

“Urban Shoppers Behavior towards Shopping Malls With Reference To Coimbatore City”

T.Sudha¹ Dr.M.G.Saravananaraj²

¹ Research Scholar, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Thirunelveli.

² Professor, Department of Management studies, Mahendra Engineering College, Namakkal District.

Abstract: Shopping malls have seen an impressive growth in India during the past few decades. However, the malls have not been able to consistently provide a one stop destination to the consumers. With the prevailing condition, people have few time and they want to get all the things in a single place. This paper examines the Urban Shoppers Behaviour towards shopping malls and provides suggestion for improving the service of the shopping malls. The customers of Coimbatore City have been surveyed for the study. A sample of 100 respondents had been selected based on convenient sampling for the study. Based on the survey of urban shoppers, the study analyses the cognitive attributes of the shoppers towards attractiveness of shopping malls and intensity of shopping. The results of the study reveal that ambiance of shopping malls, assortment of stores, comfort and entertainment in the mall attracts higher customer traffic to the malls.

Keywords: Retail Sectors, Shopping malls, Shoppers behaviour, Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Retail Sectors:

The Indian retail industry has emerged as one of the most dynamic and fast-paced industries due to the entry of several new players. It accounts for over 10 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and around 8 per cent of the employment. India is the world's fifth-largest global destination in the retail space. Indian Retail Industry has immense potential as India has the second largest population with affluent middle class and rapid urbanisation. India's retail market is expected to increase by 60 per cent to reach US\$ 1.1 trillion by 2020, on the back of factors like rising incomes and lifestyle changes by middle class and increased digital connectivity. With the rising need for consumer goods in different sectors including consumer electronics and home appliances, many companies have invested in the Indian retail space in the past few months.

Shopping Malls

Today in Indian economy, the retail sector is very promising particularly organised retailing, it is spreading in the entire tier – I, II, III cities of India. Every year the organised retail outlets and malls are opening up in good numbers in all the cities of India. Malls are not merely points of sales for different retailers but it is a place where several brands build their equity in unison. Malls typically work on a catchment area philosophy and concentrate on providing convenience, variety and experience. Their main purpose is to focus on the target audience and increasing the footfalls. The number of shopping malls mushrooming across the country's landscape makes us wonder about the evergreen marketing opportunities and ever changing consumer purchasing patterns in India. The mall culture is still in nascent stages in India when compared to developed and other developing countries. Clearly, there's room for hundreds of more mega malls as the country continues its drive to become a super power economy with a huge middle class market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The last few years have witnessed an accelerating increase of shopping malls in the Indian retail sector. The evolution of malls happened not with a motive of evolving a new retail format but with the basic idea of developing a community center for people where they could converge for shopping, cultural activity and social interaction. Gradually malls increased in huge numbers that they replaced the street shopping centers and became shopping communities themselves. **(Feinberg et al, 1991)**.

The shopping centers which are larger could facilitate variety of shops and create pleasant environment for the shoppers, leading the shoppers to visit and stay longer **(Ooi & Sim, 2007)**. The shopping malls attract regular and tourist shoppers towards frequent shopping and most of the growing cities are patronizing the shopping malls compared to the downward market places **(Maronick, 2007)**.

The consumers may be attracted to a mall by feelings evoked by qualitative aspects of a particular amalgamation of stores rather than a variety of stores with a limited depth and width **(Meoti et al, 1991)**. This is because consumers in an overcrowded market, when have choice of variety and several shopping center options for multiple purpose trips, the need arises for a measure of attraction, which grasps the essence of consumer's liking and can also be practically applied. The stores which a customer shops in represent reinforcing stimuli that contribute to the attraction response towards the mall. It was termed as the reinforcement-affect model and an experimental study was conducted to prove that the more likeable stores that a mall housed, the more acceptable the mall was to the consumer.

One study conducted by **Ahmed et al. (2007)**, revealed six mall attractiveness factors from the shoppers' perspective: comfort, entertainment, diversity, mall essence, convenience, and luxury.

The time taken to reach the outlet and operating hour are one of the main criteria which the consumers look for while selecting a shopping outlet **(Kaufman, 1996)**.

OBJECTIVES

The broad objective of this study is to find out the Shoppers behaviour towards shopping mall. The specific objectives of this study are given below:

1. To study the factors influencing customers' choice of Shopping Malls in Coimbatore.
2. To analyze the level of satisfaction of customers towards functioning of shopping Malls.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive research design has been adopted for the present study. Descriptive study is a fact-finding investigation with adequate interpretation. It focuses on particular aspects or dimensions of the problem studied. It is designed to get the descriptive information and provide information and formulation of more sophisticated studies. Through the structured questionnaire, primary information was accumulated. The questionnaire was organized after the satisfactory previous review of literature and for pre-testing. Mass media such as journals and dailies, magazines, text books, other published and unpublished sources of information, internet web resources and the secondary data were utilized for this study. Convenience sampling method is dictated only by the researcher's convenience and not to other considerations (Srivastava 2008). The population under study comprised urban shoppers towards shopping malls in Coimbatore city. This study is not without its limitations. First of all, the number of respondents selected is very small. Only 100 respondents have been surveyed. Moreover, here only the customers of Coimbatore City Shopping Mall have been surveyed.

DATA ANALYSIS

I. Factors influenced in selection of shopping mall

S.No.	Factors	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	RANK
1.	Variety of stores in Mall	30.2	1
2.	External Ambience of store	23.5	17
3.	Location of Mall	24.4	14
4.	Well marked aisle directories	23.4	18
5.	Clean restrooms	22.6	19
6.	Pleasant shopping environment	25.2	10
7.	Range of merchandise	26.3	5
8.	Finding nice display of merchandise	25.3	9
9.	Travel time and distance	25.5	8
10.	Availability of International Range products	24.9	11
11.	Availability of branded products	23.9	16
12.	Availability of new, latest and unique products	26.3	6
13.	Convenient shopping hours	26.3	6
14.	Being able to comparison shop	24.9	11
15.	Attractive design and décor of the mall.	24.4	14
16.	Leisure and Entertainment services	27.5	2
17.	Parking facilities	26.7	4
18.	Responsiveness of the staff	24.9	11
19.	Variety of Food courts	27.4	3

After a careful analysis on the literature, 19 factors were listed out and responses were collected in a 5 point rating scale. Weighted average ranking was used to identify the factors that most influenced in selection of shopping mall. Variety of stores in Mall, Leisure and Entertainment services, Variety of Food courts, Parking facilities, Range of merchandise, Availability of new, latest and unique products, Convenient shopping hours are some of the factors that influenced the shoppers in selecting the shopping mall.

II. Shoppers satisfaction at shopping mall

S.No.	Factors	MEAN SCORE
	Hygiene and Infrastructure	
	Drinking Water facilities	2.85
	Restroom Facilities	2.69
	Upkeep and cleanliness of the shopping center	3.45
	Ventilation facilities	3.65
	Location of the Shopping Mall	3.81
	Adequacy of the space in the shopping center	3.74
	Parking facilities	3.65
	Mall map /guide	2.95
	Clock room for the belongingness	2.02
	Physical surroundings of the shopping mall	2.98
	Layout of the shopping mall	3.21
	Uninterrupted Power Supply	2.09
	Play stations for kids	2.01

	Complaint facility	2.91
	ATM Machines	3.98
	Wi-Fi Connectivity	3.25
	Security systems / CCTV	3.87
	Store Consciousness	
	Availability of the all Products under one roof	3.97
	Services Quality of mall stores	3.74
	Accepting defective products	2.73
	Facility for using credit / debit card	4.21
	Billing procedure	4.11
	Prices of the products	3.65
	Quality of the products	3.45
	Free door delivery	2.74
	Store Design	3.65
	Space to move	3.77
	Employee Consciousness	
	Hospitality of the Reception Employees	3.65
	Availability of mall employees	2.91
	Efficiency and Knowledge of Employees in mall	2.65
	Response of services when approached	2.46
	Comfort With Entertainment	
	Good food court	4.52
	Multiplex	4.61
	Good environment of the mall	4.01
	Lifts/Escalators	4.45
	Music in the mall at an appropriate volume	3.97
	Emergency Service Conscious	
	First aid and Special need assistance	2.91
	Ambulance services	2.87
	Lost and found	2.10

To find out the satisfaction level of the urban shoppers at shopping mall, average score analysis was performed and those factors which scored mean value more than 3 are considered to be satisfied and those which scored less than 3 are the areas identified for improvements.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Variety of stores in Mall, Leisure and Entertainment services, Variety of Food courts, Parking facilities, Range of merchandise, Availability of new, latest and unique products, Convenient shopping hours are some of the factors that influenced the shoppers in selecting the shopping mall.
- Food court, Multiplex, environment of the mall, Lifts / Escalators and other areas are found to more satisfactory for the shoppers.
- Clock room facility, play areas for kids, drinking water and rest room are some of the facilities that customer feels to be improved.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

- Travel time and distance is an important criteria for customer when choosing shopping mall. Today's customers are very busy and they do not have enough time. Therefore, the shopping malls should be located in a convenient place for their target customer.
- Today, customers go to malls not only for shopping, but also to hang out with friends and family. As a result, if the malls arrange better facilities, it will help them to differentiate themselves from competitors.
- Customers go to malls to watch cinemas, recreation for children etc. Many malls are now adding cine complex, amusement park as a differentiation strategy. This study also highlights that customers strongly agree with entertainment which is an important variable that develops positive attitude towards malls.
- The overall service of the malls should be good to develop satisfaction level among the target customers. Today's customers want good services from wherever they go.

CONCLUSION

The study has examined the factors which appear to drive mall visiting behaviour. The results of the study reveal that the Variety of stores in Mall, Leisure and Entertainment services, Variety of Food courts, Parking facilities etc. were some important consideration while deciding to visit it. The products offered in the malls were generally perceived to be branded and superior quality which in turn leads to the general perception of the malls to be expensive when compared to the local markets in Coimbatore. However, with the upcoming mall culture in India there had been change in this perception. Mall marketers had to change this perception by appropriate communication strategies and promotional tactics. There are various combinations of media like newspapers and radio advertising to promote the mall offerings. Moreover, age as a factor had an important bearing on the behaviour towards all the malls. With additional research, this information may help to develop a unique identity for the mall. The malls are an emerging phenomenon in the Indian retail scenario and they have been pleasantly accepted by people from all age groups across classes. The mall concept was not transparent in the minds of the shoppers. It is very crucial for the mall managers to help the shoppers differentiate between malls and other variant formats in the retail industry.

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