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Determinants of Shopping Mall Attractiveness: The Indian ContextDr. Amit Mittal^{a*}, Dr. Deepika Jhamb^a^a*Chitkara Business School - Doctoral Research Center, Chitkara University, Punjab, India**

Abstract

This paper identifies the main attributes that lead to shoppers' patronage of a shopping mall in the Indian context. The review of literature identifies sixteen salient attributes which converge into the following four main dimensions that can be considered as determinants of shopping mall attractiveness: (1) merchandising (2) variety & selection (3) milieu & facilities, and (4) convenience. The study is important to both practitioners and academics who have an interest and a stake in shopping centres and their patronage. The new found spending power of Indian consumers coupled with the heavy investments in shopping centres makes this study critical for retail practitioners, academics and researchers. This research has shown a fair degree of convergence between the preferences of shoppers in India and shoppers in other parts of the world in the context of shopping mall attribute evaluating criteria. This has important implications for future research.

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1. Introduction

Over the past decades millions of consumers in emerging markets have access to increased spending power and the organized retail sector has benefited the most. At the same time the retail sector in emerging markets has become increasingly competitive and large western style shopping centres have started to dominate the retail landscape. Despite some experts questioning the future of shopping centres, their contribution to the marketing distribution system remains indisputable (Finn and Louviere 1996). As per the Global Shopping Centre Report 2014 (released by Cushman & Wakefield) shopping centres are a major economic ecosystem in a city and they drive economic and social development. At the same time, the global recession and other economic and security upheavels we have been witnessing for the past couple of years have had a negative impact on shopping centre growth. There is also this

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emerging paradox of declining mall patronage and increasing shopping centre space which started in the west (Ashley 1997; Wakefield & Baker 1998) and seems to be catching up in India (report by JLL, India 2014). In India shopping centres are most commonly known as *shopping malls*. Indian shopping malls fit into the definition provided by the International Council of Shopping Centres (2004): “*Shopping Mall is the most common design mode for regional and super-regional centres. The walkway or ‘mall’ is typically enclosed, climate-controlled and lighted, flanked on one or both sides by storefronts and entrances. On-site parking, usually provided around the perimeter of the centre, may be surface or structured*” (Pitt and Musa 2009). Due to the huge investments which have already taken place (and with more to come) and the impact that that malls have on the local economy and employment, this paper seeks to identify the key drivers or determinants of shopping malls attractiveness in the Indian context. A study in the Indian context is needed because it may not be desirable to generalize retail research findings developed in an overseas market context and research that compares geographical differences in shopper preferences or choices also seems scarce in the retail setting (Martenson 1987; Severin, Louviere & Finn 2001). *Keeping this in consideration, this research attempts to discover the important attributes that consumers consider when choosing among shopping malls in India.*

2. Review of Literature and theoretical framework

A majority of shopping malls in India are created to provide divergent benefits of shopping to consumers (Jhamb & Kiran 2012). Holbrook (1982) states that malls are attractive locations which facilitate social interactions and entertainment. Bloch et al. (1994) & Geuens et al. (2001) identified different patterns of the shopping malls habitat. These patterns were high levels of purchasing, enjoyment of the mall aesthetic, physical design, appearance, a relief from boredom, desires for variety, exploring new products or stores within the mall and enjoyment of communicating and socializing with others. Anuradha and Manohar (2011) investigated the customer shopping experience in two malls in Chennai (India). The study concluded that the reasons identified were (in the order of preference): shopping ambience, availability of different types of shops, entertainment offered at malls, parking facility, ease of shopping, good product quality, discount and sales promotion, pride and prestige attached shopping. Shoppers visit shopping malls with entertainment centres for making use of all facilities under one roof, Wakefield and Baker, (1998) and Rajagopal (2008). These days, consumers tend to be more selective because of the growing number of malls. They are more likely to patronize malls that are more attractive and have a wide variety of stores and merchandise that match their preferences (El-Adly, 2007). Therefore, it is essential for mall managers to keep in mind the attractiveness attributes while developing their malls, (Wong et al., 2001). A comprehensive review of the shopping mall attractiveness attributes that drive mall patronage is outlined in table 1.

3. Methodology

The research covers a review of previous research as outlined in table 1. This will help in developing the mall patronage or attractiveness measures. In the next stage, data is collected and finally analysis is done using exploratory factor analysis. The attributes are measured on a five point Likert scale. The study selected a total of five hundred active shoppers of shopping malls from the major cities of Punjab and Chandigarh (these are two relatively prosperous regions in India with a significant emerging mall culture). A structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents through the ‘mall –intercept survey technique’. Two hundred and forty usable questionnaires were finally received leading to a success rate of forty eight per cent.

3.1. Measurement

Based on review of previous research on shopping mall patronage, sixteen items or attributes were measured on five point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Table 1 summarizes the linkage of previous authors and items used for measurement on shopping mall attractiveness attributes in the research.

Table 1: Shopping Mall Attractiveness Attributes

Authors and Attributes	Assortment of Merchandise	Nice Packaging of products	Improved Quality	Proper Display	Reasonable Price	Availability of Brands	Availability of Products	Exchange facilities	Parking Facility	Adequate Dressing Rooms	In-store Promotions	Pleasant Ambience	Children Play Area	Trained Sales Personnel	Convenient Shopping Hours	Suitable Location
Dubihlela & Dubihlela (2014)	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓
Gudonavičienė & Alijosiene (2013)	✓		✓			✓			✓						✓	
Wong et al. (2012)														✓	✓	
Jhamb & Kİran (2012)	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓				✓	✓		
Anuradha & Manohar (2011)									✓			✓			✓	
Jain & Bagdare (2010)	✓	✓		✓						✓		✓				
Patel & Sharma (2009)	✓					✓		✓		✓	✓			✓		✓
Teller (2008)									✓							
Rajagopal (2008)	✓			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

4. Results and Discussion

This research has been conducted to understand Indian Shoppers' mall patronage behavior based on their evaluation of mall attractiveness attributes. For achieving this objective, the sixteen attributes outlined in Table1 were first classified into two broad clusters of mall attributes each consisting of eight attributes each. This was done through an experiential survey of six senior retail executives. These clusters were named: (1) Shopping Mall Product Attributes and (2) Shopping Mall Service Attributes. This is very similar to the concept of 'core product' and 'supplementary services proposed by Lovelock, Wirtz & Chatterjee (2011).

Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Shopping Mall Product Attributes

Shopping Mall Product Attributes	Merchandising	Variety and Selection
1. Assortment of Merchandise	.852	
2. Packaging of Products	.818	
3. Quality of Merchandise	.801	
4. Display	.668	
5. Price	.522	
Eigen Value	2.867	
% of variance	35.844	
Cumulative Variance	35.844	
6. Availability of Brands		.817
7. Availability of Products		.784
8. Exchange Facilities		.711

Eigen Value	2.246
% of variance	28.078
Cumulative Variance	63.921

Using factor analysis, the *shopping mall product attributes* have been classified into the following two factors: (1) Merchandising and (2) Variety and Selection. These two factors explain 63.921 percent of total variance. *Merchandising factor* includes assortment of merchandise (.852), packaging of products (.818), quality of merchandise (.801), proper display (.668) and reasonable price (.525). These items explain 35.884% of variance. *Variety and selection factor* accounts for 28.078% of total variance. The major elements included in this factor are: availability of brands (.817), availability of products (.784) and exchange facilities (.711).

Factor analysis applied on *shopping mall service attributes* classified the items into two major factors: (1) Milieu & Facilities and (2) Convenience. These two factors account for 68.578% of total variance. In *milieu & facilities*, parking facility (.953) and adequate dressing rooms (.787) had higher loadings. In case of *convenience factor*, trained sales personnel (.846) and convenient shopping hours (.763) dominated with higher loadings.

The research shows that there are four broad dimensions of the sixteen shopping mall attractiveness attributes viz. (1) Merchandising, (2) Variety & Selection, (3) Milieu & Facilities and (4) Convenience. These findings seem to match the findings in other emerging and developed markets (Nevin and Houston 1980; Ruiz 1999; Wong, Lu & Yuan 2001; Rajagopal 2011, Dubihlela & Dubihlela 2014).

Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Shopping Mall Service Attributes

Shopping Mall Service Attributes	Milieu & Facilities	Convenience
1. Parking Facility	.953	
2. Adequate Dressing Rooms	.787	
3. In-Store Promotions	.751	
4. Pleasant Ambience	.685	
5. Children Play Area	.655	
Eigen Value	3.495	
% of variance	43.691	
Cumulative Variance	43.691	
6. Trained Sales Personnel		.846
7. Convenient Shopping Hours		.763
8. Suitable Location		.549
Eigen Value		1.991
% of variance		24.887
Cumulative Variance		68.578

5. Conclusion

This research indicates that the more different markets and geographical contexts may seem, the more similar customers would behave in the long term. Shopping centres present retailing at a macro level unlike retail stores,

where shopping takes place at a much more micro level. A number of differences between the shopping behavior of consumers might occur between different geographical markets (due to difference in cultures, income, demographics etc.) but at a shopping centre level, consumers eventually still seem to care for more tangible benefits such as merchandise, brands, variety, social infrastructure (milieu) and of course a reasonable level of convenience; and this is what the research has unveiled. The salient attractiveness dimensions identified in this research also by and large hold true in most emerging and developed retail markets right from India to the US travelling across China, Mexico and South Africa. However, the need cater to local tastes and preferences shall still be critical especially at the store, brand and product level. The future of retail in India will be a blend of global models and customized local strategies.

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