

Determinants of Shopping Experience Exploring the Mall Shoppers of Bangalore City

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper aims to explore the composition of “shopping experience” for shoppers in the metropolitan area of Bangalore city. **Design/methodology/approach:** The paper applies data reduction using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on a sample of 200 respondents drawn from four constituent urban clusters within the Bangalore and condenses a set of 22 mall attributes into a list of five comprehensible factors. **Findings:** The research shows that shoppers visualize shopping experience as a combination of five factors: Ambience, Physical infrastructure, Marketing focus, Convenience, and Safety & Security. They assigned different weightage in terms of significance to each of these factors. Internal configuration of these factors also reveals interesting patterns. **Practical implications:** In India Mall developers should focus on improving convenience and creating ambience. Disproportionate expenditure on adding to physical infrastructure is not expected to defer same dividends. **Social implications:** The study assumes significance as India has seen a rapid growing of shopping malls in the recent past. Such malls are struggling to attract shoppers. The paper explores the expectations of mall shoppers in Bangalore city. **Originality/value:** This paper is among the few works done on understanding Indian mall shoppers. It adds significantly to the meager body of knowledge in this area in an Indian context.

KEYWORDS: Consumer behavior, Mall determinants, Mall management, Shopping experience, Shopping malls.

INTRODUCTION

Initial excitement over bright prospects of mall development in India has now been replaced with strict practicality. Rising prices and intense competition is draining profitability out of the mall projects. Researchers have already started raising doubts over sustainability of shopping malls in India [27]. Scenario is particularly competitive in metropolitan area like Bangalore. This city pioneered mall development and contribute nearly 79 per cent of available mall space [30]. Bangalore city comprises four business sizable areas like;

- (1) Hosur Road;
- (2) Magrath;
- (3) Kempapura; and
- (4) Vittal Mallya.

The region has total mall space of 24.7 million sq. ft and supply is likely to go up to 119 million sq. ft within a couple of years. After development of south Bangalore the city did not witness significant addition to mall space as it took its own time to assimilate the concept. Mall development got major boost during 2003-

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2004 and since then, there has been a constant growth in mall supply (barring the exception of 2008-2009 when recession led to slowdown in real estate projects). At present malls are competing against each other. The majority of Bangalore malls have identical tenant-mix. It is expected for an Bangalore shopping mall to have a hypermarket, a multiplex, a department store, a food-court and shopping options for different categories of merchandise. These identical malls lead to shopper boredom which encourages out-shopping [23,25]. Competition among malls is further intensified by improvements in intra and inter-city transportation systems which enable shoppers to travel to distant shopping alternatives [17].

Distribution of mall space in India is vastly uneven and highly skewed in favor of big areas resulting in higher concentration of mall space in this city. Problem of uneven distribution persists within individual cities as well. Some locations in a city are over-supplied with mall space whereas other locations have a shortage of it. Malls clustered at a single location encroach on each other's catchment area. Availability of shopping options in excess of demand result in reduced footfalls and rates of conversion for each mall. There are prominent clusters of shopping malls in Bangalore. Malls located in these clusters suffer from crisis of identity. They resemble each other in terms of size, aesthetics, facilities and tenant-mix. Being in close proximity they share catchment area and target population. As shopping parameters in terms of available products/brands and pricing are the same for all malls, customer takes mall patronage decision based on factors beyond the act of shopping.

II. Literature review:

A number of studies on management aspects of shopping malls have been conducted in past. Most of these were carried out in global context. In India few specific studies are available. Most of the Indian studies are very generic in nature. These touch on issues like overview of mall development and operations in India [15], financing and practices [26] and comparative analysis of malls in India and the USA (Singh and Bose, 2008). All these studies are conceptual in nature. Empirical studies on Indian shopping malls are based on consumer response data. The outstanding studies in this category include profiling of mall shoppers [16] and measurement of customer attitude towards malls [29]. Very few studies are touched on the issue of shopping experience though there is one that discusses service environment and patronage intentions using Analytical Hierarchy Process. This reflects a definite gap in literature on this theme.

2.1. Shopping experience:

Traditional product acquisition does not explain complete value of shopping activity because consumers shop for experiential and emotional reasons as well. Majority of researchers have explored this aspect of shopping [12]. Significance of shopping experience in context of shopping malls was discussed by Csaba and Askergaard [8] in light of evolution of shopping malls in America. Quoting extensively from Victor Gruen, they emphasized computing of shopping experience. Emotional character of shopping results in positive outcomes like increase in store liking, more time spent in the store, larger ticket-size and higher incidence of unplanned purchase, making it imperative to include elements that add the desired experiential perspectives to shopping [1]. Bellenger and Korgaonkar [2] empirically established that a large proportion of retail shoppers (69 per cent) fall in the category of recreational shopper. Hence retailers and mall developers should make shopping an entertaining experience to differentiate them and to increase their market share [30,13]. Looking at constitution of shopping experience, Holbrook and Hirschman [10] improved on conventional information processing approach to add experiential perspective to it. They proposed a general model representing typical consumer behavior variables in which the existing information processing model was contrasted with an experiential view that focuses on the symbolic, hedonic, and aesthetic nature of consumption. Kim et al. [13] also came up with the classification as Utilitarian and Hedonic factors.

2.2. Building blocks of shopping experience:

Retailers should provide an entertaining shopping experience to customers since. These experiences can be offered if mall engages customers in enjoyable manner during product acquisition. Therefore it is important to know what makes shopping experience appealing. Many different studies have posited different sets of attributes as answers to this question. Studies conducted across the globe have affirmed that mall shopping is a relative choice phenomenon [17,28]. In a significant work on shopper's excitement and desire to stay at malls, Wakefield and Baker identified group of four constructs: ambient factors, design factors, layout and variety. Each factor had multiple attributes reflected by different statements. Important attributes included in this study were architectural design and overall design, temperature control, variety of stores (tenant-mix), music, ease in stores location and lighting. Each of these had an impact on desire to stay at the mall. Mattila and Wirtz [21] carried out an experimental study to study the influence of music along with that of scent. Significance of distance and travel time was discussed and established by Huff and Rust [11]. They developed retail gravity model for predicting mall patronage based on the principle of cost (accessibility) versus utility (size). The model tried to predict and explain retail patronage as a function of store size and distance from the consumer home and place of work. In recent years a study conducted in Australia by Reimers and Clulow [22] established value of

convenience irrespective of format (shopping mall or shopping strip). Elements of convenience taken up in the study were: spatial convenience, temporal convenience, car convenience and shopping services of particular interest in the present context are spatial convenience and car convenience. A dedicated study on tenant-mix and its relation with excitement was conducted by Kirkup and Rafiq [14]. They explained management of tenant-mix in new shopping centre's in UK and concluded that development of strong, distinctive and consistent tenant-mix is crucial for success. Other studies indicate that diversity of tenant-mix influences mall selection and it was linked with sense of excitement in a mall. Consumers make more trips to large malls. It is believed that malls with more and larger anchors provide a better shopping environment. In this study relating to new shopping malls during first few months of their launch, Brito established that store selection and retail-mix hold the key in shaping image of a mall which in turn, encourages patronage.

A related list of mall attributes was used by Venkateswarulu and Uniyal with reference to shopping malls in the city of Mumbai. They identified five factors defining attractiveness of a shopping mall. These were:

- (1) Appeal and convenience.
- (2) Amenities and atmospherics.
- (3) Ambience.
- (4) Personnel
- (5) Parking and seating.

This study also included some new mall attributes like restrooms, smell, security and size of store. The significance of marketing activities for a mall was highlighted by Chattopadhyaya and Sengupta (2006) in a study done on malls in Kolkata. They argued that malls that achieve distinctive positioning by developing appropriate marketing strategies enjoyed increased customer patronage.

Review of literature presented a long list of vital mall attributes that possibly affect shopper's response to a shopping mall. Authors felt the need to integrate these diverse attributes and see their relationship with shopping experience. Present research was planned to carry out this integration and understand whether and how attributes related to operational aspects of shopping malls constitute shopping experience. This study is primarily exploratory in nature.

III. Research Problem:

Growth is quickly occurring not only in terms of purchase, but also in terms of store formats that retailers are bringing in the market. The Indian consumer is looking for more value in the form of consistent availability, improved quality, pleasant shopping environment, competitive pricing. Customer's tastes and preferences are changing leading to fundamental transformation in lifestyle and spending patterns which in turn are giving rise to new business opportunities. Therefore, it has a vast scope for the research and as the retailing environment is changing quickly, leading to shopper's expectations. Consumers shopping expectations are changing continuously so in such environment it is necessary to understand consumer's choice of preference and expectations towards shopping mall. Consumers shopping experience may offer insights into how and why the consumer shops and the attributes that customer chooses during shopping in shopping malls. It is help the retailers to gain better understanding of their customer's choice and preferences will also enable them to ascertain which mall attributes should be emphasized in retailing strategy to allow retailers to create a more centric shopping experience.

IV. Research objectives:

- To identify the mall determinants in Bangalore city.
- To study the impact of mall determinants on shopping experience.
- To suggesting strategies for improving shopping experience in Bangalore shopping malls.

V. Research methodology:

This research was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved secondary data and personal interactions with select practitioners, academicians and shoppers to define the problem. It resulted in generation of a structured questionnaire. Second phase involved data collection.

VI. Research instrument:

Review of literature resulted in a tentative list of mall attributes affecting shopping experience. This list was scrutinized by a panel comprising academicians and industry experts. Panel members recommended inclusion and modification of some attributes. For instance, safety and security from accidents, safety while shopping and security against acts of terror. Size of store was replaced with size of the mall. Size of the entrance hall was included as another attribute whereas ease in locating stores was used in place of layout. Final instrument comprised 22 mall attributes. Statements were structured to assess respondent's level of agreement/disagreement to the statements representing these attributes. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale in which "1"

represented strong disagree and “5” represented strong agree. Questionnaire was duly pre-tested and was found valid and reliable. It also contained questions on demographic details of respondents.

VII. Sampling:

The majority of cases should be at least five times the number of variables for running factor analysis, sample size was kept at 200 [5,9]. For this research population was defined as people visiting shopping malls in Bangalore city for shopping. Sampling element was individual visiting malls for shopping. Sampling unit for this research was shopping mall from where the elements were to be drawn. Extent to which people are included in the sample is defined as the criterion (preferably objective) that defines elements. In this research, scope was expressed as persons carrying minimum of one shopping bag in their hands at the time of exit. Sampling frame could not be developed for this research as it was neither possible nor advisable to compile a list of all mall shoppers in Bangalore city. Therefore non-probability sampling techniques were used. This research used quota sampling method. It is a form of multi-stage restricted judgmental sampling where first stage consists of developing control categories or quotas of population elements while subsequent stages involves selection of sample elements based on convenience or judgment [19]. First stage in this research resulted in development of control categories or quotas as four malls in Bangalore city (Hosur Road, Magrath, Kempapura, Vittal Mallya). Malls selected for this research were similar in terms of size, age and tenant-mix. Second stage involved selection of respondents on the basis of convenience and judgment. A total of 50 respondents were selected from each mall. Mall intercept method was chosen to approach shoppers.

VIII. Data analysis and interpretation:

Demographic information collected with help of questionnaire was used to develop a profile of mall shoppers in Bangalore using simple numbers and percentages. Data relating to mall attributes was subjected to data reduction using factor analysis using SPSS.

IX. Profile of respondents:

Sample used in this research is representative of the population as key demographic parameters of sample resemble those for population. The Bangalore city has a large proportion of young, working population as reflected in median age of 25 years. Sample taken for this research is also young as 48 per cent of respondents are in the age-group 20-35. Bangalore has a monthly household income (Rs. 34012 per month) that falls within the modal income category (.25000-40000) for this research [24]. Sample shows slight divergence from population in terms of gender-composition and education as is evident from Table I. It may be attributed to the fact that shopping malls attract a higher proportion of people from upper socio-economic strata. The measure of sampling adequacy, KMO test of sampling adequacy.

X. Data analysis using factor analysis:

Collected data were found suitable for factor analysis in terms of correlation analysis, variable-wise. The data were then subjected to Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation. After a series of deletions factor output was received in form of five extracted factors for a 2 variable problem as given in the Appendix (Tables AI-AIV).

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Demographic group	Demographic sub-group	Number	Percentage	Relevant data for Bangalore
Age	13-19 years	40	20	Median age =25 years
	20-35 years	96	48	
	36-50 years	48	26	
	51-65 years			
Gender	Male	102	51	53.6
	Female	98	49	46.4
Education level	Schooling	46	23	Literacy rate =86:34
	Graduation	56	28	
	PG & above	56	28	
	Professional	42	21	
Monthly income	Less than Rs. 10,000	22	11	Rs. 34012
	Rs. 10,000-25,000	54	27	
	Rs. 25,000-40,000	74	37	
	More than Rs. 40,000			
All data		200	100	

10.1. Factor output:

Factor output comprised of five factors explaining 67.4 per cent of total variance associated with the problem. Rotated component matrix is appended as Appendix 4. Extracted factors are presented in the summarized table (Table II).

10.1.1. Factor 1:

First factor comprising of six mall attributes (temperature control, cleanliness, pleasant smell, background music, clarification and landscaping) explains 21.6 per cent of variance. These variables have significantly high factor loading (greater than 0.8) on this factor. Since these variables add to the feel and atmospherics of mall, it is labeled as ambience. Respondents have shown moderate level of agreement for ambience as is evident from average scores of 3.44 for this factor. Hygiene, temperature control and illumination (lighting) emerge particularly strong with average scores ranging from 3.93 to 3.675.

10.1.2. Factor 2:

Second extracted factor explaining 12.555 per cent of total variance comprises of four variables: parking space, size of the mall, size of the Atrium and open spaces. Loadings for this factor range from 0.837 to 0.729. These attributes represent vital infrastructural elements of malls so the factor is labeled as physical infrastructure. It is not very potent since it has lowest average score among all extracted factors (2.26).

10.1.3. Factor 3:

Third factor comprising of four variables (attributes) explains 12.210 per cent of variance. The attributes are: attractive exteriors, diversity of tenant-mix, events organized by malls and promotional schemes offered by malls. Loadings for this factor range between 0.718 and 0.826. Events and promotional schemes are active attempts by malls to induce shoppers. Attractive exteriors also induce prospective shoppers from a distance for a visit to the mall by portraying a distinct image and impression. Diversity of tenant-mix extends a rational benefit to the shoppers to visit a mall. Collating active, passive and rational tactics for inducing/attracting customers, this factor is labeled as marketing focus. Average score for this factor is 2.99. However, tenant-mix is considered significant with average score of 3.38.

10.1.4. Factor 4:

The Fourth factor comprises of three variables (distance of mall from shopper's home, lifts and escalators and ease in locating utilities inside the mall) and explains 10.779 per cent of total variance. Factor loadings in this case range from 0.843 to 0.744. All these variables add to convenience for a shopper so the factor is labeled as "convenience to shopper". Average score for this factor is 3.14.

10.1.5. Factor 5:

This factor comprises of three variables (security against acts of terror, safety from accidents and safety while shopping) and explains 10.246 per cent of total variance. Factor loadings in this case range from 0.847 to 0.749. This factor is labeled "safety and security". Respondents have shown least support for it and assigned average score of 2.32. Validity and reliability of factor output was checked statistically. Value of Cronbach's Alpha(social sciences, business) was greater than 0.7 for all factors indicating reliability of output (Table II). Convergent validity was checked with help of "Variance Extracted (VE)"(see Table III).

Table 2: Validity and reliability of factor output

Factor No.	Factor Title	Variables Included	Factor Loading	Cornbach's Alpha	Average Score/ Factor	Factor Ranking
F1	Ambience	Illumination Landscaping Background Music Ambient odour General Hygiene Temperature Control	0.855 0.848 0.834 0.832 0.828 0.826	0.918	3.44	I
F2	Physical Infrastructure	Open Space Size of the Mall Parking Space Size of the atrium	0.837 0.802 0.741 0.729	0.791	2.26	V
F3	Marketing Focus	Promotional schemes Tenant Mix Mall façade Promotional events	0.826 0.768 0.752 0.718	0.778	2.99	III
F4	Convenience to Shopper	Utilities Lifts & Escalators Distance of mall from home	0.843 0.812 0.744	0.770	3.14	II
F5	Safety and Security	Safety from accidents Safety while shopping Security against	0.847 0.815 0.749	0.746	2.32	IV

Variance Extracted for all five factors is higher than 0.5. Final factor output shows absence of cross loading establishing discriminate validity of the output.

XI. Ranking of factors:

Relative significance of factors was determined by dividing sum of average scores for all variables constituting a factor by the number of variables constituting that factor. With average score per factor of 3.44 Ambience is the most desirable factor. "Convenience to shoppers" is also relevant to shoppers with average score 3.14. Factor labeled "marketing focus" is a borderline case with average score of 2.99. Remaining two factors (physical infrastructure and safety and security) have scores less than 3 indicating that these are less significant.

XII. Observations:

Results of this research support the notion that shopping experience is an orchestration of a number of factors. Mall developers and managers should take an integrated view of situation and work on multi-pronged strategies to improve shopping experience. These strategies may be designed in light of following observations made in this research:

XIII. Composition of shopping experience :

Shopping experience goes beyond the basic chores of shopping and is not a monolith. A number of factors are to be considered for improving it because customers view it as a blend of its constituent factors. In this research shopper of Bangalore city identified ambience, physical infrastructure, marketing focus, convenience and safety and security as its constituents. Results also indicate that shopping experience cannot be improved as an afterthought because many decisions regarding these factors are to be taken at planning/design stage. World-class shopping experience demands coherent efforts by research, design, planning, commercial, and marketing management teams.

XIV. Differential impact of factors:

All constituent factors do not contribute equally to shopping experience. Though respondents identified five factors, all five are not equally significant. For instance only two factors (ambience and convenience to shoppers) have average score higher than three. Clearly, there is a need for serious rethinking on part of mall managers if they aim at improving shopping experience in malls. It is responsibility of decision makers to identify key factors and decision areas where suitable changes can yield more than proportionate dividend.

XV. Relative significance of factors:

Ambience is the foremost factor defining shopping experience. It is evident from average score as well as percentage of variance explained by this factor.

Table III: Variance extracted by each factor

S. No.	Factor number and Label	Variance Explained
1	F1 (Ambience)	0.700
2	F2 (Physical Infrastructure)	0.606
3	F3 (Marketing Focus)	0.588
4	F4 (Convenience to shopper)	0.641
5	F5 (Safety and Security)	0.648

Contrary to common perception next important factor is not physical infrastructure. Mall developers invest exorbitant amount to develop premium infrastructure assuming that shoppers would prefer it. Results of this research indicate that it is least significant since average score per factor is lowest (2.26) for it. Customers find a shopping trip pleasant if it is convenient to move around and shop inside a mall. It is indicated by average score of 3.14 assigned to "convenience to shoppers". Investing in infrastructure could be a colossal waste of resources. If the same amount is utilized sensibly in offering convenience, it would yield better dividend. Prudent management of shopping malls is all about investing money in areas where it is actually needed. Another interesting observation is about safety and security. Customers have assigned higher priority to "marketing focus" over it. It could be due to the fact that so far India has not witnessed any major accident inside shopping malls. Despite so much political turmoil, there has not been a single act of terrorist violence inside shopping malls in India.

XVI. Composition of factors:

This research provides interesting insights as to what constitutes individual factors. Shopper's definition of factors may be a lot different from what managers or researchers perceive. For instance, people generally

associate ambience with music, air-conditioning, music and fragrance whereas functions like hygiene are considered routine. Maintaining hygiene is supposed to be a normal activity under house-keeping and is more of a “Hygiene factor” than being a “motivational factor” Present research defies this notion. Table II shows that general hygiene is biggest contributor to ambience of a mall (average score 3.903) whereas variables like odour, background music, landscaping etc. have low scores. A look at factor “convenience to shoppers” reveals that lifts and escalators are significant because these add convenience (and not ambience). It puts a question mark on practice of installing lifts and escalators that are aesthetically appealing but may not perform in terms of carrying/load bearing capacity and speed. Results suggest that lifts and escalators should be created and maintained to add convenience. Similar observations are in case of marketing focus. Marketing in malls is considered synonymous with promotional schemes and events for creating footfalls. Results of this study indicate that essence of marketing lies in having appropriate tenants inside the mall because respondents assigned highest score (3.38) to this variable under “Marketing focus”. No amount of promotion will attract customers to a mall if it does not have suitable stores where they can shop.

XVII. Conclusion:

Observations and suggestions presented above highlight the need to have a serious re-look at how shopping malls are designed and managed in India. Shoppers have their own definition of shopping experience and inability of many shopping malls to attract shoppers is due to their inability to recognize this fact. Results of this research are presented with a note of caution as these are based on a sample taken from Bangalore city over a specific period of time. These results are applicable for Bangalore and should be extrapolated to the entire market only if validated by similar studies conducted on a wider canvas. These results should be supplemented by follow up researches on similar pattern before arriving at a firm hypothesis about composition of shopping experience. Future studies may focus on collecting similar data from shopping malls across different cities, at time and from different segments of shoppers. It would be interesting to find out whether composition of shopping experience varies with place, time and shopper demographics.

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