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Malling as a Leisure Activity in South Korea

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Abstract

To understand the ever-increasing connection between leisure and consumption in the urban context, this study explores the Korean fascination with shopping malls and *malling* as a contemporary leisure activity and experience. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it examines mall visitors to the COEX-Mall in Seoul, South Korea by addressing three research questions: Do Koreans view *malling* as a leisure activity?, What makes *malling* distinct from other types of shopping experiences?, and What specific aspects of *malling* make it an attractive leisure activity for Koreans? Findings call for further conceptualization of the nexus between leisure and consumption in the urban context, particularly in East Asian countries where shopping malls are increasingly utilized and perceived as leisurescapes.

KEYWORDS: Korea, urban, shopping malls, leisurescape.

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Introduction

Well-known leisure researchers Kelly (1991) and Kelly and Godbey (1992) observed decades ago that leisure activities in capitalist societies are increasingly associated with consumption, whereas leisure had traditionally been thought of as more closely rooted in the local community and less in commercial undertakings. More recently, Stebbins (2009) noted that leisure experienced through mass consumption has become an indispensable part of our everyday lives, one that significantly impacts society both positively and negatively. Despite these researchers' observations, comparatively little research has been conducted on leisure activities in contemporary consumption spaces, such as shopping malls, even though these spaces are globally becoming ever more popular as recreational spaces. This increase in popularity can be seen in Seoul, South Korea, where shopping malls have become favorite leisure destinations among Koreans wanting to enjoy leisure time in the city. Indeed, Koreans have broadly adopted a new word, *malling*, to perfectly describe the link between their leisure and consumption in these spaces.

Shopping malls are the quintessential example of how consumption is being joined with, if not transformed into, leisure in East Asia. Shopping malls were first built in the United States in the mid-1950s. While, in Western countries, their advent was in full swing by the 1960s, malls did not reach Asian countries until the late 1980s (Bunce, 1983). However, over the last few decades, shopping malls have multiplied at a rapid pace in East Asian countries, namely South Korea, China, Taiwan, and Japan. These shopping malls are typically characterized by cutting-edge designs with brand name shops, famous restaurants, and entertainment facilities, and are consistently crowded with local residents and urban tourists (Kwon, 2010). For example, the most frequented malls in Seoul, the COEX Mall, Time-Square Mall, and I-Park Mall, each attract over one hundred thousand visitors every day (Kim, 2008; Cho, 2010). COEX Mall statistics show that a total of five hundred million people have visited the COEX Mall in the past ten years (Kang, 2010). These shopping malls are increasingly perceived as preferred playgrounds in the Korean urbanscape (Park, 2007; Cho, 2010) and, as we propose, represent a contemporary Korean leisurescape.

Given the increasing importance of shopping malls as leisure spaces, the dearth of literature on shopping malls in the leisure field is especially surprising. Non-leisure researchers, including Abaza (2001), Anjaria (2008), Bowlby (2001), Curtis (1994), Patel and Sharma (2009), Rajagopal (2009) and Salcedo (2003), have investigated shopping malls from perspectives such as consumer behavior, retail management, architecture, and urban studies. Within these disciplines, they have explored numerous issues involving business strategies, consumer behavior, and socio-historical and cultural aspects of shopping malls; however, their interest has not focused on the recreational function of malls and few studies have empirically investigated mall visitors' behavior, namely *malling*. Therefore, from the perspective of leisure studies, there is a need to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of *malling,* since it offers a prime example of the ever-increasing connection between leisure and consumption in the urban context.

To investigate individuals' motivation to visit various shopping spaces, consumer behavior researchers, such as Kim (2006) and Patel and Sharma (2009), have largely drawn on conceptualizations of utilitarian and hedonic consumption initially developed by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982). Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) buying decision model proposed two consumption perspectives that vary within consumers and over time: utilitarian and hedonic. The utilitarian consumption perspective proposes that consumers are rational decision makers who maximize utility by focusing on the utilitarian benefits of a product. While the hedonic consumption perspective proposes that emotional arousal accompanies a consumptive act, and is defined as "a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meaning, hedonic responses and esthetic criteria" (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982, p. 132). However, we propose that the *malling* experience extends beyond merely consumption. Indeed, while it has both utilitarian and hedonistic components it also involves feelings of identification, sense of place, and so on (Goss, 1993; Stillerman & Salcedo, 2012; Zelizer, 2005). In other words, beyond the motivation to shop, visiting a mall may encompass many other motivations, such as the need to cope with stress, feel excited, relax, and socialize. As such, utilitarian and hedonic conceptualizations are limited in their ability to explain all aspects of *malling*.

With the above-mentioned in mind, this study explores the Korean fascination with shopping malls as leisure spaces, and *malling* as a contemporary Korean leisure activity and experience. To do so, we examine whether shopping malls truly serve as leisure spaces in Korea. We then inquire into what specifically might attract individuals to spend their leisure time at a mall. Accordingly, the purpose of the current study is to understand the ever-expanding role of the shopping mall as an urban leisurescape and of *malling* as a leisure activity. Employing a mixed-methods approach in which both quantitative and qualitative phases are combined, this study examines Korean mall visitors at one popular mall in Seoul by addressing three research questions: first, do Koreans view *malling* as a leisure activity; second, what makes *malling* distinct from other types of shopping experiences; and third, what specific aspects of *malling* make it an attractive leisure activity for Koreans.

Leisure, Consumption, and Shopping

Over the last few decades, whole populations have begun to change the way they spend their leisure time; our everyday lives are inevitably influenced and complicated by the modern dynamics of commercialism, urbanization, and globalization (Bauman, 1998; Oswell, 2006; Rojek, 1995; Stebbins, 2009; Urry, 1990). According to Erkip (2003), "demand to consume more, and more distinctively, has created a new consumption style that [has] required new consumption and leisure spaces" (p. 1075). In fact, major business corporations have come to regard leisure-related consumption as a profitable business opportunity, scrambling to gain a competitive advantage in the emergent leisure market (Cowen & Tabarrok, 2000; Clark & Lloyd, 2004; Oswell, 2006). As a result, a wide range of consumption-related leisure activities are continually being created or reinvented and extensively promoted. These activities, ranging from new shopping opportunities to video

games, amusement parks, commercial films, and professional sports, have become embedded into our everyday lives (Clark, 2003; Kelly & Godbey, 1992; Lury, 1996; Rojek, 1995, 2006; Stebbins, 2009). Moreover, unlike traditional approaches to leisure that connote the importance of freedom (Dumazedier, 1974; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Kelly, 1982), these commercial leisure activities entice individuals through marketing strategies and other business techniques that manipulate the desire for leisure activities and experiences (Macdonald, 1953; Williams, 1959).

The growing interest in shopping offers a case in point. Shopping has become "the quintessential leisure of the consumer society, simply the most modern manifestation of the conspicuous consumption of Thorsten Veblen's 'leisure class'" (Jackson, 1991, p. 285-286). Particularly for urban residents, shopping represents an important outlet for social identification and interaction, as well as providing temporary relief from daily routines (Guiry et al., 2006; Jackson, 1991; Jansen-Verbeka, 1987, 1991; Stillerman & Salcedo, 2012; Timothy, 2005). While shopping has been historically viewed as a definitively laborious activity, during the past century, shopping has become much less practical and much more recreational, a leisure activity to be undertaken as a pleasant pursuit (Bacon, 1993). Bowlby (2000) suggested that shopping provides modern shoppers with a sense of freedom to experience new desires and escape the restrictions of tradition.

Many consumer researchers, such as Barbin et al (1994), Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), Kim (2006), Miller (1998), and Patel and Sharma (2009), empirically support the notion that many consumers tend to go shopping for emotional arousal rather than purely for a rational or specific purpose. In particular, Barbin et al (1994) and Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) explain this phenomenon through the notion of hedonic consumption. These researchers suggest that consumers are no longer solely problem solvers, but are individuals who frequently enjoy aspects of the consumption process apart from its tangible outcomes. Guiry et al. (2006) likewise employ the idea of 'recreational shopping' to understand this phenomenon. Guiry et al. define recreational shopping as an activity "that is characterized by the shopper experiencing intrinsic rewards from the shopping process per se, either in conjunction with, or independent of, the acquisition of goods and services" (2006, p. 75). More specifically, Patel and Sharma (2009) suggest that hedonic shopping motivation involves six dimensions: shopping enjoyment, gratification shopping, idea shopping, shopping for aesthetic ambiance, role shopping, and social shopping. Therefore shopping, once considered as toil, in its contemporary form has adopted many leisure components. Indeed, like other potentially recreational experiences, shopping is facilitated by a setting that supports shopping as a leisure activity. Shopping malls provide one such setting.

Shopping malls and *malling*

Shopping malls can be best described as controlled shopping environments with a carefully planned selection of shops, amenities, and parking in a fully enclosed and climate controlled space (Darlow, 1972). For developers and customers alike, the shopping mall offers two specific advantages: first, it allows for shopping year round because of the internal climate control; and second, it provides an efficient and planned use of space, maximizing developer income, retail profits, and shopper convenience (Salcedo, 2003). In the last 50 years, shopping malls in

North America have transformed into leisure spaces that deliver opportunities for shopping as well as other social and recreational activities and experiences (Curtis, 1994; Ng, 2003; Rybczynski, 1993). In 1970, a *U.S. News & World Report* poll found that adult Americans spend more time at shopping malls than anywhere else except for home and work (Underhill, 2004). Kowinski (1985) suggests that shopping malls in the United States have become much like community centers, providing shoppers such long-standing recreational attractions as music, movies, games, and dining opportunities. Interestingly, as Parlette and Cowen (2011) argued, even failing shopping malls can serve as social spaces by their continued use as community centers.

With this in mind, scholars have increasingly acknowledged the importance of the recreational function of shopping malls. For example, Bloch, Ridgway, and Nelson (1991) empirically examined mall visitors and found that many individuals visit malls for browsing and socializing. Erkip (2003) noted that Turkish individuals perceived shopping malls as public spaces that they enjoyed during their leisure time. While Voyce (2006) suggested that shopping malls in Australia were perceived as leisure spaces that typify consumer society. Gottdiener (1986) and Goss (1993) compared American shopping malls to amusement parks, such as Disneyland, and suggested that shopping malls provided a fantasy environment to consumers. Jacobs (1984) and Titus (1990) also proposed that mall settings are perceived as comfortable and safe leisure spaces because of the planned exclusion of danger, disorder, and chaos that may prevail elsewhere. In addition, there is also a growing body of work that proposes that both access to and uses of shopping malls, particularly in developing world cities, serve to illuminate unique patterns of urban transportation as well as social and economic segregation including the creation of boundaries that serve to impede access by marginalized groups, limit free expression and abate public space (Abaza, 2001; Anjaria, 2008; Lofland, 1998; Sabatini & Arenas, 2000; Staeheli & Mitchell, 2006; Stillerman & Salcedo, 2012).

Despite the popularity of malls in America, shopping malls were not introduced into East Asian countries, such as South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong, until the late 1980s. This introduction of shopping malls was largely a response to calls by the new urban middle class in East Asian countries, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s during the rapid economic growth in the region, who began to demand new recreational spaces where individuals could spend their ever-increasing leisure time. In addition, developing urban shopping malls not only satisfied urbanites' demands for leisure, but it was also a prime opportunity for city governments who wanted to revitalize deteriorating urban areas, for land owners who wanted to increase property values, and for property developers who sought increased profits (Kim, 2009; Kim & Choe, 2011; Shin, 2008). Since then, the development of commercial venues in East Asia has been regarded as central to revitalizing urban spaces. In turn, this has resulted in a multiplication of urban shopping malls in the past few decades, particularly in South Korea after the five-day workweek was introduced in 2004 (Kim, 2008; Raco, 2003).

Shopping malls, therefore, are proliferating as popular recreational spaces, with Koreans perceiving them as "playgrounds" and "spaces to hang out" (Park, 2007; Cho, 2010). As a result, Koreans increasingly employ a new word, *malling*,

to describe the consumption of leisure in such spaces. This term has been widely used among Koreans ever since it was employed as part of a marketing strategy, appearing in a shopping mall advertisement in 2007. German consumer researcher, Christian Mikunda, has explained the concept of *malling* as an effective business strategy and suggested that the purpose of *malling* is to get consumer to stroll around until they find merchandise that they wish to purchase (Mikunda, 2004). In particular, the CEO of Times Square Mall in Seoul characterizes the "malling system" at Korean shopping malls as "the idea that visitors can visit one place and get access to almost anything they want, conveniently" (Lee, 2009, p. 1). In addition, new mall developers in South Korea have recently employed lease-based system in their shopping malls, whereas Korean shopping centers had previously been individually parceled out to business owners. This change significantly contributed to the "malling system" since the leasing system required mall owners to develop integrated space management (Lee, 2011). As well as managing the commercial venues, this also has come to involve holding a diversity of festivals and free events, such as exhibitions and music concerts that contribute to visitors' perception of the shopping mall as an integrated recreational place where they can enjoy *malling*. To understand the dynamics involved in this ever-expanding role of the shopping mall as an urban Korean leisurescape and of *malling* as a contemporary leisure activity, this study employing a mixed-methods approach to examine Korean mall visitors' motivation for *malling*.

Methodology

Research Site: COEX Mall

The COEX-Mall in Seoul, South Korea, was selected as the research site for the current study. The mall was built in 2000 and is located in Samseong-dong, one of the central business districts in Seoul and is connected to a subway station. With over 250 shops, such as clothing stores, cosmetic stores, souvenir stores and electronic stores, it houses two food courts, a multitude of restaurants, a 16-screen multi-cinema complex, an aquarium, and a large bookstore. Covering 85,000 square meters, this mall is now the largest underground shopping mall in East Asia, attracting over 100,000 local residents and tourists daily. The building complexes where the shopping mall is located were largely developed in a Mixed-Use Development. Hence, the multi-building complex includes offices, major department stores, convention centers, and luxury hotels, in separate buildings all connected to the shopping mall.

Mixed Methods Design

The current study employed a mixed methods approach to investigate mall visitors' motivation for *malling*. Mixed methods designs refer to those that combine quantitative and qualitative approaches into the methodology of a single or multiphased research study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 1998). A mixed methods design provides several advantages. First, combining both quantitative and qualitative data within a single study minimizes the limitations of each method. Second, a mixed methods design provides supplementary tools to understand and contextu-

alize complex social phenomena. Finally, a mixed methods design enhances both the reliability and validity of the conclusions through data triangulation (Creswell et al., 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene & Caracelli, 1997). Therefore, a mixed methods design is used to provide a more complete and nuanced basis for understanding the complex social phenomena intersecting leisure and shopping malls in Korea.

In particular, mixed methods designs have proven very useful to understand motivation—a central concept in the current study. McInerney (1998) suggests that quantitative techniques enable researchers to validate the characteristics of motivation but result in a limited range of inquiry; in surveys, for example, researchers select a limited number of responses, to the exclusion of all others. He suggests that qualitative techniques complement quantitative results because the inductive approach in qualitative analysis focuses on individual perspectives, and thus move beyond the researchers' preconceived categories concerning motivation. He concludes that both quantitative and qualitative approaches need to be combined to adequately study motivation. This combined approach invites a dialogue within the framework of a single study rather than calling upon completely different studies in different contexts to inform one another. Therefore, a mixed methods study is an ideal research structure for the current study which explores *malling* as a contemporary Korean leisure activity.

Accordingly, this study follows a mixed methods sequential explanatory strategy (Creswell et al., 2003) in which two data collection phases were conducted. Sequential mixed methods data collection strategies result in a process whereby the data collected in one phase contribute to the data collected in the next (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In the initial stage of this sequential design, quantitative analysis of a mall visitor survey was conducted to identify individuals' motivation to visit the mall; in the second stage, qualitative content analysis of blog posts was conducted to further investigate and unpack what specific aspect of the mall appeal to visitors. We should note that the two results were combined in the discussion section, allowing us to answer our three research questions based on both quantitative and qualitative results.

Phase 1: Mall Visitor Survey

The first phase of this study was quantitative, consisting of a mall visitor survey conducted at the COEX Mall. Employing factor analysis, cluster analysis, and ANOVA, this phase aimed to ascertain the underlying tendencies in visitor motivation. It was decided that identifying what motivated individuals to visit the mall would be the most effective and direct way to understand what "being at the mall," namely *malling*, actually meant to them. More specifically, this quantitative analysis specifically sought to identify mall visitors' different motivations, to determine how dominant each motivation tended to be, and to analyze the behavioral and demographic characteristics associated with the various motivations.

Data were collected using a survey questionnaire designed for COEX Mall visitors. The questionnaire consisted of three major parts. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of nine Likert-type scale questions to measure why individuals visit the COEX Mall. Mall visitor motivation had not been studied before and was expected to be multifaceted, going beyond the traditional motivation to shop.

With this in mind, this part of the questionnaire was designed based on a wide range of existing literature on the separate topics of leisure motivation and shopping motivation, including Barbin et al. (1994), Fodness (1994), and Beard and Ragheb (1983). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement (e.g., *I visit the mall to purchase goods,* or *I visit the mall to relax*). The second part of the questionnaire assessed behaviorally oriented variables such as shops frequented (retail, food and beverage, entertainment), frequency of visit, length of visit, and total expenditure. The third and final part of the questionnaire examined the demographic characteristics of respondents.

The survey was conducted on-site with actual mall visitors on both weekdays and weekends. A direct face-to-face survey methodology was employed for this project and systematic sampling was utilized. The field researchers approached every third mall visitor entering the COEX Mall, outlined the purpose of the research project, and invited the visitors to participate in the survey. From a total sample of approximately 208 respondents, 205 usable questionnaires were collected. Data collected in the survey were then analyzed using SPSS 18.0. Data analysis involved three steps. First, motivation items were factor analyzed in order to delineate underlying dimensions of motivation associated with the shopping mall. Bandalos (1996) argues that exploratory factor analysis is the most useful way to identify the latent constructs or model for a set of variables. Therefore, it was expected to reveal the major dimensions implicit in the mall visitor's motivation. Second, TwoStep cluster analysis, which is an exploratory tool designed to reveal natural groupings (or clusters) within a dataset (Kayrd, 2007) was performed using the factor scores of motivations identified in the factor analysis. Finally, ANOVA tests were employed to investigate differences across clusters of mall visitors. ANOVA has been widely used for comparing more than two distributions (Freedman, 2005) and was expected to identify behavioral characteristics of each cluster in the current study.

Phase 2: Content Analysis of Blog Posts

In the second phase of this study, a qualitative content analysis of blog posts was performed. This phase aimed to obtain more detailed information than the survey results provided about why people visit the mall. Blogs were chosen largely because of their role in providing accessible personal accounts where bloggers make public their day-to-day experiences, thoughts and feelings (Herring et al., 2005). Blogs are a communication tool that offers the advantage of easy, inexpensive self-publication of content for a potentially vast audience on the World Wide Web, while offering more flexibility and opportunity for interaction with other individuals than in any previous publication format, print and digital alike (Herring et al, 2005). Therefore, blogs provide spaces where anyone can become an author, while creating a flexible environment where individuals are motivated to reflect and discuss; in the case of our study, on their leisure experiences while visiting the COEX Mall. Indeed, "in blogging the presence of the audience and the writer's consciousness of the audience clearly introduce the social into an individual's thought process" (Nardi et al, 2004, p. 6). As Viega (2005) proposed, "the ability to append without erasing any of the previous content, makes blogs fundamentally different from other kinds of websites…Regular readers can thus have a sense of

identifying 'voice' behind the posts on the site" (p. 3). Moreover, blog posts are not only textual but also contain various multimedia content including photos and video clips. Therefore, blog posts have recently been employed for content analysis since these online sites are regarded as a primary means of expressing personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about real life experiences, from the mundane to the special event (Dearstyne, 2005; Lloyd et al., 2006).

A qualitative content analysis refers to "an approach of empirical, methodological, controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification" (Mayring, 2000, p. 2). It goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes, and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. With little adjustment, the techniques of content analysis can be applied to a wide variety of textual data sources, including interview scripts, newspaper articles, and diaries (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990). Therefore, a qualitative content analysis of blog posts is an appropriate methodology for the current study since blog posts provide a rich description of mall visitors' motivation, revealing meanings, themes, and patterns in a subjective but scientific manner.

The content analysis of blog posts consisted of the four steps described by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009). The first step was data preparation. In this step, blog posts between 2005 and 2010 including the word "COEX Mall" were retrieved using the Google blog search engine. In addition, the sample size was reduced by excluding commercial or informational blog posts (e.g. advertising promotions, news). Therefore, the sample consisted only of blog posts that were obviously written about one's personal experience in the COEX Mall. Of the 2,395 blog posts that were initially retrieved, 237 blog posts were used in the final analysis. We should note, however, that this number does not represent 237 different bloggers; our data indicates that a few of the bloggers posted more than once regarding their experience at the COEX Mall. In addition, blog posts varied significantly in terms of their size (i.e., number of words) and ranged from 47 to 358 words.

The second step was to develop categories and a coding scheme. For the current analysis, categories were derived from the survey results in the first phase of the study. The cluster groups, which were obtained through factor analysis and cluster analysis, were considered to be reliable enough to serve as categories for any themes that might emerge from the current qualitative analysis. In addition, the behavioral and demographic characteristics of the cluster groups identified in the survey were also used to help to identify themes in the coding process.

The third step was to define the unit of analysis. Since blog post texts tend to be informal entries with no set format, an instance of a theme might be expressed in a single word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire document. Therefore, the current analysis used individual themes as the unit for analysis, rather than a physical linguistic unit (e.g., word, sentence, or paragraph). In other words, the unit of the current analysis was a text chunk of any size, as long as that chunk represents a single theme or issue of relevance to the research question.

The fourth and last step was to code the text. The researchers read all the sample posts to identify the specific aspects of the mall most often mentioned by bloggers with respect to their motivation to visit the mall. Since individual themes were used as the coding unit, the researchers primarily looked for expressions of ideas. All the themes that emerged from the sample posts were first categorized under one of the three main groups of mall visitors. Original quotes from the blog posts that represented these themes were then recorded. Since the three categories were not mutually exclusive, assigning a particular theme to a single category was somewhat difficult. Thus, themes were sometimes assigned to multiple categories simultaneously.

Results

Mall Visitor Survey

As shown in Table 1, a general profile of the sample indicates that more than half of the respondents in the survey were female (55.1%), in their 20s (52.2%) and high school and college students (52.7%).

Factor analysis using principal components analysis with varimax rotation was applied to the nine motivation statements to determine the underlying dimensions. Prior to factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were applied to test the fitness of the data. The KMO was found to be 0.702 (greater than the 0.5 required) and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be 475.76 with significance lower than .001. Both of these statistical data supported the use of factor analysis. To validate the internal reliability of the statement in the factors identified, an internal reliability test was conducted. The factor analysis resulted in three dimensions of motivation: the first factor was labeled as 'recreational motivation,' the second factor as 'purchase-related motivation' and the third factor as 'meeting motivation.' All three dimensions had eigenvalues greater than 1 and relatively high reliability coefficients ranging from 0.61 to 0.78.

The first dimension, "recreational motivation," explained 31.50% of the total variance with reliability coefficient of 0.79 (see Table 2). This factor incorporates four items of motivation (e.g., to enjoy the place, to feel excited, to cope with stress, and to relax). "Purchase-related motivation," the second dimension, accounted for 18.10% of the variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.62. This factor incorporates three items of motivation (e.g., to browse, to get product information, and to purchase goods). The third dimension, "meeting motivation," explained 16.66% of the variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.66. This factor comprised two items of motivation (e.g., business meetings, and to be with friends).

A two-step cluster analysis was carried out using a likelihood measure that revealed the factorial scores of three factors and three clusters. Then, ANOVA tests were performed in order to identify differences among the three cluster groups. Significant differences among clusters were found for most variables including gender, age, occupation, length of visit, total expenditure, and shops frequented. The characteristics of each cluster group are as follows.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Survey Respondents

Variable	Number	Rate
Gender		
Male	92	44.9
Female	113	55.1
Age		
19 or younger	25	12.2
20-29	107	52.2
30-39	53	25.9
40 or older	20	9.8
Occupation		
Student	108	52.7
Worker	85	41.5
Home-maker	12	5.9
Monthly Income (KW)		
Less than 1,000,000	10	4.9
1,000,000 – 3,000,000	26	12.7
3,000,000 – 5,000,000	82	40.0
5,000,000 – 7,000,000	57	27.8
More than 7,000,000	30	14.6
Total	205	100.0

Cluster 1 was labeled "Recreational visitors." This cluster was the largest, containing 108 respondents (52.7%). The cluster included individuals who have a high "recreational motivation" and low "purchase-related motivation" or "meeting motivation." These individuals tended to be younger (mean age was 26.3) and female (61%). In addition, in this cluster the rate of high school and college students was higher than the rate of workers and homemakers. Recreational visitors were also likely to spend relatively longer periods of time at the shopping mall and tended to frequent food and beverage shops more so than retail and entertainment stores.

Table 2

Factor analysis of Motivation

	Motivation	Factor loadings			Cronbach α
Recreational motivation	To enjoy the place	**.801**	.132	.047	.78
	To feel excited	**.784**	.175	-.222	8
	To cope with stress	**.783**	.212	.156	
	To relax	**.726**	-.253	.233	
Purchase-related motivation	To browse	.191	**.792**	.024	.61
	To get product information	-.150	**.699**	.025	6
Meeting motivation	To purchase goods	.281	**.695**	.056	
	To meet for business	.141	-.128	**.851**	.65
	To be with friends	-.024	.261	**.844**	7

Cluster 2 was labeled "Visitors for meeting" and was comprised of 69 respondents (33.7%). The cluster consisted of individuals who had higher "meeting motivation" than "recreational motivation" or "purchase-related motivation." Individuals with high meeting motivation tended to be older (mean age was 31.7), and included a higher proportion of homemakers than students or workers. They were likely to spend more money than did individuals of other cluster groups. In addition, they also tended to frequent food and beverage shops more so than other types of shops.

Cluster 3 was labeled "Purchasers." This cluster was the smallest and represents 28 respondents (13.6%). This group included individuals who have higher "purchase-related motivation" than "recreational motivation" or "meeting motivation." The group of purchasers was composed of more males (64%) than females (36%), and had a higher proportion of workers and homemakers than students. Individuals in this group tended to spend less money than other cluster groups and visited the COEX Mall for relatively shorter periods of time. They were also more likely to frequent retail stores than entertainment or F&B shops.

Table 3

Cluster Analysis and ANOVA

Cluster	N	%	Motivation	Mean	Characteristics
Recreational Visitors (A)	108	52.7	Recreation	.727	- Recreation>Meeting>Purchase-related - F&B > Retail > Entertainment - More female than male - The youngest - Students > Workers > Homemakers - The longest length of visit
			Purchase-related	-.918	
			Meeting	-.542	
Visitors for Meeting (B)	69	33.7	Recreation	-.004	- Meeting>Recreation>Purchase-related - F&B > Entertainment > Retail - The oldest - Homemakers > Workers > Students - The highest expenditure
			Purchase-related	-.114	
			Meeting	.295	
Purchasers(C)	28	13.6	Recreation	.151	- Purchase-related>Recreation>Meeting - Retail > Entertainment > F&B - More male than female - Workers > Homemakers > Students - The lowest expenditure - The shortest length of visit
			Purchase-related	.489	
			Meeting	-1.787	

In sum, the quantitative analysis revealed the overall tendencies in visitor motivation. Factor analysis identified three main motivations behind mall visits: recreational, purchase-related, and meeting-related. Based on the results of the factor analysis, cluster analysis was used to provide more information about the individuals motivated by these three purposes, that is, "Recreational visitors," "Visitors for meeting," and "Purchasers." Finally, ANOVA results revealed the demographic and behavioral characteristics of each cluster group and found that high school and college students, females, and younger visitors tended to have higher recreational motivation, to stay longer, and to spend more money than males, older visitors, housewives, and working people, who were likely to go to the mall for utilitarian purposes.

Content Analysis of Blog Posts

The content analysis of blog posts generated a total of 16 individual themes from the 237 sample posts. As expected, these themes were derived from various linguistic units including single words, sentences, paragraphs, and entire posts. We should note that several of the identified themes were associated with more than one category (See Table 4). The survey results helped the researchers to identify themes and assign them appropriately, since they provided statistical information about the three groups of mall visitors regarding motivation to visit as well as how individuals in each group behaved and the socio demographic composition of each group. Table 4 shows the specific themes related to each of the three categories and includes some of the bloggers' expressions that best described how bloggers conceptualize the mall and their practices within it.

The first category, recreational visitors, includes 11 themes. The most frequently mentioned theme was diversity of functions offered by the mall. Many bloggers regarded the shopping mall positively as a place, where they were able to engage in many activities simultaneously. They stated that a wide selection of shops, restaurants, and attractions got them excited about visiting the mall. Some bloggers stated that they did not have any specific reason for going to the mall, but they were convinced that, once there, the mall would provide them with a wide variety of possible activities. A female blogger in her twenties emphasized the diversity of functions at the mall as the reason why she and her friends were likely to visit again.

> My friends and I always have trouble deciding what to do and where to hang out. I know we are good friends, but each of us has such different interests […] the best option is always shopping malls like the COEX Mall since there are a lot of things to do with so many shops and theaters in one place […] It satisfies everyone. —Yahoo Blogger

In addition, several blog posts, particularly young female posts, described the mall as the "hottest young place." They were likely to use several terms, such as "playground" and "our place," to express their perceptions and experiences of the mall. For them, the mall seems to be a fashion hotspot and cultural hub where people can get together and keep up with current trends. A female blogger and a male blogger described their experiences at the mall.

> After I submitted my final paper, I went to the COEX Mall with some school friends. Although we were late for our movie, we talked a lot over pizza […] After eating at Pizza Hut, we went to Starbucks for coffee and continued our conversation. —Yahoo Blogger

> When you are at the COEX Mall, you have the opportunity to constantly see many women dressed alike. It must be the latest fashion in Seoul. —Naver Blogger

Furthermore, other bloggers suggested that the mall was an escape from reality, where they were able to get relief from stressful urban life and everyday routine, while others mentioned the dearth of satisfying recreational alternatives in the city.

Table 4

Themes and Quotes

Visitor Category	Specific themes	Blog quotes
Recreational visitors	- Wide range of options - No specific plan - No reason - Youthful atmosphere - The latest fashions - Escape from reality - Satisfying many different needs - Few recreational alternatives - Good location/Easy access - Enclosed environment/Climate control - Walking environment	"All in one" "Everything's there" "It's our playground" "Wandering around" "Just to kill time" "The best place for hanging out" "I lost all track of time" "Retreat from reality" "Not many place to go"
Visitors for meeting	- A variety of restaurants - Walking environment - Clean interior - Good location/Easy access - Enclosed environment/Climate control - Satisfying many different tastes - Combining multiple activities	"Food paradise" "The food comes highly recommended" "Everyone gets satisfied" "Enjoy walking there" "Conveniently located" "Regardless of any weather"
Purchasers	- Wide range of shops - The latest fashions/multi-national brands - Good displays and hospitality - Combining multiple activities - Good location/Easy access - Enclosed environment/Climate control	"Just window-shopping" "The current fads" "New products" "In vogue" "Very kind clerks" "Outstanding service"

The second category, visitors for meetings, includes seven themes. The most frequently mentioned theme was the abundant variety of restaurants located in the shopping mall. Many bloggers commented on the fact that shopping malls were the best places to experience a variety of different foods. They wrote about the menus and shared photos of the food to present their opinions about the restaurants they visited. Beyond evaluating the food, these bloggers often provided the location of restaurants for other readers and made recommendations for what to order at each restaurant. This theme was seen in many blog posts without regard to bloggers' age or gender, and was best exemplified by a young female's blog post about her experience:

> We arrived at the COEX Mall before lunch and decided to visit an expensive-looking restaurant that I have been curious about. You can see the gorgeous exterior. [Shows a photo of the outside of the restaurant.] It is located in front of the ABC mart. […] I ordered a mozzarella salad which was good enough to satisfy even my picky taste. […] He ordered a chicken almond sandwich. Although I was expecting a grilled chicken breast, it was a ground patty. [Shows a photo of the sandwich.] —Egloos Blogger

Another important theme was the perception that the mall setting was an ideal place to walk and socialize with friends. The bloggers often mentioned the interesting displays and clean interiors as serving to enhance the backdrop for walking, socializing, and browsing. In addition, some bloggers praised the easy accessibility of the mall, as it is located at a traffic hub and directly linked to a subway station. Other bloggers were attracted to the mall because of the enclosed environment with climate control, sheltering them from adverse weather conditions, unlike outdoor shopping streets. These characteristics definitely contribute to the popularity of the mall as a meeting place. For example, a blogger stated that the mall is a particularly good place to meet during bad weather:

> It was really cold today, but I don't know why I did not want to stay home. I decided to go to the COEX Mall. […] The "Bandi in Lunis" bookstore is the perfect place for waiting for friends. —Naver Blogger

The third and last category, purchasers, was comprised of six themes. Unlike the other two categories, not many themes were assigned to this category, since few bloggers wrote about their actual purchasing experiences on their blogs. Instead, many bloggers conceptualized the mall as a stimulating place for browsing, replete with an abundant variety of merchandise featuring multi-national brands, fantastic displays, and great hospitality. This phenomenon was described in a young female's blog post about the COEX Mall:

> I visited the COEX Mall with my friend to browse the fall fashion line. As expected, garments in the COEX Mall caught my eye.
> - Naver Blogger

Therefore, many individuals had no intention of making purchases at the mall, but instead intended to get ideas, determine prices, and make final purchases at cheaper places or online. In addition, purchasers tended to choose the mall be-

cause they could combine purchasing with other activities there, such as watching movies, socializing or eating out. Purchasing was rarely the primary motivation; rather, browsing and combining activities was the attraction. Of course, other aspects of the mall, such as ease of access and the enclosed environment, also appealed to purchasers at the mall.

Discussion

In this study, the quantitative analysis of the mall visitor survey revealed statistical information about mall visitor motivation while the qualitative content analysis of blog posts generated unique themes to describe specific aspects of the mall visitor motivation. This complementary analysis provides answers to the study's three research questions.

Do Koreans view *malling* as a leisure activity?

The factor analysis reveals three main motivations individuals have to visit the mall, namely, recreational, purchase-related, and meeting motivation. More specifically, the cluster analysis shows that the cluster for "recreational visitors," those who have more "recreational motivation" than other motivations, is made up of the largest number of visitors, constituting 52.7% of total respondents. As a basis of comparison, "visitors for meetings" constituted 33.7% and "purchasers" constituted 13.7% of total respondents. Moreover, and importantly, recreational motivation was shown to be consistently fairly high across all three groups, while "purchase-related" and "meeting motivations" vary considerably. Similarly, many themes revealed in the blog analysis, such as a variety of functions, escape from reality, and walking environment, are obviously associated with the recreational function of shopping malls. These findings indicate that the majority of COEX Mall visitors are recreationally motivated to some degree and clearly support the notion that *malling* has become a popular leisure activity in Korea with shopping malls becoming increasingly perceived and experienced as popular leisure spaces in South Korea.

In particular, our findings indicate that shopping malls do seem to hold more appeal for high school and college students, females, and younger individuals. The ANOVA results suggest that Korean students, females, and younger visitors tend to have stronger recreational motivation, to stay longer, and to spend more money than males, older visitors, housewives, and working people, who tend to visit shopping malls for more utilitarian purposes. Interestingly, this finding contradicts extant work on North American and European shopping malls which proposes that while teens do tend to be heavy and consistent users of shopping malls, they tend not to spend much money as compared to other groups (Haytko & Baker, 2004; Lewis 1990; Ortiz, 1994). In addition, one of the main themes found in the blog analysis was that shopping malls are perceived and described as the "hottest" young place to go. Indeed, most bloggers who wrote about mall visiting and who perceived mall visiting as an exciting experience were females and younger individuals.

What makes *malling* distinct from other types of shopping experiences?

While Koreans have used the word *malling* to distinguish mall visits from other types of shopping, the term has become commonplace without any real understanding of its attributes. The findings in the current study provide plausible answers concerning the difference between the characteristics of *malling* as compared to those of traditional shopping.

First, the concept of *malling* is not necessarily linked to actual purchasing, even though malls were originally designed and built to provide spaces for buying and selling. The survey results show that the cluster of "purchasers" is the smallest (13.6%) cluster among the three groups of visitors. The other two clusters, "recreational visitors" and "visitors for meeting," have an extremely low score for "purchase-related motivation." Similarly, actual purchasing experiences were not frequently mentioned in blogs, but rather, bloggers were more interested in browsing at the mall. This implies that for mall visitors, purchasing is secondary to other activities that are part of *malling*.

Second, eating and drinking clearly serves as an essential part of *malling*. In the quantitative analysis, food and beverage shops were identified as the most frequented attractions for mall visitors, particularly for "recreational visitors" and "visitors for meetings." It also reveals that the cluster of "visitors for meetings," who are mostly meeting at restaurants and bars, constitutes a considerable percentage (33.7%) of all visitors. Similarly, the theme associated with food and restaurants was frequently described in many blog posts by bloggers of both genders and all ages. Furthermore, a variety of eating opportunities leads people to prefer shopping malls as their final shopping destination over other traditional Korean shopping venues, whether their original purpose is to eat out or not.

Finally, the concept of *malling* implies that individuals perceive the shopping mall itself as a product. According to the quantitative results, a majority of all respondents are "recreational visitors," whose motivation is not directly linked to any specific activity or any particular store, but rather these visitors largely frequent the mall for their personal recreation, that is, to cope with stress, to relax, or to feel excited. This suggests that the object of consumption is not so much a certain product as it is the mall itself, in all its aspects and experiences it allows for. These findings are supported by extant work regarding North American, European and Global South shopping malls which proposes that shopping malls do serve various other functions beyond purchasing including, identity enactment, and courtship (Anjaria, 2008; Fiske, 2000; Miler et al. 1998). Indeed, the blog analysis provides some evidence detailing how individuals utilize the mall as a whole. For example, many bloggers stated that they did not have any specific plan or purpose when they visited the mall other than "just being there." In fact, bloggers most often combine several aspects of the shopping mall into an overall image, describing it as "the hottest place," or "our place."

What specific aspects of *malling* make it an attractive leisure activity for Koreans?

Both quantitative and qualitative results support the notion that individuals perceive the mall as an escape from reality. The survey results confirmed that a ma-

jority of individuals regard shopping malls as enjoyable recreational places, where they can cope with stress, feel excited, and relax. Likewise, many bloggers stated that they visit shopping malls to escape from their daily routines, analogizing the mall to places like Fantasy Island or Disneyland. These findings indicate that *malling* plays an important recreational role providing an attractive outlet from stressful urban lives and support previous work by Miller et al. (1998), Salcedo (2003) and Stillerman and Salcedo (2012).

In addition, survey results indicate that the largest group of mall visitors, recreational visitors, tended to spend the most time there while spending the least amount of money. Shopping malls, therefore, seem to be perceived as not vastly different from other types of public leisure spaces such as neighborhood parks or community recreational centers where they can relax or unwind without the burden of spending money. In the process, shopping malls are perceived as public leisure spaces even though these spaces are owned and managed by private corporations (Gottdiener, 2003; Ritzer, 2003). Indeed, rest areas, free events, and free restrooms offered in shopping malls serve to enhance this perception.

Finally, shopping malls provide an easy leisure choice for urban residents, satisfying many different needs with a variety of attractions, providing an easily accessible, enclosed environment with climate control. The results of blog analysis indicate that many individuals are attracted by the wide range of attractions and variety of restaurants, which allows them to engage in multiple activities simultaneously. The qualitative results show that many bloggers are attracted by physical features, including a good location and enclosed environment, as appealing to them. These findings confirmed that shopping malls seem to satisfy individuals' many different tastes and needs (particularly in terms of variety of activities, accessibility, and protection from adverse weather condition) (Anjaria, 2008; Curtis, 1994; Ng, 2003; Rybczynski, 1993).

Counterintuitively, this study found that entertainment facilities, such as movie theaters and video-game rooms, turned out not to be a major part of *malling* as a leisure activity as proposed in the extant literature on malls (Curtis, 1994; Ng, 2003; Rybczynski, 1993; Salcedo, 2003). The visitor survey shows that across all three groups of visitors, entertainment attractions are not ranked as the highest priority. Interestingly, for the cluster of "recreational visitors," entertainment facilities are the least frequented attractions during their *malling* experiences. These facilities were not frequently mentioned in the blog posts, and when they were, bloggers referred to them only as a side story, small part of their whole experience.

Conclusion

The modern consumer culture has called for new consumption and leisure spaces. In South Korea one contemporary solution to this demand is the increasing development of the urban shopping mall, satisfying the demand for both consumption and leisure and combining them under one roof. In this regard, we propose that shopping malls, by their provision and blending of functions and leisure experiences become a fascinating leisure laboratory; reveling that what makes the Korean urban shopping mall an interesting space to investigate is not necessarily the shopping activities taking place per se but rather the shopping

malls' role in providing a contemporary Korean leisure*scape*. In particular, South Koreans have coined the term *malling* to describe what can rightfully be called a new leisure activity, one that combines to various degrees for various visitors both consumption and leisure in a shopping mall. The current study analyzes this new leisure activity. It proposes that in Seoul, shopping malls clearly serve as central and popular leisure spaces for those who are seeking to recreate, meet, or purchase, with varying blends of motivation. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal that *malling* has several features that distinguish it from traditional shopping and contribute to its increasing popularity as a Korean leisure activity.

The findings from this study have two main implications for future research. First, the leisure function fulfilled by shopping malls, and as exemplified by the COEX Mall, suggests the extent to which leisure activities of urban residents are increasingly blended with commercial activities. The increasing role of shopping malls as leisure spaces is not necessarily surprising given that market places have historically served as community leisure spaces. Nevertheless, commercial activities increasingly make up a much greater portion of our leisure time than ever before both in developed and increasingly in developing nations. The everyday lives of contemporary urban residents are full of commercial activities as individuals seek to find the easiest and most convenient ways to cope with their stressful contemporary urban lives (Clark, 2003; Rojek, 1995; Stebbins, 2009; Stillerman & Salcedo, 2012). Business interests, whose purpose is profit maximization, use diverse business techniques to attract people. The cumulative effect of such strategies entices urban residents to visit commercial spaces repeatedly and habitually (Macdonald, 1954; Williams, 1959). This is particularly true in our study for Korean students and younger visitors who tend to frequently visit the COEX mall, stay longer, and spend more money than other groups of visitors. Arguably, these individuals are being "groomed" for a life of consumption and leisure that are increasingly interlinked. The interlinking of consumption and leisure, we believe, will have significant impact in the continued development of the sociocultural fabric of Korea, and on perceptions and adoption of particular leisure activities. Accordingly, leisure scholars must continue to investigate commercial aspects and impacts of everyday life in contemporary urban society and address their implications for leisure studies. In addition, more research should be done to specifically explore the repeated and habitual nature of *malling*, which was not addressed in the current study. One logical extension of this work for East Asia in particular, would be to investigate whether *malling* features and practices identified in this study translate to other East Asian cities? If so, how and under what conditions? And, if not, why not? In addition, studies should further examine the repeated and habitual nature of other East Asian commercial leisure activities as compared to *malling*.

Second, while the current study reveals the tastes and preferences of contemporary Korean urban residents in spending leisure time, it has nonetheless important policy and planning implications for other nations. Given that more than half of the world's population lives in cities (United Nations Population Fund, 2007) and the stress of urban living generated by hectic routines, limited space, cultural diversity, and rapid changes (Chiesura, 2004; Clark, 2003; Flanagan, 1993;

Rojek, 2006; Van den Berg et al., 2007), it is important to explore the unique leisure needs of this expanding and vibrant population. This study shows that the appeal of the COEX Mall as a potential leisure space for Koreans is that it offers a wide range of attractions, youthful atmosphere, convenient and accessible location, in an enclosed walking environment with climate control. These appealing features of *malling* satisfy the recreational demands of urban residents in Seoul. However, more studies should be done regarding the various general aspects of commercial spaces that attract a variety of urban residents in both developed as well as developing nations. Leisure scholars and practitioners alike should take the features of *malling*, revealed in the current study, and of commercial leisure spaces, as revealed by future research, into account when formulating and designing urban recreation, whether public or private, in order to provide urban residents with a higher number and greater variety of leisure opportunities.

Finally, to date, research on shopping malls has particularly been focused on North American, European, and of late, Global South nations. Largely, this body of work has positioned the shopping mall as sites of interpretation and negotiation as well as shaping of consumer identities and promoting of socioeconomic segregation. This extant work, however, has neglected to address East Asian countries where the development and use of centrally located urban shopping malls continues to rise steadily since the 1990s and following the rapid economic growth in the region. Indeed, the rapid economic growth led to urbanites' demand for new recreational spaces where they could spend their ever-increasing leisure time, and has been met with considerable success. Our study, therefore, seeks to address this gap in the literature. Findings from this study suggest a need for further consideration and conceptualization of the nexus between leisure, shopping malls and consumption, particularly in East Asian countries where shopping malls are increasingly utilized and perceived as leisurescapes. Specifically, *malling* as a contemporary leisure activity requires further empirical and conceptual consideration and investigation if we are to understand the increasing role of shopping malls as leisurescapes in East Asia. We should note that this work must be undertaken with particular cultural and cross cultural sensitivity so as not to further essentialize or other East Asians or East Asian leisure in the process. One approach to doing so, and which the current study sought to follow, is by taking Spivak's (1990) call to position our research "not as descriptions of the way things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a critique of anything" (p. 51).

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