

A DELPHI TECHNIQUE ANALYSIS OF DRIVERS OF OUTSOURCING DECISIONS AMONG MULTI-TENANTED SHOPPING MALL OWNERS IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the drivers of outsourcing decisions of multi-tenanted shopping mall owners for facilities management in Ghana.

The study was conducted using nine owners of multi-tenanted shopping malls in Ghana with a history and experience in outsourcing retail properties to third party facility management firms ($n = 9$) and facilities managers who are experts in providing outsourced services ($n = 5$). Using the Delphi technique, five surveys were conducted (Delphi polls) using questionnaires that were sent out to the participants via an online survey tool (Survey Heart). The surveys sought to build a consensus from the respondents on the factors that drive their decision to outsource FM in their properties and they were conducted over a period of 9 months.

The results showed that the outsourcing decisions of multi-tenanted shopping mall owners in Ghana is driven by the strategic advantages, cost-saving benefits and the service quality-related benefits that outsourcing gives them. Among these broad factors, the ability to focus on core competencies for competitive advantage, and avoid the fixed cost associated with paying the salaries and other entitlements of in-house staff were the main reasons for their decisions to outsource. The results also showed that the owners are of the view that third-party services providers deliver quality FM services than in-house teams.

The study shows the factors that drive the decision of multi-tenanted shopping malls in Ghana to outsource FM services in their buildings. The findings of the study will be useful to prospective investors into retail properties in Ghana as well as facilities management service providers and further research into facilities management.

Keywords: Shopping malls; Outsourcing; Facilities Management; FM; Delphi Technique

1.0 Introduction

Facilities Management (FM) is essential in the daily running of services and the overall growth of a business due to its role in making the working environment conducive for both staff and clients (Masjoni, 2015). One's definition of FM may vary according to context, nature of the environment, culture, organizational setting, goals and the individual's interest (Noor *et al.*, 2014; Price 2006; Anna-Lisa, 2005). In the context of buildings, Atkin and Brooks (2015) defined FM as "an integrated approach to operating; maintaining, improving and adapting the building and infrastructure of an organization in order to

create an environment that strongly supports the primary objectives of the organization". FM in a building can be carried out in-house (Atkin & Brooks, 2015; Ikediashi, 2014; Fick, 2012; Barrel & Baldry, 2003), by outsourcing (Amos & Gadzekpo, 2016; Atkin & Brooks, 2015; Toe, 2015; Ahamed *et al.*, 2013; Olusegun *et al.*, 2013) or by a mix-strategy where some services are provided in-house while the others are outsourced (Atkin & Brooks, 2015). Outsourcing refers to "the act of transferring work, responsibilities and decision rights to someone else" (Power *et al.*, 2006). It entails the allocation of risk and responsibility for performing a function or service to another entity (Ashley, 2008). In buildings, it involves

contracting a third-party service provider to undertake the FM role (Li & Choi, 2009; Amos & Gadzekpo, 2016; Atkin & Brooks, 2015; Toe, 2015; Ahamed et al., 2013; Olusegun et al., 2013).

The retail business in Ghana is largely traditional with retailers operating in small shops usually owned and used by themselves or rented to tenants but recently, there has been the emergence of large multi-tenant shopping malls in Ghanaian cities (Doamekpor, 2016). According to findings made by Doamekpor (2016) and the authors' preliminary investigations on the websites of most of these shopping malls, their FM is outsourced. Though the use of outsourcing in shopping malls is increasingly gaining popularity (Toe, 2015; Doamekpor, 2016; Amos & Gadzekpo, 2016; De Mendonca & Zhou, 2019), there is a paucity of knowledge on why multi-tenanted shopping mall owners decide to use it as a strategy over the in-house and the mixed approach, especially in Ghana. There is also a paucity of knowledge on the theories that underpin the decisions to use outsourcing as a strategy by multi-tenant shopping mall owners in Ghana. Therefore, the study assessed the drivers of outsourcing decisions of multi-tenanted shopping mall owners and the theories that underpin such drivers and decisions in Ghana.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Outsourcing in FM

Outsourcing entails the act of moving some of a firm's internal activities, decisions and

Responsibilities to a third-party service provider outside the firm (Power et al., 2006; Ashley, 2008). In outsourcing, there are certain activities and decisions that are integral to the attainment of the overall goal of the firm but are either not its core competencies or require expertise and skills outside of the firm, hence the need to engage another entity who is an expert in such services, rather than using an in-house team and resources (Kurdi et al., 2011). In an attempt to define outsourcing, Olusegun et al., (2013) indicated that it entails the process of contracting certain specialized services out to third-party experts so that the firm can focus on its core competencies. The common idea that runs through all the definitions of outsourcing is the contracting of activities to a third-party outside of the organization (Tannor et al., 2021; Ikediashi et al., 2015; Ikediashi, 2014). The end result of any outsourcing activity should be quality services that support the goals of the firm. (Kurdi et al., 2011; Amos & Gadzekpo, 2016).

The proponents of outsourcing have made a number of positive arguments about its use as an FM strategy. A number of scholars have argued that outsourcing has more cost-saving benefits than the in-house approach to FM. In a recent study on user satisfaction with FM in multi-tenanted shopping malls in Ghana, Tannor et al., (2021) suggested that some activities such as cleaning, catering, landscaping, waste management are non-core to the owners of the malls, thus, the resources and expertise to undertake them will come at a huge cost due to the need to train an in-house

team, procure FM materials and equipment and also pay salaries of the in-house team. In another study on FM in Nigerian hospitals, Ikediashi et al., (2015) found that outsourcing helps the hospitals to reduce the cost that will be associated with certain FM activities when carried out in-house. A study conducted on the advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing practices of Kazakhstan banks by Tayauova, (2012) found that using the right resources and techniques in FM has a huge impact on the cost that is incurred on the non-core activities of the banks. They further suggested that contracting specialist service providers with experience and resources in such services saves cost. In Amos and Gadzekpo (2016), the authors did a per-unit cost analysis between in-house and outsourced services in public polytechnics in Ghana and found that certain services that are non-core and seasonal to the polytechnics, when outsourced, result in lower per-unit costs than when undertaken in-house.

Another upside of outsourcing is that it makes it possible for a firm to dedicate its time and resources to its core activities to get better competitive advantages while a third party handles non-core services. For example, in Kroes and Ghosh (2010), it was found that services such as Information Technology, cleaning, maintenance, landscaping are non-core when it comes to the competencies of tertiary institutions, thus dedicating time and resources to these services may shift the focus from the core competency of providing quality education and such institutions managing these services in-house may lose out to others that focus on better academic services while outsourcing FM to third-party providers. In a similar study on institutions of higher learning, Amos and Gadzekpo, (2016) found that the reason why public polytechnics in Ghana outsource certain FM services is because undertaking such services in-house could divert management time from academic work which is the core competency to non-core services. In Ikediashi (2014) and Ikediashi *et al* (2015), this benefit of outsourcing was termed as 'strategic' because it made it possible for public hospitals in Nigeria to dedicate time, energy and resources to their core activity of quality healthcare delivery while non-core services such as cleaning, landscaping, catering etc are taken care of by third-party FM service providers. Essentially, the services that are seen as non-core to the firm are core to the specialist FM service provider, hence it will undertake it with all seriousness to give a good impression to the firm who is its client (Kurdi et al., 2011; Delen et al., 2016).

Closely related to strategic benefits are the flexibility that outsourcing offers the firm in terms of its ability to change services and service providers and the operational efficiencies it helps the firm to achieve. Outsourcing allows a firm to contract services providers for short-term services without difficulties because the staff of such service providers are recruited by their employers and can move to other jobs when the contract expires or is terminated without the firm having to worry about any issues (Amos and Gadzekpo, 2016; Tayauova, 2012). Studies suggest that the flexibility to change FM staff in an in-house strategy

situation is limited because the in-house team is employed by the firm and even in cases where such staff are incompetent, it may require time and financial resources to lay-off staff and recruit new staff (Kroes & Ghosh, 2010; Cotts et. al, 2010; Barrel & Baldry, 2003). Some scholarly works have also argued in favour of outsourcing on the basis that it increases productivity and operational efficiencies of the organisation because of the quality of FM services that the experienced third-party service provider undertakes (Amos & Gadzekpo, 2016; Ikediashi, 2014; Ikediashi et.al, 2015; Olusegun et.al, 2015; Delen, et al., 2016; Sapri, et al., 2016)

Though positive arguments have been made in support of outsourcing, there are contrary views to some of these arguments. According to an earlier study by Bettis et. al (1992), over-dependence on outsourced service providers can result in low market output for the firm in terms of its core activities especially when the contracted FM service provider fails to deliver services on time and to the required quality. Gilley and Rashid (2000) and Adhikari et al. (2019) supported the findings of Bettis et al., (1992) by suggesting that outsourcing promotes over-reliance on third-party FM service providers which in the end discourages innovation on the part of the firm because it is not encouraged to research into new ways of FM service delivery. According to Amos and Gadzekpo (2016) and Holmén et al., (2017), while the third-party FM service provider considers FM as its core activity and continuously evolves to find new and better ways of delivering such services, the firm it sees as a client remains in the dark and the end result is technological redundancy for such a firm as far as FM service delivery is concerned. In a recent study conducted on drivers of in-house FM decisions among multi-tenanted office building owners in Ghana, the findings of Tannor et al. (2022) further buttressed the views of previous scholars outsourcing kills innovation on the part of the sourcing firm. The study found that 88% of multi-tenanted shopping mall owners manage FM in-house to due to its ability to promote innovation over outsourcing.

Another critique towards outsourcing as an FM approach is that confidential and sensitive information about the firm may be shared with the service provider. For instance, Adhikari et al. (2019) claimed that Asian firms in competition with American firms in various products and services first started as FM service providers and it offered them the opportunity to learn client needs of the firms, they provided services for and later developed similar products and services. Closely related to the security of information is staff control. According to Amos and Gadzekpo (2016), most polytechnics in Ghana use in-house FM for most non-core services because it offers these institutions the opportunity to have control over staff and their activities to ensure that whatever they do is aligned to the overall goals of the polytechnics. Outsourcing these services would have made this difficult as staff of outsourced firms are not staff of the polytechnics in direct terms.

Despite the fact that scholarly works such as Amos & Gadzekpo (2016) and Tayauova (2012) found cost-saving benefits to be associated with outsourcing, others have contrasting views to this. In studies conducted on FM in Nigerian hospitals by Ikediashi et.al (2015), it was found that outsourcing meant that the hospitals have to pay service providers and the profit motive of these providers could lead to high service charges to the hospitals which will eventually translate into high operational cost. Similar findings have been made in Atkin & Brooks (2015); Cigolini, et. al (2009) and Olusegun et al., (2015). In a study on FM strategies used by Ghanaian public polytechnics, Amos and Gadzekpo (2016) found that third-party FM service providers consider the FM services they provide as a business and as such have operational costs to meet as well as profits to make. In order to reduce costs and increase their profit margins, Amos and Gadzekpo posited that outsourced service providers will pass on all or part of their costs and profits targeted to their clients in the form of higher service fees, thus using an in-house strategy will help reduce costs to the polytechnics.

2.2 Drivers of Outsourcing Decisions

Literature review on studies conducted on outsourcing across various industries and services has revealed several factors that drive the decisions to outsource a service. While most of this literature relates to other services rather than FM in the built-environment, the driving factors can be applied to the built-environment. From the literature reviewed, it was evident that the factors that drive outsourcing decisions are the benefits associated with the strategy and or the disadvantages firms find with the in-house strategy. From the broad literature reviewed on the drivers of FM, six themes emerged: Cost and Finance related; Strategy related; Quality related; Time related; Innovation related and Social related drivers.

2.3 The Delphi Technique

The Delphi technique as a research tool used today was developed during the cold war in the 1950s by the RAND Corporation to forecast and predict future military developments for the United States of America for a better strategy. This technique aims to build the most reliable consensus from the opinions of a group of experts about a subject through a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963). The Delphi technique is a survey method of research that aims to structure group opinion and discussion (Goodman, 1987). Experts use this strategy to anonymously communicate their opinions with other experts over repeated rounds in order to reach a consensus on a subject (Kavosi et al., 2018). According to Goodman (1987), anonymity, iteration with controlled feedback, statistical group response, and expert input are among the key aspects of the Delphi technique. The Delphi approach is extensively used for various reasons. For instance, because participants can be interviewed or surveyed individually, it can facilitate a “dialogue” between experts

from diverse geographical locations while preserving anonymity (Ziglio, 1995). This technique, according to Barret and Heale (2020), provides a flexible approach to gathering expert opinions on a topic of interest in an anonymous approach that encourages participants to be honest (Barrett and Heale, 2020). According to Fletcher (2014), conducting a series of anonymous surveys with experts can help mitigate the consequences of power relationships and prevent a single person or sector from dominating the group opinion. Despite the benefits associated with the Delphi technique, it has been criticized for being time-consuming as it requires participants to complete numerous rounds of questionnaires which might result in high drop-out rates, compromising the study's validity (Barrett & Heale, 2020; Kavosi et al. 2018; Fletcher, 2014). Furthermore, the use of this technique has been criticized by Barrett and Heale (2020) for its lack of clarity on what consensus entails.

Despite the criticisms, the Delphi technique has been used in several studies. In Kavosi et al. (2018), the technique was used to investigate the most important factors that influence outsourcing decision making for healthcare services. The researchers initially extracted 180 decision factors from 15 selected articles via a literature review and used a panel of 20 experts and pundits with related qualifications and at least 5 years' experience in the field of healthcare service outsourcing to conduct two rounds of surveys. In the first-round survey, the experts' responses reduced the factors to 29 sub-factors which were finally grouped into six most important factors in the second round: strategy, quality, management, technology, performance feature, and economy, as the most important factors affecting the outsourcing of services. due to the fact that a consensus was reached after the second round, the was no third exercise, thus, the study concluded that the decision to outsource healthcare services is a complex and multi-criteria decision-making process that should pay attention to certain key factors (strategy, quality, management, technology, performance feature and economics). In this study, the application of the Delphi technique-maintained anonymity for the respondents by giving them coded names such that their responses could not be known with their names.

In another study, Vos et al. (2018) used the Delphi technique to identify antecedents that influence perceived cleanliness via consultation with seven experts and twenty-four end-users in the field of FM (FM service providers, clients of FM service providers and consultants). They conducted Delphi exercises comprising of interviews, group discussion and questionnaire surveys with the experts in that order and after each exercise, feedback was gathered from the respondents before the next was conducted. As a first step, information was collected from the individual FM experts via face-to-face interviews. In a second step, the expert information was collated, analysed and resubmitted to them for feedback to ensure what was captured is what they said in the interviews. The third exercise was made up of a group discussion where the

experts were brought together to exchange ideas on the antecedents that influence perceived clinginess. The fourth exercise was a survey with the experts such as FM managers, consultants and construction experts.

The fifth and final exercise was the presentation of the factors agreed upon by the expert to the seven end-users to find out if they agree with the experts or not. After unanimity was obtained between the experts and users, no further exercise was conducted.

Prior to the studies conducted by Kovasi et al. (2018) and Vos et.al (2018), Zahoor et al. (2017) used the Delphi technique to identify and prioritize the factors that cause accidents in construction and how accidents can be reduced in Pakistan's construction sector. At the first stage, thirty-two contributory factors of accident causation were identified via a review of fifty-one articles on construction accidents and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with academic and industry experts. Two Delphi surveys were then conducted among the four respondent groups (clients, contractors, safety officials and academia) to determine and prioritise the most important factors. The three most significant factors identified were poor enforcement of safety rules, insufficient allocation of safety budget, and insufficient safety training.

What is observable from all these studies conducted using the Delphi method is that they sought to attain some consensus on issues that are largely unexplored, difficult to define, highly contextual and expertise specific, or future-oriented (Fletcher, 2014). The studies have also shown that there are various approaches to conducting Delphi studies and the duration of engagement with experts is dependent on how long it takes to reach a consensus. This study, therefore, uses the Delphi technique based on the evidence of its application in similar studies and the fact that the study sought to arrive at a consensus on factors that drive outsourcing decisions among shopping mall owners who have been involved in outsourcing FM in retail properties over the past five years.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample Selection

A preliminary search on multi-tenanted shopping malls in Ghana revealed twelve of such malls in three cities in Ghana (Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi). Out of the twelve malls, ten (83%) are located in Accra (Tannor et al., 2021; Doamekpor, 2016) while the remaining two are in Kumasi and Takoradi. Though the malls are twelve, the owners were ten because some owners owned more than one mall. For a multi-tenanted mall owner to be included in the study, informed consent was required. Preliminary information was sent out to the owners about the study and they were also informed of their participation in a Delphi exercise with other shopping mall owners and that at certain stages, their opinions may be seen by other respondents. Out of the ten mall owners who form the population, nine (90%) consented and were purposively sampled to take part in the study while the remaining one

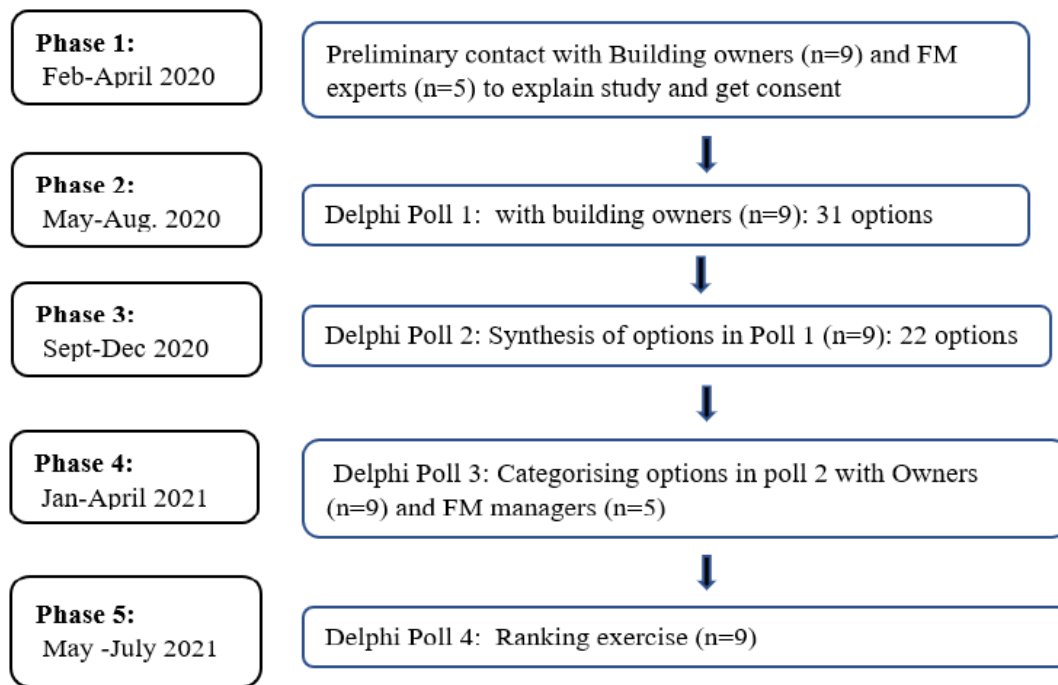


FIGURE 1.—A flow chart of how Delphi Technique was Used

opted out due to time constraints ($n=9$). The sampling criteria required that the mall should have multiple tenants, should have been outsourced and the owners and FM managers should consent to its inclusion in the study. Apart from the owners, the views of facility managers who have much experience in providing outsourced services were also deemed vital to building a consensus on the right factors, thus five managers with over at least 5 years' experience in managing FM in multi-tenanted retail properties were included ($n=5$).

3.2 The Delphi Methodology

Though the Delphi technique as found in literature is widely used to predict the future, it can be modified to conduct studies that do not seek to make predictions but to build a consensus from expert opinions about events as in (Basu, et al., 2015). In this study, our use of the Delphi technique was to build a consensus from nine ($n=9$) multi-tenanted shopping mall owners and five experienced outsourced facilities managers ($n=5$) in Ghana on the factors that drive outsourcing decisions for FM in the malls over the in-house strategy. With the lead author as a facilitator, the study was conducted using activities arranged in five phases with each phase comprising of a different set of activities towards a consensus (see Figure 1). The first poll (P1) was in the form of a survey questionnaire sent out via an online data collection tool (SurveyHeart) to all nine mall owners. It comprised of a single question “*Why did you Outsource FM in your building instead of managing it in-house?*”(respondents were asked to list as many factors that influenced their decisions as possible). In a second poll (P2), the individual responses in P1 were shared with all respondents, thus each

respondent received his/her responses from P1 and that of the other eight respondents. The P2 offered the respondents the opportunity to change their responses if they felt the need and also indicate if they agree with the opinions of others. At the end of P2, the views of the respondents were summarised into one report, thus resulting in 22 FM decision factors. The report was done in such a way that similar views were classified into one using the best words that describe them. In a third poll (P3), the 22 FM decision factors listed by the owners were further categorised under the six key drivers identified in the literature (See Table 1), thus, the facilitator placed each factor under the key FM decision driver that best defines it. This resulted in another summarised report which was sent out again via SurveyHeart to both owners and the five facilities managers to tick to accept that a deciding factor was placed under the right key-driver or reject and suggest where it should be placed. This was to ensure that the decision drivers are not wrongly categorised. The result of P3 was sent out in a final poll (P4) and the nine mall owners were asked to rank the importance of each driver in their outsourcing decisions using a 4-point Likert scale (*where 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree*).

Below is a summary of the Delphi methodology in Figure 1

4.0 Results

4.1 Drivers of Outsourcing Decisions Among Shopping Mall Owners in Ghana

Tables 2 shows the end result of four Delphi polls conducted among the nine shopping mall owners and five FM experts. The polls were conducted between May 2020 and July 2021 (see Figure 1). In Table 2, six composite

TABLE 1.—Drivers of Outsourcing

S/N	KEY DRIVERS	AUTHORS
1	Strategy Related	Bustinza et al., 2005; Ghodeswar et al., 2008; Kroes & Ghosh, 2010; Ikediashi et al., 2015; Ikediashi, 2014; Kurdi et al., 2011; Delen et al., 2016; Olusegun et al., 2015; Sapri, et al., 2016
2	Social Related	Brackertz & Kenly, 2002; Burdon & Bhalla, 2005; Alexander & Brown, 2006; Ghodeswar et al., 2008; Ikediashi et al., 2015; Ikediashi, 2014
3	Innovation Related	Abraham & Taylor, 1996; Deaver, 1997; Wagenberg, 2003; Ghodeswar et al., 2008; Kroes & Ghosh, 2010; Ikediashi et al., 2015; Ikediashi, 2014; Holmén et al., 2017
4	Cost / Financial Related	Wagenberg, 2003; Kroes & Ghosh, 2010; Hsiao et al., 2010; Burdon & Bhalla, 2005; Ghodeswar et al., 2008; Ikediashi et al., 2015; Ikediashi, 2014; Tayauova, 2012; Amos and Gadzekpo, 2016
5	Quality Related	Burdon & Bhalla, 2005; Ghodeswar et al., 2008; Kroes & Ghosh, 2010; Ikediashi et al., 2015; Ikediashi, 2014
6	Time Related	Gottfredson et al., 2005; Ikediashi et al., 2015; Ikediashi, 2014; Adhikari et al., 2019; Holmén et al., 2017

TABLE 2.—Delphi poll 4 (Ranking Exercise)

It is better to outsource FM in shopping malls because ...	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	I-M	G-M
1. Strategy Related											
Allows me to focus on core competences	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.00	3.52
It is a way to share risk associated with FM with the service provider	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	3.00	
Increases flexibility and profits	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3.56	
2. Social Related											
It is way of providing employment for Ghanaians since the service provider employs locally.	1	2	3	1	1	2	3	1	4	2.00	1.94
Helps improve corporate social responsibility	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	2	3	1.89	
3. Innovation Related											
It ensures reliability of FM services than when in-house teams are used	3	2	2	1	4	2	3	2	3	2.44	2.44
To improve customer relations	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	2.33	
Permits a quicker response to tenant needs than the in-house approach	1	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	2.56	
Allows access to products and new technologies in FM that an in-house team may not have	2	3	2	1	2	1	3	3	2	2.11	
Certain FM skills may not be available in-house but the experienced third-party vendor may have them at its disposal	2	2	3	2	4	2	3	2	3	2.56	
Helps reduce/ avoid investment in FM related assets and equipment	2	4	3	4	3	2	3	2	1	2.67	
4. Cost Related											
Helps reduce overall cost of business operations	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	2	3.33	3.03
Helps avoid the fixed cost associated with hiring an in-house team	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3.78	
It is a way to reduce capital investment into non-core activities	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	1	1.78	
It is a way of reducing/ avoiding investment in FM related assets/ equipment	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	2	3.22	
5. Quality Related											
It Facilitates better FM for improved performance to standards	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	2.78	3.00
It Leads to quality FM services to users	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	2	3.33	
It Results in better mutual trust with tenants on FM related issues than when done in-house	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3.44	
Outsourced service providers are more responsive in the delivery of FM services	3	4	3	2	2	2	1	3	2	2.44	
6. Time related											
It Ensures timely delivery of FM services	3	3	4	4	4	4	2	3	2	3.22	
It Helps increase speed to market for core activities	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1.44	2.30
There is limited time to assemble/acquire all the tools and skills needed to undertake FM in-house	1	1	3	4	3	2	2	3	1	2.22	

Scale :1 = Strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = Strongly agree

R = Respondent

I-M : Individual Average variable Score

G-M= Group Average variable Score

drivers identified in the first three Delphi-polls (See Appendixes 1-3) were ranked to identify the most important factor that influenced outsourcing decisions among the shopping mall owners. Using the Likert-scale developed, the average scores for each factor under the six main drivers was computed to obtain an Individual Mean (I-M) for the factor. This is to help appreciate the factor(s) that influenced a driver most. The average of the I-M for factors that make up a driver was then computed to determine the Group Mean (G-M) on the basis of the same scale. The G-M is a representation of the overall impact of a driver on the outsourcing decisions of multi-tenanted shopping mall owners in Ghana.

The results from (Table 5) shows that the reasons why owners of multi-tenanted shopping malls in Ghana outsourced FM to third party FM vendors are the strategic, cost-saving and quality-related advantages that outsourcing has over the in-house strategy. The results showed that strategic advantage is the most important reason why the shopping mall owners outsource FM (G-M of 3.52). With the strategy related drivers, all owners of the shopping malls strongly agree that outsourcing allows them to focus on their core competencies (attained an I-M of 4.0). The owners of the malls also strongly agree that it offers them the opportunity to be flexible in their business operations and increase profit margins (I-M of 4.0). With an I-M score of 3.0, all nine mall owners agreed that outsourcing gives them that strategic benefit of sharing certain risks associated with FM with third-party service providers. In overall terms, strategy related factors scored a G-M of 3.52, making it the main reason why FM in shopping malls is outsourced. The results also showed that cost saving advantages and the ability of third-party FM service providers to deliver quality services than in-house teams are the two other reasons why the mall owners outsourced (both scored 3.03 and 3.00 G-Ms respectively). The building owners agreed that the desire to reduce overall expenditure; avoid the cost that comes with paying salaries and other expenses for an in-house team; reducing expenses on non-core activities were the cost-related reasons why they outsourced the FM services. Apart from strategy and cost-related drivers, the owners considered the remaining drivers as having the least impact on their outsourcing decisions. Social related drivers obtained the least G-M (1.94), thus showing that owners of the malls do not consider the quest to be socially responsible (help provide jobs for Ghanaians and improve corporate social responsibility) as a reason why they outsourced. Innovation and time-related factors also scored below the 3.0 score needed to make them relevant, thus the owners were of the view that they could achieve any of the least scored factors using any approach to FM.

4.2 Discussion

There is empirical evidence to support the findings made in Table 5 concerning strategy, cost-related drivers and quality-related drivers. According to Prahalad & Hamel (2003), organisations mainly concentrate on their core

competencies and will outsource what they deem non-core in order to attain a strategic advantage. This is evident in this study because the highest driver scored by all owners was ‘The need to focus on core competencies. In Amos & Gadzekpo (2016), it was found that one reason why public polytechnics in Ghana outsource certain services in FM is because they want to be able to focus on their core competencies of providing quality higher education while diversifying risk that arises with FM. In a study on the impact of outsourcing on Supply Chain and firm performance, Kroes & Ghosh (2010) found that outsourcing services such as IT, cleaning, maintenance, landscaping which are not core activities of institutions give them a strategic advantage when it comes to the performance of their core competencies. In Ikediashi (2014) and Ikediashi et al., (2015), it was found that government-owned Nigerian hospitals outsource certain components of FM in order to focus on their core competencies of healthcare delivery. The findings made concerning the extent to which outsourcing in FM in these shopping malls opens a further discuss in the outsourcing vs in-house literature. In a recent study by Tannor et al. (2022), a sample of 65 owners of multi-tenanted office building owners showed that 88% of them manage FM in-house due to strategic advantages. A majority of these owners are already into the real estate sector and had the expertise to manage their own property. In this study, the same strategic advantages have been found with outsourcing in multi-tenanted shopping malls but the difference is that while the property owners in Tannor et al. (2022) had core competencies that relate to property management, majority of the shopping mall owners in this study have core competencies that do not relate to FM and as such found outsourcing to be of a strategic benefit that because it allows them focus on their core activities while FM is being taken care of by the third-party vendor. What makes outsourcing decisions among shopping malls in Ghana unique is that majority of these malls are owned by individuals / firms that have expertise in core competencies that do not relate to real estate. Therefore, outsourcing presents the best opportunity to own these malls as a way of diversifying their investments while focusing on their core competencies.

The study also found that the building owners were motivated to outsource because it leads to cost reduction and quality service delivery than the in-house approach. This has been established in previous studies. For instance, Catyuan (2012), Tayauova (2012) and Vaxevanoua and Konstantopoulou (2015), in their studies found that firms would outsource services that have higher cost implications when undertaken in-house. In Ikediashi and Okwuashi (2015), the outsourcing decisions of Nigerian property owners were found to be driven by the cost-saving advantages that come with engaging specialist third party vendors in FM. In a study on why Nigerian hospitals owned by the state outsource certain FM services, Ikediashi et al., (2015) found that the hospitals cut down significant costs by such outsourcing decisions. The findings resonate with that of Amos and Gadzekpo (2016) who posited that

in-house FM as an approach will result in a higher cost of transaction for certain services than when outsourced.

4.3 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to assess the drivers of outsourcing decisions among multi-tenanted shopping mall owners in Ghana. Twenty-two factors were identified, categorised into six groups based on their similarities and ranked. The entire process was done in four Delphi polls conducted with nine mall owners and five FM experts in outsourced service delivery. The results showed that outsourcing the FM services gives the owners strategic advantages that allow them to focus on their core competencies. It was also revealed that the shopping mall owners see outsourcing as cost-efficient and lead to quality service delivery than the in-house approach to FM.

The findings have both research implications as well as relevance to the industry. The findings have not only added to the existing body of literature in FM decisions but are the first of such to be conducted on multi-tenanted shopping malls in Ghana. This will also help in further research into other kinds of properties and FM approaches.

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APPENDIX 1.—Delphi poll 1

I outsourced FM in my building because. . .

I do not live in Ghana and I do not want to lose focus on my core business in South Africa
 It is more cost-effective than employing my own team to undertake FM
 The outsourced service provider has the best expertise and equipment to undertake FM.
 The service provider manages some properties for me in South Africa and the service charge is low.
 It is more profitable than using the in-house FM strategy
 The service provider is very reliable when it comes to responding to FM service concerns
 It is a way of providing employment for others in Ghana
 They work professionally to ensure that tenants are happy with FM services.
 It is cheaper when it is outsourced
 I am able to undertake other social responsibilities
 The outsourced service provider has people with the best skills, I do not want to employ and spend money to train an in-house team
 Doing things myself means I have to buy equipment and other materials for FM.
 I once had my own staff for FM but the tenants were complaining too much about how they delayed in doing most of the things. The Broll people are very fast in solving issues for tenants
 To gain access to products and new technologies in FM from Broll which is a renowned international FM expert
 I don't want to take the responsibility for monitoring the activities of an FM team on a daily basis
 The service providers provide quality services as required in our contract
 To avoid the fixed cost associated with hiring an in-house team
 It allows me to focus on my core activity of building construction and finish projects on time
 To reduce/ avoid investment in FM related assets/ equipment
 Most of the tenants have much trust in the outsourced service provider because they have been working with them in other malls before they rented mine
 They have their own manager who supervises them and makes sure they provide quick solutions all the time.
 To reduce capital investment into non-core activities
 To improve performance to standards
 I don't want to have anything to do with the risk managing staff, paying their salaries and social security
 Outsourced service providers provide quality services
 If I employ my own staff, they can sometimes steal funds and resources needed for managing the place
 I don't have the time to recruit people for all the FM services and employ them.
 The service provider takes responsibility for any bad events that happen during FM, if it is my own team, they can cover up things.
 When I had an in-house team, they were not serious, cleaning and others were poorly done.
 To ensure timely delivery of services
 The service provider is well known to be an expert in FM and tenants coming from abroad like their services
 The service provider knows how to relate with tenants well

APPENDIX 2.—Delphi poll 2

I outsourced FM in my building because. . .

Allows me to focus on core competences
 It is a way to share the risk associated with FM with the service provider
 Increases flexibility and profits
 Helps improve corporate social responsibility
 Ensures reliability of FM services than when in-house teams are used
 To improve customer relations
 Permits a quicker response to tenant needs than the in-house approach
 Allows access to products and new technologies in FM that an in-house team may not have
 Certain FM skills may not be available in-house but the experienced third-party vendor may have them at its disposal
 Helps reduce/ avoid investment in FM related assets and equipment
 Helps reduce the overall cost of business operations
 Helps avoid the fixed cost associated with hiring an in-house team
 It is a way to reduce capital investment into non-core activities
 It is a way of reducing/ avoiding investment in FM related assets/ equipment
 It facilitates better FM for improved performance to standards
 It leads to quality FM services to users
 It results in better mutual trust with tenants on FM related issues than when done in-house
 Outsourced service providers are more responsive in the delivery of FM services
 It ensures timely delivery of FM services
 It helps increase speed to market for core activities
 There is limited time to assemble/acquire all the tools and skills needed to undertake FM in-house
 It is a way of providing employment for Ghanaians since the service provider employs locally.

APPENDIX 3.—Delphi poll 3

I outsourced FM in my building because. . .

Strategy Related

Allows me to focus on core competences

It is a way to share the risk associated with FM with the service provider

Increases flexibility and profits

Social Related

It is a way of providing employment for Ghanaians since the service provider employs locally.

Helps improve corporate social responsibility

Innovation Related

Ensures reliability of FM services than when in-house teams are used

To improve customer relations

Permits a quicker response to tenant needs than the in-house approach

Allows access to products and new technologies in FM that an in-house team may not have

Certain FM skills may not be available in-house but the experienced third-party vendor may have them at its disposal

Helps reduce/ avoid investment in FM related assets and equipment

Cost Related

Helps reduce the overall cost of business operations

Helps avoid the fixed cost associated with hiring an in-house team

It is a way to reduce capital investment into non-core activities

It is a way of reducing/ avoiding investment in FM related assets/ equipment

Quality Related

It facilitates better FM for improved performance to standards

It leads to quality FM services to users

It results in better mutual trust with tenants on FM related issues than when done in-house

Outsourced service providers are more responsive in the delivery of FM services

Time related

It ensures timely delivery of FM services

It helps increase speed to market for core activities

There is limited time to assemble/acquire all the tools and skills needed to undertake FM in-house
