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Exploring the Factors affecting the Consumer Behavior

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Abstract

It has never been an easy task to understand the consumer behavior especially when the old traditional retailing has been changing its form to the modern organized retailing. The present paper tries to understand the consumer behavior and the factors that affect the consumers or makes them visit the malls. An effort has been made to explore various variables that attract the consumers to the malls along with different type of factors such as personal factors and situational factors. The paper also quotes some of the studies to provide a detail description about a range of variables.

Keywords: *Consumer behavior, Personal factors, Situational factors*

Introduction

Traditional bazaars

Retailing is an age-old concept in India. The haats, weekly bazaars, the kirana stores were the traditional markets of India. The traditional markets had an unorganized format of retailing with small retailers such as foot path vendor, apparel shops, hand-cart hawkers, general stores, medical stores, and kirana stores, etc. In some parts of India such as small towns and cities, we still can see the kirana shops. These are small independent stores, run by family as businesses and depending on the returns they also employ one or two helpers. These traditional bazaars suffer poor access to capital, lack of management, lack of regulations and denial of access to best practices. These bazaars

prove to be beneficial for those with less capital and investments as they provide livelihood to them with only land and labor with a less or no tax. With the change in time, and the coming of the era of LPG i.e. Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization the change could be seen. The coming of the organized retailing is the cause of these.

Transformation from the Bazaars to Organized Market

In the other developing countries, the transformation has started from traditional bazaars to the mall culture or a much-organized format of retailing. However, recently has there been an awakening in this sector, starting off with the urban areas and the cities, mall culture has developed their significance. The retail market is getting organized. It has largely influenced the way people shop, the way they consume, and their patterns of consumption have been impacted. These changes could be seen, may be because of the change in the income of the people, a rise in income, and increases the purchasing power of the people and eventually leading to changes in the consumption. White (2008) finds that the change in the lifestyle of the people results in the changes in the factors that affect them to shop. The factors that once were of only a little significance are now growing to attract the consumer, like the entertainment centers in the malls that are growing now to attract the consumers were once not that attractive to the consumers. The change could be because of increasing awareness of the products/ brands. The more organized the markets get, people find it easier and more interesting to purchase.

Factors affecting Mall Culture: A Theoretical Framework

Solomon (2006) and Peter et al (2008) considers consumer behavior 'a complex pattern'. It is the study of the actions of people their psychological, social and physical attributes, how do they purchase a product, use them and dispose of after using. It is important to know the behavior of purchasers, the pattern of their visit to the mall. There are certain factors which affect the consumer's behavior, it indicates certain situations which leads the customers to make a purchase or not. Following are certain personal and situational factors that affect the consumer's behavior to make or not make purchases.

Personal Factors

- Personal values: It consist of the consumer's behavior of purchasing, their attitude for shopping depends upon personal values of the consumer. Shim, and Eastlick, (1998) the consumers have positive attitude towards mall culture, who give importance to personal values and self-actualization.
- Shopping motives: Babin, Darden, and Griffin, (1994) talks of two types of shopping values: the dark side and the fun side. I.e. utilitarian and hedonic shopping. Patel, and Sharma, (2009) talks of nine motivational shopping values, the most important being the utilitarian and hedonic shopping. The shopping depends on the atmospheric type and the motives.
- Demographics: Massicotte, et al., (2011) talks about the difference between the adult and youngster's interpretation while shopping. The difference of effect of atmospheric cues on both. Making the malls to

deal with both in different ways. The teen-section and the adult-section. Turley and Milliman (2000) talks of five categories: external cues, general interior, layout and design, and point of purchase and decoration displays. External cues are the surroundings of the store and the architecture of the store. General interior includes the lightning, flooring and color arrangements of the store. Layout and design include the space design, traffic flow and allocation. Point of purchase and decoration are the signs, cards, wall decorations, price displays. Puri (2013) maintains in the study that women need the qualified service and products while shopping, as they are more interested in shopping. On the other hand, males are more interested in the entertainment rather making purchases in the malls. Michon, and Chebat (2008) maintains that youngsters are more into the attracted product, they tend to purchase those products which looks attractive while adults tend to purchase the qualified products, which are more productive in use. (Anic & Radas, 2006) believes that the companion has a direct impact on the consumer while making purchases. The consumer who comes for shopping with children, who comes on weekends, who do not come with the shopping list results in shopping more, spending more while making purchases.

Situational Factors

- Atmosphere: Situational factors are those which are in the current purchasing position. Those who are in the process of shopping. The atmosphere of the mall is the mood, the situation, and the creative work of the mall, ambience & atmosphere, air-conditioning; mall Interiors, space for walking & shopping that attracts the consumers. The factors that affect the consumers while making purchases like the physical surroundings, social surroundings, temporal perspective, task definition and antecedent state and focused on the role of these factors on shopping behavior of customers. The environment of the mall and the surrounding of the malls affect the consumers' behavior.
- Property Management: It includes the management of the malls. The cleaning of stores, cleaning of shopping areas, toilets, places to sit, security standards, easy access to information about shops and goods all refers to the property management. The consumers get attracted to the mall's safety & security, hygiene, cleanliness of the malls and restroom.
- Promotions: Abhik Roy (1994) found that the most important feature in shopping. Promotional advertisements and activities are the most important factors for the attraction of the consumers. The promotional activities like the free gifts/ trail packs, offers and discounts, surprise contest/ lucky draw, demonstrations, celebrity visits and new product launch.
- Reachability: Bearden (1977) and Severin et al (2001) found that the most important characteristic of shopping malls is location. Howell and Rogers (2001) found convenience, parking and nearness as important attribute of shopping malls. Frasquet et al (2001) and Leo and Philippe (2002) found that the most important characteristic of shopping malls is accessibility. Reachability is the important factor for a mall shopper. Parking facilities, nearness to other entertainment places are some other factors for attracting consumers to the malls.

- **Shopping Experience:** It occurs as an impression on shoppers at the retail shops at the shopping malls. It refers to the process of shopping, seeing thing and the whole experience you get while making purchases. It includes the product quality, service quality, range and type of shops in the mall, offers and discounts, surprise contests, price, and Sales Executive Interactions etc.
- **Entertainment:** These are those activities that hold the attention and interest of an audience, gives pleasure and delight to the consumers. The entertainment area for the consumers in the shopping malls includes, children play area, movie theatres/multiplex, indoor sports, food court and video games zones, etc. The people prefer purchase of products from shopping malls are due to quality, convenience and wider choice. Movie, One Stop Shopping and eating joints are the most attraction for the consumers.

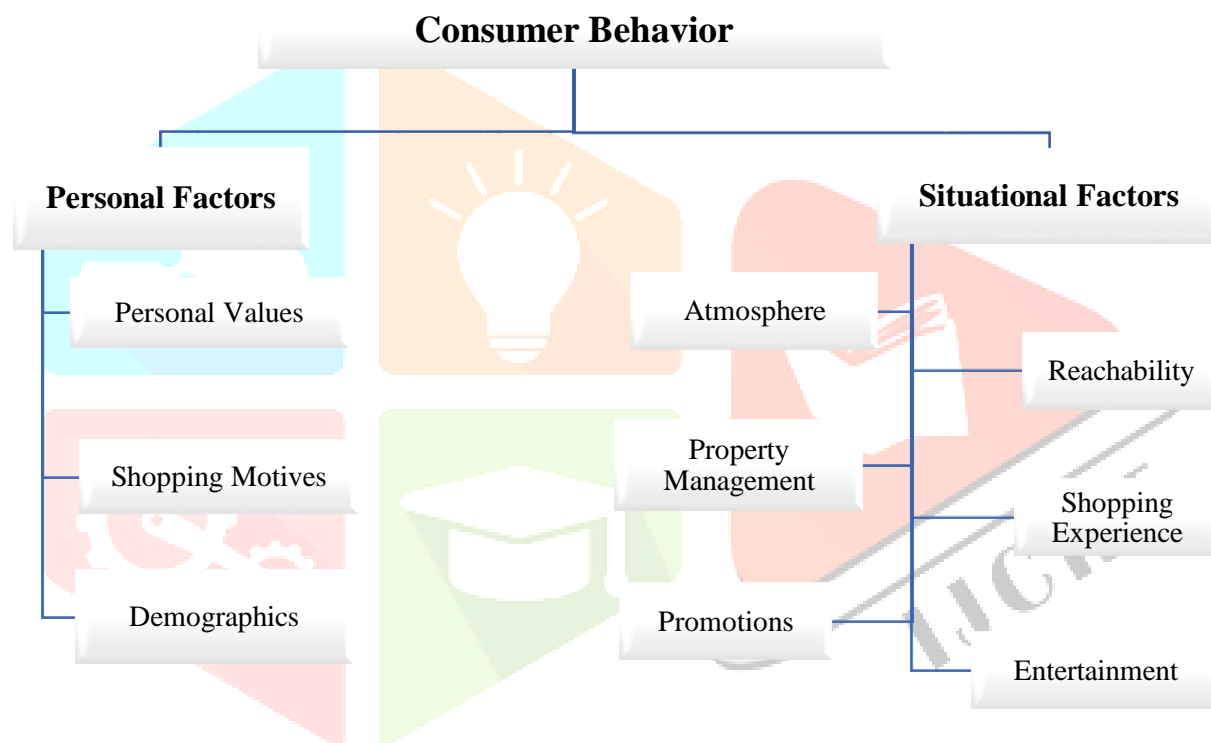


Figure showing various factors of consumer behavior

The figure explains the factors that affect the consumers while making purchases in the malls. All the variables the personal, the demographic, the atmosphere all affect the consumers while visiting malls. The mall which is near to the residential areas are more feasible to the consumers to visit. The security, sitting arrangements of the malls attracts many, even the old age could freely visit without even worrying about where to sit or take some rest or the climate. The discounts, sales and the quality of the product attract the consumers the most. Their experience while making purchasing or even just to make a visit impact them the most, to make a further purchase/ visit to the malls.

Entertainment which once was not a significant factor of attracting the consumer is now the most significant factor. Some people tend to visit malls just for the entertainment purpose.

Conclusion

It has never been an easy task to understand the consumer behavior may in terms of the old traditional retailing or the modern organized retailing. There is a need to understand what affects the consumer to come and visit the mall, and not just to understand the footfalls in the malls but even there is a need to understand what affect the consumer and leads to make a final purchase. All the above factors have their own way to attract the consumer; maybe it is his own personal values and personal factors or the physical variables leading to the atmosphere, property management or the entertainment in the malls that attracts them the most. The need is to understand these variables and make some more choices that could result in an increase in the number of footfalls in the malls ad an eventual increase in the number of purchases.

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