
A study of problems faced by customers during visit of organized retail malls

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research paper is to find out the problems faced out by consumers visiting shopping malls. Some of the problems faced include long waiting queues for payment of bills, parking problems, less number of trial rooms, unorganized display etc. The focus is to make the shopping experience at malls worthy and less time consuming. Researcher proposes to achieve by finding the time spent by consumers in malls, time taken for payment and obtaining suggestions from the consumers. A research design was developed for understanding the all the above parameters. Researcher used Online Questionnaire method for collecting data. Two-way ANOVA, Chi-Square, Friedman testing methods have been used to analyze the obtained data. Considering the retailers point of view as well as the consumers point of view, based on malls visited and the data gathered from the survey, researcher infer that most of the problems caused in the malls are due to overcrowding and these problems can be resolved to some extent by implementing new technologies as well as providing additional facilities as per the consumer's preferences along with considering the feasibility of implementing them.

Keywords: Customer shopping experience, Mall management

1. Introduction

The Indian Retail Sector is booming and mall growth is being seen as a clear indicator of the economic prosperity in India. These shopping cum entertainment options are getting bigger and better, sporting multiplexes and food courts to woo shoppers. Dominant retail activity is visible in the top cities but tier II and III cities are also witnessing change. There has been huge investment in malls in last decade and is projected to be high in coming years. Malls are springing up in every city and are fast becoming sought-after entertainment hotspots, with shopping as the by-product. From a situation where there were no malls about a decade ago, the country had over 300 malls by the end of 2007.

Lack of Feasibility/Market Research prior to the development of a Mall:

In the past, some malls were constructed without carrying out a rigorous due diligence exercise on their feasibility. The market scene is gradually changing wherein more and more developers are approaching property consultancy firms to conduct feasibility and positioning studies for their projects.

Zoning

Landlords/developers tend to lease out retail space on a first-come-first-served basis. This creates a sub-optimal tenant mix like a food and beverage outlet next to a designer apparel shop instead of an accessories or a footwear shop.

Design Issues

At present, most of the popular malls have long queues and congestion outside their main entry points during weekends and festive seasons. Having only one entry and exit point also leads to overcrowding. Similarly, the visibility of retail units from all vantage points is poor in many malls.

Few Promotional Activities

There are very few promotional activities organised in the majority of malls at present. Developers perceive that these events only help increase foot traffic and not revenues.

Facility Management

Good infrastructure/facility management of common areas becomes a problem in malls where retail outlets are sold as strata title.

Parking

Many malls in India do not have adequate parking. Since most malls are being built in the city, developers typically provide basement parking facilities. However, these parking spaces are inefficient due to low ceiling heights, bad lighting and single entry and exit points.

In most of the developed markets, mall management is an established independent service line. The retail sector in these developed economies is mature in terms of end-consumer demand, number of retailers and experienced developers.

1. Revenue Shared Model: A common practice in developed markets such as the United States and Europe is the use of the revenue share model in determining rent. Under this arrangement, the tenant will either pay a fixed monthly base rent as minimum guarantee and/or a 'percentage of sales' rent, whichever is higher. This is beneficial for both landlords and retailers as landlords are encouraged to organise promotional activities that would increase retailers' revenues because they may have a percentage share in it. The model works successfully in bullish and bearish market conditions. When the market is weak, retailers are protected from rising rental costs.
2. Multiple entries and exit Points: This will decongest entry and exit points. As also managing the parking system will be a lot easier with multiple points as customers will be able to get in and out of the mall easily. Today on a weekend, one spends up to 20-30 minutes waiting in the car queue and finding a car space.
3. Promotional Activities: Malls need to carry out extensive promotional campaign promoting their mall as a brand as also an awareness campaign about the various outlets and brands available in the mall. The best example of this would be ad campaign of Central Mall chains.

4. Trial Rooms: There's a dearth of trial rooms in many malls. One has to wait for a long time to get a free trial room especially on weekends. Customer experience and service takes a sure beating in this case. The only way out is to have ample trial rooms in new and upcoming malls.
5. Billing Systems: Almost all malls today have automated billing systems. But developers more often than not leave very little space for billing counters which invariably leads to queues when the mall becomes operational. Have more counters with queue limits and categorise them on the number of items will help decongest the billing sections. So a customer with less number of items will be served in a quick service time per customer but a longer queue while customers with larger number of items will be served in a shorter queue.
6. Parking Systems: A automated reserve parking systems will certainly enhance customer satisfaction. Customers should be provided with a facility wherein they could reserve parking space via SMS or the internet.

Mall management can broadly be classified into 3 systems.

Infrastructure System

Infrastructure System refers to the management of facilities provided to the tenants within the mall. This includes provision of adequate power supply, safety issues in case of emergency and miscellaneous issues related to signage, water supply, sanitation, etc. These form an integral part of mall management as they are the basic amenities that any tenant would look for in a mall. Infrastructure management also includes risk management issues such as essential safety measure asset liability and environmental audits as well as emergency and evacuation training.

Ambience System

The overall shopping experience provided for consumers becomes an important factor for the success of any mall. Ambience System includes management of parks, fountains and overall look of the mall. A mall is not just a place for shopping but is also a place where people spend their leisure time. In favourable, lush green landscaping with seating facilities and the presence of food and beverage inside or outside the mall can increase foot traffic.

Traffic System

Traffic System includes managing foot traffic into the mall and parking facilities. Foot traffic management involves crowd management inside the operational area of a mall. The flow of people is related to the design of the mall and the spatial distribution of its tenants. For example, a star-shaped mall tends to have a problem of crowding in the centre of the mall, as everyone has to pass through the centre while moving from one side to the other. Circular malls, on the other hand, would not have this problem. They tend to have better pedestrian flow and less congestion. Managing parking facilities includes provision of ample parking and manoeuvring of cars in the parking lot.

2. Review of literature

1. In the article, keeping customer's when things go wrong by these MOWAPP in Canadian manager – commercial level. The author has tried to explain the process by which weak customers and services can be improved. According to the author the process is classified into following frame
 - (i) focus on customer concerns
 - (ii) enquiring front line employees
 - (iii) so that the customer's are been properly written and cleared for
 - (iv) express sincere understanding of customer's desires, wants and means
 - (v) apologize and rectify the situation where the customer feels that the retailer has wrong. Buyers and Alexander in their article have highlighted the changes that are taking place in the Marketing involvement because of growth of retail sector. According to them the norms through out most of the developed world is modern staff / style designed. Product you can pickup to examine / revolutionary staff assistant. Such things are important aspect that changes the consumer perfection, ideas and understanding of a particular shop. It really attract the consumer to buy a product not because it needs it, but it is a type of service that the retailer offers which makes him, rather compels him to buy the thing.
2. Another article by Garbarino and Johnson titled the different rules of satisfaction plus and commitment in customer relationship published in Journal of Marketing indicates that unless and until a retailer understands a specific class of factors that influences customers satisfaction, induces to develop their loyalty towards a particular retail format and liking for a particular buying behaviour. A retailer cannot succeed in attracting consumers' loyalty as well as cannot retain a large number of customers for a longer period.
3. Another article regarding title - Enhancing customers' loyalty in Retail bit. Sopanand has tried to find out factors that are responsible for developing customer's loyalty. According to the author following are the mutual factors that develops customer's loyalty
 - (a) Understanding a customer of the product
 - (b) Appropriate association between needs of the consumers and the products offered
 - (c) Right understanding psychology of the consumer by the marketers
 - (d) Development of suitable market mechanism,
 - (e) Appropriate distribution and logistics systems
 - (f) Designing a suitable promotional format
 - (g) Offering discounts or value addition which the customers has not accepted from the producers and the marketers.
4. S.L. Gupta also has conducted a study in the city of Lucknow which is a sampher / standard size of 200 respondents with an objective to understand the mind set of consumers in "B" Class cities of India. According to the author the consumers are definitely changing their perceptions to the retail malls. The author has analyzed the fact

that made an important growth in affecting customers towards the organized retail outlet. It was noticed that consumers can be classified into 4 categories

Group 1: Consumer who believe in good bargaining and reasonable prices.

Group 2: Who want a wide variety of mercantile and availability / eligibility of something for everyone in the family.

Group 3: Consumers who want a consumer location for buying and attractive ambience.

Group 4: Consumers who are more interested in helpful behaviour of people and free hold delivery facilities.

3. Objective of Research

1. To study the problems faced by customers while visiting organized retail malls.
2. To study the preferences given by customers towards various offers for bulk purchase.

3.1 Hypothesis of Research

1. There were differences in importance given by mall visitors to different problems.
2. There were no differences in frequency of visiting malls gender wise.
3. There were significant differences between genders on availability of choices and their preference.

3.2 Research Methodology

To understand the behaviour pattern of consumers towards these problems researcher have carried out a survey to understand the needs of customer as well as the retailers and what kind of facilities can be implemented to lessen the problems.

The survey carried out consists of:

Population : People of different occupation, age and gender

Type of Sampling : Simple random sampling.

Sample Size : 150

Type of Research : Descriptive

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

Researcher used online questionnaire method for collecting primary data. The questions were framed keeping in mind the objectives of research. The population consists of people from various income, age and occupational groups. A simple random sample of 150 people was selected and a primary data was collected through direct filling of questionnaire by the respondents. From analytical point of view researcher used rating scales as simple category or dichotomous scale, multiple choice single response scale and Likert scale.

3.4 Methods of Analysis

We used hypotheses testing methods like Friedman’s test, chi-square test, Two way ANOVA test to find out conclusions based on the data collected.

4. Analysis of data

Researcher mainly focuses on the parameters which includes Problems faced by customers while visiting organized retail malls, Customer’s criteria for choosing organized retail mall , Time spent by people at cash counters

The detail expiation of each parameter is as follow,

4.1 Problems faced by customers while visiting organized retail malls

Various problems faced by customer while visiting mall are security check, unorganized display, long queue at payment counter, inefficient paring, waiting at trial room etc. Related with this parameters researcher used interval scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means least bothersome and 5 means most bothersome. It was observed that customers are least bothersome about security check and unorganized display. While customers are most bothersome about long queue at payment counter, inefficient paring, waiting at trial room

Table 1: Problems faced by customers while visiting organized retail malls

	Security Check	Unorganized Display	Long queues at payment counters	Inefficient parking system	Long wait at trial rooms
Least Bothersome	55	22	2	11	4
2	40	22	7	10	13
3	24	30	23	9	32
4	19	51	37	49	27
Most Bothersome	12	25	81	71	74

4.2 Customer’s criteria for choosing organized retail mall

Related with this parameter, researcher ask question with some alternatives options to the customer which includes distance from house, rush in the mall, good service, ambience and interiors, and availability of brand choice. It was observed that the majority of customers prefer to visit mall based on availability of brand choice (98), distance from house (82), Ambience and interiors (60)

Table 2: Customer’s criteria for choosing organized retail mall

Mall choosing criteria	No. Of People
Distance from house	82
Rush in the Mall	23
Good Service	43

Ambience and interiors	60
Availability of brand choice	98

4.3 Time spent by customer at cash counters

It was observed that 67 customers spent 5-10 minutes at cash counter, 49 customers spent 10-20 minutes at cash counter, and 17 customers spent more than 20 minutes at cash counter, and 17 customer spent 0-5 minutes at cash counter.

Table 3: Time spent by customer at cash counters

Time spent at Cash Counter	No. of Customer
0 - 5 min	17
5 - 10 min	67
10 - 20 min	49
> 20 min	17

Table 3.1: Average waiting time at cash counter

Interval	Mid Value (x)	Frequency (f)	fx	$(x - \bar{x})$	$(x - \bar{x})^2$
0-10	5	84	420	-5.34	28.49
10-20	15	49	735	4.66	21.74
20-30	25	15	375	14.66	214.98
Total		148	1530		265.20

Mean = 10.34 min **Standard Deviation** = 1.34 min

Researcher also calculate average waiting time of customer at cash counter, it was observed that average time (Mean) spent by customer at cash counter was 10.34 minutes with standard deviation of 1.34 minutes. Because of high waiting time at cash counter, researcher suggests that retailer should use RFID technology which can reduce average waiting time at cash counter to 2 minutes and also reduce the time for scanning the items.

4.4 Data analysis & Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1:

There are differences in importance given by mall visitors to different problems.

H_0 = There are no differences in importance given to various problems by different mall visitors.

H_1 = There are differences in importance given to various problems by different Mall visitors.

To test this hypothesis, researcher use Friedman's test. The detail explanation is as follow,

Table 4: Analysis of hypothesis by using Friedman's test

Importance/ Visitor Frequency	Security Check	Unorganized Display	Long queues at payment	Inefficient parking system	Long wait at trial rooms
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Once in week	2.32 (4)	3.37 (3)	4.24 (1)	4.11 (2)	2.26 (5)
Once in 15 days	2.26 (5)	3.10 (4)	4.26 (1)	3.83 (3)	3.98 (2)
Once in month	2.34 (5)	3.15 (4)	3.94 (2)	4.02 (1)	3.57 (3)
Greater than a month	1.36 (5)	3.45 (4)	5.00 (1)	4.55 (2.5)	4.55 (2.5)
Sum	19	15	5	8.5	12.5

$$\chi^2 = (12 / (b * (t * (t+1)))) * \sum R_j^2 - 3b (t+1)$$

$$\chi^2 = 12 / (4 * (5 * 6)) * 839.5 - 3 * 4 * 6$$

$$\chi^2_{(Cal)} = 11.95$$

$$\chi^2_{(table)} = 9.488$$

$$\chi^2_{(Cal)} > \chi^2_{(table)}$$

Reject H_0 and accept H_1 .

From the above analysis, it was observed that there are differences in importance given by mall visitors to different problems. Mall visitors face major problems in two areas which includes long waiting queues and scarcity of parking space. Hence researcher suggests that retailers give more focus to these problems and try to minimize it by using RFID technology.

Hypothesis 2:

There were no differences in frequency of visiting malls gender wise.

H_0 : There were no differences in frequency of visiting malls gender wise.

H_1 : There were differences in frequency of visiting malls gender wise.

To test this hypothesis, researcher use Chi square test. The detail explanation is as follow,

Table 5: Analysis of hypothesis by using Chi square test

Observed:

Frequency of visit / Gender	Once in week	Once in 15 days	Once in month	Greater than a month	Total
Male	26	30	33	8	97
Female	12	7	13	3	35
Total	38	37	46	11	132

Expected:

Frequency of visit / Gender	Once in week	Once in 15 days	Once in month	Greater than a month	Total
Male	28	27	34	8	97
Female	10	10	12	3	35
Total	38	37	46	11	132

$$\chi^2_{(Cal)} = \sum (O - E)^2 / E$$

$$\chi^2_{(Cal)} = 1.67$$

$$\chi^2_{(table)} = 7.8$$

$$\chi^2_{(Cal)} < \chi^2_{(table)}$$

Accept H_0 and reject H_1 .

From the above analysis, it was observed that there were no differences in frequency of visiting malls gender wise. Males and females visit mall with same frequency.

Hypothesis 3:

There were significant differences between genders on availability of choices and their preference.

H_0 : There were no significant differences between genders on availability of choices and their preference.

H_1 : There were significant differences between genders on availability of choices and their preference.

To test this hypothesis, researcher uses Two way ANOVA test. The detail explanation is as follow,

Two way ANOVA:

H_0 : There is no significant difference preference wise

H_1 : There is significant difference preference wise

H_0 : There is no significant difference gender wise

H_1 : There is significant difference gender wise

Table 6: Analysis of hypothesis by using Two way ANOVA test

	Mobile Recharge coupon	Discount coupon for next purchase	Food coupon	Entertainment coupon	Total
Male	24	40	23	13	100
Female	9	18	10	5	42

Total	33	58	33	18	142
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Table 6.1: Solution

Sources of Variation	SS	d.f	M.S	F cal	F table
Column	412.5	3	137.5	10.895	6.59
Rows	420.5	1	420.5	33.320	7.71
Residual	50.5	4	12.62		
Total	883.5	7			

Alpha = 5%

$F_{cal} > F_{table}$.

Accept H_1 and reject H_0

From the above analysis, it was observed that,

1. There are significant differences preferences wise.
2. There are significant differences between genders on availability of choices and their preference.

Hence researcher concludes that there were significant differences between genders on availability of choices and their preference.

5. Conclusion of Research

Based on the statistical tests performed on the data collected from survey, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. There are differences in importance given by mall visitors to different problems. Mall visitors face major problem which includes waiting long queues and scarcity of parking space.
2. There are no differences in frequency of visiting malls gender wise. Males and females visit mall with same frequency.
3. After implementing RFID technology we accept mean time to go to 2 min from 10 min which is for payment and not for scanning the items.

Thus there are a few suggestions like electronic payment systems so as to avoid long queues, automated parking systems, flexible offers and facilities. Flexible offers can include food coupons, entertainment coupons, mobile recharge coupon etc as per the preferences of people. Certain facilities like more number of trial rooms, home delivery on alteration of clothes, mall navigation, ATM facilities in mall etc. can be added to increase mall value. They also have inclination towards entertainment facilities for children. Also people are ready to pay certain sum of money in order to avoid long queues. Thus researcher can conclude that most of the problems caused in the malls are due to overcrowding and these problems can be resolved to some extent

by implementing new technologies as well as providing additional facilities as per the consumer's preferences along with considering the feasibility of implementing them.

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