

A STUDY ON IDENTIFICATION OF THE FACTORS  
INFLUENCING THE PURCHASE BEHAVIOR OF  
CONSUMERS VISITING THE MALLS

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**Abstract:**

The present paper tries to understand the purchase behavior of consumers visiting the shopping malls.

**Methodology:** A structured questionnaire was used for collecting the data from 600 respondents visiting three malls- Spencer plaza, Citi centre and Ampa-Skywalk. A convenient sample (non-probability sampling method) is used for the study.

**Findings:** The finding reveals that consumers aged between 20-40 years visit the malls often and malls need to attract them to spend time and money in the shopping malls. Malls need to satisfy their needs by creating good ambience and environment.

**Key words:** Shopping Malls, consumers, attributes, and purchase behavior

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Retail is India's largest industry. The sector has witnessed an immense growth in the last few years. The key factors responsible for the retail boom have been the change in consumer profile and demographics, increase in the number of international brands available in the Indian market, economic implications of the government, increasing urbanization, credit availability, improvement in the infrastructure, increasing investments in technology and real estate building a world class shopping environment for the consumers.<sup>(1)</sup>

Retail is about consumption and consumption is what is driving economic growth. The retail scenario in India is gradually shifting from streets to shopping experience to the customers with their blend of retail outlets, controlled environment, ambience, parking facilities, entertainment, etc.

Changes in consumers' natural and social environments have a huge impact on their buying and shopping behavior.<sup>(2)</sup> No two customers have the matching likes and preferences.

### 1.1 Theory of Shopping

The concept of shopping can be examined according to three different dimensions in order to develop a holistic view of shopping and shopping behaviour: shopping environment, the socio-cultural context and the individual motivations.<sup>(3)</sup> The shopping is one of the activities that is always on one's mind. Today, most retail companies are building a business around the concept of offering everything at competitive pricing, offering huge discounts, big bargains, on a nice premise.

The retail industry in India is of late often being hailed as one of the sunrise sectors in the economy. **AT Kearney**, the well-known international management consultancy firm, annually ranks emerging market economies based on more than 25 macroeconomic and retail-specific variables through their Global Retail Development Index (GRDI). It has made India the cause of a good deal of excitement and the cynosure of many foreign eyes. According to the Global Retail Development Index (GRDI) published by AT Kearney, "India's strong growth fundamentals—9 percent real GDP growth in 2010; forecasted yearly growth of 8.7 percent through 2016; high saving and investment rates; fast labor force growth; and increased consumer spending—make for a very favorable retail environment and the 4th spot in the Global Retail Development Index (GRDI). As has been the case for several years, Indian consumers continue to urbanize, have

more money to spend on non-food purchases, and have more exposure to brands. The result is a powerful, more discerning consumer class. India's population of nearly 1.2 billion—forecast eventually to overtake China's—also is an attractive target."

## 1.2 Shopping malls

The latest trend in the corporate universe is of the emergence of the shopping malls. The first thing that comes in our mind about the shopping malls is that it is a big enclosed building housing a variety of shops or products. According to historical evidences, shopping malls came into existence in the middle ages, though it was not called so. The concept of departmental stores came up in the 19th century with the Industrial Revolution. Consumers wanted a better shopping experience and this demand gave rise to the emergence of shopping malls in India.

**Ahmed et al. (2007)**<sup>(4)</sup> believes that shopping mall is a place to socialize and for recreation. There are various purposes for consumer visiting shopping mall which are to do shopping, entertainment, to rest, spend time with friends etc. Shops, food court, restaurants, cinema, children's games area, interactive entertainment, social use areas, relaxation places and promotion areas now become a major component in shopping malls. In fact, shopping malls play a key role to show consumer's life style<sup>(5)</sup>. They are not only a centre for shopping but also a community centre for social and recreational activities.<sup>(6)</sup>

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shopping malls have emerged as the fast growing destination of many consumers. Shopping malls have become the locus for consumers in the Chennai city to experience changes in social stratification and shopping mode choices. Consumer's perception towards the malls is very significant for retailers and mall developers. To understand further, review of past research has been done. A select literature review pertaining to the study is presented in this section. This chapter examines previous research on shopping malls and focuses on the perception of consumers shopping in the mall.

**McCraken (1998)**<sup>(7)</sup> specifies that a literature review offers "deconstruction" of the existing literature by establishing a survey of the ground and assessing the categories and relationships that must be investigated, an approach that would be attempted to undertake in this research. This

study deals with the reviews pertaining to the factors influencing the purchase behavior of consumers in shopping malls.

**Reid and Brown(1996)**,<sup>(8)</sup> proposes that the customers' orientation towards shopping may shed light into the way he/she indulge in shopping and it may also tell the reason why he/she chooses a particular retail store (including shopping malls). Shopping as a collective activity makes possible the shared creation of taste and style. It produces a sense of social identification, whoever the shopper's companion may be.<sup>(9)</sup>

Shopping suggests something that is pleasurable, and possibly transgressive and excessive: someone may spend too much time or too much money.<sup>(10)</sup> In other words, a shopper just enjoys himself/herself.

One study showed that excitement at the mall had the strongest influence on mall patronage intentions. An exciting mall is more likely to keep shoppers returning again and again.<sup>(11)</sup> According to **Dholakia (1999)**,<sup>(12)</sup> occasion and motives are also some crucial points which influence the consumers shopping behavior. **Terblenche (1999)**<sup>(13)</sup> opined that apart from shopping motive other features like entertainment, relaxation and spending good time with friends attract customers towards shopping malls.

There are many facets to the consumers or mall goers: as shopper, as chooser, as communicator, as character explorer, as pleasure seeker, as rebel, as victim, as activist, and as citizen. As shoppers, mall goers' time is characterized by window shopping and malling; exploring and shopping have become one.<sup>(14)</sup>

Inside the mall, "the shoppers consider the name of the store, quality of the product, the kind of service it offers and the store's window display when choosing a mall store to visit".<sup>(15)</sup>

Shoppers in general are attracted to "novelty".<sup>(16)</sup> Mall managers have also increased the type of entertainment available at shopping malls. Today's consumer can do more than just shop at a mall. Shoppers can decide to watch a movie at movie theatres boasting 30 screens or more or they can opt to take the children for a quick skate around the ice rink. Some malls accommodate museums into their space, such as The Citadel mall in Colorado, which is the home to the Children's Museum.<sup>(17)</sup> All these amenities have been added to the mall in the hope of attracting the consumer to visit the mall for reasons other than just shopping.

**Sinha and Banerjee (2004)**,<sup>(18)</sup> report that it is necessary for retailers to be aware of shoppers' motivations and to understand ways of attracting the consumers. Consumers visit shopping malls

for a variety of reasons. For example, In Chile, consumers go to malls only when they need to buy something.<sup>(19)</sup> In the USA, many consumers view shopping malls as an entertainment source.<sup>(20)</sup> In Malaysia, people may regard shopping malls as community centers for economic and social activities.<sup>(21)</sup>

The window display plays a large role in carrying out the message to the shoppers who pass by the store. He/she passes by the store, gazes into the windows, compares his ideologies with the ideologies presented by the display windows and this would tell whether or not the commodities presented by the shop would appease the subject's desires.<sup>(22)</sup>

In a shopping environment, consumers not only evaluate merchandise quality, but also consider service quality.<sup>(23)</sup> **Akhter (2003)**<sup>(24)</sup> have tried to identify specific facets of the shopping experience that motivate customers to prefer shopping malls over small shops. **Yavas (2003)**<sup>(25)</sup> pointed out that research on shoppers' motives typically considers the importance rather than the 'performance' of a particular shopping centre.

**Jason et al. (2003)**<sup>(26)</sup> said there are three major motivation factors which influenced consumer behavior namely thrill seeking, escapism and socializing. Comprehension of this motivation would give management a useful idea or information to develop a pleasure in the shopping mall. Consumer behavior research enables better understanding and forecasting not only of the subject of purchases but also of purchasing motives and purchasing frequency.<sup>(27)</sup>

Motivations of shopping include inside and outside ambience of mall, layout, and extent of involvement in the shopping process. Ambience of shopping mall, architecture, ergonomics, variety, and excitement motivate the shopper to stay long and make repeated visits to the mall.<sup>(28)</sup> The effectiveness of malls is enhanced by measuring the shoppers' traffic and sales of the retail tenants.<sup>(29)</sup>

**Ismail (2006)**<sup>(30)</sup> states that in term of shopping centre attractiveness, the management of shopping centre should provide comfort to consumers. Among the factors were space of parking, comfortable place for consumers rest, security in the shopping centre and aspect of cleanliness in shopping centre.

Many customers derive intrinsic enjoyment from the process of shopping.<sup>(31)</sup> Shopping behavior of consumers is varying in different countries. The reasons of this varying shopping behavior are the diverse cultures and the changing economies of the various countries.<sup>(32)</sup> **Pavleen Kaur and Raghbir Singh (2007)**<sup>(33)</sup> conducted a study to uncover the motives that drive young people to

shop in departmental stores or malls. The results reveal that the Indian youth primarily shop from a hedonic perspective.

A larger shopping centre can facilitate a greater variety of shops and create a more pleasant environment for the shoppers, thus enticing shoppers to visit and stay longer. This proposition leads to one of the challenges faced by the managers of shopping malls located outside the traditional shopping belt, which is how to attract shoppers to patronize their malls.<sup>(34)</sup>

**Howard (2007)**<sup>(35)</sup> also believes shopping to be a leisure pursuit and with the rapid development of shopping centres, both retailers and developers are trying to make it more of a pleasure activity.

It is observed that large and recreational shopping malls attract the regular shoppers and tourists towards frequent shopping.<sup>(36)</sup>

Major attributes of shopping mall attractiveness include comfort, entertainment, diversity, mall essence, convenience, and luxury from the perspective of shoppers. Such shopping mall attractiveness may be designed in reference to the three broad segments of shoppers that include stress-free shoppers, demanding shoppers, and pragmatic shoppers. This enables mall managers to develop appropriate retailing strategies to satisfy each segment.<sup>(37)</sup>

**Ahmed et al. (2007)**<sup>(38)</sup> said shopping gives opportunity to society to learn how to communicate with other people apart in the house (for example to find or make new friend and see different type of people). They believe that shopping centre is a place to socialize and for recreation. There are various purposes for consumer visiting shopping centre which are to do shopping, entertainment, to rest, spend time with friends etc. Shops, food court, restaurants, cinema, children's games area, interactive entertainment, social use areas, relaxation places and promotion areas now become a major component in shopping centre.

**Kotler and Armstrong (2008)**<sup>(39)</sup> state that consumer purchases are strongly influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological characteristics which marketers must take into account. Past studies on shopping motivation proposed that consumer not only involved with use of goods or service, but also with the emotional satisfaction. Therefore, shopping motivation could be categorized in to two-dimensional namely “motivation oriented use “and “experience motivation”.<sup>(40)</sup>

**Goyal and Aggarwal (2009)**<sup>(41)</sup> opine that in India, a consuming class is emerging as a result of increasing income levels and dual career families with high disposable incomes. With retailers

eyeing their presence in the market, it is important to identify the target shoppers as well as the prime factors of enjoyment in shopping. The results reveal that a majority of the consumers are pro shoppers, feeling enjoyment while shopping. Their key interests include getting product ideas or meeting friends.

Consumer evaluated shopping centre which have unique design or architecture, entertainment (example, theatre and playground), and attractive restaurants is emphasized in central business district. <sup>(42)</sup>

**Rupesh Kumar Tiwari & Anish Abraham (2010)** <sup>(43)</sup> say that consumers enact their social roles by shopping or visiting a mall.

The study by **Ali et al (2010)** <sup>(44)</sup> indicates the purchase behavior of the consumers based on frequency of purchase, monthly expenditure, preferred marketplace, distance to market and food packaging and the impact of socio-demographic profile of consumers (gender, age, education and income) on the purchase decisions for grocery, fruits and vegetables. The results show that vegetables are the most frequently purchased products and most of the consumers shop for vegetables on a daily basis. Similarly, fruits are generally purchased twice a week. On the other hand, grocery products, which are less perishable, are less frequently purchased. The study further reveals that the income level of a consumer is an important factor which affects most of the food purchase decisions. Results indicate that a higher income and educational level of consumers influences their decisions on product and market attributes while gender and age seems to have no significant impact.

Based on the above literature, the decision to buy in a shopping mall usually starts with a set of characteristics or attributes or reasons that consumers consider important. Consumers often use these attributes to determine how malls can cater to their needs. The researcher identified the reasons of mall choice in relation to attributes, such as accessibility of malls, environment, atmosphere, and service personnel behavior, parking, working hours, quality, variety of merchandise, credit availability, and return policies, etc., for the factors influencing the purchase behavior of the consumers in malls at Chennai.

### 3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

From a theoretical perspective, this effort is intended as a preliminary step towards developing a more comprehensive understanding of consumer's perception on shopping in malls. In this paper,

a special focus is given to understand whether the age of a consumer influences the choice of attributes which affect the purchase behavior of the consumer.

#### 4. SAMPLING PLAN AND DATA COLLECTION

The consumers, who shop in shopping malls in the area of Chennai, were taken as the population for this study. Data were collected from the selected shopping malls located in Chennai city. The target population for this study consisted of active mall shoppers.

For gathering the required information, a pre-tested questionnaire was distributed to the respondents numbering of 600 consumers from Chennai. Consumers between the ages of 15-70 have been selected for this research. A mall-intercept approach was adopted in the data collection. The study was carried out at three major shopping malls at different locations in Chennai. The respondents were provided help in completion of questionnaire and an attempt was also made by the researcher to establish good rapport with the consumers by way of creative listening and the consumers were approached at their own terms. Respondents of shopping malls in Chennai were found earnest and courteous in their approach and their frank responses to the various statements on factors of consumer perception. However, in some cases, the respondents were provided help in the completion of questionnaire particularly in the interpretation of questions in a language best suited to them.

Questionnaire was administered to 600 respondents. However, during the process of data analysis, questionnaire of 112 respondents were omitted due to paucity of information. In all, 488 respondents were covered under the study and the usable response rate was 81.33 percent. A convenient sample (non-probability sampling method) of 600 consumers was pooled up for the current study in which respondents of this study were requested to complete the questionnaire on voluntary basis.

The sample size was considered as adequate, since the minimum sample to determine sample size from a given population is  $384^{(45)}$  for every one million population.

#### 5. STATISTICAL TOOLS

Chi-square test is used to find out the relationship between the age and factors influencing purchase behavior. Chi-square association test is a non parametric test useful to establish an



association between two categorical variables. The frequency dumping in each cell of the cross tabs allows identification of the association between two types of heterogeneous groups and also the nature of cases in that particular cell. Hence Chi-square is used. The most important associations alone have been analyzed.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed on scales of a nominal nature. One way analysis of variance is applied

## 6. OBJECTIVES:

1. To study the impact of demographic factors with special reference to age on the purchase behavior of the consumers visiting the mall.
2. To study the significant difference among the customers in the purchase behavior.

## 7. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

### Test of Independence between Age and factors influencing purchase behavior

The various studies conducted earlier relating to the mall shopping behavior and perception reveal that demographic factors have impact on the purchase behavior of consumers visiting the malls. The influence of these factors has been proved in the succeeding chapters through statistical analysis. The demographic characteristics of consumers examined in the study comprises of different age groups namely below 20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, above 60.

Chi-square test is used to find out the relationship between the age and factors influencing purchase behavior. Chi-square association test is a non parametric test useful to establish an association between two categorical variables. The frequency dumping in each cell of the cross tabs allows identification of the association between two types of heterogeneous groups and also the nature of cases in that particular cell. Hence Chi-square is used. The most important associations alone have been analyzed.

### 7.1 Proximity to Mall

**Table I. Pearson Chi-square test for association between age and proximity**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	84.615(a)	45	.000
Likelihood Ratio	86.739	45	.000

Linear-by-Linear Association	16.915	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	488		

**Source: Primary Data**

(a) 31 cells (51.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.

In the survey pertaining to factors influencing the purchase behavior, it is found that the Pearson's chi-square value is 84.615 and P value .000 implying that the Null Hypothesis of Independence between Age and proximity is rejected. This shows that there is association between age and factors influencing consumers using the malls. A close scrutiny based on primary data and field experience indicated consumers aged between 20-40 preferred malls because of the proximity to their home. Compared to other age groups, the youths visit the malls frequently. Hence the mall management must make the malls attractive to the consumers. Mall management should be able to satisfy multiple needs of the customer and to provide for all his requirements at one location, under one roof. Mall management must adapt to different tactics to attract these consumers.

**7.2 Credit terms****Table II .Pearson Chi-square test for Test of Independence between age and credit Terms**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	74.097(a)	45	.004
Likelihood Ratio	73.710	45	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.223	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	488		

**Source: Primary Data**

(a) 30 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

The Pearson's chi-square value is 74.097 and P value is .004 implying that the Null Hypothesis of Independence between Age and proximity is rejected this shows that there is association between age and credit terms. Based on primary data and field experience ,majority of the youth consumers would like to have credit terms for the purchase they make. Hence retailers in mall must grant at least a short term credit to the consumers. Smart cards may be introduced by the mall management.

### 7.3 Waiting time

**Table III. Pearson Chi-square test and test of Independence between age and waiting time**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	63.314(a)	45	0.037
Likelihood Ratio	60.559	45	0.061
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.047	1	0.306
N of Valid Cases	488		

**Source: Primary Data**

(a) 29 cells (48.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.09.

There is association between age and waiting time in the mall. From the above it is found that the Pearson's chi-square values 63.314 and P value 0.037 implying that the Null Hypothesis of Independence between Age and Waiting Time is rejected. Young consumers prefer to wait in the mall to get their needs satisfied. Hence mall management must make necessary arrangements to make the consumers feel easy in the mall. There should be sufficient sales and customer service employees to assist aged consumers through the buying and checkout process. Atmospherics can make consumers less aware of their wait because they are either distracted and/or entertained. Malls enhance the store's atmospherics through visual communications (signs and graphics), lighting, and colors. An important component of atmospherics is music. Good music could be played into a store to entertain the consumers.

### 7.4 Ease of transaction

**Table IV. Pearson Chi-square test and Test of Independence between age and ease of Transaction**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	58.264(a)	45	.089
Likelihood Ratio	55.360	45	.139
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.281	1	.258

N of Valid Cases	488		
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**Source: Primary Data**

(a) 27 cells (45.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10.

Young consumers prefer smooth flow while moving in the mall. The above analysis shows that the Pearson's chi-square value is 58.264 and P value .089 implying that the Null Hypothesis of Independence between Age and proximity is accepted. This implies there is no association between age and factors influencing the consumers visiting the shopping malls. A cool and refreshing environment should be created, which makes the consumers to forget all worries of the day. They should be made comfortable while moving in the mall and also when they enter into a retail shop to buy products in the mall. Mall management must make the consumer satisfied and feel happy after a shopping trip.

In addition to Chi-square test, the factors influencing purchase behavior were subjected to one way ANOVA to ascertain and confirm the influence of the demographic variable- "Age" on the purchase behavior.

**7.5 One-way ANOVA table.**

**ANOVA**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
13.1 Proximity	Between Groups	228.106	5	45.621	4.606	.000
	Within Groups	4773.647	482	9.904		
	Total	5001.752	487			
13.2 Credit Terms	Between Groups	233.068	5	46.614	6.829	.000
	Within Groups	3290.276	482	6.826		
	Total	3523.344	487			
13.3 Waiting Time	Between Groups	18.697	5	3.739	.558	.732
	Within Groups	3228.956	482	6.699		
	Total	3247.654	487			

13.4 Ease of Transaction	Between Groups	21.215	5	4.243	.670	.647
	Within Groups	3054.291	482	6.337		
	Total	3075.506	487			

From the above ANOVA table, it is inferred based on the significance levels (at 5%) the null hypotheses of equality of means across different age groups are rejected in the cases of 'Proximity' and 'Credit Terms' and are accepted in the cases of 'Waiting time and 'Ease of Transaction'. The implication is that people have differing preferences across age groups with respect to 'Proximity' and 'Credit Terms' and therefore it can be concluded that Age influences these two parameters which determine the purchase behavior.

But with respect to 'Waiting time and 'Ease of Transaction', there is no statistically significant differences across various Age groups in terms of these variables deciding the purchase behavior. It is understood from these results that people of all Age groups have the same preference for Waiting Time and Ease of Transaction.

In this context, it is relevant to observe a small contradiction between the results given by Chi-square and ANOVA with respect to Waiting Time. According to Ch-square test, it was established based on the observed significance level (.037) that people have different preferences about waiting time based on their age group. However, the significance level observed for the same variable using ANOVA (.732) contradicts the earlier result and maintains that the Age does not influence the preference over waiting time. Based on sense of reason and field experience the result of ANOVA is preferred and chosen over that of Chi-square. This is a logical decision because people of all age groups have the same preferences of having a short waiting time during their shopping experience in a mall.

## 8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was carried out to assess the perception of consumers about shopping in malls in Chennai. For the purpose of the study consumers who visit shopping malls was taken as a sample frame. Data related to the demographic profile, their purchasing behavior in malls were collected analyzed using different statistical tools. It is found though different categories of consumers were visiting the mall, consumers aged between 20-40 years were found many in numbers. Hence the

relationship between age and purchase behavior of the consumers were tested and found that the behavior varies across the categories of the consumers. To test this ANOVA, and Chi-square test were applied.

The inferences derived from the analysis are presented below.

- Consumers aged between 20-40 years feel that they visit malls due to proximity to their home. Mall management must satisfy the needs of these consumers.
- To attract more consumers between 20-40 years, malls must give short term credit to consumers. Retailers can introduce smart cards.
- Since the consumers who are aged between 20-40 years, cannot wait for long time in the malls to get their needs satisfied, mall management must have different sales personnel to attend them. Retailers can play good music to entertain these consumers.
- Cool and refreshing environment in malls will make the young consumers to stay more in the mall. Retailers should avoid creating complications in the shops. Goods should have their prices clearly marked and there should be no haggling.

## 9. END NOTE

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