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Atmospheric Impact on mall image from Customer Perspective

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ABSTRACT

India has been a nation of 'dukandars' – around 12 million retailers – consisting of more retail shops than those of any other country put together. Retailing has been in our blood - as shopkeepers or as shoppers. But things are changing. The way shopping is done, the way retailing is getting modernized and organized, and the way people are shopping – as students, as shoppers and as academicians.

Introduction

Retailing involves a direct interface with the customers. It is the coordination of business activities right from the conception or design stage of the product to its delivery and after sales service to customers. The Indian retail industry is growing with more than 12 million retailers spread across the country. The retail industry provides around 8% of the country's employment. India's e-commerce retail is expected to grow more than 50 percent in the next five years, As the population increase internet access and aided by the growth in the global retail development index. The Indian retail industry is undergoing a tidal change with many organized retailers entering into the market.

Shopping Mall Image

The more positive image of a shopping centre is, the more likely is the probability that customers will visit it and do business. Customers choose a place for shopping whose image is closest to the supposed ideal. The brand is a subjective assessment of a shopping place; however it determines the acceptance or rejection of this place. A Shopping Centre is a group of retail and other commercial establishments that is planned, owned and managed as a single property. Some of the formats are Community Shopping Centres, Megamalls, Lifestyle Centres, and Neighbourhood Shopping Centres etc(International Council of Shopping Centres (ICSC), 2013). The stores in the planned shopping centres complement each other. Shopping centres attract more customers as they hosted more stores, hence customers can buy more varieties of products. A customer chooses a place for shopping based on its image (Sit et al.,

2005) suggests that a brand is a subjective perception that is formed in the mind of an individual based on

the personal perception about a certain object. Branding is often defined by a term branding image is the overall perception of the exceptional character and position of a brand in the consumer's mind. However, Martineau (2002) proved that techniques of brand image may be successfully applied for shopping centres to facilitate increasing of customer satisfaction and commercial success of a shopping centre.

The concept of store image was used by Martineau (1958) for the first time. He defined it as 'a store's image in customers' mind partly based on functional attributes and partly based on psychological attributes.' The store image includes its characteristic attributes that customers feel the store different from other stores. These attributes are assortment of commodities, price value relation, and service that customers can objectively compare with other stores. The store image attributes are attractiveness and luxuriousness and special attributes of that store. Many studies followed Martineau (1958). Arons (1961) defined store image as a complex of meanings and relation that make a store distinguish the store from others. Thus, store image is the overall attitude of a consumer to the store. Store image mean various things, and each store has a relation in the consumer's mind. Bearden (1977) studied the influence of store image as 'consumers choose a store they feel close to their self image,' and he studied the store image attributes that affect store choice between downtown and suburban shopping centers. Deutscher (1978) showed that store image attributes make an important role in the choice of retail store. In their study on image attributes. In their model of store choice, Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1978) found that purchasers distinguished acceptable

unacceptable stores in the process of comparing their evaluation standards with perceived image attributes, and that 'store image is a variable that consumers depend on in their choice of stores.' James, et al (1976) found that image attributes influence consumers' perception and attitudes and they are directly related to sales and profits. Schiffman, et al (1977) focused on the description of image existing in the competing types of retailers and explained that store image attributes made an important role in the choice of store type.

Shopping malls

Shopping malls become public magnets. People like to spend their leisure time at shopping malls. Even, when tourists come from out-of-town or from other places, they mostly visit popular shopping malls. Shopping Malls are one of the formats under the location Shopping Centres. This leads to emergences of many malls in towns and major cities that focus shopping with entertainment.

A shopping centre is a planned form of concentration of retail and service objects in one land plot which must be separated from a naturally formed city centre (Pajuodis, 2005). The key ratio of shopping centres is flows of customers (Finn, Louviere, 1996), whereas the key ratio of retail companies is the turnover of commodities.

Literature review

With an increasing number of shopping centres worldwide, the number of researches aimed at defining various aspects related with these shopping complexes grew as well. A motivation to shop in a certain shopping centre is one of the most frequently analysed areas; however, in spite of the attention given to the researches on shopping motivation, Dennis et.al (2001) stated that little analyses was done on how different consumer segments react to the marketing mix of a shopping centre. Warnaby and Yip (2005), point out a necessity not only to attract customers to the shopping centre, but prolong the customers' stay in the shopping centre as much as possible. The time spent by a customer in the shopping centre not always has a strong correlation with sales, but the fact that customers spend a lot of time in a certain shopping centre evidences that this place is attractive to them and there is a potential of increase in sales revenues. The importance of duration of the customers' stay in the shopping centre for the image of the shopping centre El-Adly, (2007).

Nevin and Houston (1980), being among pioneers that analysed image attributes of shopping centres in detail, distinguished three main brand attributes of shopping centres namely assortment (quality and variety of stores operating in

a shopping centre, quality of goods sold there, range products, sales promotion actions, special events within shopping centre, a good place to spend time); facilities (layout of a shopping centre, convenient parking lot, possibility to buy snacks, comfortable recreational areas) and market position (general price level, staff of stores and the shopping centre). Singh and Sahay (2012) distinguished ambient convenience to shopper and marketing focus as the most important factors that motivate Indian customers to visit shopping centres. Gonzalez-Hernandes and Orozco-Garcia (2012) names as many as 28 items, which are connected with six groups of factors namely shopping centre characteristics, popularity and promotional programs, personal services, internal atmosphere, recreational options, and external atmosphere. One may notice that the authors distinguished a lot of elements of the same nature though named differently or classify different elements into the same group attributes. Richardson et al (1994) found that consumer evaluation of store brand is driven by extrinsic cues displayed by the brands than intrinsic cues. Many authors (Patterson, 2007; Pettigrew, et al (2005) have found that increased store loyalty amongst older consumers relates to the extent to which they receive personal attention, brand names and the shopping mall's reputation. Dens (1999) suggests that satisfaction with an activity is a necessary precondition for repeat behaviours, especially when product or store choice exists. Wesley, et al (2002) support the view that mall visit satisfaction influences intention to visit the mall. Richardson et al (1994) suggest that consumers evaluation driven by extrinsic cues. In another experiment, recommended that choice of aesthetic impressions serves as external cues for the positive image for the store. Corlett (1999) and Corlett (1998) suggested that the discounts and award programs that stores offer, as special personal services, relationship marketing and customer education are good strategies for building store loyalty, increasing purchase frequency and promoting mall patronage.

Statement of the problem

Malls, which anchor stores tend to, absorb the image of the store. A mall with a department store as an anchor reflects an image of high quality merchandise and good service. A mall with a price format store as an anchor reflects an image of a low service mall (Kirkup and Mohammad, 2007). It has also been found that shopping at an upscale mall is more likely to create high level of self-congruity. Consumers belonging to high economic strata are more likely to visit stores housed in upscale mall to have a better shopping

(Siry and V. St-James, 2006). The mall image should be seen as a result of the interaction between the mall image, socio-economic factors, and store atmosphere. This study aims at identifying the important factors that play an important role in enhancing a mall image.

Objectives of the study

The study aims at identifying the important elements that play an important role in enhancing the image of the shopping mall.

Research Methodology

The research was carried out in Coimbatore City in Tamil Nadu state of India and the study was done during the period of June and July 2014. Sampling unit for this study is the shoppers who visit mall for various purposes to different shopping malls in the city. A total of 120 responses were obtained from the shoppers who came out of the mall after shopping was selected randomly with every shopper coming out were identified for the response. The responses were obtained with the help of a structured questionnaire. The cronbach alpha test applied shows the reliability resulted with a co-efficient of 0.732. As the study identifies the factors influencing mall on the aspect of image. Factor analysis was carried out to screen the factors affecting mall image. Considerable data has also been collected from secondary sources such as journals, magazines, websites. The percentage and factor analysis has been used for data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Shopping malls attract the attention of the customer because of their functional variety. The result of the data analysis were discussed as under:

Classification of Responses

The respondents were classified based on their socio-economic profile and the factors influencing mall image.

Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic variables namely age, sex, residence, education, occupation and monthly income are the most important variables employed in market segmentation.

TABLE 1 Distribution of Respondents Based on Socio-Economic Profile

Variables	No. of respondents (120)	Percentage
Age (in years)	Up to 20	20
	21- 40	62
	41- 60	17
	Above 61	4
Gender	Male	4
	Female	5
Marital status	Married	6
	Unmarried	4
Family	Nuclear	70
	Joint	29
Education	School Level	10
	Under Graduate	29
	Post Graduate	51
	Skill and technical education	8.3
Occupation	Business	12
	Govt Employment	25
	Private Employment	37
	Profession	20
	Agriculture	4.1
Monthly Income (in ₹)	Less than 10,000	16.67
	10,001-20,000	29.17
	20,001-30,000	41.67
	Above 30,001	12.5

Source: Primary data

The socio economic profile of the respondents shows that majority of the respondents (75 per cent) who visit mall belong to the age group of 21-40 years. Female respondents predominantly (66 per cent) involved in visiting mall, remaining 54 percent were male. Majority of the respondents were married. The nuclear families were predominant with 70 per cent. Majority of the respondents (95 per cent) were literate. Most of the respondents (62 per cent) were graduates, 35 per cent of the respondents were under graduates, and 13 per cent of the respondents studied up to school level and remaining 10 per cent of the respondents were with skill oriented and technical education. Most of the respondents were in private sector employment (45 per cent) and 35 per cent were government employments, 25 per cent of the respondents were in profession and remaining five per cent were home maker and unemployed. Most of the respondents (50 per cent) were in the income group having monthly income between ₹20,001-30,000, 35 per cent of the respondents between ₹ 10,001-20,000, and 20 per cent of the respondents with monthly income of less than ₹10000 and for fifteen per cent of the respondents monthly income is above ₹ 30,331.

Accessibility of Store

Location, transportation and travelling time influence the consumer market patronizing the store and, inevitably, sales (Wood & Browne, 2007). Thang and Tan (2003), note that retailers are chosen on the basis of accessibility, ease of transportation and time duration of travelling. They found that accessibility of a store is rated second to merchandising and that even stores located on the same street still engendered varying perceptions with regard to accessibility. The smallest distance can however influence a store's success or failure (Wood & Browne, 2007).

Table 2 Distance to Mall

Distance travelled to mall (in kms)	No of respondents (120)	Percentage
00-05	39	32.50
05-10	50	41.68
10-15	17	14.16
More than 15	14	11.66

Source: Primary data

From the table2, it is understood that, Majority of the customers (74.18%) who were able to visit the shopping mall within ten kilometres were patronised the mall. About 12 percent of respondents travelled more than 15 kilometres to reach the mall. Lesser the distance to travel, more the number of respondents who patronise the mall.

Location to the store

A single visit to a store where a consumer may meet with unsatisfactory style could disconfirm a consumer's perception and instantly influence the perception of store image (Newman and Patel, 2004). Location is an important aspect of marketing and a good location can be a source of competitive advantage for the retail outlet (dickinson, 1981; vigoda, 1981).

Table 3 Satisfaction towards Location of Mall

Location	No of respondents(120)	Percentage
Satisfied	83	69.17
Not satisfied	37	30.83

Source: Primary data

Table 3 analyses that 83 percent of customer were satisfied with the accessibility of the store and its location and 37 percent of respondents answered that the location of store are not accessible.

Motivation of Store elements to shop longer and spend more time

Nicholls et al.(1994) found that a person will tend to shop more and spend more money when going out with someone. Other situational factors can also have an impact on shopping behaviour and purchase decisions. Thus the various store elements which leads to shop more time are analysed in the table 4

Majority of the respondents (45.83%) were with the sales staff and engaged in merchandising. About 17 percent of the customers to shop in the mall for solution selling or for sales. Another 16.67 percent of the respondents spent time in the mall for their enhanced shopping. About 12 percent of the respondents did shopping wish list and found all their wish merchandise available in the mall. A few percentage of the respondents visited shopping not only for purchase in exclusive stores but for the availability of equality brands.

Purpose of visit

People visit or use shopping malls for various activities in different hours of day and days of week. "Shopping malls provide many facilities under one roof" lack in providing goods at a cheap price. This mall is more famous among the Common Market. Malls provide largely the same goods at a competitive price. Various purposes attract customer with entertainment, fashion, food court, window shopping, brand portfolio, quality, mall essence, cost effectiveness, attractiveness and luxury which is depicted in the table,

Table 4 Store elements which motivates to shop longer and spend more time.

Store elements	No of respondents (120)
Experienced merchandising	55
Solution selling	20
Enhanced shopping experience	20
Retailing co-branding	10
Wish list program	15

Source: Primary data

Purpose of visit Table 5

Product purchase	No of respondents (120)
Grocery	15
Accessories	5
Entertainment	20
Food products	25
Sports wear	5
Womens, kids & fashion	15
Electronics	10
Dine	20
Books, cards, gift, music & crafts	5

Source: Primary data

Majority of the respondents visited the mall for shopping purpose. For most of the people the shopping is done with entertainment(16.67%).and for some of the respondents shopping with the family as get together(15.83%). 12.5 percent of the respondents purchased groceries apparels(12.5%) and others visit for the purpose of shopping things like accessories, sportswear, books , cards, gifts and crafts.

Factors Influencing Mall Image

The analysis was done for identifying the important factors of exterior and interior mall atmosphere that affect and position the image of the mall in the minds of the consumer. Varimax rotation was used. Factors with eigen value more than one, was considered for analysis. If any factor's component loading was 0.8 and above in any one of the factors, it was taken as a dominant variable of that

The forty three variables influencing the mall image were factorized by using principle component loading. The Eigen values calculated shows that only nine factors had Eigen value more than one. The principal component analysis rotated factor loading method was used for finding stimulating factors. kaiser-meyer-olkin(KMO) measure sampling adequacy index resulted with Bartlett's test of sphericity chi-square is highly significant (761.062). Table shows the 43 statements factored.

Table 6 Atmospheric influence on retail mall image from customer perspective

Variable	Factor									Communality
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
	-.191	-.751	-.190	.103	-.155	-.202	.312	-.256	-.019	.875
	-.051	-.866	.149	.012	.092	.089	-.180	.055	.086	.834
	-.109	-.040	.559	.133	.040	.644	.048	-.257	-.169	.856
	.085	-.029	-.017	-.027	-.931	-.002	.021	-.072	-.052	.884
	.129	-.030	.680	.273	.175	-.038	-.502	-.163	-.189	.901
	-.011	.007	.855	-.037	-.063	.086	.134	.201	.145	.823
	.151	.091	.083	-.122	.015	.824	-.100	-.020	.123	.757
	.184	-.058	.022	-.005	.122	.052	.015	-.058	.934	.931
	.142	.470	.428	-.341	.464	.037	.228	.093	.091	.826
	.267	-.290	.247	-.381	.371	.063	.096	.493	.228	.807
	.321	.296	-.133	-.668	.337	.083	.082	-.174	.174	.842
	.270	.148	.021	.005	.062	-.110	.079	.893	-.086	.922
	.399	-.003	.027	.093	.078	-.114	.768	.106	-.038	.790
	.344	.054	.100	.832	.253	-.055	.152	-.081	.060	.924
	.498	-.108	-.173	.571	-.135	-.330	.147	-.312	.117	.876
	.591	.367	.192	.330	.148	.152	.300	.048	.046	.769
	.545	.227	.284	.237	.070	-.029	.520	-.036	.263	.833
	.720	.246	-.042	.247	.043	.116	.342	-.101	.128	.800
	.747	.282	.244	.104	-.089	.080	.116	-.147	.388	.907
	.669	-.061	.011	-.162	-.072	.150	.189	.380	.420	.861
	.671	-.308	-.163	-.182	-.171	.481	.004	.130	-.006	.883
	.700	.022	-.320	-.137	.010	.540	-.042	.010	.025	.906
	.705	-.169	-.137	-.062	.121	.426	.172	.197	.260	.881
	.777	-.087	-.246	.111	.471	.100	.066	.019	.081	.928
	.855	-.143	-.096	.131	.087	.184	.110	.190	.146	.889
	.874	.043	-.096	.167	.202	.117	.169	.056	.085	.897
	.772	.087	-.064	.291	.101	-.193	.215	-.325	.167	.919
	.807	-.067	-.016	.141	.432	-.071	.211	-.027	.187	.947
	.857	-.157	.178	.077	.118	.017	.061	-.200	.022	.855
	.785	-.272	.272	-.106	-.217	-.049	.307	-.052	.159	.947
	.882	.012	.032	.195	-.179	.056	-.013	.144	.095	.882
	.855	-.017	.152	.121	.022	-.008	.033	.246	.264	.901
	.863	.066	.042	.122	.307	.174	-.051	-.045	-.037	.898
	.865	.193	-.266	.036	.065	.122	-.135	.124	.042	.911
	.913	.130	.086	-.106	.125	.200	-.089	.109	.078	.949
	.845	.126	-.065	-.259	-.002	-.077	.143	.210	-.070	.877
	.766	.287	.108	-.265	.269	.010	.283	.147	.146	.946
	.907	.282	-.176	-.005	.019	-.023	.084	-.067	.091	.953
	.860	.128	.070	-.028	-.053	.117	.219	.132	.286	.926
	.857	-.075	.142	-.009	-.039	.010	.135	.357	-.114	.920
	.942	.035	.097	.000	-.165	.053	.003	.057	-.002	.932
	.854	.121	.103	.080	-.192	-.060	.370	.121	-.022	.955
	.900	.227	.107	-.082	0.633	-.208	.120	.021	-.100	.947
	58.75	10.25	7.75	5.75	3.25	1.05	.05	0.15	.05	
EXPLANATORY VARIABLE	58.75	69	76.75	82.5	85.75	86.8	86.85	87	87.05	

Explanation of Independent Variables

Variables			
Interior Store atmosphere:		Exterior Store atmosphere	
X1	Selling space	X24	Entrance
X2	Merchandise space	X25	Marquee
X3	Customer space	X26	Windows
X4	Personnel space	X27	Construction materials
X5	Functional product groupings: men's clothing, women's, and kids.	X28	Lighting
X6	product grouping meant for personality of customer consists of committed customer, disinterested customer and thoughtful person.	X29	Front and back entrances
X7	Segment wise product groupings consists of Women's apparel, music stores and art gallery	X30	Electric self opening doors
X8	Storability product groupings consists Super market	X31	Push pull doors
X9	Traffic pattern	X32	Air conditioning
X10	Flooring	X33	Trees, fountains, and benches
X11	Lighting	X34	warm or cold air entrance
X12	Store fixtures	X35	Traditional or fluorescent lighting
X13	Storage rooms	X36	Walkways
X14	Display walks	X37	Large window display
X15	Tables	X38	Public service messages
X16	Wall textures	X39	Multilevel Parking
X17	Store temperature	X40	Price level
X18	Private Dressing facilities	X41	Satisfactory service
X19	Vertical transportation	X42	Vehicle Parking facilities
X20	Light fixtures	X43	Sidewalks
X21	Price level displays		
X22	Scents and sounds		
X23	Community relation		

Among the resulted nine factors factor 1 has highest (58.75) on influencing mall image. All the nine factors taken together explained 87.05 percent of variance in the mall image, under factor store front the retail mall image among customer is enhanced by general exteriors which includes satisfactory service(0.942), traditional or fluorescent lighting(0.913), public service messages(0.907), push pull doors (0.882), trees, fountains. and benches(0.863), cold or warm air (0.865), multilevel parking(0.854), price level foster a perception of retail image(0.857) and finally parking facilities favour a store image(0.854). Factor 2 consumers perceive a store image that reflects higher-quality merchandise space(0.866), Factor 3 named as products available for customer personality with different emotions consists of Committed customer, disinterested customer and thoughtful person (0.855), factor 4 promotional shows resulted with events organised of product promotion like display walks(0.832), factor 5 personnel space (0.931) which employees moving space and comfort ability in handling the products, factor 6 segment wise product groupings consists of Women's apparel, music stores, art gallery(0.824), factor 8 store fixtures and fittings (0.893) and factor 9 "all under one roof" idea which is established through supermarket style of malls.

The vehicle parking facility in a mall is an independent variable in promoting mall image as indicated by the communality value of 0.955. in a tier III mall in Coimbatore, in order to spend more time in a mall, customers need to have a proper parking vehicle facility to engage a customer or with his/her family to shop, dine, and entertain with ease on their mind.

Conclusion

The atmospheric elements have a greater impact on retail store image. This study shows the importance of retail store image related to the atmosphere it creates via its exterior and interior, layout and displays. Atmosphere factor attracts the Customer to visits a shopping mall and spend more time in shopping. Customers visit shopping mall because the reason that they can get good products that are more effective in a pleasant atmosphere. When retailers take a proactive, integrated atmospheric approach to create a certain look, properly display products, stimulate customer behaviour, and enhance the physical environment, it has a positive impact in visual merchandising and impact of communication on a retailer's image.

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