables alternativas de atracción a través de un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales

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Abstract: this research analyzes the attraction factors applied to the new shopping center formats called lifestyle centers, which are created to satisfy the new lifestyle demands, with a greater variety of services and experiences that improve visitor loyalty, where there is still a scarce amount of research. For this purpose, an explanatory study was developed through a survey applied to 398 visitors. The statistical analysis was carried out by means of a factorial solution and a structural equation model to estimate the effects of nine latent variables on the dependent variable intention to visit. The results reveal the existence of the proposed factors (accessibility and convenience, variety of offerings, physical environment, permanent entertainment, perception of luxury, eco-natural environment, uses of technology, special events, and quality of service). The significant effects of each attraction factor and its ability to influence visitation intention are discussed. The conclusions point to greater relevance compared to other traditional latent variables of the physical environment, service quality, accessibility, events, and the presence of technology services, issues that had not been documented in previous studies; thus, this research contributes to the knowledge to improve the attractiveness of lifestyle centers.

Keywords: shopping center, lifestyle centers, attraction factors, special events, quality of service, technology, relationship with staff, structural equation modeling.

Resumen: esta investigación analiza los factores de atracción aplicados a los nuevos formatos de centros comerciales llamados *lifestyle centers*, que nacen para satisfacer las nuevas demandas de estilos de vida, con una mayor variedad de servicios y experiencias que mejoren la lealtad de visita, donde todavía existe un escaso número de investigaciones. Para tal efecto, se desarrolló un estudio de carácter explicativo a través de una encuesta aplicada a 398 visitantes. El análisis estadístico se realizó mediante una solución factorial y un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales para estimar los efectos de nueve variables latentes hacia la variable dependiente intención de visita. Los resultados revelan la existencia de los factores propuestos (accesibilidad y conveniencia, variedad de la oferta, ambiente físico, entretenimiento permanente, percepción de lujo, ambiente eco-natural, usos de tecnología, eventos especiales y calidad del servicio, complementando la literatura. Se discuten los efectos significativos de cada factor de atracción y su capacidad para influir en la intención de visita. Las conclusiones señalan una mayor relevancia frente a otras variables latentes tradicionales del ambiente físico, la calidad del servicio, la accesibilidad, realización de eventos, la presencia de servicios de tecnología, cuestiones que no habían sido documentadas en estudios previos, por lo que esta investigación contribuye al conocimiento para mejorar la capacidad de atracción de los lifestyle centers.

Palabras clave: centro comercial, lifestyle centers, factores de atracción, eventos especiales, calidad del servicio, tecnología, relación con el personal, modelo de ecuaciones estructurales.

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Introduction

In the quest to offer visitors a greater variety of experiences and services, malls have evolved into a new format called lifestyle centers or megamalls (Olonade *et al.*, 2021; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2018), characterized by offering a convenient lifestyle option, bringing together desirable consumer elements in a unique, safe and comprehensible location (Olonade *et al.*, 2021), being an open-air retail environment composed of at least 50 000 square meters of retail space (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2018), with enhanced entertainment offerings, visually more attractive physical layouts (Ameen *et al.*, 2021) and social interaction or leisure facilities (Tripathi *et al.*, 2020).

The research on these new shopping center formats is scarce in Latin America (Tripathi *et al.*, 2020; Elmashhara and Soares, 2019; Olonade *et al.*, 2021), compared to other countries, its increase and acceptance in emerging countries (BBC, 2017; America Retail, 2022), so investigating the competitive management of different variables that favor attraction to malls is an interesting topic for marketing and business (Pantano *et al.*, 2018). In this regard, the purpose of this research is to study the attraction factors of current lifestyle centers to favor the understanding of those aspects that are valuable for the current consumer; likewise, to examine their attractiveness by measuring the effect of visiting variables.

This paper begins with a review of the different attractiveness factors presented in the literature and their effect on visit intention. Subsequently, the hypotheses are presented in the context of the alternative attraction factors present in lifestyle centers. Finally, the methodology used and the results are described, ending with a discussion of the conclusions and an in-depth analysis of the state-of-art on the theoretical and practical implications for the competitive management of these new formats.

Literature review

Malls have an important role in the consumer's commercial relationship with brands and the architecture of modern cities, being places that create consumer experiences (Diallo and Siquiera, 2017) enriched by new trends in physical and virtual commerce (Ameen *et al.*, 2021) to stimulate emotions and meet current consumer needs (Can *et al.*, 2016). In that sense, with the aim of amplifying the experience and emotional bonds with customers, lifestyle centers have emerged with modern upsized retail environments with a more attractive, multifaceted and pleasurable offer by containing a greater number of brands, services and entertainment (Olonade *et al.*, 2021; Tripathi *et al.*, 2020; Ameen *et al.*, 2021).

The marketing and business literature has investigated the attractiveness of shopping malls based on the proposal and existence of latent variables capable of affecting visitor behavior (Lucia-Palacios *et al.,* 2016), generally using CAT conceptual models (Cognitive-Appraisal-Theory: Lazarus, 1991), which study attraction factors as cognitive and emotional variables of the consumer, involving knowledge, affective states and judgments of convenience and image (in the face of location, offer, design, etc.) (Calvo and Lévy, 2018), which subsequently develop visitation behaviors (loyalty and recommendation) widely documented in the literature on shopping centers (Ahmad, 2012; De Juan and Rivera, 1999), which in the case of lifestyle centers allows contextualizing the influence of attraction factors and explaining behaviors on visitation intention (Lucia-Palacios *et al.,* 2016; Lecointre *et al.*, 2018).

For their part, attraction factors refer to a set of atmospheric, hedonic and entertainment aspects that motivate the intention to visit the shopping center (Munuera and Cuestas, 2006; Calvo and Calvo, 2013) considering that there is no convention of the type or variety of them, because each research obeys particular needs, contexts and objectives (González and Orozco, 2012; Thanasi-Boçe *et al.*, 2021), with greater focus on environmental topics, variety of supply and leisure (Gomes and Paula, 2017).

A literature review of attraction factors allows observing four aspects centered on convenience or accessibility, variety of stores, environmental design and entertainment due to the constant analysis in the empirical literature related to shopping centers (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2018; Gomes and

Paula, 2017; González and Orozco, 2012). As for lifestyle centers, Ameen *et al.* (2021) and Rosenbaum and Contreras (2019) have reported that there is a scarcity of knowledge of the aspects that favor visitation, so they recommend checking those referred to in the literature, and proposing new alternative factors that understand and meet the new needs of visitors (Olonade *et al.*, 2021; Tripathi *et al.*, 2020; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2018) in terms of specific offer options (e.g., luxury or gastronomic consumption), convenience of nature-based spaces, technology-driven services or resources, favorability of specific entertainment activities such as concerts, and the evaluation of the quality of service offered by partners that are conducive in the current lifestyle of visitors (Thanasi-Boçe *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, the proposed attraction variables with their definitions and hypotheses are addressed, starting with the dependent variable and continuing with the independent variables.

Intention of the visit

Consumers have different purposes for visiting a shopping mall, ranging from shopping to entertainment or socialization (González and Orozco, 2012), being this decision a holistic experience in terms of satisfying the consumption demands of various recreational, socialization, functional or convenience categories (Anselmsson, 2016). Consequently, visit intention can be seen as the emotional response and personal evaluation of the total set of experiences or expectations to be fulfilled in the shopping center (Lucia-Palacios *et al.*, 2016).

Hence, visit intention is defined as the desire to go to a shopping mall, combining three aspects: tendency to visit, frequency and pleasure (Ortegón and Royo, 2017), being analyzed from the positive perception when interacting with the atmospheric or design elements of the mall (El-Adly and Eid, 2015). Therefore, the intention to visit is proposed as the dependent variable, understood as the behavioral response to the effect of different factors that attract visitors to shopping malls (Calvo and Calvo, 2013; Lucia-Palacios *et al.*, 2016).

Accessibility and Convenience

The demand of modern life due to the consumer's feeling of lack of time motivates the valuation of easy and fast consumption, making shopping malls to be considered as convenient spaces for shopping (Lloyd *et al.*, 2014; Reimers and Chao, 2014). El-Adly and Eid (2015) state the importance of convenience as a determining factor of visitation, but establish that there is no conclusive definition, proposing it as the set of attributes spatially reduced in value of spatial and temporal proximity, synthesizing their study from a macro perspective of visitation due to time savings and convenience when using the services of the shopping center (Calvo and Calvo, 2013; Calvo and Lévy, 2018). In this regard, shopping environments by offering convenience to users in time reduction due to proximity and extended opening hours (Ahmad, 2012; El-Adly and Eid 2015), give way to accessibility defined by the location and arrangement of access roads (Munuera and Cuestas, 2006). Thus, to define the variable, people look for nearby shopping centers with easy and quick access, allowing the following hypothesis to be put forward:

H1: Accessibility and convenience positively influence visit intention.

Variety of the offer

Lloyd *et al.* (2014) consider the visit to a lifestyle center as a hedonic and utilitarian value activity, where visitors enjoy exploring or buying new products to escape boredom and for achieving a purchase goal or satisfying an intended service. Therefore, the variety of the offer is to incorporate various types of services or stores that can attract more consumers (El-Adly and Eid, 2015) and the choice for a shopping mall starts from including a specific service or brand (Ahmad, 2012).

Although a shopping center is an agglomeration of stores (Munuera and Cuestas, 2006), the attractiveness of a lifestyle center refers to the style, the specialty of the stores, the number of stores, as well as the brands available (Anselmsson, 2016), generating a determining image of

the shopping center (Ahmad, 2012). Finally, this variable refers to diversity of recognized stores, brands and services available in the mall (Calvo and Calvo, 2013; Ortegón and Royo, 2017), having to study how the multiplicity of establishments, especially of fashion items or hedonic products influence the intention visit (Santoso *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, previous research assumes an effect of the variety of offers that can also be expected in the context of lifestyle centers.

H2: Offer variety positively influences visit intention.

Physical environment

Interior design has been studied highlighting its relevance in the development of an attractive and harmonious shopping atmosphere, giving a visual distinctive to shopping centers (Afaq *et al.*, 2020) by including an appealing exterior appearance or interior design, cleanliness, decorations and interesting displays (Calvo and Lévy, 2018; Calvo and Calvo, 2013). Overall, environmental elements affect the visit experience, considering that consumers enjoy a spacious shopping environment, connecting design and circulation through stores (Reimers and Chao, 2014). Previous research suggests that the environment is a valuable aspect that influences permanence (Santoso *et al.*, 2018), indicating that aesthetics or design generate purchase reactions and frequency (Michon *et al.*, 2015; Lecointre *et al.*, 2018). Along these lines, the literature assumes traditional mall relationships, which are also susceptible to extrapolation to lifestyle centers.

H3: The physical environment positively influences visit intention.

Entertainment

Given the changes in the lifestyle of consumers and the increase in online shopping, shopping malls improve their attractiveness for visitors by positioning themselves as an option that combines their lifestyle with leisure activities or consumption of entertainment services (Calvo and Lévy, 2018), turning entertainment into a main tool to increase revenues (Anselmsson, 2016; Tripathi *et al.*, 2020), positioning the mall as a place for family gathering and social enjoyment, even when not buying (Lucia-Palacios, 2016; Olonade *et al.*, 2021). Afaq *et al.* (2020), Elmashhara and Soares (2020) point out that the demand for hedonic aspects has increased in shopping malls due to the growing consumption in permanent entertainment services (food courts, playgrounds and cinemas).

Entertainment is considered as a relevant part of the attractiveness strategy, because it focuses efforts to improve entertainment services and directs resources to the addition of recreational facilities that meet consumer needs (Khare *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, we consider that it has effects not only in the shopping center context but also in lifestyle centers.

H4: Entertainment positively influences visit intention.

Perception of luxury

Luxury consumption encompasses categories of high fashion, accessories and brands with an image of exclusivity and idea of status, conferring shoppers with products for personal display, beyond functional attributes (Perry and Kyriakaki, 2014), whose economic importance represents a global market of billions (Bai *et al.*, 2022), justifying the constant investigation of the role of the perception of luxury in the lifestyles and behavior patterns of lifestyle center visitors (Perry and Kyriakaki, 2014). Therefore, shopping centers that aspire to a cutting-edge positioning depend on establishing how to attract consumers by properly studying the combination of fashion brands that denote them with luxury image and sophistication (Yu *et al.*, 2021, Bai *et al.*, 2022).

The literature has approached luxury from hedonic consumption, personality and perceived popularity of the retail environment, studying its impact of quality and exclusivity only on certain consumers (Michon *et al.*, 2015; Can *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the influence and attractiveness of this attribute of shopping centers can be studied in the context of lifestyle centers (Yu *et al.*, 2021).

H5: The perceived luxury of stores positively influences visit intention.

Eco-friendly environment

A hallmark of lifestyle centers is the incorporation of eco-friendly environments to provide relaxing and comfortable states that facilitate the public's playful engagement and interaction with the space (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2018). Several researchers suggest that eco-friendly environments influence shopping behaviors (Kumar *et al.*, 2020), generate positive, sensory and emotional effects on visitors to service spaces (Rosenbaum and Contreras, 2019). Summarizing, the use of forms, materials and elements that symbolize nature, serves as an eco-friendly marketing strategy to encourage the intention to visit (Ortegón and Royo, 2017). In this way, Kumar *et al.* (2020) recommend delving deeper into the responses and effects of aesthetics with green or nature environments on visitor behavior, so it is proposed:

H6: Perception and incorporation of eco-friendly environments positively influence visit intention.

Use of Technology

Shopping malls are fluid and changing spaces, which effectively combine commercial aspects, various technological resources and social practices (Lecointre *et al.*, 2018), constantly evolving to improve the shopping experience by optimizing the circulation and exposure to visitors of the goods or services they offer (Pantano *et al.*, 2018). In that sense, new digital tools complement the technological advances of retail spaces to meet experiential needs and influence visitor behavior (Pantano and Gandini, 2018), motivating the analysis of the strategic potential of technology and requiring further research on its effects (Willems *et al.*, 2017).

Willems *et al.* (2017) have suggested that available studies tend to focus on the utilitarian or hedonic benefits of specific technology tools, an issue supported by Pantano *et al.* (2018) who point out a neglect of the value of technology as a

tool that enhances the purchasing process from a holistic and interactive commercial atmosphere. Passavanti *et al.* (2020) propose that research on the experience and technological aspects has been conducted based on the use of digital platforms, mobile technologies and functional technologies in stores, so it is desirable to investigate it from a global perspective of available technology services in the mall. Consequently, it is interesting to assess the effect of this attraction factor, particularly in the context of lifestyle centers.

H7: Technology uses positively influence visit intention.

Special events

The literature has established the shopping mall visit as a hedonic experience belonging to an entertainment typology, which starts from an exciting shopping activity or interaction with a mix of complementary services (Sadachar and Fiore, 2018), emphasizing special events as a differential factor that affects visitors' behavior by enhancing the shopping experience and increasing permanence (Khare *et al.*, 2020), despite the fact that their effects are not homogeneous and may be experienced differently by consumers (Elmashhara and Soares, 2020; Ahmad, 2012).

Elmashhara and Soares (2020) argue to study the entertainment variable in two types: permanent entertainment, established as the inclusion of services, stores and permanent leisure spaces designed to entertain (Anselmsson, 2016), previously raised as study variable H4. And special event entertainment, being the offer of occasional or seasonal activities of the mall, such as product launches, thematic or social cause events, festivals and musicals (Khare *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, considering special events as an independent variable to permanent entertainment and its innovative nature of this research, it is established that lifestyle centers use various events to differentiate themselves and attract consumers (Khare *et al.*, 2020), determining the differential value of this variable to conduct studies that measure their visitors' behavior (Elmashhara and Soares, 2020), postulating that:

H8: Special events positively influence visit intention.

Quality of the service

Elmashhara and Soares (2019) describe that shopping for mall visitors is an immersive and emotional experience, becoming a holistic entertainment that involves buyer-seller social interaction. Previous research evidence that the relationship of shoppers with staff facilitates the shopping process (Anselmsson, 2016), improves the perception of service and significantly influences visit and purchase intentions (Ahmad, 2012). Therefore, service quality offers a differential value against online shopping by generating a process with higher quality against the emotional, hedonic and functional needs of the customer (Khare *et al.*, 2020).

Elmashhara and Soares (2019) have pointed out service quality as a component of attractiveness, based on the relationship of consumers with the staff of the shopping mall, therefore, there is an interest in measuring service quality against the importance given by consumers to empathy, responsiveness and interactions with the employees of the shopping center (Anselmsson, 2016), being able to extend such reasoning to the case of lifestyle centers and making it possible to propose:

H9: Service quality positively influences visit intention.

Materials and Method

This empirical study adopts a quantitative method to test a large number of hypotheses (Hernández *et al.*, 2014), applying a structured questionnaire for collecting responses to attitude or preference questions (Zmud, 2003) and as a tool recommended in previous studies to calculate the effects of attraction variables on visit intention (Santoso *et al.*, 2018).

Based on the literature review of the ten proposed variables, 56 items were delimited from the adaptation of the literature consulted. Subsequently, the items were validated by thematic experts (two academics with doctoral level and a shopping center manager with more than ten years of experience), whose contributions allowed optimizing clarity, relevance and sufficiency of the questionnaire, allowing retaining 41 items in line with the recommendations of cultural adaptation exposed by the literature (Hernández *et al.*, 2014; De Juan and Rivera, 1999). Subsequently, they were analyzed by means of a pilot test with 30 effective surveys, obtaining a Cronbach's alpha α=.96 considering as adequate the reliability of the instrument (Celina-Oviedo and Campo, 2005).

The questionnaire was applied to visitors of six lifestyle centers in a major Latin American city, which meet the ICSC (2019) classification of lifestyle centers or mega-malls: Santafé, Plaza Central, Plaza de las Américas, El Edén, Centro Mayor and Calima. Along these lines, 398 effective surveys were obtained complying with the recommendations of the literature by requiring five to ten surveys per item and exceeding the minimum sample $\geq$200 (Kline, 2011; Lloret-Segura *et al.*, 2014).

The statistical treatment of the data was performed in SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 23, specialized software to develop multivariate analyses and calculate the effects between proposed variables (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Subsequently, the analyses of results are shown, including the factorial solution, validity measures and relationship testing of the structural equation model.

Results

Based on the proposed objectives to estimate the variables and calculate the relationships or effects between variables, the parameters proposed by Hair *et al.* (2014) were used to collect and analyze the data, complying with tests, parameters, and coefficients that confirm the normality and validity of the data, giving way to the performance of inferential analysis with parametric tests. Consequently, Mardia's test was applied, proving a multivariate normal distribution of the data, being considered relevant for further parametric analysis (Kline, 2011). Subsequently, a factor analysis was performed (see Table 1), calculating the significant statistical correlation degree with Barlett sphericity test of $\chi2$= 1067.723 / gl=487 /

p<0.000, with sample adequacy measure index KMO=0.933. A component extraction was performed with the maximum likelihood technique, finding that the 41 indicators are distributed in nine latent factors, conserving 67.05 % of variance explained (Hair *et al.*, 2014), presenting relevant and significant loadings >0.49 for most of the items (Lloret *et al.*, 2014).

Table 1

Factor analysis of attraction factors

Indicators		Factor								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
H1-AC1	H1-AC1 It is easy to access the mall, due to its location (car, public transport, bicycle or other means).	0,54	0,04	0,23	0,04	0,12	0,03	0,09	0,16	0,15
H1-AC2	The person visits the mall because of its proximity (it is close to work or place where he/she lives).	0,29	0,10	0,31	-0,12	0,17	0,11	0,01	0,02	0,13
H1-AC3	It is easy to go around the shopping center.	0,46	0,06	0,18	0,01	0,26	0,19	0,00	0,12	0,13
H1-AC4	The hours of the shopping center are convenient (broad).	0,58	0,13	0,20	0,32	0,12	-0,01	0,11	0,11	0,12
H2-VO1	The person can find all the products he/she is looking for in the mall	0,67	0,05	0,08	0,27	0,14	0,06	0,20	0,03	0,07
H2-VO2	The mall has a wide variety of warehouses and stores.	0,69	0,02	0,22	0,16	0,21	-0,08	0,08	0,13	0,13
H2-VO3	There is a wide range of services: Banking, insurance, real estate, clothing stores, etc.	0,63	0,07	0,10	0,26	0,16	-0,03	0,12	0,10	0,07
H2-VO4	The person finds the preferred brands.	0,65	-0,01	0,24	0,19	0,11	0,02	0,12	0,04	0,11
H3-AF1	The decoration and lighting are striking for him/her	0,41	0,05	0,23	0,19	0,27	0,02	0,06	0,05	0,59
H3-AF2	The shopping center is a nice place to visit.	0,44	0,09	0,32	0,20	0,23	0,09	-0,03	0,16	0,55
H3-AF3	The design and appearance of the shopping center are attractive	0,37	0,06	0,27	0,24	0,20	0,07	0,16	0,10	0,54
H3-AF4	The shopping center has free or large spaces	0,31	0,24	0,24	0,25	0,16	0,01	0,11	0,14	0,41
H4-OE1	There is a wide variety of restaurants and cafes.	0,36	0,05	0,27	0,22	0,49	-0,01	0,05	0,17	0,22
H4-OE2	It is important that the shopping center has a big food court.	0,40	0,08	0,22	0,20	0,53	-0,01	0,05	0,20	0,18
H4-OE3	There are entertainment spaces and cinemas in the mall.	0,29	0,04	0,17	0,15	0,85	0,05	0,12	0,13	0,17
H4-OE4	It is attractive that the mall has entertainment spaces and cinemas.	0,39	0,06	0,19	0,15	0,64	0,03	0,09	0,22	0,10
H4-OE5	The person visits this mall because it has a variety of entertainment activities to please everyone in the family	0,27	0,14	0,24	0,29	0,27	0,32	0,17	-0,03	0,05
H5-PL1	There are luxury brands in the shopping center	0,33	0,11	0,17	0,69	0,14	-0,06	0,14	0,10	0,16
H5-PL2	The shopping center has a recognition image.	0,40	0,14	0,17	0,55	0,13	-0,07	0,21	0,12	0,18
H5-PL3	The shopping center offers a feeling of prestige or luxury.	0,20	0,16	0,09	0,63	0,08	0,20	0,12	0,09	0,11
H5-PL4	Do you think that the people who buy in this mall have a prestigious style that identifies them.	0,01	0,26	0,06	0,33	-0,01	0,34	0,17	-0,02	0,12
H6-AE1	There are environments with vegetation in the shopping center	0,03	0,86	0,04	0,16	0,06	0,18	0,05	0,05	0,04

Indicadores		Factor								
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
H6-AE2	There is use of resources or elements of nature in the architecture of the mall.	0,04	0,91	0,09	0,16	0,08	0,13	0,09	0,02	0,04
H6-AE3	The design and eco-friendly environment of the mall (presence of shrubs, areas and green walls) is attractive.	0,07	0,88	0,10	0,12	0,03	0,18	0,11	0,10	0,03
H6-AE4	The presence of natural spaces or scenarios makes people feel comfortable.	0,10	0,75	0,06	0,05	0,00	0,23	0,17	0,17	0,07
H7-PT1	The inclusion of technological advances in the mall is attractive (digital screens, elevators, escalators, digital calls for payment automation, location app, security elements in parking lots, etc.).	0,25	0,17	0,17	0,52	0,22	0,28	-0,02	0,16	0,10
H7-PT2	The mall offers technology (wifi, bluetooth, etc.) that facilitates the online search of stores, stores or products.	0,20	0,20	0,14	0,39	0,19	0,35	-0,06	0,04	-0,01
H7-PT3	The technological benefits help the choice of visiting, permanence and consumption in the mall. (digital screens, elevators, escalators, digital applications for payment automation, location app security elements in parking lots, wifi, etc.).	0,16	0,22	0,09	0,24	0,18	0,61	0,08	0,14	0,01
H7-PT4	The content of forums, blogs, website and social media, make it attractive to visit the mall	-0,08	0,27	0,08	0,03	-0,11	0,62	0,20	0,05	0,01
H8-EE1	The mall has an offer of special events or fun and varied programs.	0,20	0,16	0,26	0,08	0,10	0,19	0,56	0,11	0,01
H8-EE2	The incorporation of special events makes it attractive to visit the CC (events such as: concerts, bingos, artist presentations, sporting events, parades, seasonal decorations, etc.).	0,13	0,08	0,09	0,16	0,00	0,17	0,74	0,24	0,09
H8-EE3	In the mall people can escape routine and boredom.	0,21	0,14	0,33	0,33	0,10	0,27	0,31	0,15	0,03
H8-EE4	This mall is outstanding when it comes to special events.	0,18	0,21	0,14	0,10	0,12	0,20	0,55	-0,01	0,04
H9-SP1	The personalized attention of the sellers of the stores is important.	0,20	0,12	0,08	0,03	0,16	0,07	0,25	0,59	0,09
H9-SP2	The sellers in this shopping center are friendly.	0,16	0,14	0,33	0,18	0,22	0,15	0,03	0,65	0,06
H9-SP3	The sellers of this shopping center offer customers personalized attention.	0,20	0,13	0,31	0,18	0,13	0,18	0,14	0,51	0,08
H9-SP4	People choose to buy in a shopping center because customer service is better compared to other places.	-0,13	0,17	0,11	-0,02	-0,02	0,50	0,21	0,11	0,03
IntV1	This shopping center is a good place to visit.	0,26	0,06	0,65	0,11	0,17	0,14	0,17	0,21	0,18
IntV2	I would visit this shopping center again	0,34	0,06	0,68	0,16	0,23	0,04	0,16	0,13	0,13
IntV3	I would recommend this shopping center to other people	0,31	0,11	0,77	0,22	0,12	0,18	0,17	0,13	0,14
IntV4	Satisfaction of visiting the shopping center	0,25	0,10	0,75	0,25	0,12	0,12	0,15	0,18	0,15

Note. Factor analysis. Maximum likelihood method.

Validity measures and data consistency

The reliability of the data was verified with Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR), exceeding the criteria suggested by Hair *et al.* (2014). Following Martínez and Martínez (2009), different statistical validation procedures were applied to evaluate the convergent and discriminant validity from the variance extracted (AVE): When the variables were contrasted with Fornell and Larcker method (1981), H1 and H2 did not exceed the expected values, proceeding with the study correlations between Anderson and Gerbing pair variables (1988) with confidence interval >95 % (±1.96 for the correlation between variables and standard errors of covariances) that statistically justify the validity existence of all variables. Therefore, the convergent and discriminant validity is supported by the results of the factor analyses that show that the items of each variable are highly correlated among themselves, but due to the extensive bibliographic review to define the variables and the validity methods carried out, it is demonstrated that each variable differs from another for this study, allowing the application of structural equations (Table 2).
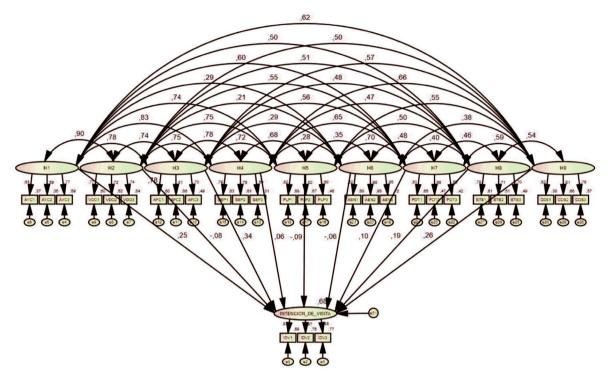
Table 2

Reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity values

Factor	Cronbach Alpha (CA)	Composed reliability (CR)	Extracted average variance (AVE)	INTV	H1	H9	H8	H7	H6	H5	H4	H3	H2
INTV	.895	0,895	0,739	0,860									
H1	.694	0,697	0,438	0,716	0,66								
H9	.765	0,775	0,537	0,691	0,62	0,73							
H8	.773	0,776	0,537	0,575	0,50	0,54	0,73						
H7	.759	0,758	0,513	0,575	0,60	0,59	0,46	0,72					
H6	.910	0,920	0,794	0,298	0,30	0,39	0,42	0,50	0,89				
H5	.815	0,819	0,602	0,600	0,74	0,55	0,50	0,70	0,35	0,78			
H4	.720	0,763	0,521	0,720	0,72	0,67	0,48	0,66	0,29	0,69	0,83		
H3	.804	0,808	0,585	0,728	0,78	0,57	0,48	0,56	0,30	0,73	0,77	0,78	
H2	.785	0,788	0,554	0,636	0,90	0,50	0,51	0,55	0,22	0,75	0,76	0,74	0,74

Estimation of the structural equation model

The proposed model was based on the specification of the path graph with the nine exogenous variables and the dependent intention variable to visit (Figure 1). The adjustment was made by debugging items with low or high error coefficients and keeping three items per variable so as not to compromise the stability of each dimension, reaching an adequate adjustment (CMIN = 2. 239) with significant value (Pvalue=.000 for the whole model), achieving goodness-of-fit measures close to the values suggested by the literature GFI = .883, AGFI = .848, RMSEA = .056, CFI=.931, TLI=.917, PNFI=.731 (Escobedo *et al.*, 2016; Hair *et al.*, 2014).

Figure 1
Structural model

Note. Influence model of attraction factors on visit intention.

Table 3
Estimators and significance for endogenous and exogenous latent variables

Relations			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Pvalue	Path
IntV	<---	H1	0,925	0,315	2,937	0,003	.25
IntV	<---	H2	0,256	0,094	2,737	0,006	-.08
IntV	<---	H3	0,408	0,118	3,455	***	.34
IntV	<---	H4	0,463	0,112	4,151	***	.06
IntV	<---	H5	0,085	0,092	0,922	0,356	-.09
IntV	<---	H6	-0,046	0,04	-1,161	0,246	-.06
IntV	<---	H7	0,206	0,068	3,018	0,003	.10
IntV	<---	H8	0,261	0,067	3,898	***	.19
IntV	<---	H9	0,461	0,076	6,104	***	.26

Note. ***es = >0.001 being a significant value ≤0.05.

The results of the different tests and fulfillment of criteria showed that the dimensions had factor loadings and discriminant values that prove the relevance of the nine factors (Lloret *et al.*, 2014).

Consequently, it is validated that six relationships out of the nine hypothesized reach significance values (Pvalue ≤ 0.05) and demonstrate positive effects (path coefficients ≥ 0.05) on the dependent

variable intention to visit (Escobedo *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, H2, H5 and H6 do not have a significant effect to visit intention, since the p -value of these three hypotheses exceeded the expected value of significance and present negative effects (see Table 3). Finally, the implications of each hypothesis are more discussed in the following section.

Conclusions and discussion

The progressive growth and evolution of the shopping center industry intensifies the competition to develop visitor attraction strategies (Santoso *et al.*, 2018), so it is important for shopping center managers to know which components make shopping centers more attractive to consumers (Tripathi *et al.*, 2020; Pantano *et al.*, 2018). This research has delved into the proposal and empirical testing of attraction factors in a recent type of large-scale shopping mall format called lifestyle center that has received little investigated. We reveal how attraction factors operate in this new context by demonstrating their effects on visitation intention, using the CAT paradigm (Lazarus, 1991) to enhance the understanding of the conceptual model. These results contribute to the literature in multiple ways.

First, the findings verify the presence of traditional latent variables in the literature (e.g., variety of offerings, physical environment, convenience of location and entertainment) as applied to the new concept of shopping malls called lifestyle centers. In addition, new attraction variables (e.g., perception of luxury, preference for eco-friendly physical environments, perception of technology services, special events and service quality) are tested, providing information to suggest managers the need to include and manage new factors that can improve the attractiveness and increase the visiting frequency to lifestyle centers (Tripathi *et al.*, 2020).

Second, the statistical analysis of the structural model revealed that most of the variables have a positive and significant effect on visitation intention (H1, H3, H4, H7, H8 and H9); however, when investigating the behavioral responses of visitors when interacting with the commercial

atmosphere, differences are found on the visitation intention of some of the factors (H2, H5 and H6). In this regard, the role and relevance of the attraction factors are discussed below along with the hypotheses obtained.

The influence of H1 towards visitation intention presented a high significant effect, being congruent with previous studies of the variable in traditional shopping centers that have shown that accessibility and convenience are significant to encourage visitation (Thanasi *et al.*, 2021; Calvo and Lévy, 2018), so this research manages to complement the literature of the category by positively extending the effects of proximity and easy travel to lifestyle centers. We consider that this finding can be further studied by allowing visitors to access entertainment services, the main factor of interest in these environments.

The values of H2 show a negative effect of the variety of offerings on the intention to visit lifestyle centers. In contrast to previous research suggesting that the attractiveness of a traditional shopping mall is positively influenced by the agglomeration of available brands and services (Anselmsson, 2016; El-Adly and Eid, 2015), our results support Ahmad (2012) who suggests that consumers' visit decision is strongly influenced by the variety of offers with the accessibility to services and especially by the emotional attachment to specific brands, thus Lecointre *et al.* (2018) and Diallo and Siquiera (2017) point out that the composition of services and brands present or absent can generate effects contrary to those expected. In similarity with Elmashhara and Soares (2019), it was found that the variety of the offer in correlation with leisure activities has a negative effect on visit attitudes, so as they are not considered attractive to the surveyed consumers, further research is suggested to contrast the type of effect on intentional measures of visitation.

The findings against H3 suggest that the physical environment of the lifestyle center is the latent variable with the largest positive effect towards visitation intention in harmony with previous studies (Lecointre *et al.*, 2018; Munuera and Cuestas, 2006; Calvo and Calvo, 2013) where spatial design and display with visual appeal seem to have an important effect for visitors. In line with

Afaq *et al.* (2020), the results suggest that harmony towards atmospheric design with visually appealing spaces and wide aisles generate the opportunity to be able to transit with companions, whose company induces higher consumption and visit frequency (Lucia-Palacios *et al.*, 2016) being potentiated by marketing activities to favor pleasant experiences (Muñoz-Querales *et al.,* 2020). We consider that these results can stimulate further research, maintaining the relevance in improving spatial designs to facilitate the transit of people and evaluating the emotional involvement of visitors in differentiating, preferring and recommending the physical environmental designs of each lifestyle center.

Regarding H4, the findings support a significant effect of the entertainment offered by the lifestyle center on visitation intention. As documented in the literature review by Khare *et al.* (2020), this variable has been essential to promote the visit to these new retail environments. Therefore, due to its essential value for social relationship as suggested by Lucia-Palacios *et al.* (2016) or Rosenbaum and Contreras (2019) a greater effect of the variable on visitors was expected, especially when extended to lifestyle centers whose main axis is the consumption of leisure services such as cinema or food and its adaptation possibilities to the different segments of shoppers in shopping centers (González and Orozco, 2012), also considered a marketing activity to improve the experience of visitors (Muñoz-Querales *et al.,* 2020). Consequently, testing its effects in the Latin American context implies new research possibilities so we encourage to deepen in the variety, specialty and differentiation of the offer of entertainment services aimed at different customer profiles in the case of lifestyle centers.

Regarding H5 based on the role of the perception of luxury in lifestyle centers in promoting visitation intention, there is a non-significant negative effect. Although some studies highlight that lifestyle centers are designed under the concept of luxury, prestige and fashion (Michon *et al.*, 2008), as pointed out by Perry and Kyriakaki (2014) and the results, the items that most influence the intention to visit from the luxury factor are the choice of type of stores and brand positioning

both of the shopping center and the retailer offer, so it is considered that the resulting effect is due to the fact that the perception and relevance of luxury is subjective when evaluating products, stores and design of the retail environment (Diallo and Siquiera, 2017). Therefore, it is recommended to deepen this result in Latin America and lifestyle centers, which use a greater variety of offerings for diverse visitor profiles, determining methodologies and levels of objective identification of luxury and prestige to increase the understanding of this phenomenon.

The resulting values for H6 show that there is no direct and significant effect of eco-friendly environmental design on visitation intention. We consider that the result is because some lifestyle center designs reward addressing more immediate consumer satisfaction concerns (e.g., shopping, eating, entertainment) over the incorporation of spaces with eco-friendly elements (e.g., fountains, gardens, green areas) (Rosenbaum *et al.,* 2018). In relation to Ortegón and Royo (2019), findings suggest that nature-centered environments possess an indirect effect on consumer behavior, similarly Rosenbaum *et al.* (2018) recommend considering the mediating effects of natural spaces on consumer emotions, so new research will have to examine the role or degree of influence of this variable in the relationships with emotional states and behavioral, permanence and social relationship variables within physical eco-friendly spaces in lifestyle centers.

This study shows positive and significant effects on the perception of technology in lifestyle centers on the intention to visit H7, so that the perception of technological services or spaces becomes a relevant factor to get the attention of consumers, responding to the current needs of interactivity with the space as a result of the combination of access to the store and the use of communication technologies (particularly social networks) (Pantano and Gandini, 2018; Lecointre *et al.*, 2018). Lifestyle centers have transcended in the category, moving exclusively from managing their physical environment to developing digital and omnichannel experiences that enhance their competitive differential (Ameen *et al.,* 2021) by being able to extend sensory marketing activities

through the stimulation of the senses (Cortázar and Rodríguez, 2016). In a practical perspective, new research will have to analyze the integration of physical and virtual sensory environments, examining the benefits of appropriating technology to streamline consumption processes that improve the perception of store owners, comparing the scope of technological spaces for display and customer relations.

For its part, H8 based on the role of special events, proved to be a variable that strongly promotes the intention to visit. Contrasting the literature and separating special events or differentiating them from permanent entertainment and leisure services (Elmashhara and Soares, 2020), specific activities in shopping centers such as parades, concerts or launches, and even seasonal decoration activities of the mall proved to be effective attractiveness strategies (Sadachar and Fiore, 2018; Can *et al.*, 2016). The results obtained in the case of lifestyle centers open new research topics, such as the individual analysis of the variable in behavioral studies or the analyses of the impact of these activities on the moods of visitors.

For H9, the significant and positive effect of service quality on visit intention is confirmed. Previous results in traditional shopping malls suggest that a more focused attention on meeting functional needs and interaction with retail environment collaborators can improve consumption and visit intention (Ameen *et al.*, 2021). Having demonstrated this relationship allows extending the degree of knowledge for service management and relevance, particularly as these new retail environments are oriented to captivate convenience and increase experiential attributes for the visitor. Although this study offers significant information, the findings will have to be complemented with new research adding conditions, stages and comparing the variable in virtual channels (for example, the evaluation of after-sales services in social networks to assess relationships with reputation and image measures).

In conclusion, the results obtained allow to extend the conceptual and empirical knowledge of attraction factors in the context of lifestyle centers through a structural model of relationships, however, based on previous studies, we consider it important to clarify that in addition to identifying the effects of individual variables on consumers, it is required to have a holistic perspective of the stimuli capable of influencing visitors (Lucia-Palacios *et al.*, 2016; Calvo and Lévy, 2018). Hence, the attractiveness should also be examined through a joint and separate management of the factors capable of encouraging the visit to a lifestyle center.

On the other hand, in view of the current trends in technology services and the findings identified, it is necessary to recommend that lifestyle center managers encourage interactivity and the continuous renewal of commercial displays, allowing them to propose the creation of interesting interactive physical spaces (for example, with augmented reality or virtual showcases) to stimulate experiences. Also create or have virtual spaces of communication with the offer of stores or brands, which encourage commercial interaction, omnichannel and launches of new services or products. These premises complement the discussion of each hypothesis mentioned above.

Finally, this research acknowledges some limitations for future research. We consider that since there are differences in the design of each lifestyle center and the analysis was applied to a single city in Latin America with common customer profiles, the results imply limitations in the generalization of the findings. Therefore, future research should propose methodologies that consider the uniformity degree of the environmental designs of these new formats and compare the information obtained by customer profiles.

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