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2003 Mall Shopping Patterns

Consumers Spent More Time in the Mall

Every year since 1995, ICSC has been compiling consumer survey data on mall shopping patterns. Data for the 2003 survey were collected from a robust sample of 23,235 exit interviews at 79 regional and superregional malls owned and managed by General Growth Properties, The Rouse Company and Simon Property Group.[1]

This article presents key findings from the latest mall shopping patterns study.

NUMBER AND DURATION OF MALL VISITS

- On average, shoppers make 9.5 visits during any three-month period, or 38 mall trips annually.
- An average mall visit lasts 82.2 minutes.
- Compared with previous years, shoppers in 2003 visited the mall less frequently, but stayed longer. In contrast, as seen in Table 3-1, the number of visits and the time spent in malls increased from 1996 to 2001, then fell in 2002.

Table 3-1

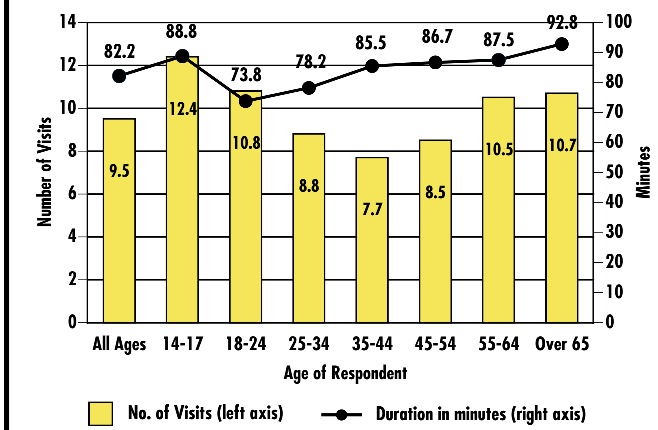
SELECTED SHOPPING PATTERNS (1996-2003)

	1996	1996-97	1998-99	2000-01	2001-02	2003
No. of visits in past 3 months	9.5	9.9	10.1	10.1	9.9	9.5
Duration (minutes)	77.0	75.5	76.4	78.1	75.1	82.2
Total Spending Per Mall Visit	$66.70	$63.50	$68.20	$75.10	$71.90	$83.30
Department Stores	$34.10	$33.90	$35.20	$35.90	$34.10	$36.00
Mall Shops	$28.40	$26.10	$29.40	$37.40	$35.50	$42.20
Restaurant/Food	$4.20	$4.00	$4.10	$4.70	$4.10	$5.90

- By age, those in the 14–17 year bracket frequent malls the most (12.4 times) in any three-month period. But, as can be seen in Chart 3-1, it is the oldest group—65 years+—that spends the longest time in malls (92.8 minutes).
- Males, surprisingly, visit malls more often (9.7 times) than females (9.3 times). However, women still stay in the mall longer than men by a margin of 11.7 minutes. (Also see Table 3-2.)

Chart 3-1

NUMBER OF MALL VISITS IN PRECEDING THREE MONTHS AND DURATION OF VISIT BY AGE GROUP



Source: ICSC Research

- Of all ethnic groups, Hispanics frequent the mall the most (10.1 times) and stay there the longest (91.5 minutes).
- As expected, general shoppers/browsers spend the longest time (92.2 minutes) in malls. Those who come to the mall for a specific purpose (store or purchase) stay only 75.8 minutes per visit.
- The number of department stores and mall stores shoppers enter correlate positively with the amount of time they spend at the mall—i.e., the longer shoppers stay at the mall, the more department stores and mall shops they visit.

Table 3-2

SELECTED SHOPPING ATTRIBUTES BY GENDER (2000-2003)

	2000-01	2001-02	2003
MALES			
% of Total Shoppers	37%	37%	39%
No. of visits in past 3 months	10.2	10.0	9.7
Duration (in minutes)	68.9	65.6	75.0
Total Spending per Mall Visit	$70.10	$67.10	$78.50
FEMALES			
% of Total Shoppers	63%	63%	61%
No. of visits in past 3 months	10.0	9.9	9.3
Duration (in minutes)	83.5	80.8	86.7
Total Spending per Mall Visit	$78.10	$74.80	$86.20

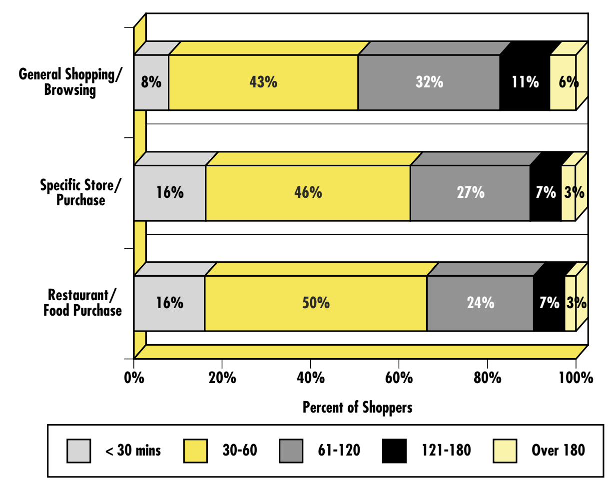
[1] Please note that unlike previously, when two years' worth of survey results were rolled into one, this report analyzed **2003 data** only.

PURPOSE OF VISIT

- Mall visits continue to be purpose-driven. About 45% of shoppers go to the mall for a specific store or purchase, while another third (33%) are general shoppers/browsers.
- However, shoppers were less focused last year. In the three years prior to 2003, an average 60% of shoppers went to the mall for a specific store/purchase, while 23% did general shopping or browsed.
- Most shoppers—regardless of purpose—spend from 30 minutes to one hour in the mall. Chart 3-2 shows that 43% of general shoppers/browsers spend from 30 to 60 minutes there. Likewise, 46% of shoppers with a specific store/purchase in mind and 50% of restaurant/food store patrons stay in malls for 30–60 minutes.

Chart 3-2

PURPOSE OF MALL VISIT
BY TRIP DURATION



Source: ICSC Research

STORE TYPES VISITED AND PURCHASES MADE

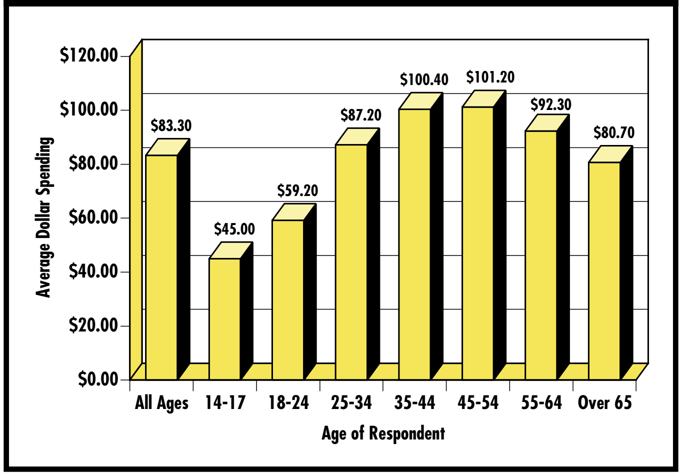
- Shoppers visit an average of 0.8 **department stores** per trip, and purchase at 0.4 department stores. This computes to a 50% conversion rate, which is comparable with that in previous years.
- The average number of **mall shops** entered per trip is 1.6, with shoppers purchasing at 0.7 mall stores. This is a conversion rate of 44%.
- Department stores are more popular among the older groups. Shoppers ages 45–64 enter one department store per visit, while those age 65+ visit 1.4 department stores.
- Meanwhile, those aged 18-54 visit more mall shops (1.7) than shoppers 55 years or older.
- Asians, on average, visit 2.9 mall shops, which is significantly higher than other ethnic groups. By comparison, African-Americans enter 1.3 mall stores, Hispanics visit 1.6 stores, and Caucasians go to 1.7 stores.
- Hispanics are avid department-store shoppers, entering 1.0 department store per visit. This compares to just 0.7 stores for African-Americans and 0.8 department stores for both Caucasians and Asians.
- By household income, shoppers in the $75,000+ bracket visit one more mall store (2.6) than those with lower incomes.

SPENDING TRENDS

- Average spending at department stores is $36.00. General shoppers/browsers ($35.80) spend more at department stores than those who go to the mall for a specific purpose ($32.20).
- The average amount spent at mall shops is $42.20. General shoppers/browsers and specific-purpose shoppers spend the same amount ($45.30) at mall shops.
- Average spending at restaurants/food shops is $5.90.
- Note that 16% do not spend anything during a mall visit. This proportion of non-spenders has more or less held steady since 1994.
- The mean total spending (including those who spent nothing) in 2003 was $83.30, which was substantially higher than in previous years. (Also refer to Table 3-1.) Excluding zero-spenders pushed total spending up by $16.14 to $99.44.
- The average dollar spending for mall shops began exceeding that of department stores in 2000, with a $1.00-2.00 margin between the two. However, in 2003, the difference grew by as much as $6.00.

Chart 3-3

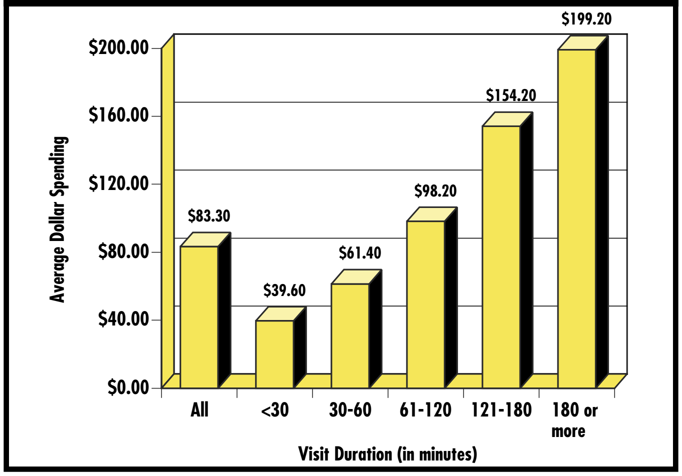
AVERAGE SPENDING PER MALL VISIT BY AGE GROUP



Source: ICSC Research

Chart 3-5

AVERAGE SPENDING PER MALL VISIT BY DURATION OF VISIT

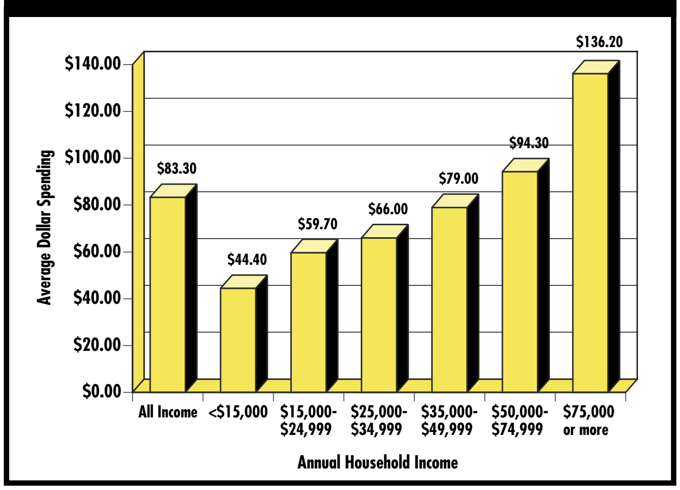


Source: ICSC Research

- Middle-age shoppers spend the most money in malls—$100.40 for those ages 35–44 years and $101.20 for those 45–54. (See Chart 3-3.)
- Not surprisingly, mall spending increases with household income, with those earning $75,000+ spending $136.20, about $53 more than those earning less. (See Chart 3-4.)
- Women generally spend more than men ($86.20 vs. $78.50) per mall visit. (Also see Table 3-2.)
- In total, Asians outspend ($146.70) the other ethnic groups. However, spending trends vary by store type. For instance, Hispanics spend the most at department stores ($52.00); Asians spend the largest amount at mall shops ($107.80) and food stores/restaurants ($8.30); and African-Americans spend the most on movies or other entertainment ($2.90).
- It makes sense that the longer shoppers stay in the mall, the larger their spending because of a greater propensity to buy on impulse. On average, total spending increases by $1.01 *per minute* of mall stay. As can be seen in Figure 3-5, those who stay in the mall for half an hour at the most spend $39.60. On the other hand, shoppers who spend at least three hours in the mall usually end up spending nearly $200.00.

Chart 3-4

AVERAGE SPENDING PER MALL VISIT BY INCOME GROUP



Source: ICSC Research

SHOPPING PATTERNS BY CENTER SIZE

- As can be seen in Table 3-3 on the next page, centers under 800,000 square feet are visited more frequently (10.2 visits) within a three-month period, although shoppers stay longer—for 84.8 minutes—in superregional malls (i.e., centers with size 800,000 square feet and over).
- By purpose of visit, malls under 800,000 square feet draw more general shoppers/browsers (36%), but fewer purposeful shoppers (41%) compared to malls over 800,000 square feet.
- Superregional malls are associated with more department stores visited (0.9 vs. 0.5 for centers under 800,000 square feet), but fewer mall shops (1.5 compared with 2.0 for the smaller centers).

Table 3-3

SHOPPING PATTERNS BY CENTER SIZE

	All Malls	Center Size	
		Under 800,000 sq. ft.	Over 800,000 sq. ft.
Number of Visits in Preceding 3 Months	9.5	10.2	9.3
Duration of Visits (in minutes)	82.2	71.6	84.8
Purpose of Visit (% of shoppers)			
General Shopping/Browsing	33.5%	36.3%	32.6%
Specific Store/Purchase	44.9%	41.4%	46.1%
Restaurant/Food	9.0%	7.6%	9.4%
Attend a Special Event/Movie	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Other (Not Specified)	9.6%	11.7%	9.0%
A. Number of Department Stores Visited	0.8	0.5	0.9
B. Number of Department Stores Where Made Purchases	0.4	0.3	0.4
C. Department Store Conversion Rate (B/A)	50.0%	60.0%	44.4%
D. Number of Mall Shops Visited	1.6	2.0	1.5
E. Number of Mall Shops Where Made Purchases	0.7	0.8	0.7
F. Mall Shop Conversion Rate (E/D)	43.8%	40.0%	46.7%
Department Store Spending Per Mall Visit	$36.00	$21.10	$39.60
Mall Shop Spending Per Mall Visit	$42.20	$57.20	$38.00
Restaurant/Food Spending Per Mall Visit	$5.90	$5.10	$6.20
Total Spending Per Mall Visit	$83.30	$80.40	$84.10

However, the *department store* conversion rate (60%) is significantly higher in malls less than 800,000 square feet, while the *mall store* conversion rate (47%) is slightly higher at superregional malls.

- Except for the mall shops, larger-sized centers report significantly higher consumer spending at their respective stores. According to the 2003 survey, shoppers spent in total an extra $3.70 per trip at a superregional mall.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The 2003 shopper profile underscored the continuing stability of most key attributes. However, there were three notable developments from last year's survey, as follows:

- While women still comprise the majority of mall shoppers, the rise in the proportion of male shoppers is noteworthy. In 2003, males represented 39% of mall shoppers compared to 37% in the preceding three years. This corroborates the theory that men, indeed, are back in the stores. (Also see Table 3-2.)
- Shoppers appeared to be more "efficient" last year. While consumers made fewer visits to the mall compared to previous years, they stayed longer.
- Although the majority of consumers still visit the mall to shop and spend, they seem to be acknowledging that malls serve other purposes than being a shopping destination. Going to the mall to attend a special event or movie, or for "other" reasons, has risen to nearly 13% of shoppers in 2003. This compares with just 8.0% from 2000 to 2002.

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