

Exploring the Determinants of Mall Management from Customers' Perspective in India

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the determinants of mall management in India. The paper applies data reduction using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on a sample of 400 respondents drawn from eight shopping malls from different regions in India and condenses a set of 28 mall attributes into a list of six comprehensible factors. The research shows that shoppers visualize shopping management as a combination of seven factors: ambience, convenience, food and entertainment, promotion, tenant mix, amenities and safety and security. They assign different weightage in terms of significance to each of these factors. Internal configuration of these factors also reveals interesting patterns. The study suggests that mall manager in India should focus more on improving amenities and a differential tenant mix. Disproportionate expenditure on physical infrastructure is not expected to yield matching dividends. The study assumes significance as India has seen a rapid mushrooming of shopping malls in the recent past. However, malls are struggling to attract shoppers. This paper explores customers' perspective of mall management in India. This paper is among the few studies conducted on the perspective of

Indian mall shoppers about mall management. It adds significantly to the meager body of knowledge in this area in an Indian context.

Keywords: Mall Management, Shopping, Retail, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Malls, Customer Perspective

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the determinants of mall management in India from customer's perspective. A stream of research has explored the mall attributes in India. This type of research has provided deep insight into the consumer psyche and helped to formulate retail strategy (Reylond et.al, 2002). A number of studies on shopping malls have been conducted in the past. Most of these studies were carried out in the global context. Studies on Indian malls are few and most of them are generic in nature.

Most of these studies pertain to - determinants of shopping experience in India (Singh and Sahay, 2011), mall development and operations in India (Kuruville and Ganguli, 2008), financing and practices (Singh et al., 2010), profiling of mall shoppers (Kuruville and Joshi, 2010) and measurement of customer attitude towards malls (Swaminathan and Vani, 2008). No study has touched on the issue of determinants of shopping mall management in India. This reflects a definite gap in literature on this context.

The need for such a research is highlighted through the fact that the aggressive, geographic market expansion of successful retail organisations, the internationalisation of retail practices and the development of a global consumer market (Severin et al., 2001) has led many to call for investigating consumer behaviours in specific cultural contexts (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2002). Others argue that the management of retail firms needs to understand the local consumer motives, attitude, values, lifestyle and perception (Byoungho and Kim, 2003).

This paper makes two important contributions to the existing literature. Firstly, based on the empirical research, this paper extends knowledge to explore the determinants of mall management in India. Secondly, the importance of mall management in retail research is emerging as a specialized field of study for researchers as malls provide the basic environment which magnetizes customers, keeps them shopping and bringing them back. From a

managerial point of view, it is instrumental to understand shoppers' perspective and it can be used to design marketing programs accordingly.

This research paper is divided into three major sections. First, a discussion of the theoretical background and previous research that has been conducted in this area. Although there has been a dearth of studies on the determinants of mall management in the Indian context, theoretical exploration can be based on international studies conducted in other countries. Second, is a presentation of the research methodology adapted to research the determinants of mall management from customers' perspective. Included is a description of the data collection procedure along with the measures adopted for this study, and also an explanation of the exploratory (EFA) factor analysis. Third, is a presentation of the findings, conclusions and implications for mall managers.

Research Objectives

With the above discussion, it is imperative to know sustainability and quality of mall management in India because shopping malls look empty after the grand opening and leads to future problems that could affect the popularity and thereby long-term viability of the malls (Prayag, 2006). How to attract and win over the hearts of an increased number of customers and retailers becomes the tough task of mall management, although the challenge brings ample opportunity in disguise to serve the lifestyles of the shoppers through deliberation of their mall experience. Mall management indiscriminately promises footfall and conversions without adequate investigation or study and when this does not materialise, the relationship between retailers and mall management sours (Mitra, 2006; Prayag, 2006). Today's shoppers are quite informed and value their time and money. Therefore, they evaluate malls according to different dimensions. Malls in India are similar in terms of tenant mix and amenities (Roy and Masih, 2007; Singh and Bose, 2008) and this makes it very difficult for shoppers to differentiate between malls. However this requires estimation of meaning and composition

of “determinants of mall management”. Present research was considered to address this question. The research aims at identifying the factors defining mall management for Indian shoppers. It explores the following issues:

- Identifying factors defining mall management in Indian malls;
- Identifying relative significance of these factors;
- Suggesting strategies for improving shopping experience in Indian shopping malls.

Literature Review

In order to understand the determinants of mall management, two different but related researches were identified: shopping mall management and shopping experience. Mall management implies positioning a mall, attracting the best tenants, formulating tenant mix policies, promotions and facility management (Jones Lang, Lasalle Meghraj, 2007). Significance of mall management was discussed by Jones and Hillier (2002) and they concluded that it is imperative for mall managers to design the mall ambience, facilities and services according to the preference of shoppers. Chebat, Sirgy and St-James, (2006) state that the kind of tenants and image of the quality of merchandise, facilities like parking space, food courts, gaming area, sitting area for the elderly and cinema halls, attract the shoppers to visits the mall frequently. Michon et al. (2008) in their study found that consumer patronage motive for visiting malls range from seeking variety, entertainment, social interaction, to leisure, convenience and relaxation.

A shopping mall should be easily accessible to minimize the searching time and psychological costs of consumers, including stress and frustration (Levy and Weitz, 2007). In case of shopping mall, ease of access within the centre is always vital because that reduces the shopping time and effort (Frasquet, Gil and Molla, 2001). Location of a mall has been considered as an important dimension of mall management in India as nearly 50 percent of the mall visitors depend on the public transport facilities for commuting (Majumdar, 2005).

Brito (2009) in his study identified that store selection and retail-mix hold the key in shaping image of a mall which in turn, encourages patronage. Anchors are the major retail stores used to drive business to smaller retailers. These larger department stores or grocery stores are generally part of a retail chain and are the prominent business in a shopping mall. It is also believed that malls anchors are the footfall generator of the mall and larger anchors provide a better shopping environment. Many malls in India don't have control over the tenants as it is created by real estate developers which lead to vacant malls after grand opening.

Michon et al. (2008) indicated that mall management has realised that ambience and attractiveness is a prominent contributor attracting shoppers to stores. Therefore successful malls must provide interactive environments where the service aspects should be blended (Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon, 2001) with the physical ambience (Holbrook, 1994). The availability of these facilities has a direct impact on sales and business of malls.

Organising cultural events has time and again proved vital in attracting consumers to a mall. Such activities may also act as a differentiator for a mall (Jones Lang Lasalle Meghraj, 2007). Mall managers can work on drafting marketing strategies for individual malls to meet the needs of the local consumer base and the challenges of local, and in some cases, regional competitors. Mall promotions are these days almost as familiar a sight in shopping centres as the tenants themselves. Malls sometimes hold themed events especially during festivals, which not only provide footfall and boost retailers' sales, but also provide a platform for opportunities in commercialisation.

A multiplex is a movie theater complex with multiple screens, typically six, ten, or more screens. They are usually housed in a specially designed building. Sometimes, an existing venue undergoes a renovation where the existing auditoriums are split into smaller ones, or more auditoriums are added in an extension or expansion of the building. Multiplexes in existing

and upcoming malls attract a whole country of movie buffs and is one of the most important sources of footfalls for malls. Malls all over the country are also becoming serious destinations for fun and gaming. In-door cricket, bowling, pool tables, air hockey, go-karting, car racing, shooting, pinball and online multimedia gaming contests are just a few of the games on offer. This is premium entertainment and all of it in a clean, safe environment and perfect ambience (Singh, 2005). Shopping centers have incorporated food courts, cafes and restaurants on the centre property to provide a different experience (Sit, Merrilees and Birch, 2003).

Chattopadhyaya and Sengupta (2006) highlighted the significance of marketing activity in a study done on malls in Kolkata. Malls can create distinctive positioning by developing appropriate marketing strategies with enjoyed increased customer patronage.

This study also included some new attributes like restrooms (utilities), smell (odour), and security. Review of literature presented a long list of vital mall management attributes that possibly affect shopper's response to a shopping mall. Present research was planned to carry out this integration and understand whether and how attributes related to operational aspects of shopping mall management enhance the footfall. This study is primarily exploratory in nature.

Research Methodology

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

Along with the discussions and an extensive literature review, a pool of thirty three items was generated to measure the determinants of mall management. In the survey instrument, the thirty three items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, in which respondents

were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Lastly, the questionnaire also consisted questions to solicit demographic information of the respondents such as gender, age, education, income, occupation and marital status. The survey instrument was then pre-tested to suit Indian respondents. The main purpose of the pre-testing was to identify grammatical mistakes, sequencing errors, phrasing problems and clarity of questions. Only grammatical errors were identified and they were subsequently corrected. Hence, all the thirty three items were retained in the survey instrument for the next phase.

For the next phase, a sample of 800 was targeted and 489 were collected. The survey process was conducted in seven cities of India i.e., Bhubaneswar (51 respondents), Kolkata (65 respondents), Raipur (28 respondents), Hyderabad (58 respondents), Bangalore (56 respondents), Mumbai (70 respondents), Gurgaon (72 respondents). These cities were chosen based on the convenience and degree of mall penetration as well as the level of mall culture prevalent in them. Major malls in these cities were chosen to ensure similarity in size, tenant mix and convenience.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic information collected with help of questionnaire was used to develop a profile of mall shoppers across different regions of India using simple numbers and percentages, followed by an exploratory factor analysis to know the determinants of mall management in India from customer's perspective.

Profile of Respondents

Sample used in this research is representative of the population as key demographic parameters of sample resemble those of the population. Out of those 400 samples, large proportions of respondents are under the age group of 25 to 40 years, which counts for all most 45% of the sample size. Major respondents are male (62.2%) and married (33.2%). Working professionals (30%) are the major visitors at the mall followed by private service holder (25.5%)

and government employees (17%). Almost 21.25% of visitors' income is less than Rs. 10,000.

Table I: Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Demographic Group	Demographic Sub-Group	Number	Percentage(%)
Age Group	13-19 Years	25	6.25
	20-35Years	226	56.5
	36-50 Years	94	23.5
	51-65Years	55	13.75
Gender	Male	249	62.25
	Female	151	37.75
Marital Status	Unmarried	267	66.75
	Married	133	33.25
Qualification	Schooling	47	11.75
	Graduation	225	56.25
	PG & above	128	32
Occupation	Govt. service	68	17
	Private service	102	25.5
	Professional	120	30
	Business	30	7.5
	Student	80	20
Monthly income	Less than Rs10,000	85	21.25
	Rs 10,000-Rs 25,000	118	29.5
	Rs. 25,000-Rs. 40,000	97	24.25
	More than Rs.40,000	100	25

For reduction of the variables, data analysis using exploratory factor analysis is used to identify the underlying determinants of mall management in India from customer's perspective. Exploratory factor analysis was performed on items of the measurement scale using the principal component analysis with varimax rotation. An orthogonal rotation was chosen for the sake of simplicity (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Exploratory Factor Analysis

It can be seen from the above table, seven factors were extracted, accounting for 75 percent of the total variance explained. Factor loadings greater than 0.60 has been considered for the removal of additional items (Kim et.al, 2001). Reliability of the factors was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. A Cronbach's alpha value of greater than or equal to 0.7 is considered acceptable for the factor to be reliable (Hair et al., 2006).

Table II: KMO and Bartlett's Test

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Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.858
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7238.485
	df	378
	Sig.	.000

Communality value (Table III) for all the variables was greater than 0.6 indicating a healthy proportion of variance explained for each variable included in the research.

Data reduction using EFA with Varimax rotation resulted in extraction of seven factors. Extracted factors are presented in the summarized table (Table IV).

Factor 1 (Table IV - Tenant Mix): A total of seven indicators were loaded in the first factor to represent the issue of tenant mix. Factor 1, tenant

mix included items such as anchor tenant, good choice of brand, good range of products, preferred brand, and variety of stores with an Eigen value of 5.900, the accounted for 21.07 percent of total variance. The relatively large proportion of various explained by this factor suggests that tenant mix is an influential determinants for mall management. It may further be explained that the first indicator (indicator 1) in the first factor with a highest loading of .742 signifies that shoppers are looking for the tenant mix when going to shopping mall.

Factor 2 (Amenities): A total of six indicators were loaded in the second factor to represent the issue of amenities. Factor 2, amenities included items such as rest room, wash room, vertical circulation, signboard, premises, hygiene with an Eigen value of 4.305, which accounted for 36.44 percent of cumulative variance. The relatively large proportion of variance explained by this factor implies that amenities are much significant for shopping mall management.

Factor 3 (Entertainment and Food): A total of two indicators were loaded in the third factor to represent the issue of entertainment and food. Factor 3, Entertainment and food included items such as presence of multiplex and food court inside the mall with an Eigen value of 3.621, accounted for 49.37 percent of cumulative variance. The result of the factor suggests that proportion of variance is relatively good and shoppers are always concerned about entertainment and food-court inside the mall.

Factor 4 (Convenience): Convenience is considered as an important factor while deciding to go for shopping mall. The results of the factor demonstrated that the range of loadings vary between .834 to .918 with an Eigen Value of 3.621 and 12.93 of total variance. The total cumulative variance explained as 59.22 percent. The factor consisted of three descriptors, including the closeness to home, leading road, and the parking facility. The trend of results explains that mall management should give more importance to the convenience. Under this factor, the first indicator containing closeness to home is essential and reports for a high factor loading of .918. Thus, it

tends to suggest that location is a deciding factor of mall management to attract more number of shoppers.

Factor 5 (Ambience): Ambience is the fifth important factor containing three significant indicators. It explained 6.53 percent of total variance with an Eigen Value of 1.829. The factor included indicators related to air-conditioning, decor, and colour scheme. The factor accounts for a total cumulative variance of 65.75 percent. This factor suggests that ambience is essential to keep the shoppers for a longer time inside the mall as this might influence them to purchase more products.

Factor 6 (Safety and Security): The factor analysis extracted five important indicators under the name safety since shoppers felt that safety is an important determinant of mall management. Although the factor extracted as sixth one, shoppers expressed their deep sense of agreement on safety as it is one of the concern of mall management. As it is seen in the results of factor analysis table, the factor accounted for 5.4 percent of total variance, with an Eigen value of 1.516. This factor indicates the safety comprises five indicators such as safety on escalator, safety on lift, safety on restroom, safety in the mall, and trust on parking. The factor accounts for a total cumulative variance of 71.16 percent. The factor loadings between the five items vary from .811 to .885.

Factor 7 (Promotion): The seventh factor focusing on the promotion consisting of two indicators with loading ranging from .856 to .863 and explained 4.6 percent of total variance and 75.82 percent of cumulative variance with an Eigen value of 1.305. This factor is loaded in two indicators such as regular promotion and promotional schemes.

Discussion and Managerial Implications

The current research makes an important contribution to the field of mall management by identifying the determinants of mall management from customer's prospective. These determinants will act as guidelines for the mall developers in

India as it will help them to understand the particular preferences that customers consider while visiting the malls. The study validates the proposition that mall management in India is determined by seven factors: tenant mix, convenience, ambience, entertainment & food, amenities, and safety & security. The first and foremost factor that defines shopper motives is "tenant mix" already studied in some previous literature (Singh and Sahay, 2012) in national capital region (NCR) of India. Mall developers need to design the tenant mix to enhance the shopping experience. Few other factors got repeated in the present study like safety and security and physical infrastructure. It signifies irrespective of geographical location Indian customers prefer some common amenities in their mall visit, that can be considered as the basic expectation from the mall shoppers.

It is important for the mall managers to understand this composition. However specific decisions to be taken under each factor would vary depending on the intended positioning. For upcoming shopping malls, it is important to decide location, design, leasing and facilities management in a manner so that the mall can attract a good number of footfalls. Already operational malls and forthcoming malls can design their marketing strategy for their sustainability. This research also provides benchmark for evaluating future options for mall management, operations and promotions. There could be decisions beyond the list of variables (observable parameters) included in this research. These may be evaluated in terms of their analogy to variables and compatibility with factors included in the proposed model.

Though respondents identified seven determinants of mall management in India, all seven are not equally significant. For instance only two preferences basically tenant mix and amenities have more contribution, having higher score. This is a valuable indicator for mall managers' operating in India to differentiate on the basis of tenant mix as well as amenities. It is the responsibility of developers to identify key preferences and decision areas where suitable

changes can yield more dividends in the years to come.

Directions for Future Research

This study is probably the first study to be carried on the constitution of mall management in India for existing shopping malls as well as forthcoming mall. Results are based on a sample of respondents taken from a few shopping malls in India. It is possible that individuals demonstrate different shopping preferences on varying occasions. It is advisable to test these preferences so as to arrive at a generalized theory that could be applied to all the Indian malls. Already in different studies the importance of mall development to the society, country's economy and end customer demographic, psychographic benefit (Singh et. al.2010; Kuruville and Ganguli, 2008; Tripathi and Siddiqui, 2008) has been highlighted. Other interesting aspect would be to see if these preferences change with geography (cultural influences), size of the mall, nature of town (tier-I, tier-II etc.) and demographics of respondents. Another issue relates to significance of tenant mix. In a country like India where all the existing malls have the same kind of tenant mix, it is difficult to differentiate one mall from another. Therefore, how would people rate tenant mix where developers consider regional tenants under their umbrella? Amenities is the least concern in Indian malls, but the question arises how the developers can provide international facilities? It also has implication for developers and the Govt. who can assure a safe shopping destination in the malls. Can the cultural aspect be considered when the mall development happens at the regional level? It is important to find how determinants of mall management are related with other factors like mall loyalty, patronage intentions and shopping experience.

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Table III: Communalities

Sl.No	Statements	Initial	Extraction
1.	Mall is close to my home	1.000	.856
2.	Roads leading to mall are in good condition.	1.000	.799
3.	Mall provides adequate parking space.	1.000	.735
4.	The mall has reputed anchor store(s)	1.000	.742
5.	The stores in the mall offer a good choice of brands.	1.000	.831
6.	The mall has good range of products.	1.000	.774
7.	Stores within the mall stock my preferred brands.	1.000	.784
8.	There is a large variety of stores in the mall.	1.000	.769
9.	The mall provides occasional entertainment for customers(i.e. fashion shows and lucky draws)	1.000	.752
10.	The mall has a good combination of international and local brands.	1.000	.767
11.	Tenants are well placed in the mall.	1.000	.771
12.	I feel safe while using the escalators.	1.000	.707
13.	I feel safe using the restrooms.	1.000	.791
14.	I feel safe when using the lifts.	1.000	.715
15.	I feel safe within the shopping mall.	1.000	.643
16.	I do have trust of safety of my vehicle in car park.	1.000	.763
17.	The mall has specific venue for entertainment(i.e. Multiplex and game zones)	1.000	.791
18.	Mall has a food court.	1.000	.679
19.	The rest rooms are conveniently located.	1.000	.798
20.	The mall has clean wash rooms.	1.000	.752
21.	Mall provides adequate option for vertical circulation (i.e. lifts, escalators and stairs.	1.000	.786
22.	Directory sign board with in the mall is helpful.	1.000	.789
23.	The premises of mall are neatly maintained.	1.000	.663
24.	The food courts' hygiene is maintained badly.	1.000	.754
25.	I would prefer a mall which provides promotional scheme when I shop.	1.000	.737
26.	Air-conditioned of the mall is well controlled.	1.000	.745
27.	The mall has pleasant background music.	1.000	.794
28.	The mall has modern décor and facades.	1.000	.744

Table IV: Factor Loading, Eigen Values, Variance explained

Name of factor	Indicators	Factor Loadings	Variance explained
TENANT MIX	The mall has reputed anchor store(s)	.850	21.07
	The stores in the mall offer a good choice of brands.	.905	
	The mall has good range of products.	.871	
	Stores within the mall stock my preferred brands.	.872	
	There is a large variety of stores in the mall.	.868	
	The mall has a good combination of international and local brands.	.863	
	Tenants are well placed in the mall.	.869	
AMENITIES	The rest rooms are conveniently located.	.814	15.3
	The mall has clean wash rooms.	.885	
	Mall provides adequate option for vertical circulation (i.e. lifts, escalators and stairs.	.864	
	Directory sign board with in the mall is helpful.	.870	
	The premises of mall are neatly maintained.	.884	
	The food courts' hygiene is maintained badly.	.811	
SAFETY AND SECURITY	I feel safe while using the escalators.	.873	12.9
	I feel safe using the restrooms.	.835	
	I feel safe when using the lifts.	.883	
	I feel safe inside the shopping mall.	.843	
	I do have trust of safety of my vehicle in car park.	.785	
CONVENIENCE	Mall is close to my home	.918	9.84
	Roads leading to mall are in good condition.	.879	
	Mall provides adequate parking space.	.834	
AMBIANCE	Air-conditioned of the mall is well controlled.	.850	6.53
	The mall has modern décor and facades.	.885	
	Overall mall has a fashionable colour scheme.	.847	
ENTERTAINMENT AND FOOD	The mall has specific venue for entertainment(i.e. Multiplex and game zones)	.843	5.41
	Mall has a food court.	.868	
PROMTION	I would prefer a mall which provides promotional scheme when I shop.	.863	4.66
	The mall provides occasional entertainment for customers(i.e. fashion shows and lucky draws)	.752	