

Classical Shopping VS Modern Shopping Malls: Complimentarity or Rivalry? Constantine's Case

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Abstract

Currently, Constantine is experiencing a new phenomenon worthy of study: the expansion of contemporary shopping malls on the city's edge, an experiment comparable to that conducted in Western cities decades ago. Previously, the city center was the sole ideal retail area; however, a new challenger to traditional shopping has emerged. The survey revealed that despite the establishment of these contemporary districts, the traditional town center of Constantine has maintained its vibrancy and Retail appeal. The purpose of this paper is to determine the attractiveness factors and causes that attract the Algerian consumer for shopping, whether in the traditional town center of the city or in modern commercial centers on its suburbs. A questionnaire was distributed to 400 customers of Ritej mall in the new town of Ali Mendjeli (southwest of Constantine) and shopping streets in the traditional town center of Constantine in order to achieve the aims of the study. The investigation revealed that the most significant characteristics that influence purchasing are the appeal factors: quality and product diversity, pricing, entertainment and social activities, location and accessibility, parking, atmosphere and aesthetic, security, and infrastructural services. The study indicated that entertainment has become a vital component of shopping for Algerians.

Key words: attractiveness factors, Constantine, consumers, shopping centers, traditional town centre.

INTRODUCTION

Markets have existed in various forms since ancient times, beginning with the agora in Ancient Greece and progressing to current multinational retail malls. Al-Maimani, Salama, and Fadli, (2014). Several reasons have contributed to the decentralization of commercial districts in most cities over time: «the emergence of peripheral economic zones, the growing size of cities, expanding the supply of commodities and more diverse services boost enterprises' commercial potential and attractiveness.» (Senelet and Chevallier-Masson, 1985) Trade has evolved significantly over time, both in terms of form and application.

Shopping malls are an American "innovation" that has spread throughout the world. Especially during the 1960s, when the economy was booming. As a result of its creation as an artificial center, It was originally built as a shopping place at the periphery of the urban sprawls of American cities (Sorkin 1992), and soon became a direct rival to shopping streets in the traditional town centre. However, as time passed, the concept of creating other functions other than shopping in order to promote and captivate other social intentions became a main principle in the architecture of shopping centers (Azadarmaki 2012). These spaces are used as quasi-public spaces, entertainment venues, and sociable hubs (Goss 1993; Kusumowidagdo, Sachari, and Widodo 2016; Sahito et al. 2020).

The first shopping center in Algeria was opened on August 5, 2010, in the new business metropolis of Bab Ezzouar (Algiers), but Constantine had to wait until April 16, 2016 to see the Ritaj-Mall open (the biggest shopping center in the new town of Constantine). Historically, Constantine was a Phoenician, Roman, Vandal, Arab, Ottoman, and lastly French colony (3000 years BC) (Soufiane, Said, and Atef, 2015). It was a regional city from Ancient Numidia that remained the capital of Eastern Algeria. Most commercial activities were concentrated in the center of Constantine, particularly its traditional center « médina », which served as a focal point for the community. They typically included a wide range of uses such as shops, mosques, madrasas (religious schools), hamams (public baths), offices, and other communal institutions (Al-Maimani, Salama and Fadli, 2014).

During the initial phases of development. Each sort of trade is represented by an organization; a time or civilization's way of life. It separated between public commercial and private residential areas during the Islamic era, and the grouping

of artisans by trades, which resulted in a wide spread of popular markets (souks), such as the « Souk El Acer, Souk el Djemaa, Souk Leghzel », and many specialized marketplaces (Rahba) “Rahbet Lejmel, Rahbet Ezzra’a, Rahbet Essouf” (Benidir 2007). There are also several local markets where dealers and crafters congregate according to specialization: Kharrazin (shoemaker), Nadjarin (carpenter), Haddadin (Blacksmith), Dabbaghin (tanner), Djazzarin (butcher). Despite the fact that French colonization entered there and erected a new European urban fabric on top of the Arab traditional fabric, these traditional markets maintained their prestige and vitality. The activity grew during the colonial period with the establishment of new commercial centers such as big commercial spaces.

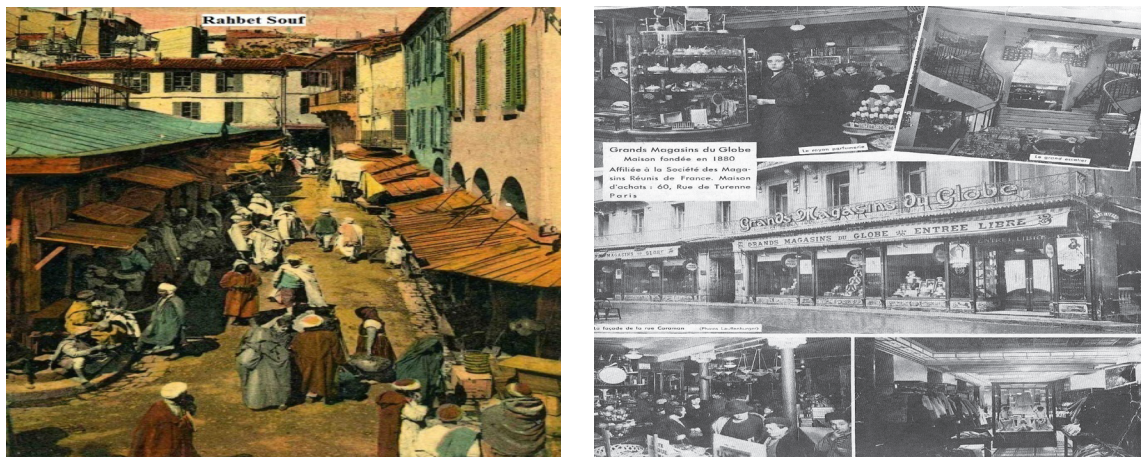


Figure 1. Traditional markets and modern commercial spaces in the era of French colonialism, Constantine, Algeria
(source: www.constantine-hier-aujourd'hui.fr)

The rapid expansion of Constantine and the high standard of life as a result of economic and social changes had a significant impact on commercial activities, forcing them to depart from the long-established pattern. It all started with its European and semi-European neighborhoods, which transformed and developed the forms of its stores, such as Saint Jean and Sidi Mabrouk to its adjacent neighborhoods. At this point, the old city had seen a significant spread of the phenomenon of bazaars, which is based on the principle of converting residential buildings or parts of them into multiple small shops offering a variety of goods and services in the same location, resulting in the dominance of the commercial function at the expense of the residential function. Due to the limited area and high prices of the city center's stores, investors and traders headed to the city's outskirts to search for new spaces that are large and low in price for commercial use, so new secondary commercial poles have emerged in the south-eastern region on National Road 03 “ONAMA” and on the northwest side on National Road 27 “KANTOULI.”

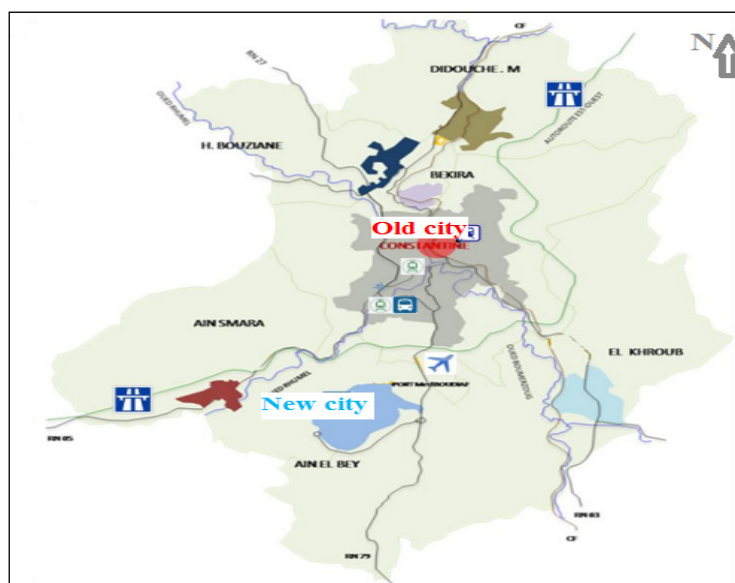


Figure 2. Locational map of the historical center and the new Town (Ali Mendjeli) in Constantine
(source: PDAU Constantine).

As a result of the city of Constantine's large population increase at the end of the 1990s, the state programmed the project of the new city on "Ali Mendjeli," located 22 kilometers from the city's capital on a land base of 1500 hectares (Douablia, Lazri & Chettah, 2022), as an urgent urban pole to accommodate the mom city's population growth. The local government intended to accommodate a population of 300,000 people and build 50,000 dwellings. Today, the population of this territory exceeds 450,000 people, with a housing stock of 90,000 units developed on a land base of more than 4,400 hectares (GHIMOUZE 23 May 2020). To handle the massive influx of residents, the essential infrastructure, including administrative facilities, institutions, entertainment, and commercial facilities, had to be prepared. A first urban core arose naturally at the level of Neighborhood Unit UV 06, the first inhabited district (Rehal 2021), where the majority of shops were concentrated. Then commercial spaces were created, beginning with the El Ritaj shopping center. Then the numbers grew and the shapes changed, resulting in the creation of "La Coupole," "Sans Visa," and "El Ritaj Mall." Six shopping centers were built between 2008 and 2016. They all include shopping, entertainment, dating, and visiting friends and family. This has resulted in new shifts and patterns of consumption and shopping, as well as the birth of a new competitor to traditional shopping.

The investigation tries to answer the following questions:

- What are the reasons why shoppers opted to visit Constantine's traditional center?
- Is there anything else that draws people to huge retail malls besides shopping?
- What variables are vital in recruiting customers?

This study is based on the hypothesis that the emergence of modern commercial centers on Constantine's periphery has not affected the commercial attractiveness of the traditional center, but rather served as its complement. Many indicators and factors push the consumer to shop whether from the traditional center or modern commercial centers, and that there is also a new culture in the behavior of Algerian shoppers, which is the search for a combination of both. This study is a valuable and significant addition since it addresses a recent topic in terms of the novelty of the experience of major commercial hubs in Algeria, and what it may add in terms of understanding the consumer's behavior. The primary goal of the research is to identify the factors that attract consumers to shop, whether in the traditional center of the city or in modern commercial centers on its outskirts, as well as the most significant changes that have entered the culture of shopping and consumption in these major centers. Although there have been previous studies on the subject, they were about other countries' experiences, which differ in many ways from the Algerian shopping environment in economic, social, and cultural terms, confirming that this study will address some of the factors that previous studies have not addressed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method

Changes in the natural and social settings of customers have a significant impact on their purchasing and shopping behavior (Ma'aitah 2010). This study's methodology is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, Identity of shopping in Algeria's historic town centers and malls, It was discovered by technological studies and qualitative questionnaire surveys. The purpose of this study is to analyze customer preferences for shopping malls vs traditional centers, as well as to identify the characteristics that generate higher appeal in the comparison of shopping streets, traditional centers, and malls. A survey is a research technology that uses a questionnaire to collect information from a sample of people. The work of developing a survey study design includes creating a questionnaire, defining the list of questions, and designing the exact style of the written questionnaire (Ma'aitah 2010).

Data Collection

The questionnaire survey was used to obtain information from visitors inside the traditional center and mall. The questionnaire was created with the study's goal and literature review in mind. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first on demographic variables (age, gender, marriage status, education level, and marital status) and the second on preferences, retail space selection, and factors influencing commercial appeal. The questionnaire was prepared in Arabic first and then translated into English; it contains 45 items with Likert scale responses (1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree). The study's sample size included all El Ritaj Mall customers in the new town of Ali Mendjeli-Constantine and the traditional town center of Constantine. Initially, 500 questionnaires were issued; the total number of useable responses obtained as a result of this process was 400 (the response rate was 80%).

Measures

Teller and Elms (2012) define “attractiveness” as the degree to which a location draws customers (Teller and Elms 2012). There are numerous factors that might influence consumer behavior and direct it toward a shop, shopping mall, or shopping in the town center. The variables determining attractiveness employed in this study were the same as those used in prior investigations, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement information for individual factors

Factor Indicator	Operational Definition	Source
Accessibility	easily find the entrances and exits, the proximity of the center from the customer's place of work or residence, close to bus station and tramway	(Alzubaidi et al. 1997), (Teller 2008), (Teller and Elms 2012) , (Sahito et al. 2020)
Merchandising (Quality,Variety, price)	specialization, diversification, quality of the products, variety of brands, availability of int'l stores branches, the overall price level is low, you can find a lot of special offers,	(Teller 2008); (Baker et al. 2002),(Wang, Zhang, and Wang 2006), (Ma'aitah 2010), (Ahmad 2012),(Ammani 2013)
Entertainment and social activities	Presence of fun and variety entertainment programs, various entertainment facilities for youth, restaurants, coffee shops, safe entertainment place enjoy while shopping, cinema, existence of people of different age group, presence of both females and males and play area	(Teller and Elms 2010), (Ahmad 2012).. (Sahito et al. 2020)
Parking	Parking fees are in an acceptable range offers, different parking facilities sufficiently, easily park vehicle	(Teller 2008); (Teller and Elms 2012), (Ammani 2013)
Atmosphere and Aesthetic	The atmosphere is pleasant, fun place to walk around, clean place, interesting architectural features, Music, color, decor, well lit, and air conditions	(Teller 2008), (Ma'aitah 2010), (Wu, Yeh, and Hsiao 2011). ,(Ahmad 2012) ,(Ammani 2013)
Security	safety in car parking, personal security, safe entertainment place and children are safe while playing and doing various activities	(Yavas et al. 2003), (Ma'aitah 2010) (El Hedhli, Chebat, and Sirgy 2013)
Infrastructural services	toilets, escalators and elevators, child care, facilities for the disabled, an area to sit, cash dispensers	(Teller 2008); (Teller and Elms 2012), (Ahmad 2012)

Source: authors

CASE STUDIES

Case 1: The Old City of Constantine (Medina)

The Medina of Constantine is the city's and its historical core; it is located in the city's north-east center and covers an area of 85 hectares; it is a recognized area protected by executive order No 05-208 of June 2005. Constantine's old city is a large trading center, with 3658 commercial activity (81 shops per hectare) (and 2018). (Zorgane & Benidir, 2018). The Medina's commercial landscape is organized around squares, markets, shopping streets, Fondouks, souks, bazaars, and businesses... (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The poles and major commercial axes of the Old City of Constantine (authors based on Kribeche, 2010)

Clothing stores, fabrics, haberdashery, jewelry, and restaurants, among other things, are among the most popular business activities in Constantine's old city (see Figure 4). According to a reading of the current status of commercial operations in the medina, the variety of commercial activity; between old and modern establishments, is notable. Fabric, traditional clothing, haberdashery and traditional needlework goods, feminine articles of all kinds (indoor dresses, lingerie, pajamas, etc.), furnishings, etc. They are, among other things, products that make the old town appealing in comparison to other neighborhoods.

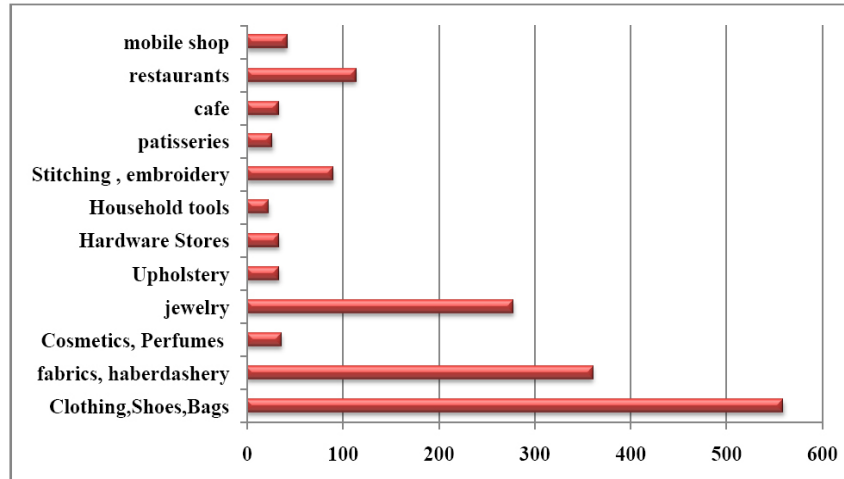


Figure 4. The commercial activities in The Medina of Constantine (Authors).

Case 2: The Culture of Modern Shopping Centers (El Ritaj Mall)

Shopping malls were recently brought to Algeria as a retail innovation and an emerging retail transformation trend. Shopping centers are collections of stores in a roofed or unroofed space. These facilities also include restaurant, parking, entertainment, hairdressing, and other amenities. The size of the facilities influences the services to some extent (Asadi 2001; BAZR and KHORRAMI, 2015). "El Ritaj Mall" is the largest shopping complex in the wilaya of Constantine, with 20,000 square meters, 6000 of which are built. It is a popular destination for residents of the region as well as several wilayas in the Algerian East (18,000 daily visitors, 25,000 on weekends). It was dedicated on April 16, 2016, which is World Science Day. It is located in the new city center of Ali Mendjeli (UV02), near the Transport Station, the tramway line, and the University of Constantine 02. It has five storeys and now includes 277 stores, which are distributed on the different floors from the service floor to the third floor, which also has a number of Fast-Food restaurants.

Table 2. Composition of the Ritaj mall

Shopping Zone	More than 140 stores including 12 international brands are available in the mall to provide visitors with everything they need for their daily lives or for other uses. The most important commercial activities in it: clothing (Men, Women, Children), Ritaj Gold (space specialized in the sale of jewelry and especially gold), Cosmetics, Perfumes, home goods, Sale and repair of phones (Ooredoo, Djezzy and Mobilis)
Hypermarket Illef	Is one of the poles that the Ritaj Mall provides to its visitors, it is broken down into two floors and covers an area of more than 1000 square meters in the service floor and 4500 square meters in the basement as well as storage space. The hypermarket offers a wide choice through its different departments by diversifying its products around the daily needs of visitors (food products, household chores, clothing, furniture ...)
Fruit and Vegetable Market	A large fruit and vegetable market as well as a chain of butchers and fishmongers grouped in 67 stores and occupying 800 square meters.
Parking	All outside a parking lot that can accommodate 800 cars providing visitors the opportunity to park near the shopping center
Entertainment Area	An open-air space specially dedicated to families and their children. It is located behind the structure of the Ritaj Mall shopping center where it covers an area of 5000 square meters, several modern attractions are available to delight the little ones as well as their parents where they can have a great time and be able to let off steam and have fun.
Fast Food And Restaurants	Located on the 3rd floor of the Ritaj Mall, this space includes a series of Fast Food, 2 cafeterias and a creamery. Nearly 500 chairs are arranged in a common court to offer visitors the way to put them at ease and enjoy a good moment of relaxation while enjoying their meals in fault or with friends.

Source: authors based on <https://ritajmalls.com>



Figure 5. El Ritaj Mall The largest shopping center in Constantine (source : <https://ritajmalls.com>)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile

The findings are based on the responses of 400 persons. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the target population. Figure 6 displays some of the demographic information provided by respondents, such as gender, age, and work status. Female respondents exceed male respondents in total, with a predominance of 80.6% versus 19.4% in the sample. In terms of age distribution, people aged 20 to 35 made up the majority of the sample (56%), followed by those between the ages of 35 and 45 (22%), and those between the ages of 45 and 60 (11%). Almost 41% of those polled are students, with 33% working and 20.2% are out of work.

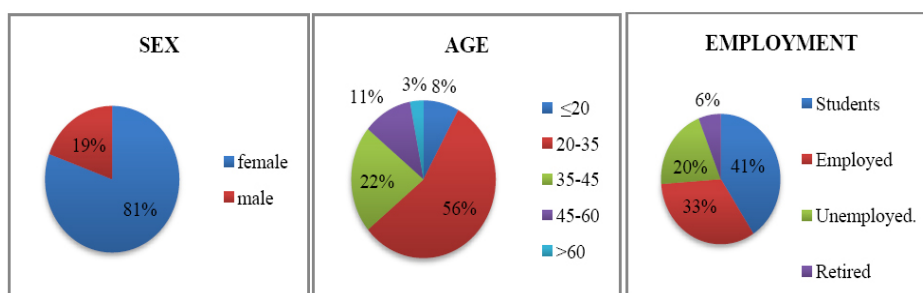


Figure 6. Demographic Characteristics of the sample (authors, 2022).

Time Profile

The study also sought to ascertain how much time respondents spent in a mall or medina and how frequently they visited one. The majority of customers (81.2%) spend one to three hours shopping in a single visit, with 10.4% spending less than an hour and 8.4% spending more than three hours. Figure 7 shows that 39.40% of respondents said they go shopping in Ritaj mall and traditional center within one to two weeks, 20.33% said they go once a month, and some (18.50%) said they go once a week.

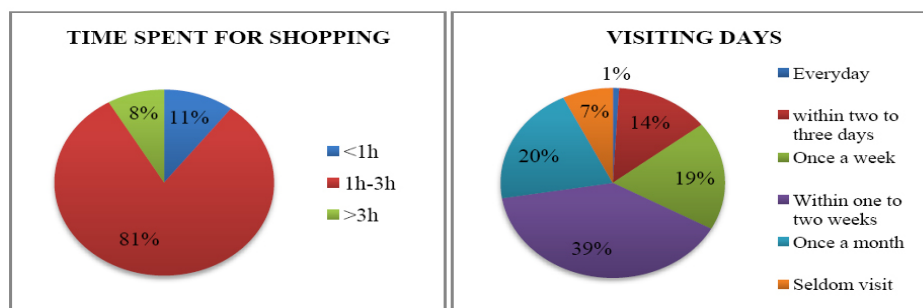


Figure 7. Time span and frequency of visit (authors, 2022).

Visiting Purpose

Figure 8 shows the reasons for visiting Ritaj mall and traditional center, as for the old city, most visitors come for the purpose of shopping (88%), while for the mall, most of its visitors go to it for entertainment and to meet family and friends (45%). Therefore, the commercial center offers areas where people may stop by, hang out, and chat with their friends in a lovely setting.

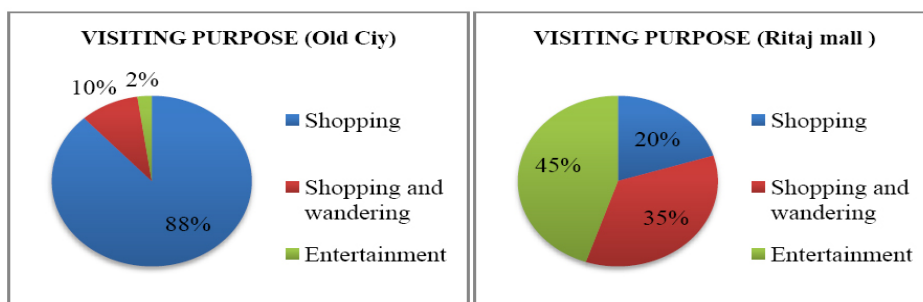


Figure 8. The intention to visit traditional center and mall (authors)

Preferences of Respondents Relating to their Choice of Shopping Place

This section of the questionnaire allows you to determine the qualities that entice customers to shop, whether in Constantine's traditional core or in malls. According to the analysis, the following are the three main reasons why the people in the study sample consented to shop in the traditional center: Product variety and low costs came in first position (40%), near proximity to residence, job, or study came in second place (20%), and habit and unwillingness to change came in third place (15%). Figure 9 also shows that the majority of customers strongly agree with three of the reasons why they prefer to shop at "Ritaj Mall," with the phrase "Exciting and fun shopping (entertainment programs, restaurants, coffee shops...)" receiving the highest score of (19%), followed by "close to place of residence, work, or study (16%), and parking availability (14%)."

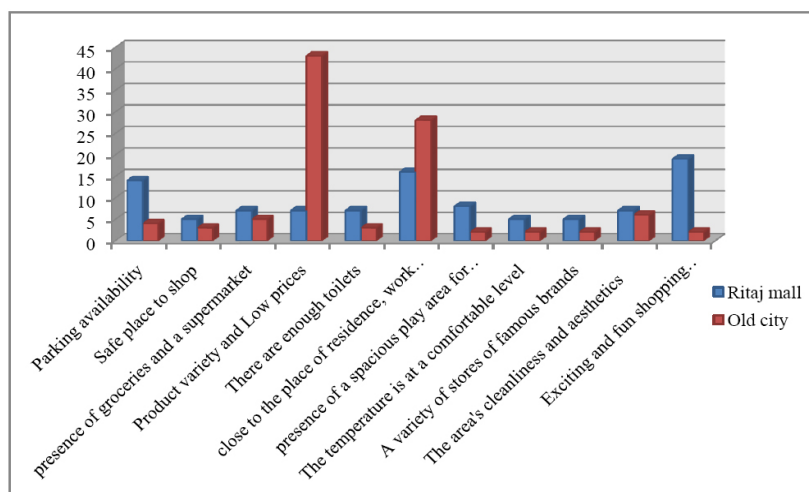


Figure 9. Preferences of respondents relating to their choice of shopping place. (Source: field research, 2022).

According to the study's findings, the traditional center of Constantine maintained its importance and commercial attractiveness for a variety of reasons, the most important of which was its monopoly on certain goods such as the trade of fabrics and sewing supplies, bride's clothing and equipment, and various jewelry, and the shopper also stuck to his habit of shopping from him. The major reason to travel to the "Ritaj Mall" is to look for a safe entertainment spot to enjoy while shopping, the mall provides restaurants, cafes, a children's play area, entertainment programs, parking, toilets, a suitable temperature, safety, and cleanliness. As a result, we conclude that there are numerous factors that influence shopping destination selection; our findings are consistent with preliminary findings provided in the relevant literature. Thus, marketing influences shoppers' perceptions of the traditional core, and Algerians are drawn to the ancient city mostly because of the variety of businesses or consumer goods choices and inexpensive costs.

We also discovered that entertainment is a major aspect in the shopping mall's attractiveness, as 56% of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 35, and this group of consumers considers the shopping mall as a place to mingle and spend time. In terms of accessibility, we found it to be one of the most essential features appealing to shoppers, whether in the traditional center or the mall, due to their closeness to workplaces, educational institutions such as universities, or transportation lines. Parking is regarded as one of the missing aspects in Constantine's historical core, which is what most visitors worry about, as it has harmed the city's commercial attractiveness. On the contrary, the mall features a parking space for 800 cars, which has resulted in customer happiness.

So, based on the study's findings, we divide the attractiveness factors that influence shoppers into two groups based on the importance and intensity of the effect: accessibility, merchandising (quality, variety, and price), entertainment and social activities, parking, and the second least influential group: atmosphere and aesthetic, security, and infrastructural services (Figure 10). Although certain aspects have a greater impact than others, they all contribute to luring customers to shop.

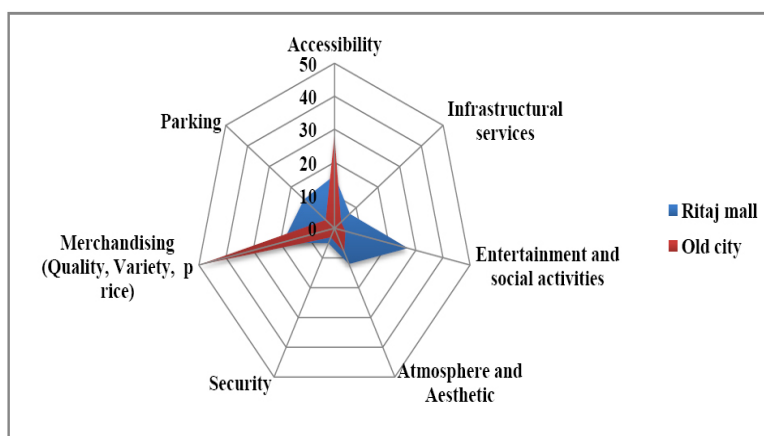


Figure 10. the Attractive factors affecting shoppers from Ritaj Mall and Medina of Constantine (Source: field research, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The availability of merchandise, the variety of items, and the cheap prices occasionally charged, particularly in informal trade, are factors that allow Constantine's medina to retain a certain animation and dynamics. However, in today's world, the aim of a commercial space is no longer restricted to consumption; consumers are searching for both social and economic development. People appear to prefer malls because they provide a modern, clean environment that blends shopping and entertainment with time spent with family and friends. That is something that the old city cores lack.

The new tendency of the growth of contemporary commercial districts on Constantine's outskirts is complimentary to the previous trend (traditional economy) represented by the Old City's historic stores. This is explained by the relocation of several commercial services from the city center to the new city Ali Mendjeli. By opening new branches of their stores while retaining their original facilities, they are able to extend their trade in modern commercial centers that provide numerous appealing features.

As a result, the study recommends:

- Using the function of entertainment and social life in marketplaces and commercial centers to address the needs of city inhabitants for leisure spaces.
- Improving the commercial attractiveness of Constantine's historic core by addressing deficiencies including as sanitation, parking, and infrastructure services.
- The necessity to diversify services within commercial centers, such as banking, opening cinemas, and so on, in order to meet consumers' need to buy and have fun under one roof.
- Stress the importance of conducting more research on commercial activities and understanding shopper behavior because of their positive impact on planning decisions and marketing strategies. This is due to a scarcity of these studies, particularly on the phenomenon of the spread of commercial centers, which is a relatively new phenomenon in the city of Constantine.

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