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SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS VISITING SHOPPING MALLS IN TRICITY

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Abstract

The analysis of the socio-economic background of the individuals plays an important role in any social investigation. We all are aware that the uncomfortable process of shopping particularly at different shops under the scorching summer sun or with humid weather has now been put at ease due to the emergence of mall culture where everything is available under one roof. There is no doubt that consumer's expectations have changed to a great extent in the society. But before understanding any other parameters of this new kind of culture, it becomes very important to comprehend the various factors such as age, caste, family type, educational achievement and economic status of the people visiting shopping malls. An attempt has been made in this paper to shed light on the socio-economic background of the consumers visiting shopping malls in Tricity. Three malls were selected for the purpose of data collection.

Keywords: Consumers, Respondents, Shopping, Malls, Women, Young, Tricity.

Introduction

The words that catch our attention when we hear the word "mall" are shopping, fun, food, movies and in fact hanging out with family or friends on a weekend or holiday. In the present times, not only youngsters but aged people also prefer to visit the mall as the place helps them to get a free-entry to the air-conditioner interior during the summer heat, to pass out their free time, to change their mood and to relish the delicious cuisines accessible in these multiplexes. On the other hand, to catch the attention of the customers, various schemes and eye-catching prizes are used by various companies these days. This is the sure success formulae that actually work to hook up the consumers to make them visit the malls. In this age, advertisements are again an important source to attract the

customers all the way through the channels of mass media. Every day we receive plenty of information related to shopping, fun, food, movies along with various deals that are available in the big malls through e- papers, e-mail, What's app, Facebook, Tweeter, Radio FM, etc. Thus, the mall culture has totally changed the concept of shopping and entertainment, thereby attracting the customers towards various deals and offers which are usually offered by them time and again. The analysis of the socio-economic background of the people plays an important role in any social investigation as it helps to comprehend the various factors such as age, caste, religion, family structure, educational achievement and economic status that affect the value system of the respondents.

Research Methodology

For the present study, the customers visiting the malls namely Elante mall, VR Punjab and NH22 in Tricity have been covered. Data was collected from three hundred respondents. From each mall, first-hand information was collected from hundred respondents. Fifty males and fifty females were covered. The sample group includes youth, housewives, working men and women along with retired persons. In this way, a sample of three-hundred respondents (in-between 24-65 years of age) was taken in the study. Convenience sampling method has been used for selecting the sample. Both primary and secondary data have been used in the present study. For primary data, a well structured interview schedule was developed and administered to the customers visiting the selected malls in Tricity.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To study the socio-economic background of the consumers who visit the malls in Tricity.
- 2) To analyse the inferences that came into light in the present study from the facts or figures and through the responses of the respondents.

Findings and Discussion

Majority of the respondents (that is, 60.66 percent) were found in the age group of twenty-four to forty one. In this way, the sample was predominantly represented by the young people. It was found that people who are young prefer to spend their time and money on buying new things in the shopping malls. Similarly, Sundarraj (2011) has found that young consumers intend to visit the shopping malls to buy diverse range of products with latest brands. Likewise, in a study of the Bengaluru and Chennai cities, young people were found to have favorably inclined towards the mall as compared to their older counterparts (Ramachandran and Anitha V., 2014). Majority of respondents were found belonging to the upper ranking castes (48.33 percent). The vast majority of respondents (97 percent) were found to be literate. It was found that well-read people prefer to visit eye-catching places for shopping in modern times. The atmosphere and accessibility matter a lot to the educated strata. Similarly, Yadav, Siraj and Arora (2012) in their work have acknowledged that the demand to have clean, attractive and pleasing atmosphere for shopping have been growing among the people. Moreover, poor accessibility and fewer parking spaces are also some of the factors that influence the people. The idea is quite clear that learned people do not want

to purchase anything in a dull environment. Out of the total sample, 45.33 percent of respondents were found unemployed or homemakers. It was found that people who are unemployed or homemakers frequently visit the shopping malls because of the entertainment facilities available in these three malls of Tricity. The results are in line with Garlin and Owen (2005) who reported in their work that the shoppers prefer to visit the shopping malls due to entertainment events such as Christmas celebrations, band performances, fashion shows etc.

Approximately 26.21 percent of informants were found working in the area of education and training. Another 17.07 percent were found engaged in government and public administration. Nearly 16.46 percent respondents were found engaged in information technology whereas 12.80 percent respondents were found belonging to the line of medical and engineering. The percent of respondents working in the line of hospitality and tourism as well as those linked to agriculture, architecture and construction were found to be same, and that is 4.87 percent. It was found that working people visit the shopping malls in order to get a break and relief from their boring job. Similarly, Underhill (2005) has identified that the stylish atmosphere of a mall provides more relief and break from the tedious and recurring nature of job to the shoppers.

Approximately 18.90 percent of informants had their income above fifty thousand rupees whereas 18.29 percent had their income between forty-five thousand to forty-nine thousand rupees. About 14.02 percent had their monthly income between forty thousand to forty-four thousand rupees whereas 12.19 percent had their monthly income between thirty-five thousand to thirty-nine thousand rupees. The number of respondents having their monthly income between thirty thousand to thirty-four thousand rupees and those having monthly income between ten thousand to fourteen thousand rupees were found to be almost similar, that is 6 percent. In the present study, it was found that disposable income of the consumers makes them spend more money on buying trendy products in the shopping malls in Tricity. The results are in line with Talreja and Jain (2013), who found in their study that increase in disposable income is one of the major reasons among most people to shop at shopping malls.

In the present study, it was found that people belonging to higher caste especially the female shoppers prefer to buy products in the presence of music and aroma in the stores of shopping malls. Similarly, Morrison, Gan, Dubelaar and Oppewal (2011) in their study have observed that the volume of music played as well as the existence of aroma persuades the behaviour of shopping the people. In their results, they revealed that the music and aroma bring about the emotional state of the shoppers and these two factors may work more on shopping, thereby spending more time in shopping in the malls along with impulse buying. The study also revealed that the presence of vanilla aroma in addition to fine music results in increasing the gratification level of the shoppers in the malls.

A high proportion of the respondents' families were male headed in the total sample, that is, 68.33 percent. Another 31.66 percent of the respondents' families were female headed. In the present study, many working or non-working women were found to be the head of their family. In majority of the cases, the partner was either missing from the residence due to employment or death. And the whole responsibility of making shopping from the basic needs to specific needs rests on the women's shoulder. These women respondents talked about the reasons that influence

them to shop in some stores in the shopping malls in Tricity. Discounts, fast checkouts and convenience were some of the factors that were highlighted by them. Likewise, Tomar and Parihar (2013) have investigated in their study the reasons for which working women possessed positive attitude towards retail stores in the shopping malls.

Some inferences that came into light in the present study from the above facts or figures and through the responses of the respondents are given below:

1. The true lovers of shopping malls are the youngsters because shopping malls serve many functions to them such as shopping, dating or just the opportunity to hang out with someone special as they really do not need a purpose for being in the mall.
2. People from all segments of the society wish to visit the shopping malls irrespective of their age. Sometimes in the scorching summer heat, shopping malls provide the aged people an opportunity to enter into a completely air conditioned environment.
3. Shopping malls have actually come up with diverse ways to cater the need of the target visitors. Singles prefer the discos where they get the chance to chill and have fun with new friends especially during the late night hours. Malls are therefore considered as the coolest place to be with the loved ones.
4. The culture of the individuals has changed along with their literacy status in the society. Thought processes, habits along with the practices of people have changed considerably with the growing literacy status, thereby providing a new mall culture for the consumers.
5. The spending power of people has increased in contemporary times due to many job opportunities. Young employed people have plenty of disposable income that they spend every week without any reason in the shopping malls either on fun or food.
6. Employed people prefer to use cafe, food joints and restaurants in shopping malls to celebrate their informal meetings and parties.
7. Better qualified professionals or businessmen with larger families tend to make more purchases in the shopping malls.
8. The constant urge to buy trendy stuff through the attractive and cheap offers in the malls provides excitement to the consumers. Moreover, consumers having high income are less conscious about the price of the product.

Conclusion

It is clear that shopping malls attract the youngsters because malls provide them a platform to perceive, talk, socialise and connect with each other. But nowadays, malls cater the needs of all age groups. Findings reveal that the better socio-economic status of the people also helps in stimulating footfalls in the malls of the Tricity. It can be said that an amalgamation of shopping along with mall culture has somehow succeeded in bringing a 'new way of life' in Tricity.

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