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DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND VISIT PATTERN OF MALL CUSTOMERS IN UDAIPUR

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ABSTRACT

The intensity of rivalry in the retail market is high and demands a need to manage shopping malls appropriately and understand the general consumer behavior during visits at a shopping mall in terms of their main reasons for visiting the mall and attitude in order to attract shopping mall visitors to visit these malls. The purpose of the study aimed to determine consumers' main reasons for visiting the shopping mall and their frequency of visits at the mall. The study was conducted in three malls in Udaipur city. A sample of 90 customers (30 from each mall) was selected for the present study. Questionnaire and interview techniques were used for data collection. Frequency and percentage were used for analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed that the consumers visit the shopping mall with certain reasons in mind and the frequencies of visits of these consumers vary. The majority of the respondents were females (55.55%), in the age group 20-30 years (46.66%), had an annual family income 2-5 lakhs, engaged in private job, graduates and post-graduates equally, single (unmarried) and belonged to nuclear family (70%) Majority of the respondents visited the mall once a month (31.11%) or once a fortnight (24.44%) to watch a movie (60%), for shopping (51.11%) or visit an eatery (40%). Mostly the respondents visited the mall on weekends (55.55%), spent 3-4 hours in the mall (53.33%), preferred car (44.44%) or 2-wheeler (28.88%) for a visit and were accompanied by friends (42%) or family (28.88%). This study contributes to the current literature and provides valuable information to retailers and shopping mall managers, with regard to marketing communications and marketing strategies that aim to increase the frequency of visits of consumers at the shopping mall.

KEYWORDS: Retailing, Shopping Mall, Malls, Customer

INTRODUCTION

Shopping malls play an important role in the retail sector and these malls have been in existence for more than 90 years. They have adapted to new designs and tenant varieties to meet the changes in consumers' needs, desires, values, and lifestyles (Telci, 2013). Shopping malls are characterized as venues that provide a comfortable shopping experience and have turned into social centers and recreational and entertainment facilities for various activities (Telci, 2013).

The retailing sector in India has undergone significant transformation in the past 10 years. Retailing is gradually inching its way towards becoming the next boom industry. Organized retailing is changing the whole concept of shopping in terms of consumer buying behavior. Shopping today is much more than just buying- it is an experience itself. Over the last few years, retail has become one of the fastest growing sectors in the Indian economy. Traditionally, Indian retail sector has been characterized by the presence of a large number of small-unorganized retailers. However, over the last half decade, the Indian consumer market has seen a significant growth of various retail formats such as malls, supermarkets, department stores, discount stores, etc. Mall culture in India has grown with an incredible pace. The malls have become a sensation in terms of changing the lifestyle of Indians- the way they are shopping and socializing. With this transition taking place, the shopping behavior of customers is likely to change as these formats were not in existence in the country until recently.

Many big cities in India have received enormous economic and social growth from these malls making them one of the most major cities not only in India but around the world as well.

The liberalization policy pursued by the Indian government in retail sector has fuelled the growth of malls in different regions of the country. Private companies are investing large amounts of money to design and create malls to provide tangential benefits of shopping and provide consumers' access to global brands. (Khare, 2011)

Saturation in the growth and number of malls in the metropolitan cities has forced mall operators to explore options in Tier II and III cities. The smaller cities are attractive due to low rental and operating costs (KPMG, 2009). The slowdown experienced by Indian economy in the last few years has affected the retail industry. The malls in bigger cities experienced decrease in consumer footfall and diminishing sales. This led to a surge of mall investment activity in the Tier II cities of the country. The cheaper real estate prices, low entry costs and availability of space in Tier II and III cities offer excellent investment opportunities compared to bigger cities (Dwivedi, 2010). In the last decade, the smaller cities have witnessed a change in consumption preferences of the consumers (KPMG, 2009; Dwivedi, 2010). Ernst and Young state that in the last two years growth in the number of malls in smaller cities has been 55 percent compared to 26 percent in the metropolitan cities (Sinha, 2010). The arrival of malls in smaller cities of India promises to transform shopping and recreation in these cities. The assortment of services and products, spatial ambience and amusement facilities target the 'shopper-tourist' (Robertson, 1995). This can be seen in the case of a small city like Udaipur. With an expected growth in the retail sector and the tourism industry riding on the high wave, the city has become the perfect ground for investment prospects and many companies are trying to cash upon the opportunity. They are understanding the need of the present age and the demand of the growing tourists; comprehending the changing lifestyle and the increasing affluence of the society; realizing the potential of Udaipur and the need of planned retailing and hence they are bringing a new era that is evident with the current projects.

Shopping malls have become a part of a contemporary consumer shopping, culture (Van Eden, 2006) where the diverse shopping behavioral needs are addressed (Ahmed *et al*., 2007). Malls presage more than stores and selling (Gottdiener, 1995) and promote a different lifestyle and buying phenomenon. Shopping mall customers visit shopping malls not only for searching for particular products, but they also view these visits as an entertainment activity that provides fun and pleasure from the shopping experience (Kim *et al.*, 2011). Shopping mall visitors tend to engage in various activities during shopping malls visits (Farrag *et al*., 2010).

Thus, it becomes vital to understand the visitors' reasons for visiting shopping malls and activities they engage in during their mall visits. Profiling customers by their choice of promotional mix will provide more meaningful ways to identify and understand various customer segments and to target each segment with more focused marketing strategies. Understanding the consumers' reasons for visiting shopping malls could assist in the segmentation of these consumers, which will provide valuable input into the development of marketing policy to attract more customers to visit the shopping malls, and further increase their frequency of visit at the mall.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Gilboa (2009), shopping mall visitors can visit shopping malls to participate in mall-initiated activities as part of the entertainment. These entertainment activities include children's programs and cultural events. Consumptive activities are activities that involve visiting the coffee-shops/restaurants, gaining new knowledge regarding new products and trends, and window shopping.

Kuruvilla and Joshi (2010) added that, within a shopping mall, shopping mall visitors may be categorized into groups that differ in their shopping reasons such as browsing, purchasing clothing, shoes, accessories and gifts. Kuruvilla and Joshi (2010) pointed that different shopping mall visitors patronize the shopping mall and can have an interest in different groups of products. Some may have purposeful shopping activities like having refreshments or watching a movie, while others may visit the objective of buying.

Farrag *et al*. (2010) indicated that window shopping involves a situation where a shopping mall visitor browses or goes through window displays to feel part of shopping mall culture and environment. This browsing on window displays allows shopping mall visitors to keep track of fashions and keep themselves informed of the latest changes in the retail market. Shopping mall visitors also visit restaurants and coffee shops in the shopping mall just to have a cup of coffee or for lunch. In addition, family members can also go to these restaurants together for family bonding (Farrag *et al*., 2010).

Telci (2013) examined the shopping motives of shopping mall visitors living in Turkey to understand the shopping mall consumer small patronage behaviour.

Khare (2011) also examined the influence of hedonic and utilitarian shopping motives on shopping mall consumers' attitudes towards shopping malls in the smaller cities of India, and the results revealed that shopping mall consumers visit malls for both hedonic and utilitarian shopping motives. In addition, Farrag *et al*. (2010) investigated utilitarian and hedonic motives using ethnographic methods to establish an understanding of the shopping mall experience as perceived by Egyptian shopping mall visitors.

In United States of America (USA), Jackson *et al*. (2011) investigated the extent to which consumers' attitudes towards shopping mall attributes and shopping value derived from a shopping mall visit differ across gender and generational cohorts.

Chebat *et al*. (2010) in Canada examined shopping mall attributes such as access to the shopping mall, shopping mall image and store atmosphere that may be used to draw shopping mall visitors to the shopping malls.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Udaipur city of Rajasthan state. There are three shopping malls in Udaipur city, namely RK Mall, Panchvati by Kothari Group, which opened in 2007, Celebration Mall, Bhuwana by Advance India Projects Ltd. (AIPL) which opened in 2011 and the Lake City Mall, Ashok Nagar by RSG Group which opened in 2012. All the three malls comprised the sampling units and were visited to select the sample for data collection.

Customers were surveyed using ‘Time location cluster sampling’ technique. This was necessitated by the fact that most of the malls have different customer segments visiting at different times at different locations in the mall.

For examples housewives visit the malls mostly between 11.00am to 3.00pm, students from 4.00pm to 7.00pm and families from 7.00pm to 10.00pm. Similarly, different locations in a mall are visited by different segments. For example, grocery area is visited by mostly middle age people, movies again by families, music shops by the young.

The customers in the shopping mall were intercepted randomly at different locations (multiplex, food court, departmental store, apparel store, etc.) and different time of the day (such as morning, afternoon, evening) so as to include all types of customer segments. The customers, thus intercepted were screened to select the regular customers, i.e. those who have visited a shopping mall of Udaipur five times in the past one year. After screening, the data were collected from the customers. A total of 90 customers comprised the first sample for the study with 30 customers selected from each of the three malls. Questionnaire technique was used for getting information from customers. Frequency and percentage were used for analysis of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Gender

The data in Figure. 1 highlight that among the visitors in the mall more than half (55.56%) of them were females, whereas 44.44 per cent of respondents were males.

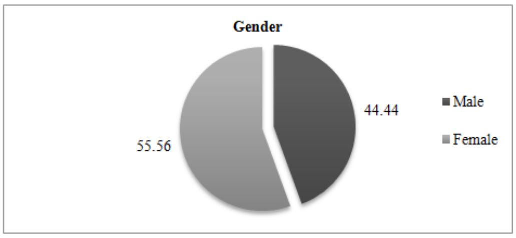

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Age

As depicted in Figure. 2, maximum percentage (46.67%) of the respondents belonged to the age group 20-30 years and 17.78 percent were in the age group 30-40 years. Only 2.22 per cent customers were above 60 years. This data reflects that the malls were most frequently visited by the 20-30 years age group. These young adults are impulsive buyers, for whom shopping from the malls is more of a status symbol. Another reason for this high percentage of footfalls from this category can be their sudden spurt in disposable income, which has seen a considerable rise in India in the recent past.

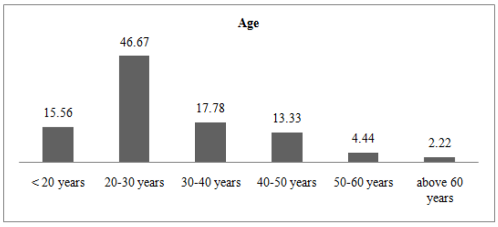

Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Age

Annual Family Income

The Table 1 also illustrates that maximum respondents (31.11%) had an annual family income between 2-5 lakh and 26.67 per cent respondents had family income more than 10 lakh. Least (17.78%) respondents had an annual family income less than 2 lakh.

Profession

According to Table 1, mostly the respondents (24.44%) who visited the shopping mall were engaged in the private sector service followed by businessmen (17.78%) and students (16.67%).

Educational Qualifications

It is evident from Table 1 that an equal percentage (33.33%) of visitors to the mall were graduates and post-graduates and 15.56 per cent and 13.33 per cent were diploma holders and 12^{th} pass respectively.

Marital Status

As per the data in Table 1, more than half of the respondents (55.56%) visiting a mall were single whereas 44.44 per cent of the respondents were married.

Family Type

The data in Table 1 indicate that the majority (70%) of the respondents who visited the mall belonged to nuclear family whereas 30 per cent respondents belonged to joint family. Further probe into the investigation reveals that according to some respondents since there are more responsibilities in a joint family and less time is available, therefore there are a low percentage of visitors from joint families.

The results were supported by a study conducted by Kuruvilla and Joshi (2010) who found that the majority of the consumers are in the age group of 25-45, highly educated, double income families belonging to middle and upper income groups. The high rupee volume purchasers comprise more men, larger families, higher incomes, higher qualifications, more professionals and businessmen. These heavy shoppers visit the malls with their family and spend on all categories of items more than the other two groups showing significant differences in the mall related behavior. The heavy shoppers have a more active lifestyle, value, fun and security.

Visit Frequency to Shopping Mall

Mall culture has been accepted and welcomed in a big way by the Indian consumer and this fact comes out of the data shown in the Table 2, with visitors who visited a mall at least once a month (31.11%) or once a fortnight (24.45%) although a very less percentage visited the mall more than once a week (8.89%).

Reasons for Visiting The Mall

According to Table 3, the most prominent reasons cited by the respondents for their visits were watching a movie (60%), shopping (51.11%), visit an eatery (40%) and indulging in window shopping (26.66%). Least response (4.44%) was obtained for participation in events and promotional activities and gaming equally.

The results substantiate the findings by Lotz *et al*. (2004) who studied the similarities and differences between mall entertainment seekers and mall shoppers and found that there are different motives for individuals who visit a mall for entertainment activities versus those who visit for shopping purposes.

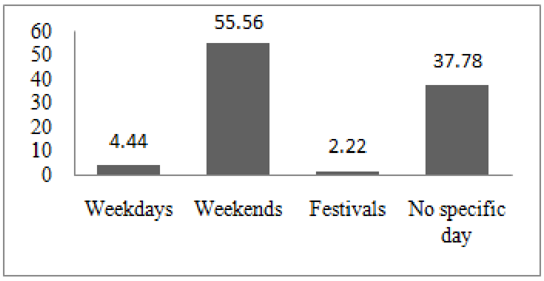

Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Day of Visit to Mall

Day of Visit to a Mall

Figure. 3 illustrates that more than half (55.56%) of the respondents preferred weekend to visit a mall and 37.78 percent said there was no specific day for them to visit such places. The reasons may be the availability of ample time to respondents during the weekend. Another reason may be that the society is witnessing a change where the presence of working couples (both the husband and the wife are working) and nuclear families is on the rise. So weekend becomes a natural choice for choosing to visit a mall.

Time Spent in Mall

Data in Table 4 portray that more than half (53.34%) of the people replied that they spent 3-4 hours in the mall and 22.22 per cent said that they usually spend 5-6 hours, which is of course a substantial time in a single day. This can imply that the people visiting malls don’t just drop by; rather they make planned visits. An equal percentage of respondents (4.44%) spent less than an hour or more than 6 hours in a shopping mall.

Preferred Mode of Travel

Regarding the preferred mode of travel to the mall, Table 5 indicates that highest preference was given to own conveyance where 44.44 per cent and 28.89 per cent respondents preferred car and 2-wheeler respectively. The results indicate the propensity of respondents to be self-dependent while opting for visiting the mall, and not depending upon public means of transportation or hiring an auto etc.

Preferred Company to Visit Mall

Figure 4 shows that the maximum (42.22%) respondents preferred to visit the mall with friends and more than one-fourth (28.89%) preferred to visit with family. Least preference (4.44%) was given to office colleagues.

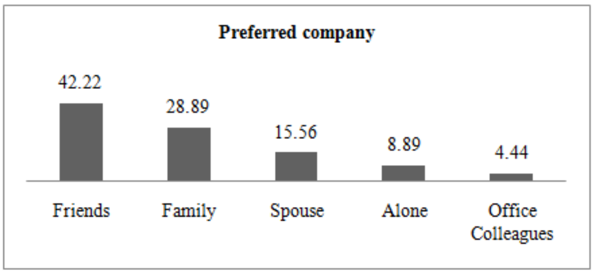

Figure 4: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Preferred Company to Visit a Mall

CONCLUSIONS

The dual purpose of this study was, firstly, to determine the consumers' main reasons for visiting shopping malls from an Indian perspective and, secondly, to determine the frequency of visits of consumers at the shopping malls. Gilboa (2009) studied the consumers' behavior at the shopping mall in terms of visiting pattern or frequency, which coincides with the findings of the current study that the frequency of visits among consumers varied. Kim *et al*. (2011) revealed that shopping mall customers visit shopping malls not only search for specific products, but they also view these visits as an amusement activity that provides fun and pleasure from the shopping experience, these findings are supported by the findings of the current study that consumers visit a shopping mall for entertainment purposes such as watching movies, celebrate special occasions, and for eating out, not for just buying groceries, Homeware.

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Background Information of Customers N=90

S. No.	Demographic Variable	Frequency (%)
A.	**Annual Family Income**	
1.	Less than 2 lakh	16(17.78)
2.	2-5 lakh	28(31.11)
3.	5-10 lakh	22(24.44)
4.	Above 10 lakh	24(26.67)
B.	**Occupation**	
1.	Student	15(16.67)
2.	Government Job	14(15.56)
3.	Private Job	22(24.44)
4.	Business	16(17.78)
5.	Homemaker	12(13.33)
6.	Other	11(12.22)
C.	**Educational Qualifications**	
1.	12^{th} Pass	12(13.33)
2.	Graduate	30(33.33)
3.	Postgraduate	30(33.33)
4.	Diploma	14(15.56)
5.	Others	4(4.45)
D.	**Marital Status**	
1.	Married	40(44.44)
2.	Single	50(55.56)
E.	**Family Type**	
1.	Nuclear	63(70)
2.	Joint	27(30)

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Visit Frequency to Shopping Mall N=90

S. No.	Visit Frequency	Frequency (%)
1.	More than once a week	8(8.89)
2.	Once a week	12(13.33)
3.	Once a fortnight	22(24.45)
4.	Once a month	28(31.11)
5.	Once in 2 months	20(22.22)

Table 3: Reason for Visiting the Mall by the Respondents N=90

S. No.	Reason for Visit	Frequency (%) *
1.	Watch a movie	54(60)
2.	Shopping	46(51.11)
3.	Visit an eatery	36(40)
4.	Window shopping	24(26.66)
5.	Meet friends	20(22.22)
6.	For personal care services	12(13.33)
7.	Do comparison shopping/compare brands or products	10(11.11)
8.	Just get away	8(8.88)
9.	Participate in the events or promotional activities	4(4.44)
10.	Gaming	4(4.44)
*Multiple response		

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Average Time Spent in Mall N=90

S. No.	Time Spent	Frequency (%)
1.	Less than an hour	4(4.44)
2.	1-2 hours	14(15.56)
3.	3-4 hours	48(53.34)
4.	5-6 hours	20(22.22)
5.	More than 6 hours	4(4.44)

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Preferred Mode of Travel to Mall n=90

S. No.	Mode of Travel	Frequency (%)
1.	Car	40(44.44)
2.	Two-wheeler	26(28.89)
3.	Public Transport	16(17.78)
4.	Walking	8(8.89)