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A Study on Consumer Awareness, Preference and Attitude towards Mall Culture with Reference to Coimbatore District

Mr.K. Sasi Kumar[a] and Dr.M. Sadika Sultana[b]
[a]*Research Scholar (Bharathiar University)&Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Tamilnadu College of Engineering, Coimbatore.*
[b]*Associate Professor & Research Supervisor, PG& Research Department of Management Science, Park"s College, Tirupur*

ABSTRACT: The growth of integrated shopping malls, retail chains and multi-brand outlets is evidence of consumer behavior being favorable to the growing organized segment of the business. Space, ambience and convenience are beginning to play an important role in drawing customers. Malls, which are now anchored by large outlets such as Westside and Lifestyle and are resided by a lot of Indian and international brands, are also being seen as image benchmarks for communities. Various factors on which the Indian consumers base their choice of going to the shopping mall or the unorganized markets have been analyzed in this research. This study focuses on the shopping mall preferences of consumers, their attitude and the awareness about the existence of malls in the district. Survey method and convenient sampling had been adopted for collection of data. The major referrals are friends, and most consumers consider time as factor, major respondents are satisfied with the brands available.

KEYWORDS: Shopping malls, mall culture, awareness and attitude.

INTRODUCTION

A shopping mall is typically, a shopping complex connected by walkways. It provides shopping as well as entertainment options to the target consumers. It generally contains one anchor store, which consumes twenty five percent of its retail space. In addition a mall contains specialty stores for clothes, accessories, home needs, books, as well as food court, multiplexes and entertainment zones. The factors that affect store choice and draw customers to the shopping centre include space, ambience, and convenience and moreover an array of choice under one roof.

Brookefields is the first of its kind retail project in the city of Coimbatore. With several anchor retail outlets, leading local, national and international brands, hyper markets, food court, fine dining, family entertainment centre, multiplex, business centre, health club, hotel and parking all under one roof, it is the ultimate shopping and entertainment experience. The mall promises something for everyone with its bewildering range of products spread over an area of about 4, 50,000 sq. ft. Its great location and connectivity make it a convenient destination for locals and tourists alike.

Entertainment and dining options abound, with a gaming park and a food court. A 70 room boutique hotel has been planned within the mall for the convenience of tourists. The hotel also has other facilities like swimming pool, roof garden, health club and banquet halls. Wi-Fi Connectivity, ATM, money exchanger, mall gift vouchers and customer loyalty programs ensure an enhanced shopping experience. Brookefields with its great value proposition for shoppers and retailers is all set to change the retail scene of Coimbatore forever.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the customer attitude towards shopping malls.
- To measure the level of awareness about malls.
- To study the preference of consumers towards malls.
- To assess the consumer opinion about marketing strategies employed by malls.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kenhove et al. (1999), reported that the choice of store by the consumer was differentiated by the nature of the task that had to be executed by him. The different tasks that were described by the respondents included urgent purchases, large quantity purchases, difficult job, regular purchases and getting ideas.

Sinha and Banerjee (2004), commented that store choice behaviour of a consumer is considered a cognitive procedure. It is believed to be a process of information processing as the brand choice or any purchase decision is considered. It is very similar to the decision of making a brand choice except the fact that store choice is influenced by the location factor, which does not need to be considered when making a selection of brands.

Satendra Bhardwaj, Rajeev Sharma and Jyoti Agarwal reported that customer perception about shopping malls and suggesting way to improve its market share in sales through customer perception about private labels.

Sproles & Kendall (1986) stated that identified the characteristics among consumers –helps to profile an individual consumer style, educate consumers about their specific decision making characteristics, and counsel families on financial management‖.

Christiansen, et al. (1999) examined the effects of mall _entertainment value‘ from the consumers‘ perspective on mall profitability.

Wirtz and Mattila (2001) argued in their study that even if the service environment is perceived as attractive, a mismatch between the desired and actual arousal levels is expected to lead to low levels of pleasure.

According to **Assael's Model of Store Choice(1995, p.630)** consumers‘attitudes towards and perceptions of the store‘s image and attributes, as well as the influence of in-store stimuli, influence patronage behaviour. Variables such as personal characteristics, information sources and store attributes could determine store patronage **(Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1992b).**

Reid and Brown(1996), proposes that the customers orientation towards shopping may shed light into the way he/she indulge in shopping and it may also tell the reason why he/she chooses a particular retail store (including shopping malls).

Research on shopping mall behaviour indicates, amongst others, that age groups differ regarding preferences for mall attributes (Anderson, Burns & Reid, 2003); entertainment available could influence mall choice (Wilhelm & Mottner, 2005) and décor of a mall is important for apparel consumers (Baker & Haytko, 2000).

Lee, Ibrahim & Hsueh-Shan, (2005), reported that certain retailer factors influence male shoppers enjoyment, namely shopping-centre features, ancillary facilities, value-added features and special events.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The survey method was been employed to study the customer awareness about existence of malls and the attitude towards purchasing at shopping malls. Datas were collected from the potential customers visiting Broke fields, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu.

DATA COLLECTION

The study includes both primary & secondary data. A structured questionnaire was issued to collect the primary data from the customers of Brookefields Coimbatore. Secondary data was collected from the reports, brouchers, magazines and website.

POPULATION & SAMPLING FRAME

A convenience sampling method was used to obtain the data from the customers.

SAMPLE DESIGN

A Sample of 275 respondents was chosen for data collection. It was observed at the end of the month (data collected) nearly 25 questionnaires were incomplete. They were deleted which gave a samples of 250 respondents in total.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools like percentage analysis, Garrett ranking.

LIMITIATIONS

The data has been collected from the respondents of Coimbatore city. The results are location specific and therefore the conclusions drawn may not be applicable to a different district having different socio-economic conditions. The study relating to awareness of mall culture is entirely based on the responses given by the respondents. The views of the respondents relating to perception, satisfaction and expectation may be based.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Demographic variables (N=250)

S.no	Demographic variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
	Age (in years)	15-25	90	36
		25-35	55	22
		35-45	40	16
		45-55	30	12
		55 and above	35	14
2.	**Gender**	Male	130	52
		Female	120	48
3.	**Education**	Intermediate	30	12
		Undergraduate	60	24
		Post graduate	70	28
		M.Phil	35	14
		Ph.D	25	10
		Others	40	16
4.	**Current Occupation**	Student	70	28
		Employed	75	30
		Entrepreneur	35	14
		Retired	30	12
		Others	40	16
5.	**Income (in Rs.)**	Below 10,000	15	6
		10001-20000	40	16
		20001-30000	45	18
		30001-40000	50	20
		40001-50000	45	18
		50001 & Above	55	22

Findings:

The above table shows that shopping Malls are mostly visited by age group of 15-25 followed by 25-35 age groups. The reason is most visitors are college students and families. Malls visited by majority of employed persons (30 %), followed by students (28%).Income group of Rs.50, 000 and above plays dominant role (22%).

Table 2: Consumer attitude, Preferences and Awareness about malls (N=250).

Table 2.1:

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of visit	Weekly	70	28
	Monthly	125	50
	occasionally	55	22

Findings:

- The above table shows that 50% of respondents visit the mall monthly, 28% visit weekly.

Table 2.2:

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Accompanying person	Friends	75	30
	Colleagues	45	18
	Neighbors	45	18
	Alone	50	20
	others	35	14

Findings:

- The above table shows that 30% of respondents prefer to visit the mall with their friends, followed by purchase with neighbours and colleagues.

Table 2.3: Influencers for visiting mall.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Influencer	Influenced	90	36
	Not influenced	70	28
	Cognitive	50	20
	self	40	16

Findings:

- The above table shows that only 36% of respondents visit the malls by advertising influence and others have neutral or nil influence.

Table 2.4: Major influencer to visit the mall.

Sl. No.	Factors	Mean Scores	Rank	% Position	Score Scale (100)	PRS
1	Friends	9.98	1	4.17	85	95.83
2	colleagues	8.84	2	12.50	73	87.50
3	kids	7.30	3	37.50	56	62.50
4	Family members	6.3	4	54.17	48	45.83
5	Myself	6.03	5	62.50	44	37.50
6	Neighbors	4.84	6	79.17	34	20.83
7	Others	3.18	7	95.83	17	4.17

PRS –percentage ranking

Findings:

The above table shows that the major influencers for visiting malls are friends and colleagues**.**

Table 2.5: Showing the purchasing budget of respondents.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Purchasing budget	0-1000	35	14
	1001-2000	55	22
	2001-3000	50	20
	3001-4000	45	18
	4001 & Above	65	26

Findings: 6

- The above table shows that 26 % of respondents have purchase budget of Rs. 4001 & above followed by 1001-2000.

Table 2.7: Respondents plan for purchase.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Major item purchased	Apparels	25	10
	Food products	30	12
	Jewelry	15	6
	Cosmetics	20	8
	Home appliance	35	14
	Health care	20	8
	grocery	35	14

	Gift & Toys	**15**	**6**
	others	**30**	**12**
	All the above	**25**	**10**

Findings:

- The above table shows that 14 % of respondents opt home appliance and groceries in their planned purchase.

Table 2.8 : Showing the visiting time of respondents.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Time of visit	**Morning**	**35**	**14**
	afternoon	**65**	**26**
	Evening	**150**	**60**
No. of times visited	**0-10**	**95**	**38**
	11-20	**70**	**28**
	21-30	**55**	**22**
	30 & Above	**30**	**12**

Findings:

- The above table shows that majority 60% of respondents prefer evening time to visit the malls. Majoriy are new customers i.e., 38% of respondents.

Table 2.9: Showing the respondents main centre of attraction in mall.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Main centre of magnetism in mall	**Entertainment**	**45**	**18**
	Food & beverages	**60**	**24**
	Variety of shops	**65**	**26**
	Others	**45**	**28**
	All the above	**35**	**14**

Findings: The above table shows that major customers feel food & beverages, variety of shops is the main centre of magnetism in mall.

Table 2.10: Showing the customer feeling towards mall.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Customer perception of one stop shop	Agree	120	48
	Disagree	80	32
	Neutral	50	20

Findings: The above table shows that major customer feel mall as one stop shop.

Table 2.11: Factors contributing to customer satisfaction.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfaction level	Brands	65	26
	Price	35	14
	Service	35	14
	convenience	50	20
	Time factor	45	18
	Parking facility	20	8

Findings:

- The above table shows that Major respondents are satisfied with the brands available.

Table 2.12: Showing the effective media for advertisement.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Effective media for advertisement	TV	65	26
	Radio	25	10
	Newspaper	45	18
	Magazines	40	16
	pamphlets	30	12
	Others	45	18

Findings:

- The above table shows that 26 % of respondents feel that Television will be effective media for advertisement.

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Table 2.13: Effectivive of promotional strategy for malls.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Effective promotional strategy	Price discounts	35	14
	Offers	80	32
	gifts	65	26
	Kids entertainment	20	8
	others	50	20

Findings:

The above table shows that 32% of respondents suggest offers as the effective promotional strategy, followed by gifts (26%).

Table: 2.14: Respondents behavior to suggest mall purchase to others.

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Mall reference	Yes	165	66
	no	85	34

Findings:

- The above table shows that majority of respondents 66% suggest the mall purchase to others and 34% of respondents do not suggest.

FINDINGS

The majority of the consumers of Brookefields is the younger population with high potent purchasing behavior. Different occupational habits were influenced by different medium/media of advertisement that has in due course influenced their impulsive buying behaviour. Majority of the customer surveyed prefer shopping once in month and majority of the customers‘ surveyed prefer to spending 1-2 hours in the Brookefields at Coimbatore in invariably of their occupational status, except the business class customers, who prefers to spend less than an hour. ·It has been observed that majority of the impulsive buyers prefer to spend between Rs.4001–Rs.5000 on their shopping and 14 per cent of items under planned purchase were Home appliances and groceries. It has been inferred that quality, brand and price are primary factors have influence the modern day customers to shop at malls like Brookefields. The major success secret of retail business in India is its discount offers provided to the customers on season and off the seasons periods. ·

SUGGESTIONS

Generally the customer‘s expect more and more satisfaction in all aspects, each and every time they step into a store. In today retail market the organized retailing could grow tremendously provided they adopt the right marketing strategies and customer attraction techniques. Retail managers must also assure product variety and availability of new products to enhance customer loyalty.

Development of incentives for customers to tell associates and friends about the value of your products or services. An endorsement from them is more effective than any amount of advertising-and it is much cheaper. Visual management should be improved because it is often seen that the people come to the store to browse rather than buy. In store Promotions for the people visiting the store should be encouraged to visit the store again and again. So it is necessary to delight the shoppers with the shopping experience. It has been observed in international shopping malls that there are in-store promotions like lucky draws for entrants surprise winners and so on at random.

CONCLUSION

Considering the location factor, majority of the respondents did not care about the proximity of the shopping malls from their homes. The reason for this probably would be that there are only a few shopping malls currently and all the consumers want to experience this new way of shopping, therefore, they do not mind even if they have to travel a long distance to visit the shopping mall occasionally. However, few of the interviewees associated their decision of their shopping destination with respect to its proximity from their home.

The Retail Industry in India has come forth as one of the most dynamic and fast paced industries with several players entering the market. But all of them have not yet tasted success because of the heavy initial investments that are required to break even with other companies and compete with them. The India Retail Industry is gradually inching its way towards becoming the next booming industry. At this juncture the Indian retail market is continuously increasing, on the back drop that middle class households purchasing power are rising as there is increase in the total income as well as the change in their tastes and preferences towards modern retail outlets. The retail players to be able to understand the extent in with different factors affect in converting the impulse buyers to compulsive buyers.

Shopping malls provide many facilities under one roof but lack in providing goods at acheap price. This makes Local markets more famous among the Common Man as they provide largely the same goods at a competitive price.‖A very mixed response was obtained when the consumers were questioned about the frequency of their mall visits for the purpose of shopping. Few of the respondents visited only the mall whenever they would move out with the intention of shopping. Others visited a mixture of both, which must be dependent on various factors. From the responses it can be analyzed that the customers who initially visited only the unorganized markets with the shopping motive in mind has also started to consider the malls for specific product categories or brands. This again indicates a gradual change in the consumer preference for malls.

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