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**Title**

**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF RETAIL  
CONSUMERS WITH SPECIAL RELEVANCE TO  
ORGANIZED RETAIL OUTLETS IN CHENNAI CITY**

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**ABSTRACT:**

In the present era, customer is the center point of all marketing activities. Creating and maintaining a regular assessment of consumer satisfaction is therefore very important for business managers, marketers and retailers as well as financial managers among others (Wilkie, 1986). The objective of the present research is to examine the relationship between customer satisfaction and store-related and consumer-related factors which leads to loyalty to a particular retail outlet. The consumer-related factors are minimal checkout delay, security, assistance available and convenience. The store-related factors are internal and external design, product category assortment and good management. On surveying 141 organized retail shoppers in Chennai city it was found that there was significant relationship between consumer-related and store-related factors and customer satisfaction except product assortment factor. So by identifying the factors that satisfy customers, with the relevant innovative strategies will help the Indian retailers to satisfy customers and build a long lasting relationship.

**Key Words:** Customer Satisfaction, Customer-related factors – Minimal check out delay, security, Assistance available and Convenience, Store-related factors – Internal External design, Product category assortment and Good management.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Retailing in India is slowly on the rise with changing consumer preferences also tastes and evolution of global structures. The retail industry in India can be traced back to the existence of mom and pop stores i.e. convenience stores catering to the daily needs of neighbourhood consumers. The Government of India in addition to canteen stores department for Defence personnel started ration shops. It also provided support to rural initiatives by constituting the Khadi and Village industries commission.

The emergence of organized retail chains was seen in the 1980s when textile companies such as Bombay Dyeing, Raymond's, S Kumar and Grasim set up their own stores. In the 1990s, organized retailers such as Future Group, Raheja group, RP Goenka group and many other started their retail chains in various formats targeted at urban population to provide a one-stop

solution for their needs. The stores emerged in various formats such as supermarkets, hypermarkets, departmental stores and discount stores.

Post 2000, organized retail expanded to small cities and towns. However, the major concentration of retail had been limited to the urban markets. Since liberalization in 1991, the Indian market had a limited presence of global retailers such as McDonalds, Landmark, Pizza Hut and few others. In January 2006, the Union Cabinet approved the policy on foreign direct investment (FDI) in retail to further simplify procedures for investing in India and to avoid multiple layers of approvals required in some activities. In 2009, A.T. Kearney's Global Retail Index (GRDI), ranked India as the emerging destination for retail ahead of Russia and China.

A report on India by Northbridge Capital, UK based investment bank reveals that "Retail market size in 2009 was estimated to be of \$450 billion, growing at the rate of 30% per annum. It expected to grow to \$720 billion by the end of 2011". An analysis by AT Kearney reveals that organized retail in India accounts for only 6% of the total retail market.

Retailing in India is going through a transformation. They are experiencing a philosophical shift from a profit- centered objective to a customer-centered, relationship oriented objective. In the present era, customer is the center point of all marketing activities. Creating and maintaining a regular assessment of consumer satisfaction is therefore very important for business managers, marketers and retailers as well as financial managers among others (Wilkie,1986). The objective of the present research is to examine the relationship between customer satisfaction and store-related and consumer-related factors which leads to loyalty to a particular retail outlet.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To present a brief profile of the retail consumers.
2. To examine the relationship between customer satisfaction and store-related and customer-related factors that leads to store loyalty.



### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The questionnaire contained questions on the brief profile and customer satisfaction influencing factors of the retail consumers. The questionnaire used is of multiple-choice and 5 point likert-scale. Convenient sample of 141 respondents visiting organized retail outlets in Chennai were collected. Chi-square test using was applied examine the relationship between customer satisfaction and store-related and customer-related factors that leads to store loyalty.

### **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND STORE LOYALTY:**

Satisfaction, as an emotional state in which consumers radiate a positive disposition towards a store or brand, is an essential first step for a repeat purchase and eventual consumer loyalty. Moreover there is a predominant belief that satisfied customers are often loyal and that they engage in repeat business (Cronin and Taylor,1992; Homburg and Giering, 2001). The loyal support of customers provides a strong basis for a stable and growing market share and reflects upon the financial strength of a company. Customer loyalty is therefore an important area of marketing for research, as the need to understand factors that determine loyalty is very important. Such factors will help in determining the various managerial and retailing policies to be implemented in order to retain existing customers, foster loyalty among retail shoppers and attract new customers.

Ahmad Al-Awadi (2002) gave a proposed model explaining the relationship between customer satisfaction and store-related and customer related factors that leads to store loyalty based on Kuwaiti experience. The factors mentioned in that model was slightly modified in light of retailer image dimensions given by Ailawadi and Keller(2004) and thus made suitable to Indian Retail shoppers.

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION:**

The **consumer-related** factors that influence customer satisfaction which leads to loyalty are:

### ➤ **Minimal Checkout Delay**

Shorter the shopping time, the higher the level of consumer satisfaction and hence loyalty. Paying due attention to checkout stage of the service helps to raise consumers' loyalty to these supermarkets. To enable consumers to cut the shopping time to a minimum, the following must be done.

- ✓ Homogenous goods must be stocked in adjacent places together with high-quality alternative goods.
- ✓ Clear signs should show location of goods on shelves.
- ✓ Increase the number of checkouts to provide fast consumer service.

### ➤ **Security**

Security while shopping will raise consumer satisfaction and loyalty significantly. Consumers' sense of security derives from the number of sources, namely:

- Providing high quality goods in supermarkets will increase consumers' trust in these goods and thus raises consumer satisfaction and loyalty.
- When the consumer feel that prices are reasonable than elsewhere for the same quality, it raises their level of satisfaction and loyalty.

### ➤ **Assistance available**

Providing assistance to consumers at different stages of shopping is a key factor in raising their level of satisfaction and loyalty. The required assistance takes a variety of forms:

- Location of goods
- Polite replies for price enquiries
- Moving the goods to car parks free of charge or at a minimal charge.

### ➤ **Convenience**

- **Parking facility**

The first step in attracting a consumer to a particular store is the provision of adequate parking space. Previous studies (Snow & Scott,1984) have stressed the need for an eight –car parking space for every 80 square metres of the area of the shopping centre, in order to provide as large a car park for consumers as possible.

- **Access**

The location of a store and the distance that the consumer must travel to shop are the basic criteria in store choice decisions

The **Store-related** factors that influence customer satisfaction which leads to loyalty are:

- **Internal & External Design**

Baker et al. (2002) find that the store environment factors, particularly physical design perceptions, significantly affect consumers' perceptions of merchandise price, merchandise quality and employee service quality. Even if the products and brands stocked by a retailer are similar to others, the ability to create a strong in-store atmosphere and rich experiences play a crucial role in building store loyalty.

- **Product Category Assortment**

- (i)**Cross Category assortment**

The one-stop shopping convenience that a broad product assortment enables is becoming more important than ever for today's time-constrained consumer (Messinger and Narasimhan 1997). Therefore wide assortment of products and services offered by the stores under one roof influences the consumer's perception of store image and increases satisfaction and loyalty.

- (ii)**Within Category assortment**

Consumers' perceptions of the depth of a retailer's assortment within a product category are an important dimension of store image and a key driver of store choice. Greater perceived assortment will influence store image, store choice and satisfaction with store.

- **Good Management**

Good management is one of the factors that attracts customers, brings about customer satisfaction and loyalty and ensures repeat purchases. Some of the good management practices are listed below:

- Offering assistance to the consumers at different stages of shopping.
- Proper inventory control avoiding shortage of goods.
- Providing different services to the local community.

The integration of consumer-related and retailer-related factors leads to customer satisfaction and then loyalty thereby leading to the following hypothesis.

- H1: There is a significant relationship between Minimal checkout Delay and level of customer satisfaction.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between Security and level of customer satisfaction.
- H3: There is a significant relationship between Assistance available and level of customer satisfaction.
- H4: There is a significant relationship between Convenience and level of customer satisfaction.
- H5: There is a significant relationship between Internal & External Design and level of customer satisfaction.
- H6: There is a significant relationship between Product Category assortment and level of customer satisfaction.
- H7: There is a significant relationship between Good Management and level of customer satisfaction.

## **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:**

### **CONSUMER PROFILE**

A brief profile of the respondents are presented in table1. Table1 indicates that

- 30.5% of respondents fall in the age group of between 18-28 years, 22.7% between 29-39 years, 34.04 % between 40-50 years and only 12.76% respondents were above 50 years. Therefore about 53.4% of shoppers were in the age group below 39 years.
- 17.73% respondents were students, 14.18% respondents were professionals, 9.93% were self employed, 31.91% respondents were salaried people, 23.4% respondents fall in other category like housewives and only 2.85% respondents were retired persons. So majority of respondents visiting organized retail outlet were salaried people.
- 22.7% respondents fall in the monthly income bracket below Rs.10,000, 14.9% respondents between Rs.10,000-20,000, 23.4% between Rs20,000-30,000, 20.56% respondents between Rs.30,000-40,000 and 18.44% respondents above Rs.40,000. This shows that majority of respondents of almost 38.3% come under the income group below Rs.30,000.

**Table1: Consumer Profile**

S.No	Factor	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Age	18-28 years	43	30.5
		29-39 years	32	22.7
		40-50 years	48	34.04
		Above 50 years	18	12.76
		<b>Total</b>	141	100
2	Occupation	Student	25	17.73
		Professional	20	14.18
		Self employed	14	9.93
		Salaried	45	31.91
		Retired	4	2.85
		Others	33	23.40
		<b>Total</b>	141	
3	Monthly FamilyIncome	Below Rs.10,000	32	22.7
		Rs.10,000-20,000	21	14.9

		Rs.20,000-30,000	33	23.40
		Rs.30,000-40,0000	29	20.56
		Above Rs.40,000	26	18.44
		<b>Total</b>	141	100

**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION:**

Customer satisfaction was measured using a five point Likert scale and Chi-square test using SPSS was applied to find out the relationship between Consumer-related and store-related factors and customer satisfaction.

**I CONSUMER-RELATED FACTORS**

**1. Minimal checkout delay**

**Table 2: Minimal checkout delay and level of customer satisfaction.**

Minimal checkout delay	Customer Satisfaction					Total Score	%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
Homogenous goods	33	75	25	7	1	555	34.93
Clear Sign	28	65	34	11	3	527	33.17
More Checkouts	20	57	54	7	3	507	31.90

The result in table2 from chi-square test indicates that the minimal checkout delay are significantly related with customer satisfaction as the chi-square value is 19.784 and significant at 0.011. Thus H1 is accepted.

Table2 gives an overall view of the customer satisfaction with the factors of minimal checkout delay. Stocking homogenous goods in adjacent places together with high quality alternate goods got the highest score and percentage (34.93%), followed by clear sign indicating the location of goods (33.17%). More number of checkouts to provide fast consumer service got 31.9%. This

shows that the strategy followed by the organized retail outlet for minimal checkout delay satisfied most of the customers which will ultimately lead to store loyalty.

## 2. Security

**Table 3: Security and level of customer satisfaction.**

Security	Customer Satisfaction					Total Score	%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
Quality goods	36	64	33	6	2	549	35.28
Good value for money	27	72	34	8	0	541	34.77
Reasonable price	15	36	69	19	2	466	29.95

Chi-square test indicates that the security are significantly related with customer satisfaction as the chi-square value is 50.475 and significant at 0.000. Thus H2 is accepted.

Table3 shows that both quality goods and good value for money had got highest scores with percentage of about 35%. Prices are more reasonable than other stores got 29.95%. Therefore customers are more satisfied with the quality of goods sold in organized retail formats than prices at which they are sold.

## 3. Assistance available

**Table 4: Assistance available and level of customer satisfaction.**

Assistance available	Customer Satisfaction					Total Score	%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
Assistance in locating goods	21	80	34	5	1	538	35.28
Polite reply for enquiries	19	82	31	7	2	532	34.89
Moving Goods to car park	15	47	46	21	12	455	29.84

Chi-square test indicates that the assistance available are significantly related with customer satisfaction as the chi-square value is 44.133 and significant at 0.000. Thus H3 is accepted.

The staff assistance provided in locating goods and polite replies made by them for the price enquiries made stands on first position with highest scores and percentage of 35%. Arrangements made to move the goods to car park got 29.84%. According to the results staff assistance regarding location of goods and enquiries made meet the respondent's expectation than arrangements made to move the goods to the car park. Improvements must be made in moving goods to the car park to increase the level of satisfaction thereby their loyalty to the store may be enhanced.

#### 4. Convenience

**Table 5: Conveniences and level of customer satisfaction.**

Convenience	Customer Satisfaction					Total Score	%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
Store is conveniently located	47	71	21	2	0	586	100
Parking space	11	40	61	19	10	446	100

Chi-square test indicates that the conveniences are significantly related with customer satisfaction as the chi-square value is 63.995 and significant at 0.000. Thus H4 is accepted.

Table5 gives an overall view of customer satisfaction regarding conveniences available to shoppers. Parking space got a score of 446. About 79% of the respondents were satisfied with the parking space. Improvements must be in this aspect to cover the customers who are not satisfied. Convenient location got a score of 586. Majority of customers about 99% respondents feel that stores were conveniently located. They are satisfied with this aspect which makes them loyal to a particular organized retail outlet.



## II STORE RELATED FACTORS

### 1. Internal and External design

**Table 6: Internal and External design and level of customer satisfaction.**

Internal & External Design	Customer Satisfaction					Total Score	%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
External design	19	79	40	1	2	535	27.01
In store design layout	19	70	47	4	1	525	26.5
Lighting	20	70	36	13	2	516	26.05
Music	14	35	32	39	21	405	20.44

Chi-square test indicates that the internal & external design are significantly related with customer satisfaction as the chi-square value is 1.28 at 12 degree of freedom and significant at 0.000 .Thus H5 is accepted.

Table6 shows that external design and in store design layout got the highest score and percentage of 27%, followed by lighting arrangement with 26%. Music played in the store got 20.44%. Overall picture shows that majority of respondents were satisfied with the internal and external design but improvements must be made in music played in the stores. More they are satisfied higher will be the loyalty to the stores.

### 2. Product Category assortment

**Table 7: Product Category Assortment and level of customer satisfaction.**

Product Category Assortment	Customer Satisfaction					Total Score	%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
Cross- Category	21	75	36	9	0	531	49.72
Within- Category	23	73	41	3	1	537	50.28

Chi-square test indicates that the product category assortment are not significantly related with customer satisfaction as the chi-square value is 4.43 not significant as the p value is greater than

0.05 at the level of significance .349.. Thus H6 is not accepted. This shows the shoppers are not satisfied with the cross-category and within-category assortment. Brand extension research also shows that a large number of associations could produce interference effects and lower memory performance ( Meyers-Levy 1989). Moreover researchers like Tversky and Shafir (1992) had said that increasing the choice set leads to cognitive overload and uncertainty and actually decrease the likelihood of purchase. May be due to these reasons the shoppers are not satisfied. Therefore the retailers must frame a proper and balanced assortment policy to successfully expand its meaning and appeal to consumers overtime.

### 3. Good Management

**Table 8: Good management and level of customer satisfaction.**

Good Management	Customer Satisfaction					Total Score	%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
Qualified staff assistance	17	58	54	8	4	499	35.57
Proper inventory control	14	59	37	25	6	473	33.71
Social service to community	6	40	60	26	9	431	30.72

Chi-square test indicates that the good management are significantly related with customer satisfaction as the chi-square value is 30.038 and significant at 0.000. Thus H7 is accepted.

The table8 shows that qualified staff assistance available at different stages of shopping got the highest score and percentage (35.57), followed proper inventory control (33.71%). Social service provided for the local community got 30.72 %. So it can be assumed that the management practices relevant to the stores satisfy most of the respondents.

## **SUGGESTIONS:**

Based on the above mentioned findings, the following suggestions are arrived to increase the level of satisfaction thereby inducing store loyalty.

- ❖ The checkout personnel must be trained to use modern machines like computers and scanners that move the checkout process quickly.
- ❖ More promotional schemes with price discounts must be offered to attract customers.
- ❖ To retain customers they must be pampered with personalized services. Therefore arrangements must be made to move goods to the parking space at a reasonable fee to satisfy the customers for they are not satisfied in this aspect.
- ❖ One of the greatest challenges faced by the retail sector today is the dearth of well trained retail management personnel. The industry is constantly communicating with management institutes on the need to introduce retail management as a discipline and not a sub-set of marketing management. The organized retail outlets must make efforts to appoint trained personnel to help the customers at different stages of shopping. If this not possible, for the selected persons proper training must be given to assist the shoppers and in giving polite replies for enquiries.
- ❖ Not all customers are satisfied with the parking space available in all these supermarkets. Therefore these shops should adopt multilevel parking facilities to make optimum use of extremely limited space. Valet parking facilities would be most welcome where stores are located in congested areas.
- ❖ Increasingly, the Indian consumers nowadays want to feel and experience new things that they have not come across before. Keeping this in mind, the Indian retailers must direct their efforts in providing new experiences to customers. An appealing in-store atmosphere offers much potential in terms of crafting a unique store image and establishing differentiation. So efforts must be made by all these supermarkets to improve the interior decor to the delight of the customer. Moreover music played by all these supermarkets were not appealing, therefore they have to concentrate in this area to make it more relaxing.
- ❖ Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) allows the automatic recognition of inventory items using radio waves. Most of the big retailers abroad such as Walmart, Tesco and Metro

extensively use this new technology. With the help of RFID , the efficiency in supply chain management and inventory management can be improved by using electronic tags that assist in storing and identification of inventory. Indian retailers such as Shoppers Stop are also adopting this technology so other retailers should also adopt this technique.

- ❖ Indian retailers can also resort to private label brands and eliminate middlemen, thereby reducing costs and providing a wider assortment to the customers at better prices.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are becoming increasingly important factors in modern retailing- a market characterized by slow growth and intense competition. Catering to consumer needs and moods requires lot of study and research. Without an innovative outlook, it might become very tough for the retailers to compete and survive in the coming years. The products offered, the store format, the pricing, and the services provided definitely influence the consumers to a great extent. But with the right use of consumer behavior with the relevant innovative strategies will help the Indian retailers to satisfy customers and build a long lasting relationship.

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