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Spatial Analysis of Patronage of Neighborhood Shopping Centers in Gusau Town Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Studies on modern shopping centers have mostly focused on super-regional and regional shopping centers, with findings that are contextual in nature, reflecting patterns of patronage in the Western world and regional contexts. This is despite the relevance of neighborhood shopping centers in the retail business landscape. The study analyzed the spatial pattern of patronage of neighborhood shopping centers in Gusau Town, Nigeria. Five neighborhood shopping centers were purposively sampled from six political wards, and a total of 400 utility and recreational shoppers were selected using a convenience sampling technique. Data was collected through interviews and a GPS device. Spatial variation in the patronage of neighborhood shopping centers was analyzed using the spatial analysis toolbox of ArcGIS 10.0V software. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the patronage pattern and analyze the demographic characteristics of shoppers. The findings revealed that patronage of shopping centers varies spatially, with the majority of customers coming from Tudun Wada and Sabon Gari wards. It was also found that local-level patronage of modern shopping centers mirrors regional and global trends, where middle- and high-income earners, with significant levels of literacy and education, dominate patronage. These customers are driven by convenience, safety, quality of goods, and the leisure aspect of shopping. The study concluded that spatial variation in patronage is influenced by the physical divide between high- and middle-income customers on one side and low-income customers on the other. Retail managers must ensure that their shopping centers have a large trade area covering at least two-thirds of the population in their operational base to sustain and grow their business. It was recommended that more investment be made in neighborhood shopping center development due to its potential for job creation and commercial viability

Introduction

Shopping centers have become an integral part of the modern world, offering consumers a safe and convenient environment that differs significantly from traditional markets (Kruegell, 2010; Johnson et al., 2021). A shopping center is defined as a group of retail and other commercial establishments that are planned,

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developed, owned, and managed as a single property (Pradaan, 2003; Kolter & Armstrong, 2005; Levy & Weitz, 2013; Okoro, Okolo & Mmamel, 2019). One notable type of shopping center is the Neighborhood/Strip Shopping Center, which typically has a supermarket as its anchor and occupies about 50,000 square feet, though it can range from 30,000 to 100,000 square feet. These centers are located in residential areas and usually do not exceed 10,000 square meters in gross leasable area. They are designed with a unified architectural layout, ensuring accessibility, comfortable surroundings, and sufficient on-site parking. They are often located along major roads (JLL Survey, 2016; Fujie, 2019) and offer a centralized and convenient platform for a variety of businesses in retail, personal services, and entertainment (Hague & Rahman, 2009; Oluwunmi, Umeh & Role, 2022).

According to ICSC (2014), a strip or neighborhood shopping center consists of an attached row of stores or service outlets managed as a coherent retail entity, without enclosed walkways linking the stores. It typically serves a small trade area, catering to 2,500 to 40,000 people within a six-minute drive (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010). In Nigeria, consumer demand for quality shopping experiences in serene environments has contributed to the growing popularity of modern shopping centers, which are attracting patrons away from traditional markets (Bayero, 2018; Iqbal, Nazir & Memon, 2022). The opening of shopping centers has introduced new purchasing trends in Nigeria, with more consumers opting for these modern retail options (Olanade et al., 2021). In Sub-Saharan Africa, shopping centers occupy at least 5,000 square meters of gross leasable area, with about three million square meters of retail space in total, including both new and older, low-quality facilities (Knight Frank Report, 2020). Nigeria's retail market was valued at $239 billion in 2022 and is expected to grow at a rate of 9% from 2022 to 2027, reaching $363 billion. As of 2023, Nigeria was ranked 39th as a potential investment hub in the global modern shopping center industry, with neighborhood shopping centers being the most vibrant subsector (Kearney Report, 2023).

Early research on shopping center patronage and behavior focused on objective factors such as distance, population density, and space (Brunner & Mason, 1968; Buklin, 1969). Over time, research shifted to shopper motivations, image attributes, and patronage patterns among specific groups such as black and low-income consumers (Gianluigi, 2006; Dubihlela & Job, 2014; Annemarie, 2014; Backstrom, 2011). Other studies explored situational variables (Zhaung et al., 2006), gender variations in patronage, and attractiveness factors (Khare, 2011; Jackson, Stoel & Brantley, 2011; Telci, 2013). In Nigeria, research has primarily focused on regional shopping centers, with limited studies examining neighborhood shopping centers. Studies such as those by Edwin & Gerald (2017), Onuola & Nnenanya (2017), and Idoko & Nebo (2017) investigated mall consumption motivations and consumer loyalty. This study seeks to address the gap in research on neighborhood shopping center patronage, especially in local settings like Gusau town, where factors such as culture, religion, and values may influence consumer behavior differently compared to other regions.

Methodology

This study focused on two types of shoppers—utility and window/recreational shoppers—within Gusau Town. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for selecting the sample.

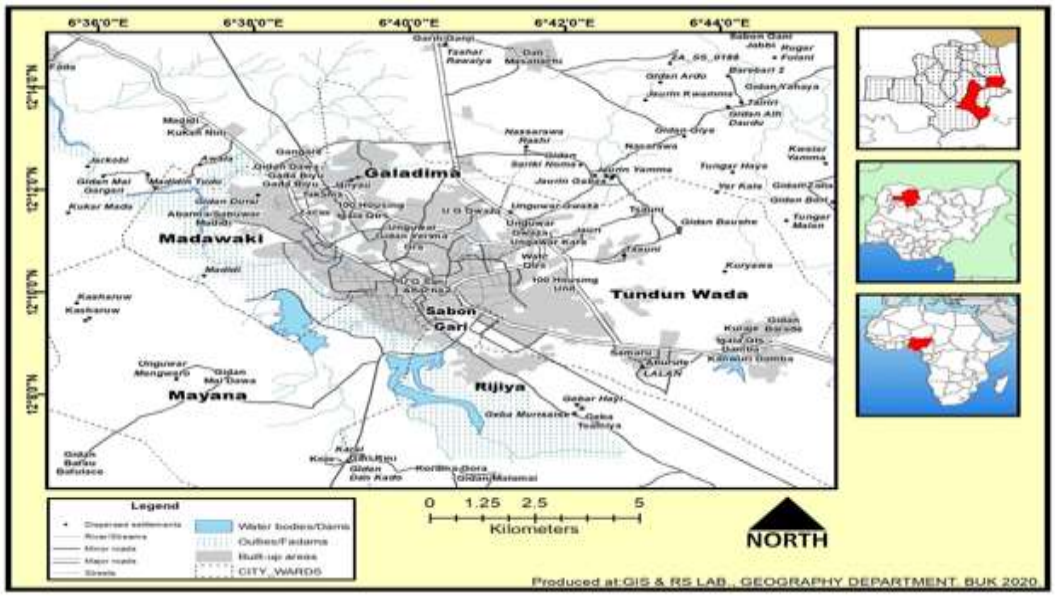

Fig. 1: Gusau Town
Source: Google Earth (2020)

Stage 1 (Purposive Sampling): Five shopping centers were selected based on popularity and size: Jifatu, A.S. Mamuda (1), A.S. Mamuda (2), Sardauna Gallery, and A.S. Mamuda 3. These centers were drawn from six political wards in Gusau Town (Galadima, Mayana, Sabon Gari, Tudun Wada, Rijya, and Madawaki), with at least one center chosen from each ward.

Stage 2 (Convenience Sampling): From each of the five shopping centers, 80 respondents were selected, making a total of 400 respondents. Convenience sampling was used due to the unknown total population of shoppers and because not all patrons were willing to participate.

The combination of purposive and convenience sampling ensured representation of the key shopping areas and ease of data collection in this context.

Table 1: Sampling Procedure

Ward	No. Shopping centers	Sampled	No. of Respondents
Mayana	0	0	0
T/wada	6	2	160
Galadima	3	1	80
Rijiya	0	0	0
Sabon Gari	1	1	80
Madawaki	1	1	80
Total	**11**	**5**	**400**

Source: Reconnaissance study, 2024

The study utilized two main instruments for data collection:

GPS Device: This was used to collect geographic coordinates of the Neighborhood Shopping Centers in Gusau Town. The data was integrated into GIS software to analyze spatial variations in patronage.

Structured Interviews: These were adapted from relevant literature (Oluwunmi, Umeh & Role, 2022) and administered to 400 respondents present at the shopping centers. The interviews gathered information on respondents' residential locations and shopping patterns. For respondents with reading difficulties, the content was translated for clarity.

The study relied on geographic tools, including a digitized Gusau Town map, which was obtained from the Geography Department at Bayero University, Kano. Data were analyzed using the ArcGIS 10.0v spatial toolbox, SPSS v.20 descriptive statistics, and Chi-square tests to explore shopping patterns and demographic variations.

Result

Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2 shows that a greater number of neighborhood shopping center patrons (customers) are male, constituting 64%, while 36% are female. The age profile indicates that 34.5% are under 24 years, 57% are between the ages of 25–44 years, 6% are between 45–64 years, and 2.5% are above 65 years. Regarding occupation, 40.5% are civil servants, 20.75% are traders, 10.5% are farmers, 7.5% are artisans, and 20.75% are either students or private practitioners. The marital status of the customers shows that 49% are married and 51% are single. The educational profile reveals that 22.75% hold NCE/ND qualifications, 45.75% have a B.Sc/HND, 18.5% possess a second degree, 9.75% have only an O-level certificate, and 3.25% have informal education, such as Qur'anic education. Overall, 68.5% of the customers hold B.Sc/HND or NCE/ND certificates. The monthly income of respondents, as indicated in Table 2, shows that 25.3% earn ₦1,000–20,000, 31.7% earn ₦21,000–40,000, 15.5% earn ₦41,000–80,000, 12.5% earn ₦81,000–100,000, and 15% earn over ₦100,000 per month.

Table 2: Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of Buyers

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)	X^2
Gender			21.160**
Male	246	64	
Female	154	36	
Age			317.040**
< 24 Years	138	34.5	
25-44	228	57	
45-65	24	6	
65-Above	10	2.5	

Occupation			133.575**
Civil service	162	40.5	
Farming	42	10.5	
Trading	83	20.75	
Artisanship	30	7.5	
Others	83	20.75	
Marital Status			0.160**
Married	196	49	
Single	204	51	
Level of Education			211.700**
NCE/ND	91	22.75	
B.Sc/HND	183	45.75	
Postgraduate	74	18.5	
O-level	39	9.75	
Primary	0	0	
Others	13	3.25	
Monthly income (Naira)			53.425**
1000-20000	101	25.3	
21000-40000	127	31.7	
41000-80000	62	15.5	
81000-100000	50	12.5	
101000-Above	60	15	
Total	**400**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023 ** *Significant at: 0.01% Level*

Spatial Distribution of Patronage of Neighborhood Shopping Centers in Gusau

Figure 2 shows that Tudun Wada Ward has the highest number of patrons, with 131 respondents representing 32.75% of the total. Galadima Ward has 48 patrons (12%), Madawaki Ward has 50 (12.5%), and Mayana Ward has 51 patrons (12.75%). Sabon Gari Ward has 75 patrons (18.75%), while Rijiya Ward has only 21 (5.25%). Additionally, 24 respondents (6%) are not residents of Gusau Town but still patronize the shopping centers.

Pattern of Shopping

Preferred Time of Shopping

The analysis of the preferred time for shopping, as shown in Table 3, indicates that 16% of respondents prefer to shop in the morning, 27% in the afternoon, and 57% in the evening. Most shoppers (57%) prefer evening shopping, which is mainly because most of the customers are civil servants who close work at 4:00 PM, and they are typically occupied from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

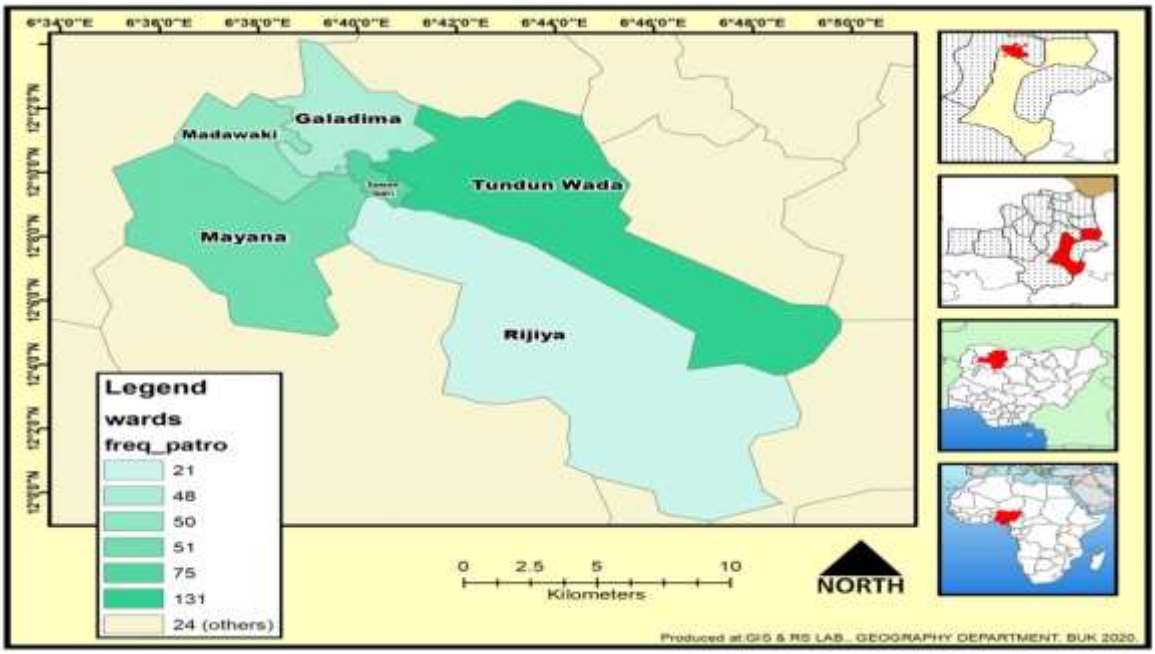

Figure 2: Distribution of Patronage among Political Wards
Source: Field Survey, 2019 and Author's Analysis, 2020

Table 3: Preferred time of shopping

Time	Frequency	Percentage (%)	X^2
Morning	62	16	111.245**
Afternoon	109	27	
Evening	229	57	
Total	**400**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023 ***Significant at: 0.05% Level*

Preferred days of shopping

Majority of the customers (48.5%) preferred weekend days for shopping, 35.5% preferred weekdays and 14.5% preferred holidays while others who have no specific preferred days of shopping constitute 1.5%. This signifies that majority of neighborhood shopping centers patrons goes for shopping during the weekdays (Monday to Friday).

Table 4: Preferred Days of Shopping

Days	Frequency	Percentage	X^2
Weekend Days	194	48.5	212.000**
Week Days	142	35.5	
Holidays/Festive period	58	14.5	
Others	6	1.5	
Total	**400**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023 ***Significant at: 0.05% Level*

Frequency of Shopping

Frequency of shopping differs among the respondents; this ranges from once in a week to twice a month. 34.5% of customers of neighborhood shopping centers in the town patronize it once in a week, 25% patronize/visit the shopping centers twice in a week and 21.5% go for shopping once a month while 19% patronize them twice every month.

Table 5: Frequency of Shopping

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	X^2
Once a week	138	34.5	22.660**
Twice a week	101	25	
Once a month	86	21.5	
Twice a month	75	19	
Total	**400**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023 ***Significant at: 0.05% Level*

Most purchased Products when shopping

Table 6 shows that 54% of respondents patronize the shopping centers to purchase foodstuff, 20% clothing materials and electronic gadgets, 13% goes for cosmetics while another 13% browse for other products available in the shopping centers.

Table 6: Most Purchased products when shopping

Product	Frequency	Percentage	X^2
Foodstuff	217	54	188.540**
Electronic Gadgets	52	13	
Clothing Materials	81	20	
Others	50	13	
Total	**400**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023 **Significant at: 0.01% Level

Rating of quality of Goods/services

Rating of quality of goods shows that 39% of customer of neighborhood shopping centers in Gusau town rates the quality of goods and services as Very Good, 55% rate it as good and 6% rate it Fair. From the above rating we can understand that the quality of goods/services offered by the shopping centers is good, hence the reason for the patronage. Research such as Babatunde & Albertina (2014) found that high quality of products and services offered/sold in modern shopping centers is a major driving force for their patronage in Cape Town South Africa.

Table 7: Rating of Goods/Service Offered by the Neighborhood Shopping

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)	X^2
V. Good	156	39	146.915**
Good	219	55	
Fair	25	6	
Poor	0	0	
V. poor	0	0	
Total	**400**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023 ***Significant at: 0.05% Level*

Factors of patronage of neighborhood shopping centers

Majority of the respondents (51%) indicated that their patronage of the shopping centers is influence by convenience (i.e. the conducive atmosphere, the level of security (safety), parking space etc. 20% of the respondents patronize neighborhood shopping centers because of the merchandize and service (i.e. the quality and availability of certain products/services, the assortment and variety etc.) and 7.5% of the respondents are influence by the entertainment and social events such Sallah Funfair and watching football matches while 17% are patronizing neighborhood shopping centers because of pricing i.e. they offer goods and services at lower prices than traditional and downtown markets and 4.5% indicate other factors for their patronage such as sign of prestige and higher social class and to browse latest gadgets.

Table 8: Factors influencing Patronage of Neighborhood shopping centers

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)	X^2
Convenience	204	51	273.300
Merchandize/services	80	20	
Entertainment/social events	30	7.5	
Pricing	68	17	
Others	18	4.5	
Total	**400**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2019 **Significant at: 0.05% Level

Distance Covered from Residential Location

Respondents indicated that they covered different distance to access the neighborhood shopping centers. 60.5% covers only 0.5km, 16.3% covers 6 – 10km and 15.7% covers 11 – 15km while only 7.5% covered 16km and above to access the shopping centers. Looking at this critically, it can be seen that those that covered 0.5km constitute more than half of the customers of neighborhood shopping center in Gusau town, whereas those that covered 15km and above, could be from neighboring towns of Bungudu, Kotorkwoshi, Tsafe, and Kaura Namoda etc. This signifies that those living around the shopping centers are most of the customers of the shopping centers despite some of them have mobility and can access shopping centers outside their immediate environment/residential area.

Table 9: Distance covered to patronize Neighborhood shopping center

Distance (km)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	X^2
0-5km	242	60.5	276.580**
6-10km	65	16.3	
11-15km	63	15.7	
16-Above	30	7.5	
Total	**400**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023 ***Significant at: 0.05% Level*

Influence of Distance on Choice of Neighborhood Shopping Centers

Table 10 shows that 41% of customers of neighborhood shopping center in Gusau town consider distance when choosing the shopping center to patronize and 33% do not, while 26% do consider distance at certain times, depending on the situation at hand.

Table 10: Influence of distance on choice of Neighborhood shopping center

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**	**X^2**
Positive	164	41	13.520**
Negative	132	33	
Sometime	104	26	
Total	**400**	**100**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023 ***Significant at: 0.01% Level*

Discussion

Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

The gap between male and female customers of neighborhood shopping centers in Gusau can be attributed to the dominance of Islamic culture, which restricts the movement of women unless necessary. In Hausa culture, allowing women to shop, even in traditional markets, is considered taboo. Another reason for this gap is that most women in the study area feel uncomfortable standing in public with men other than their husbands. Despite the 28% difference between male and female customers, it can be said that both genders significantly patronize neighborhood shopping centers in Gusau. This finding aligns with Bayero (2018), who found that 57% of customers in Lagos shopping malls were male, compared to 43% female. Similarly, Sohail (2013) found that 78.9% of shopping center patrons in Saudi Arabia were male, while only 21.1% were female. However, it contrasts with Gabriel & Daniel (2014), where 59% of customers in South Africa were female and 41% were male.

Young adults under 45 years of age make up 91.5% of the customers at neighborhood shopping centers in Gusau. This is expected, as this age group often seeks social status and views shopping at modern centers as prestigious. This finding is consistent with Bayero (2018), Sohail (2013), Cheng & Nair (2018), and Lizz (2017), who also found that young adults are the majority of patrons at modern shopping centers.

Most customers in the study area are civil servants and traders. As the capital city of Zamfara State and a regional economic hub, Gusau hosts many civil servants (both federal and state), making up 40.5% of patrons, while traders constitute 20.75%. Both married and single individuals patronize neighborhood shopping centers. Singles, often in their youth, see shopping as recreational and a chance to meet new people, as supported by Taylor & Cosenza (2002) and Swinyard (1998), who assert that modern shopping centers are resting places for teenagers.

B.Sc. and HND holders are the majority of the respondents, which is unsurprising, as shopping at modern centers often requires literacy and a certain level of enlightenment to navigate and choose items by reading labels. This aligns with Sunny & Godwills (2016), who found that educational level influences shopping center choice and behavior among urban Nigerian customers.

Customers with a monthly income between ₦21,000 and ₦40,000 constitute the majority of neighborhood shopping center patrons. This is due to the declining standard of living caused by the state government's failure to implement the ₦18,000 minimum wage, as well as the impact of cattle rustling and banditry on the state's economy. Most respondents earning ₦1,000-20,000 are students, while those earning ₦81,000-100,000 and above are federal government workers in the town. As a result, investment returns from neighborhood shopping centers may be small, and sustainability could be an issue due to low patronage and sales.

A chi-square test revealed a significant relationship between demographic and socio-economic variables and the patronage of neighborhood shopping centers. Significant differences were found in gender ($X^2 = 21.160^{**}$), age ($X^2 = 317.040^{**}$), occupation ($X^2 = 133.575^{**}$), education ($X^2 = 211.700^{**}$), and income ($X^2 = 53.425^{**}$), but not in marital status ($X^2 = 0.160^{**}$).

Spatial Distribution of Patronage of Neighborhood Shopping Centers in Gusau

Patronage of neighborhood shopping centers in Gusau varies spatially across the six political wards. The variation follows a divide between old and new residential areas. The older part of Gusau has lower patronage compared to newer areas, which have emerged due to urbanization. The difference in patronage between Galadima, Mayana, and Madawaki wards is small, reflecting similarities in their populations. These wards, which form the ancient part of Gusau, are primarily inhabited by people engaged in primary economic activities and have lower levels of Western education and social status. Low-income households dominate these areas, and population growth is limited due to the surrounding River Gusau. Rijiya ward has the lowest frequency of patrons, as it was not originally part of Gusau. It became incorporated due to outward expansion and resettlement following the 2006 floods. The small size of the area and the fact that it is home to low-income earners further limits its patronage.

In contrast, Sabon Gari ward has a diverse population with a mix of tribes and cultures. It includes lower-, middle-, and high-income residential areas, such as the 'Mortgage Area,' home to important personalities and government officials. Tudun Wada ward has the highest number of patrons, which is not surprising given its large landmass and population. The ward is experiencing significant physical development, especially in the northern and eastern parts of Gusau, and houses many middle- and high-income residential areas, such as Igala Housing Estate, Damba, Prison Quarters, and the Federal Low-Cost Housing Estate. This finding is consistent with Ozhan, Vedia, Tuba & Evren (2008), who found that most patrons of modern shopping centers come from middle- and high-income residential areas due to their preference for clean and conducive shopping environments

Pattern of Shopping

Due to individual differences and the nature of daily routines, customers tend to choose specific times that are more convenient for them to shop. Patrons of neighborhood shopping centers in Gusau town have varied preferences for shopping times, with the evening period being the most preferred. This is mainly because the majority of customers are civil servants who close work at 4:00 p.m., making them available for shopping after work hours (8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.). Another reason for the preference for evening shopping is that the weather tends to be cooler and more favorable for outings. Additionally, a chi-square test revealed a significant difference ($X^2 = 111.245^{**}$) in the preferred shopping times among neighborhood shopping center patrons in Gusau. Just as preferred shopping times vary, so do the preferred days for shopping, including weekends, weekdays, and holidays/festive periods. It was observed that 35.5% of those who preferred weekdays are commuters living on the town's fringe, using workdays to shop after hours to save on transport costs. A chi-square test of differences shows significant variation in the preferred shopping days ($X^2 = 212.0^{**}$). Furthermore, it was noted that 15% of customers, mainly youths and teenagers, preferred holidays for shopping, as they view shopping in neighborhood centers as a recreational and leisure activity, as found by Luet et al. (2006).

The frequency of shopping among respondents also varies, ranging from once a week to twice a month. Most patrons of neighborhood shopping centers in the town visit once a week to purchase their daily needs. This finding is similar to Annemarie (2014), who found that the frequency of visits to shopping malls in Nelspruit, South Africa, is once a week. The implication of once-a-week shopping is that there will be more congestion and traffic on the most preferred days. Additionally, the centers may experience lower returns as more frequent visits would lead to higher sales. Finally, the centers risk becoming weekly shopping hubs rather than vibrant commercial entities providing goods and services 24/7.

Respondents indicated that they patronize the shopping centers with the intention of purchasing various products/services. Foodstuffs, a basic necessity, top the list of products often bought by customers of neighborhood shopping centers in Gusau, followed by clothing materials. This can be attributed to the low standard of living in the town due to security challenges that have crippled the economy and caused forced migration. The people who remain are primarily concerned with essential needs. It was also observed that 13% of customers, mainly youths, buy electronics, while 20% of women purchase clothing more often.

Factors of Patronage

Patronage of neighborhood shopping centers in Gusau town is influenced by several factors, including convenience, price, merchandise, and social events. Most respondents indicated that their patronage is influenced by convenience, such as a conducive atmosphere, safety, and parking space. Other respondents are drawn to neighborhood shopping centers due to the merchandise and services offered, such as product quality, availability, and variety. Some patrons are influenced by entertainment and social events, such as Sallah Funfair or watching football matches. Others choose these centers because of lower prices compared to traditional and downtown markets. A chi-square result shows a significant difference in the factors influencing shopping center patronage ($X^2 = 273.300$). This finding aligns with the

studies of Seock (2009), Cheng and Nair (2018), Tarun, Santnam, and Anindita (2017), Bayero (2018), and Babatunde and Albertina (2014), which found that store environment, convenience, and merchandise are key factors influencing neighborhood shopping center patronage. Based on these responses, it can be argued that convenience is the primary driver of patronage in Gusau, as most products found in these shopping centers are also available in traditional markets.

Distance or proximity is another crucial factor considered by customers when choosing which shopping center to visit. A chi-square test shows a significant association ($X^2 = 13.520^{**}$) between distance and shopping center choice among customers. It was observed that those who do not consider distance are typically mobile (i.e., they own vehicles). Those who sometimes consider distance stated that their choice of shopping location depends on which center has the goods and services they need at that time. This finding aligns with Frantisek, Kristina, and Peter et al. (2018), Babatunde and Albertina (2014), and Tarun, Satnam, and Anindita (2017), who also found that distance is a critical factor in choosing a shopping center and determining visit frequency, with customers preferring centers closer to them.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Patronage of neighborhood shopping centers varies spatially between the political wards. The investigation revealed that the majority of customers come from two wards: Tudun Wada (T/Wada) and Sabon Gari, followed by Mayana and Madawaki wards, with Rijiya ward having the least patronage. This is attributed to the fact that T/Wada and Sabon Gari wards house the majority of non-indigenes, civil servants, and middle- and high-income earners, while Mayana, Rijiya, Madawaki, and Galadima wards comprise the ancient part of the town, where income and literacy levels are lower. Most of the inhabitants of these wards prefer traditional markets for their daily shopping.

If the current pattern of spatial distribution of patronage continues, there will be an agglomeration of shopping centers in one location, increasing competition among them and potentially leading to poor returns. Furthermore, other parts of the town will not be adequately served by the shopping centers, which means potential customers from underserved areas may turn to open or traditional markets.

In conclusion, the spatial variation in patronage is a result of the physical divide between middle- and high-income customers on one side and low-income customers on the other. The patronage pattern in Gusau mirrors that seen in other parts of the world, where the majority of modern shopping center patrons come from middle- and high-income residential areas due to their preference for clean and conducive shopping environments. Retail managers must ensure their shopping centers have a large trade area covering at least two-thirds of the population of their operational base to sustain and grow their business.

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