Scale for the evaluation of visitor experiences in a shopping center in Cali, Colombia

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This article presents the reliability and validity of a scale that evaluates the experiences of visitors to the shopping center in Cali - Colombia. The methodology is framed within a quantitative, descriptive, and causal approach, through the application of the hypothetical-deductive method. The variables considered in the measurement scale were determined from a theoretical review and content validation. To collect the information, a personal survey was administered to a sample of 343 customers. The validity and reliability of the scale was determined by Exploratory Factor Analysis, Cronbach's coefficient, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Among the main findings, it is highlighted that the scale shows high reliability and internal consistency since one factor explains 50% of the total accumulated variance and the total Cronbach's Alpha is 0.846. When the confirmatory model was applied, positive correlations were identified between the indicators and the variables and between the three variables. Therefore, the final scale consisted of three: subscales emotional experiences, sensory experiences, cognitive experiences, and 23 items.

Keywords: experience measurement scale, emotional experiences, sensory experiences, cognitive experiences, reliability, and validity.

Introduction

A shopping center, due to its leading role in the development of trade in Colombia, has become an important benchmark for developing marketing studies. After the Covid-19 pandemic, this type of retail achieves its recovery by transforming spaces into experience centers, facilitating interaction with brands, and developing entertainment, leisure, or wellness activities. In other words, visitors can satisfy their needs in one place with a higher level of confidence and comfort.

Opened and planned shopping centers are the result of the evolution of commercial practices over time. From the offer, the commercial activity begins with the exchange of merchandise, in the open air, arising in a "natural" manner (Cuesta, 1999) represented in market squares, streets, galleries, and department stores, until reaching the consolidation of the commercial centers in different formats. From the demand point of view, the change in shopping behavior presented by the Variables that affect the choice of a point of sale to make purchases (Vigaray, 1994) begins with the price and distance factors, followed by the assortment until the consideration of psychological variables such as shopping experiences, stimulated by the physical environment, atmosphere, and relationships with other people (Cerda, 2002). This change in consumer purchasing habits has also been a determining factor for the positive evolution of shopping centers. They needed to adapt themselves to these new needs. Nowadays, shopping malls; are understood as "the set of independent commercial establishments planned and developed by one or several entities with unity criteria, whose size, commercial mix, common services, and complementary activities are related to their surroundings" (Spanish Association of Shopping Centers, 2016); they have become poles of economic and social development in the geographical areas where they settle.

From the functional perspective, the commercial center is interpreted as the city within the city with an urban area and a dense population, where services and industry predominate, being the best alternative to meet the needs generated by the absence of public spaces, the insecurity and pollution of the environment

(Hernández et al., 2013). This trend has led to the reorganization of the physical spaces of shopping centers, allocating more area for free and local spaces intended to provide different types of services. However, this strategy generates a situation not expected by them, such as the circulation of many visitors who do not make purchases, occupying the furniture that the establishments have assigned for their customers.

Given these circumstances and the commitment to sustainable development that these establishments have acquired, social inclusion strategies are being implemented to accept all their visitors, adapting spaces so that they can enjoy and at the same time make some type of purchase of products or services. Thus, the new physical spaces are assigned to playgrounds, food courts with prices for all its visitors, movie theaters, cafes, hotels, business centers, and spaces to share with friends.

This environment motivates the development of this research that aims to determine the items that should be included in the evaluation scale of the experiences of visitors to the shopping center. Given the above, the Unicentro Cali shopping center is taken as a case study, because the service environment has been adequate to generate satisfactory experiences for its visitors, with the creation of natural environments, leisure, and entertainment areas such as eating and going to the movies, have a coffee, and meet friends.

From the review of the theoretical references on the evaluation of the experiences of visitors to the shopping center, it was identified that the service environment affects the experiences of visitors to a shopping center, by awakening emotions and perceptions that mediate satisfaction. Among the main studies that confirm the above, the findings achieved by Muñoz et al. (2019) stand out, who demonstrated that emotional satisfaction is related to happiness; Páramo (2013) relates the perception of visitors with the image; and Cornejo (2006) relate experiences and identity with visiting experiences. This indicates the study on the effect of the environment on customer experiences is a topic to be explored. Therefore, it is the opportunity for the development of this research. As theoretical references, the theory of environmental psychology is used to explain the relationship of the concepts related to experiences from the marketing approach.

Environmental psychology is the theory that is responsible for explaining "the interactions of human experiences and actions with relevant aspects of the sociophysical environment" (Canter et al., 1981). Likewise, it studies human behavior and human well-being concerning the sociophysical environment, becoming the "area of psychology whose research focus is the interrelation of the physical environment with human behavior and experiences" (Holadan, 1991), demonstrating that the natural or artificial environment awakens internal reactions in people, ranging from sensory, emotional and cognitive experiences.

Customer Experiences

The experience known as "the internal and subjective response of a consumer after having direct or indirect contact with an organization" (Meyer et al., 2007), is a holistic variable that requires the participation of the consumer from a sensory point of view, cognitive and emotional (Verhoef et al., 2009), therefore, directly influence the behavior of individuals and hedonistic consumption (Holbrook et al, 1982). From a marketing perspective, customer experiences are the memorable memories that are generated from the sensations, feelings, thoughts, actions, and relationships that arise when interacting with the brand or point of sale (Schmitt, 1999). For this work, the experiences understood as the internal reactions of the organism will be evaluated from sensations, emotions, and perceptions.

Sensations are produced through sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch (Álvarez del Blanco, 2011). Dong and Siu (2013) determine that the relationship between the service environment, the customer's predisposition, and the evaluation of the service experience are highly related. Sarafoleanu et al. (2009) identify that the person can learn to hate or love only by their smell, so that an aroma influences mood, affective responses, evaluation, and purchasing behavior. Avello et al. (2011) state that the ear is associated with other senses causing synesthesias such as hearing colors, smells, or tastes. Hultén (2011) highlights the correlation between the sense of taste and the sense of smell, and the combination of sounds offers an assessment of the experiences of visitors to places of leisure, entertainment, or points of sale. The sound is the backdrop for the creation of the atmosphere (Lovelock et al., 2016, p. 265), the pleasant musical background can cause a positive rating on the quality of the service (Williams et al., 2004), and the sound influences on the perception of the taste and freshness of food (Zampini et al., 2005). Costa (2010) shows

that the senses combine emotional and rational factors to alter purchase decisions. Most sensations are produced by more than one sense, such as the touch-smell-sound association that occurs when we first drive a car. Hu and Jasper (2015) identify that people continue to look for a physical shopping experience before making an online purchase because according to Singh and Prashar (2014) among the aspects that most contribute to the creation of experiences in shopping malls, they highlight the environment, comfort, marketing approach, security, and infrastructure.

Emotions are understood as the reactions of the human being to the sensations produced by stimuli (Lazarus, 1982), in shopping centers are made up of services (Elmashhara and Soares, 2019; Price et al., 1995) that produce anger, regret, tranquility, joy, euphoria, confidence. Therefore, emotions are a determining factor in the evaluation of the service (Mattsson et al., 2004); (Martínez-Tur et al., 2005); Price et al., 1995; Wirtz et al., 2000). Likewise, Elmashhara and Soares (2019) support the effect of social interaction with vendors by considering the mediating role of pleasure and dominance.

Perceptions understood as knowledge through the senses, refer to the way of interpreting, expressing, and communicating feelings and senses, which is why it is based on the cognitive dimension of the human being (Barreiro et al., 2002). The psychological processes by which people deal with the physical environment are interrelated (Ittelson et al., 1976). Perception provides the basic information that determines individuals' ideas of the environment as well as their attitudes toward it. In turn, from these ideas and knowledge arise a series of expectations regarding the environment shaping perception.

Consequently, the approach of this research is supported by environmental psychology. Environmental psychology confirms the effect of the environment on the attitudes of the organism. This helps to identify the indicators to include in the scale to evaluate sensory, emotional, and cognitive experiences of visitors to the mall.

Materials and Methods
The study was carried out in a shopping center located in the city of Cali, using for its development, research a quantitative approach, of a descriptive-explanatory type, based on the hypothetical - deductive model. The sample made up of 343 visitors was calculated using the simple random sampling formula knowing the population corresponding to the average number of visitors per month, with a confidence level of 95% and a sampling error of 5.3%, and although it does not allow generalizations, the results contribute to the subject studied. The sample unit was the visitor of the shopping center, selected by random sampling for convenience. The data was collected from the application of questionnaires administered in the shopping center, interviewing people over 18 years of age who were visiting the shopping center. The data collection technique was an administered personal survey, applied within the shopping center facilities on different days of the week and hours of the day.

For data analysis, univariate techniques were used through descriptive statistics represented in frequency distribution tables, graphs, indicators of central tendency, and indicators of variability (Malhotra, 2008). Next, two complementary multivariate techniques were used: Cronbach's Alpha to verify the reliability of the total scale and each of the subscales; Exploratory Factor Analysis to determine the internal validity of the scales, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to confirm the relationships between the indicators and the variable, and between the variables, using the IBM SPSS statistical package Amos version 22.

Sample Features
The characterization sample of 343 visitors was made up of women (52.8%) and men (47.2%) aged between 18 and 30 years (45.2%), 31 and 50 years (25.4%), and over 50 years old (29.4%), with a university education level (77%), single (53.1%) and workers (64.4%) with a medium-high and high socioeconomic level (81.5).

Instrument Measurement
The instrument was organized into two sections. The first contains questions related to behavioral and demographic data; the second section of the instrument corresponds to the scale related to the experiences of visitors, grouped into sensory, emotional, and cognitive experiences. For the assessment of the indicators,

the Likert-type scale was used since it was created to measure consumer perceptions and attitudes and is highly used in research in the social sciences. This was constructed with ratings from one to seven, one being the negative aspect, three being indifferent, and seven being the positive aspect.

The factors and items included in the shopping center visitor's experience scale were taken from the model of Schmitt (1990), and the model of Fishbein (1978) who proposes that the attitude toward the behavior is classified into sensations, emotions, and perceptions

Results and Discussion
Descriptive Data Analysis
To characterize and identify the indicators to be included in the measurement scale of the experiences of visitors to the shopping center, a descriptive analysis presented in Table 1 was carried out, where the behavior of the indicators related to the factors of sensations, emotions, and perceptions is shown, highlighting ratings above 6.0 (on a scale of one to seven). In this sense, the people surveyed stated that the sensations that directly affect the experiences during the visit are walking through the corridors feels safe (6.01), lighting that reflects naturalness and tranquility (6.03), and cleanliness that generates tranquility (5.93). Emotional experiences, it is highlighted that staying in the shopping center produces happy moments (5.80) and improves mood (5.83). Finally, cognitive experiences are reflected in the favorable perception of shopping center visitors due to the variety of products and services with affordable prices (6.0), excellent hours (5.95), trust (5.93), and a good offer of leisure and entertainment activities (5.85).

Table 1: Descriptive indicators related to sensations, emotions, and perceptions

Variable	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sensory experiences (S)	S1 The lighting is natural and reflects tranquility	6,03	0,988
	S2 The cleanliness of the facilities generates peace	5,93	0,979
	S3 The design gives a feeling of comfort	5,85	1,146
	S4 The colors of the building give a feeling of freshness	5,89	1,138
	S5 The level of music is pleasant	5,9	1,068
	S6 The noise level bothers you	2,69	1,276
	S7 The premises located in the corridors produce a lot of noise	5,61	1,357
	S8 The aroma gives a feeling of tranquility	5,85	1,045
	S9 The level of temperature inside produces tranquility	5,74	1,286
	S10 Walking on the floors and the stands generates safety	6,01	1,041
	S11 Rest areas and furniture (benches, chairs, walls) give a feeling of comfort	5,2	1,497
	S12 Access roads generate comfort	5,72	1,136
	S13 Is more comfortable to visit when there are few people	5,5	1,529
	S14 Interacting with other people is interesting	5,64	1,392
	S15 The type visitors make me calm	5,71	1,279

	S16 You feel identified with the other visitors	5,81	1,09
Emotional experiences (EM)	EM1 Staying in this place makes you happy	5,8	1,043
	EM2 Staying in this place makes you sad	4,52	1,432
	EM3 This place always surprises me	5,76	1,302
	EM4 Staying in this place improves your mood	5,83	1,113
Cognitive experiences (CO)	CO1 Staying in this place generates trust	5,93	1,039
	CO2 A wide variety of leisure and entertainment activities can be carried out in this place	5,85	1,075
	CO3 Employees provide good service	5,92	0,956
	CO4 The opening and closing hours are adjusted to the needs of the customers	5,95	0,972
	CO5 The prices of products and services are within the reach of customers	6	1,029

Reliability of the Evaluation Scale of the Experiences of the Visitors of a Shopping Center

To confirm the reliability of the scale for evaluating the experiences of visitors to the shopping center and its respective subscales, internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. In this sense, Table 2 shows the scale improved by eliminating some items, as follows: the subscale "Sensory experiences improve by eliminating indicator SE6, going from 0.87 to 0.961; the "Emotional experiences" subscale improves when the EM2 indicator is eliminated, going from 0.743 to 0.802; The "cognitive experiences" subscale, made up of five indicators, did not present modifications, reaching a Cronbach's alpha of 0.896, verifying a very good coefficient. Finally, by eliminating these two items, Cronbach's alpha of the total scale went from 0.937 to 0.950, which confirmed that it is consistent and homogeneous, reflecting a high degree of internal consistency.

Table 2: Reliability analysis of the scale

	Total correlation corrected items	Cronbach's alpha if the item has been deleted	Cronbach's alpha
Sensory experiences			**0,897**
SE1	0,71	0,887	
SE2	0,68	0,888	
SE3	0,68	0,887	
SE4	0,65	0,888	
SE5	0,79	0,884	
SE6	**-0,30**	**0,921**	
SE7	0,62	0,889	
SE8	0,50	0,893	
SE9	0,58	0,890	
SE10	0,67	0,888	
SE11	0,41	0,898	

SE12	0,67	0,887	
SE13	0,57	0,892	
SE14	0,68	0,886	
SE15	0,69	0,886	
SE16	0,72	0,886	
Emotional experiences			**0,743**
EM1	0,55	0,684	
EM2	**0,36**	**0,802**	
EM3	0,68	0,593	
EM4	0,62	0,642	
Cognitive experiences			**0,896**
CO1	0,750	0,871	
CO2	0,779	0,864	
CO3	0,839	0,853	
CO4	0,813	0,858	
CO5	0,556	0,913	
Scale for the evaluation experiences			**0,937**

Unidimensionality of the subscale's sensory experiences, emotional experiences, and cognitive experiences

To verify unidimensionality, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied to each of the subscales to see if they met the criteria that if a single factor explains more than 50% of the variance, the scale is highly consistent. In this sense, as shown in Table 3, the subscale "sensory experiences" is explained with a factor when reaching the variance of 50.001%, after eliminating the indicator SE6 because it had low communality; the sub-scale emotional experiences reached a variance of 72%, by eliminating the VE2 indicator, and in the sub-scale "cognitive experiences" it is explained with a single factor, with a variance of 71.43%, without the need for adjustment. In this order, it was possible to demonstrate that by complying with the unidimensionality, the scale is made up of 23 indicators, grouped into 15 in sensory experiences, three in emotional experiences, and five in cognitive experiences.

To verify the suitability of applying the EFA, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic and the Bartlett sphericity test were used, confirming that the KMO values were greater than 0.7 and the Bartlett sphericity test was highly significant with p less than 0.001.

Table 3: Exploratory factorial analysis for the indicators of the evaluation scale of the experiences of the visitors in a shopping center

	Sensory experience	Emotional experiences	Cognitive Experience
SE1	0,779		
SE2	0,742		
SE3	0,740		
SE4	0,719		
SE5	0,837		
SE7	0,676		
SE8	0,563		

SE9	0,651		
SE10	0,738		
SE11	0,463		
SE12	0,726		
SE13	0,633		
SE14	0,735		
SE15	0,744		
SE16	0,775		
EM1		0,807	
EM3		0,834	
EM4		0,855	
CO1			0,844
CO2			0,868
CO3			0,914
CO4			0,899
CO5			0,680
Alfa	0,910	0,802	0,896
KMO	0,943	0,678	0,823
Bartlett's Chi-square	2736,366	375,161	1238,04
% of explained variance	50,01%	72,71%	71,73%

Subsequently, the factorial validity of the correlation matrix of the scale indicators was evaluated, utilizing the Kaiser - Meyer - Olkin (KMO) and the Bartlett Sphericity test - measures that allowed verifying the adequacy of the data, to be subjected to confirmatory factor analysis, determined by the extraction of a factor, in which the unidimensionality of the scales studied was evaluated. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) adequacy index = 0.803 allows evidence of the factorial validity of the correlation matrix between the scale indicators, considering the Kaiser criterion (Laros, 2005) Eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1 and the test Bartlett's sphericity = 407.5 and significance = 0.000 allows evaluating significant correlations between the variables. Finally, when calculating the internal consistency without these two indicators, a Cronbach's coefficient of 0.846 is achieved and the reliability of the internal consistency of the scale is improved.

Table 4 shows the general reliability of each variable, showing that Cronbach's alpha in all dimensions has values between 0.77 for emotions and 0.894 for perceptions, with a confidence level of 95% which indicates an excellent internal consistency of the established variables.

Table 4: General Cronbach's alpha by variable

| Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Sensory experience	0,863
Emotional experience	0,771
Cognitive experience	0,894

To identify the indicators that group the variables included in the instrument, it was necessary to validate the adequacy of the data that suggests significant correlations ($p < 0.001$), denoting high correlations between the variables. The goal is to determine the number of Variables, retaining eigenvalues less than 1.

In conclusion, the analysis based on the total statistics of the event; where Cronbach's Alpha statistic was used to find the level of reliability and internal consistency of the instrument; indicates a correct approach to the variables with the indicators selected for the proposed measurement with high levels of reliability of 0.88, which shows that the indicators of the instrument detailed in Table 3 are consistent and homogeneous, allowing each component to be adequately evaluated of the experiences of the visitors of the mall.

Construct validity

Through the previous analysis, it is shown that the measurement scale represents the variables identified from the theoretical review, confirming what was stated by Bagozzi et al. (2012) when they state that the validity of the construct determines the degree to which the indicators of each construct measure what it is intended to measure. Next, the confirmatory factor analysis - CFA was carried out, using the AMOS program, to determine the relationships between the indicators and the construct, and between the constructs where the measures of goodness determine the degree to which the sample data fit the model. (Enter, 1980).

The application of the CFA to the scale to evaluate the experiences of visitors to a shopping center, shows as a result measures of kindness indicating a good fit, since, as shown in figure 1, the model presented a relative Chi-square value (CMIN/DF= 22.019), yielding a value greater than 2 (Schumacher and Lomax, 2004; McIver and Carmines, 1981); the values of the comparative indices CFI (= 0.855) and TLI (= 0.838) are less than 0.9 (Bentler and Bonett, 1980; Bentler, 1990) and the parsimony of the model, measured through the RMSEA index (= 0.100) does not show a value less than 0.05, which indicates that the three variables that make up the evaluation of the experience of visitors to a shopping center have a good fit to the data, corroborating the validity of the scale.
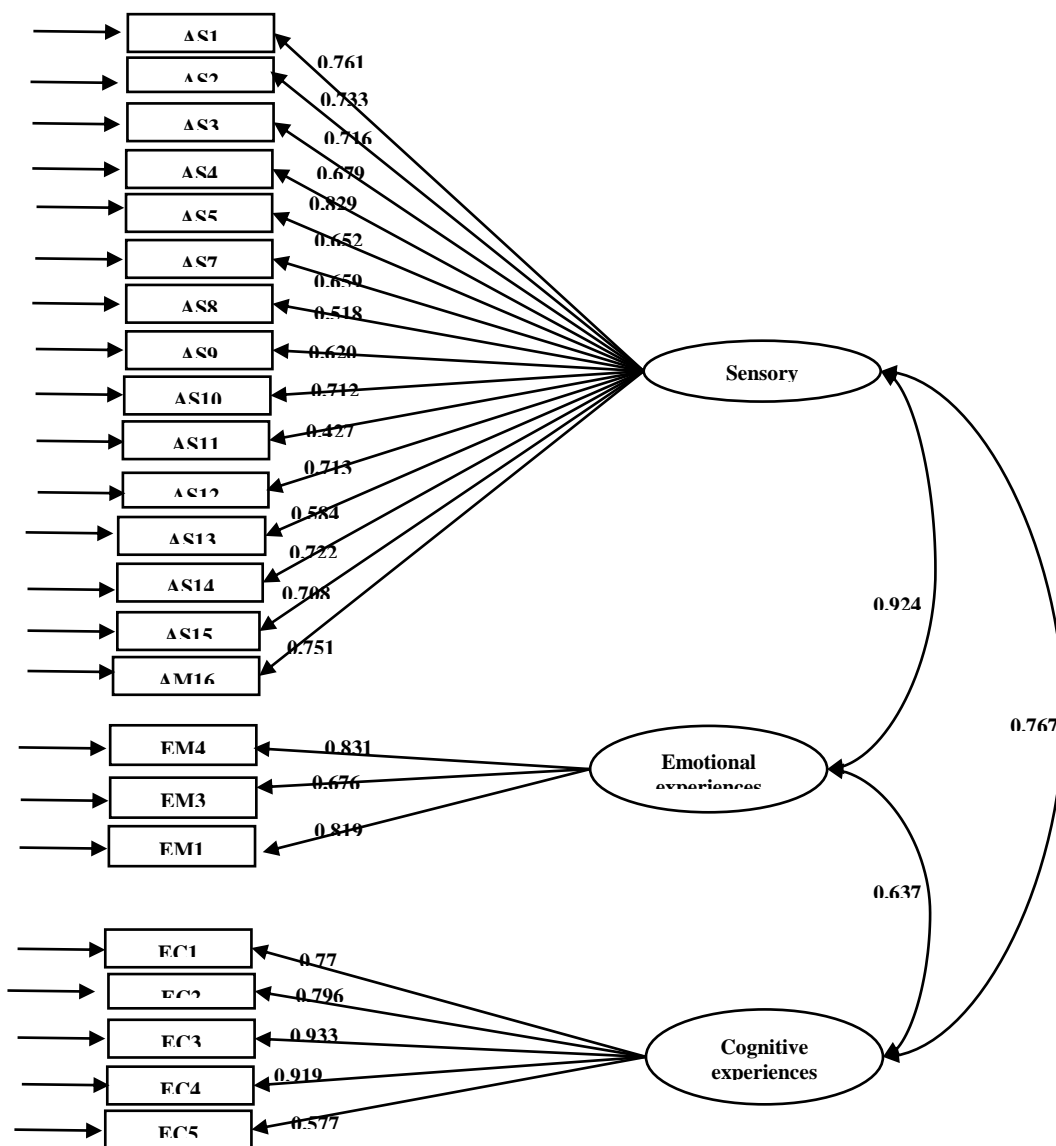
Figure 1: Model for measuring the evolution of the experiences of visitors to a shopping center.

Discussion

The analysis confirms the relationship between the variables related to sensory, emotional, and cognitive experiences. In this sense, Bitner's proposal (1992) was verified, which shows that sensory experiences are evaluated from tangible aspects, intangible aspects, and social relationships. He draws attention to the fact that the indicators with the highest load are those related to tangible aspects, highlighting that the floors are built for high traffic, the design of the structure is modern, and the facilities remain clean. These results are consistent with the study proposed by Lovelock and Wirtz (2016, p. 254), who states that the physical environment "has a fundamental role in creating the service experience." Finally, Hu and Jasper (2015) identify that people continue to look for a physical shopping experience before making an online purchase.

Concerning intangible aspects, it was possible to identify that lighting and natural appearance are indicators that strongly influence the evolution of the service environment, reaffirming what was proposed by researchers Dong and Siu, 2013; Gilboa, S. and Vilnai-Yavetz, 2013; Hu and Jasper, 2015; Kesari, B. and Atulkar, 2016; Kotler, 1973; Singh and Prashar (2014). Among the aspects that most contribute to the creation of experiences in shopping centers, the environment, comfort, safety and infrastructure stand out; Another important finding in the study was the effect of the natural environment on the experiences of visitors, verifying the results of the research carried out by Tifferet and Vilnai-Yavetz (2016) studying the effect of plant ornamentation on the perception of people about a shop; Lovelock and Wirtz (2016, p. 265) state that the sound is the backdrop for the creation of the atmosphere; Williams and Dargel (2004) identified that pleasant background music can lead to a positive rating of service quality and Zampini and Spence (2005) determined that sound influences the perception of food flavor and freshness, and Turley and Milliman (2000) state that social dimensions affect the customer experience; Bilgicer et al., (2015) affirm that the relationship is essential between customers and generates social contagion; Kwon et al. (2016) recognize positive effects when affinity is perceived between one customers and another; Pérez et al. (2016) show that the interaction effects of social density and social density positively or negatively affect the customer experience and Chebat et al., 2014; Kwon et al., 2016 identified that the stimuli shaped by contact with other people affect the experiences of visitors.

The indicators that make up the scale to evaluate emotional experiences confirm those proposed by other researchers who conducted similar studies. In this order, Purani and Kumar (2018) demonstrate the effect of the natural environment on the emotions of people who pass through a place; Sarafoleanu, et al. (2009) conclude that a scent influences mood, affective responses, evaluation, and purchasing behavior. Contact with the services offered in shopping centers also arouses emotional responses (Elmashhara & Soares, 2019; Price, Arnould & Deibler, 1995) such as anger, regret, calm, joy, euphoria, and confidence. Therefore, emotions are a determining factor in the evaluation of the service (Mattsson et al., 2004); (Martínez-Tur et al., 2005); Price et al., 1995; Wirtz et al., 2000). Likewise, Elmashhara and Soares (2019) support the effect of social interaction with vendors by considering the mediating role of pleasure and dominance.

Finally, the indicators selected to evaluate the cognitive experiences are consistent with the studies carried out by Barreiro et al., (2002) who state that the cognitive dimension of the human being refers to the conceptual perception that the customer forms of the services and producers offered by a point of sale.

Conclusions

This work was the result of the research carried out to validate the evaluation scale of the visitor experiences of the Unicentro Cali shopping center. Initially, a preliminary scale was built from the review of other previous works carried out with similar purposes and supported by the theory of environmental psychology. The results of the statistical analysis, through the application of Cronbach's Alpha, the exploratory factorial analysis, and the confirmatory factorial analysis, allow the scale to be adjusted by eliminating three items.

It is considered that for future research, the analysis of the results presented in this work could be used as a reference for new interpretations or comparative analyses. Likewise, aspects that were not worked on and that could be potentially interesting to develop new research on the effect of the evaluation of experiences on the loyalty of visitors to a shopping center could be identified. Likewise, the use of the scale validated by customer groups will enable the analysis of the influence of the service environment on the visitor experience. This will serve as a source of information for making experiential marketing decisions that are

more tailored to the needs of each of them since the effects of experiences can vary depending on psychographics and individual characteristics, motivations, or expectations.

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