CHAPTER – 6

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS & LIMITATIONS
6.1 MAJOR FINDINGS

6.1.1 CUSTOMERS

- It was depicted that malls were mostly frequented by the 20–35 years age group. These young adults are impulsive buyers, for whom, shopping from the malls / hypermarkets, is more of a status symbol. The research highlighted that both males and females frequent shopping malls / hypermarkets, almost equally and purchase decisions are likewise taken by both the genders. Further it came to light that malls were majorly frequented by the respondents who were graduates and post graduates. A very less percentage was found below the level of graduates, thereby depicting the level of literacy of the visitors to the malls / hypermarkets. Mostly the respondents, who frequented the malls / hypermarkets, were engaged in the private sector service followed by students.

- Mall culture has been accepted and welcomed in a big way by the Indian consumer and this fact was brought to fore by visitors who responded by saying that they visit a mall / hypermarket at least once a week and the prominent reasons for their visits were shopping, watching a movie, visiting an eatery and indulging in window shopping.

- Majority of the respondents were frequenting the particular mall for more than the 4th time, which showed that mall culture is here to stay and has been embraced by the Indians, and they like visiting the malls / hypermarkets regularly.

- Majority of the respondents preferred weekends to visit a mall / hypermarket which could be attributed to the reason of the availability of ample time during
the weekend, instead of need based visits to such places. Also the society is witnessing a change where the presence of working couples (both the husband and the wife are working), nuclear families is on the rise. So weekend becomes a natural choice for choosing to visit a mall / hypermarket.

- Respondents replied that they spent 3–4 hours, on an average, in the mall / hypermarket which can imply that the people visiting malls / hypermarkets do not just drop by; rather they make planned visits, vis-à-vis their duration of stay, reason, purpose for visiting etc, having been pre-decided clearly.

- It was observed that the preferred mode of travel to mall / hypermarket was by their own conveyance, which was almost always by car in large majority of the cases The results indicate the propensity of respondents to be self–dependent while opting for visiting the mall / hypermarket, and not depending upon any public means of transportation or hiring a rickshaw, auto etc.

- It was established that theme malls are yet to come in a big way in India and this fact was supported by a considerably large number of respondents mentioning they have not been to theme malls even once. This may be due to the fact that such niche / theme malls have come up only in selected cities like Delhi, Gurgaon, and Mumbai, and they have not yet reached Tier–2 or Tier–3 cities till now.

- In case of multiplexes, the most important factor for the changing tastes towards the them was found to be due to the flexibility of timings which are spread over a large time period, resulting in large number of shows allowing for flexibility for the viewers to watch any show according to their convenience.
• The digital picture clarity and the digital Dolby surround sound systems, which encompass the latest state–of–art techniques in multimedia, are another drawing factor for the masses visiting the multiplexes. The customer is aware of the swankiness in the multiplex, before hand and is also therefore, willing to spend more, on a typical visit to a multiplex.

• But it was also seen that the traditional cinemas still had a loyalty in visitors, who do not consider the extensive range of show timings as a necessary advantage which would affect their loyalty to shift from cinemas to multiplexes.

• Movie goers in multiplexes have to board a lift or take escalators sometimes, and reach the auditoriums, and due to this reason it felt cumbersome to the visitors. Distance wise it was not much, but the way to the multiplex was from inside the mall, and sometimes the mall was too crowded, or sometimes the lifts were not working or were too crowded, so the respondents felt uncomfortable at times. It might be mentioned here that, in response to a question on the preferred location of the multiplexes vis–à–vis floors, the respondents chose ground floor as the preferred location for a multiplex.

• It was observed that people are being drawn towards Niche Malls / Speciality Malls, since in such malls, customers felt that they get everything they need in a particular category at a single place that is all similar products of every quality, range and assortment are available under one roof.

• But at the same time, significant difference was also found amongst the opinions of the regular mall visitors and the niche mall visitors on this point. Niche mall visitors had become more of loyal customers over a period of time, and general mall visitors still had to catch on to the concept of theme malls, and were yet to
be made aware of the advantages of such malls. The theme malls' customers believed that they get a broader range of pricing and there is greater flexibility in shopping in speciality malls. Moreover, they also felt that they get the facility and the comfort of comparison shopping, which is not entirely available in usual shopping malls.

- Niche mall goers also felt that flexibility in shopping is supplemented with more brands available in a particular product category. Since the products were limited to a particular theme, these malls tended to stock almost every brand available under the roof thus making the product depth and line more extensive. Though, many respondents mulled over the fact that they cannot window shop in such malls.

- It was also found that the speciality or theme malls such as Gold Souks (Malls housing Gold shops and Jewellery shops) do not remain open for longer periods of time, especially at night due to security concerns. Mostly people prefer to visit malls in the evening, so there purpose of visiting such Gold Souks would be defeated if they start closing early.

- The respondents were found to largely prefer to visit hypermarkets for their grocery needs and other items of daily usage, since a whopping majority of them felt that visiting a shopping mall consumes a lot of time and moreover time is wasted in looking and visiting places and shops, where they would otherwise not have visited, or had not planned to visit and consequently are comparatively lesser fatigued at Hypermarkets.

- It was also found that many facilities like ATMs, Food Courts, Multiplexes, Kiosks and other similar set ups are missing in hypermarkets, which otherwise
can be a big drawing power for consumers towards Shopping Malls. But it was established that hypermarket visitors did not consider this to be an important factor in their shopping experience. On the other hand mall visitors, had an opinion that the presence of these facilities, like multiplexes, food courts etc affected their shopping experience considerably. Overall it was observed that if a similar product is available at a higher price a large majority of the respondents expressed their opinion that they would choose to visit a hypermarket anytime over a shopping mall.

- Moreover, it was observed that most hypermarkets do not stock luxury brands and high end fashion category items, and the upper price range is usually restricted. In a shopping mall, all classes and varieties of retail stores are present catering to all the segments of the society, presenting products and brands of national and international repute. But largely respondents felt that there is no compromise on quality of products whether they bought it from a shopping mall or the same product from a hypermarket. They had full faith and staunch beliefs as far as the quality of products in hypermarkets was concerned.

- But, it was also observed that there are many products, which are not available in the malls, like Katori, Toilet Brush, Dhoop / Agarbati, typical grocery items etc, but are available in the hypermarkets. Moreover, home delivery & similar personalised services are available in hypermarkets, which is a lacking factor in malls.

- It was also found that discounts / schemes / deals were offered more in hypermarkets as compared to shopping malls. Majority of the respondents were also found to be of the opinion that there is convenience of shopping in
hypermarkets as everything is placed relatively close by in relation to the stores spread across a vast area, which entails larger amount of walking and consequently results in more fatigue.

- It was observed that many respondents were of the opinion that the prices were inflated at first and then sold on discounts / schemes in Malls, as compared to products available on MRP or many times on even lesser prices in the hypermarkets. Another point raised in favour of hypermarkets was that mostly they are located in the downtown area or in the city centres, whereas the malls were almost always located on the outskirts of the cities or suburbs.

- Another thing that was observed against the hypermarkets was, that their salesmen sometimes lacked even the basic of training and were ill-equipped in terms of product knowledge and at many times were not prepared enough, to handle heavy rush, thereby resulting chaos at the cash counters or check out lines, which was an often observed phenomenon at the hypermarkets.

- Lastly, but definitely not in the least, in this cut throat competition between the malls and the hypermarkets, a major noting was made, that the respondents carried a strong opinion in that the hypermarkets in totality carried a far lesser entertainment value as compared to the shopping malls, as in the latter the customers asserted experiencing a fulfilling and gratifying shopping experience.

- A major locational consideration for a shopping mall / hypermarket was addressed to be on a major route / highway and it was also observed that there is no difference of opinion between the mall goers and the hypermarkets goers regarding the location of a mall / hypermarket on a main highway. Both the categories were also found to agree that location of such places on the outskirts
would result in lesser traffic snarls and reduced driving tensions, enroute to the mall / hypermarket, thus steering clear of the mental unpleasantness while visiting these places, whereas otherwise, location of such facilities in downtown area or in the core area of the city, people end up getting worked up and agitated.

- It was again found that the visitors to hypermarkets and visitors to shopping malls thought likewise in their viewpoint that the availability of travel modes to these places did not affect their frequency or decisions to visit in any way, since mostly people visiting either the malls or the hypermarkets, commuted by way of their own conveyance and were not dependant on any alternative conveyance such as public transport system or private vehicle carriers etc.

- Majority of the respondents were found to prefer the stand alone stores as against the stores in the malls, since they found that walking incentive and comfort was a big consideration for them and they felt comfortable & safe walking around local shopping areas.

- It was observed that the respondents exhibited a sense of belongingness towards the stand alone stores in the neighbourhood areas as they could identify themselves and felt the comfort in the stand alone retail stores as against the stores in a mall.

- It was seen that the standalone stores customers agreed with the notion that impulsive buying was encouraged at the malls and discouraged at the stand alone outlets as they felt that in malls the consumers had more options to move away from one product category to another product category and indulge in impulsive spending.
• Overall it was found that respondents echoed the thought that though they were regular visitors to some particular shopping malls, but when asked to choose between a Stand alone Retail Store as against a Store in a Mall (for e.g. a Levis Store in the neighbourhood market as against a Levis Store in a Mall) they had a clear verdict – any day anytime they would visit the stand alone store, and not the same store when located in a shopping mall.

• It was observed that many respondents were inclined towards those malls which held exhibits and promotional events, recreational activities, concerts / live performances etc. for the people who were visiting the malls. Difference of opinion was found between the mall visitors and the visitors to a hypermarket, when the former stated that their shopping behaviour and purchase decisions became altogether different when the shopping mall put of lots of items on sale, held special sales / exhibits and staged other promotional events / recreational services / activities / concerts / live performances etc; whereas such things least mattered to the typical visitor to a hypermarket, who showed interest only in the primary purpose of his visit which was shopping.

• It was seen that the customers visiting shopping malls lay in the higher income bracket, with more disposable income and with a more open mind to shell out money for a product. Hence the offers of coupons or discounts mattered to a lesser extent to the mall goers. Further it was found that the customers were less concerned with the malls providing the facilities for lockers for bags and bag packs and the likes.

• It was also established that the respondents desire that there should be special discounts and schemes for repeat customers or those who show loyalty towards a particular mall / hypermarket. Some opined that mailers, flyers and discount
coupons etc should be sent via mail regularly to their homes, so that they can get to know about the promotional strategies and bargain schemes being made available from time to time in the mall / hypermarket.

- Layout of a mall / hypermarket was found to have considerable influence on the buying behaviour and also the aspect that a particular store enabled them to get in quickly, get what they wanted and get out as easily.

- Relationship management & customer handling were found to play a significant role in mall loyalty. They further expressed that the vibrant & cheerful décor & ambience (like water fountains, trees, flowers artistic layout, good music playing etc) was something they opined highly about.

- On the aspect of incorporation of certain facilities / features, a large majority of the respondents favoured the placement of benches and furniture in the malls and the hypermarkets. They desired that there should be a spacious lounge with adequate seating capacity and comfortable and relaxing chairs.

- It was further observed that a vast majority felt that there should be ATM machines, drug stores, clean wash rooms and drinking facilities, large TV screens placed around in the malls as well as the hypermarkets. Many other suggestions were also noted like having the attendants to help out with the groceries and stuff to the parking lot; having a central billing system, having a large gaming arcade among others.

- Significant relation was found between the income groups and the reasons for visiting a mall / hypermarket and it was concluded that type of income group notably affects the motive to visit. Largely responses were found concentrated in the income range of Rs 15,000 to Rs 45,000 category, in which the largest
percentage visited the malls / hypermarkets for window shopping usually, apart for the other reasons for visiting such places. In the Rs 45,000 to Rs 60,000 bracket, the largest group of respondents visited the mall visiting eateries and food courts.

- It was further revealed that there is no significant relationship between income bracket of the respondents and their preference for choosing a hypermarket over a mall. If a product of the same type, make, quality and brand is available in a hypermarket as well as in a shopping mall, almost all categories of income groups preferred hypermarkets for shopping over malls which holds a strong implication for the marketeers that in the longer run, hypermarkets have a propensity to have a higher success rate than shopping malls in general.

- It was also observed that profession did not significantly impact the pattern of visits to a mall / hypermarket and further also implied that visitors’ profession lays down no constraint on choosing a particular day of a week for visiting a mall / hypermarket.

- It was found that there is no significant difference between the two genders and their decision of going to a hypermarket as compared to a shopping mall, if a product of the same type, make, quality and brand is available in a hypermarket as well as in a shopping mall. Both males and females showed an almost equal inclination towards hypermarkets and shunned their choice of a shopping mall, if given a choice over a similar product.

- It was also established that gender does not have any significant impact on the reasons / preferences for visiting a mall / hypermarket. As per the traditional belief that women shop more than men, the study revealed that males and
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females equally participate in shopping activities. This was attributed to the changing patterns of the society where men are increasingly contributing to the shopping needs of the household.

- The findings also showed a significant relationship between the gender of the people visiting malls / hypermarkets and their duration of stay. It was found that men and women significantly differed in the respective lengths of time spent for each mall / hypermarket trip. Duration of stay differed with the females, with majority of females spending 3–4 hours, whereas in the case of men, it was found that majority of them stayed for 1–2 hours.

6.1.2 RETAILERS / SHOP OWNERS

- In case of retailers, a majority of them had been operating their outlets in the said malls for the last 1–2 years and a large percentage of these outlets were of clothing and apparels, followed by those of jewellery and footwear.

- It was found that a majority of the retail outlets were frequented by students, followed by businessmen and those in private service. The most frequenting category of visitors was in the age groups of 25–30 years, followed by those in the age group of 20–25 years. The usual background of the visitors was mostly quoted to be urban, which generates interest in the fact that the malls are not yet open to the mindset of rural category people, who still prefer to shop at their local stores and / or find malls to be expensive and suited only for the elite class.

- Further, according to the retailers, the majority of the customers frequenting their outlets were from the lower high class, followed by upper middle class category
and it was also observed that their visitors mostly preferred to come with their friends, followed by with families, and least of all, alone. As per the retailers, 73% visitors who visited their retail outlets were females as compared to 27% males. The highest frequency of the customers visiting their retail outlets was quoted to be once a month, once a fortnight and least frequency was once in a year.

- On the issue of Anchor tenants, large majority of the retailers were found to be familiar with the concept of the term. On being asked, whether they would be willing to invest extra for the space of an anchor tenant, if given a chance, there was a mixed response, but mostly retailers replied in the negative.

- Mall retailers also felt that the most important factor which might lead to conversion of footfalls into actual buying behaviour was, if the customers could find a bargain easily in the mall outlets. Arrangement of products and goods in a convenient or attractive manner was found to be of least priority.

- 37% of the retailers said they had a conversion rate of 10–30%, followed by 27% saying an impressive 30–60% rate of conversion, and 14% claiming their conversion rates were as high as 90% and even more, which was a significant noting. Though most of these outlets, which claimed such a high conversion rate of 90% and above, were usually fast food outlets, restaurants and cafés. The majority, asserting their translation figures to be between 10–30%, were found to be the jewellery, home furnishings and consumer electronics stores.

- Retailers replied in unison that offering a good bargain or deal was still the best promotional strategy available to them, followed by loyalty schemes for return customers or repeat buyers. Providing a reliable delivery service at their homes
did not find much favour with the shop owners who thought that this criterion is not valid as a promotional tool as far as their shops in the malls are concerned.

- Having good customer service centres and providing services such as gift wrapping, bank, photo processing, restaurant etc also carried lot of significance vis-à-vis the promotional strategies is concerned in today’s complex retail scenario along with making available store schedule information.

- It was established that majority of the shop owners affirmed that they took regular visitor feedback, even if that person had not bought anything from their outlet. Retailers thought this to be a valuable tool in improving their marketing strategies and depended a lot on the feedback given to them. A majority had even devised their own feedback forms especially for this purpose, apart from the standard visitor’s book.

- A large majority felt that the reason of having spacious and structured parking facilities in their malls / hypermarkets reflected largely in the visitors store choice decisions. A large majority also replied in the affirmative that if there is congestion on way to the mall / hypermarket, then it would drastically affect the choice of the customers’ of that particular mall / hypermarket.

- But the retailers did not give much significance to the statement that malls / hypermarkets are sustainable only in metros and they felt that the populations of Tier–2 and Tier–3 cities are equally welcoming towards the new retail formats, be it shopping malls / hypermarkets.

- The retailers also agreed with the fact that that store layout / plan of a mall / hypermarket should be designed by a professional or a specialist. Majority of the shop owners also felt that travel time and the distance is inversely proportional to
the attractiveness and likeability of a mall / hypermarket. The further the mall or hypermarket was, the lesser it had the pulling factor on the customers, from the retailers view point.

- The retailers were all in favour of the speciality malls since according to them such malls provided all the brands of almost all the products, of a particular theme, for all categories of income and age groups. But at the same time, the retailers were unanimous in their speaking their mind about such malls, saying they are more risky as compared to the general malls, since they stocked a very limited and narrow range and category of products and brands, which pertained to particular themes only.

- The ambience, the vibes, the environment, the milieu all play a major role in decision making in the minds of the consumer, and these forces come to the fore more prominently in speciality malls, thus compelling the retail outlet owners to prioritise their marketing and promotional strategies accordingly.

- It was also established that according to the retailers in the malls, the most important aspect that the shoppers prefer in the store factor is that impulsive buying is discouraged at local stores. But, as far as the walking factor was concerned, the retailers felt that the customers always found it hard to locate good and convenient parking spots near the local stores. This was a major drawback according to the shop owners (in the malls) which the local or stand alone stores faced as compared to the stores in a shopping mall, where the customers always found convenient and organised parking, and they did not mind shelling out a few bucks extra for it either. Moreover, in the same category of walking incentive and comfort, the retailers also felt that the shoppers have to
cross busy streets in order to reach the local stores and have to walk along busy roads, which was a major cause of inconvenience to many.

- Where the aspect of service was concerned, the retailers felt that the local stores provide credit to many customers, which could not be a policy in the malls, and here the local stores sometimes had an advantage over them.

- Shop owners opined in unison that a retail outlet housed in a mall requires an entirely different kind of layout and settings, as compared to a same store situated in a normal market place or a high street. A large majority of the retailers saying that mall credibility influences the footfalls significantly towards the retail outlets located in malls, compared to the retail outlets situated in the conventional market places and a branded store situated inside a popular mall would attract more footfalls inside that store, compared to the attraction capacity of a similar store in the high streets.

- According to most of the shop owners the prime reason that customers prefer to go to a hypermarket rather than to a shopping mall, is that hypermarkets stock most of the grocery goods and the household goods and items of daily use along with the other items which a shopping mall does not.

- It was established that there is a disparity between the range and variety stocked in hypermarkets and shopping malls, but almost everything available in a shopping mall is available in a hypermarket, whereas the reverse is not true, usually, of course excepting for the multiplex and food courts part. Another thing that retailers felt missing in the hypermarkets were child care facilities / play areas for toddlers; no eateries / food joints; no places to sit or hang around in hypermarkets, which are always an inherent part of the shopping malls today.
The retailers agreed that the above mentioned aspects were quite important for augmenting the footfalls in a retail format of any kind and again significantly responsible for the translation of footfalls into purchase behaviour.

- Moreover, the retailers also felt noticeably strongly towards the notion that the salesmen in hypermarkets are lesser attentive, prompt and personalised as compared to those in malls. They felt that the hypermarkets’ salesmen and attendants are not trained fully and are ill-equipped in terms of product knowledge and sales training.

- Also the shop owners felt that hypermarkets on the whole carry far lesser entertainment value vis-à-vis the shopping malls, since in the malls there is almost always some concerts, live events, live shows going on wherein the target is the customer visiting the malls and the aim is to involve him / her and enhance his / her shopping experience, and these marketing / promotional strategies are almost never applied in the hypermarkets.

- But the retailers did feel strongly about the fact that lesser walking is required in the hypermarkets as compared to the large distances required to visit the different outlets in a mall, which of course has its toll on the customers stamina and endurance for shopping at lengths.

- It was found that a large number of retailers felt that distance of a Mall / Hypermarket from the nearest competitor tended to affect the buying behaviour or footfalls in a Mall / Hypermarket. They felt that presence of a mall / hypermarket in their vicinity had a strong propensity to have a downturn effect on their businesses and their sales were by and large inversely proportionalised to the distance of the competitor.
• It was quite evident from the findings that the retailers did not feel that their outlets in any way were lagging behind in terms of the promotional strategies and discount deals and bargains in any sense compared to the hypermarket, and they felt they could give the hypermarkets a run for their money any time where the issue of bargains and deals was concerned and were confident of their wise investments in the shopping malls.

6.1.3 MALL / HYPERMARKET MANAGERS

• The average experience of the managers interviewed was found to be 6.75 years in a similar capacity in a mall / hypermarket. More than 85% of the managers were post graduates, and 70% of them were MBAs, and each one of them was a graduate. It was found that the average daily footfalls in the malls came out to be anywhere between 4,000 to 10,000 on weekdays and rising upto somewhere between 7,000 to 15,000 on weekends, which included the visitors to the multiplexes. Average daily footfalls in the hypermarkets turned out to be anywhere between 1,000 to 3,500 on weekdays and somewhere between 2,500 to 6,000 on weekends. On being asked whether they have noticed any change in the inflow of customers / footfalls during the last 1 year, 85% replied that the footfalls had increased substantially.

• Almost all the mall managers felt that the ever increasing rentals and the high cost of operation in the malls made it virtually impossible for the retailers to maintain profitability in the malls. According to them cost of upkeep, maintenance was also substantially high and in the view of the decreasing
footfalls in the malls, it was not cost–effective and commercially viable for the retailers to continue staying in the malls. Hypermarkets were a clear favourite when it came to the highly critical decision of deciding on an Anchor store. Mostly Big Bazaar and Easy Day were found as the Anchor tenants in all the malls surveyed.

- Majority of the malls had 3 floors along with 2 basement levels and a large number of malls had parking on the ground floors along with 2 basements reserved exclusively for parking only, while a relatively lesser number had parking only on the ground floors, which was mostly the case with all the hypermarkets. Mostly malls had food courts on the topmost floor, which of course was not relevant for hypermarkets, though they did have small restaurants or food kiosks lined up in a section of the store. None of the malls had food courts on the ground floor.

- Similarly, most of the malls had their multiplex facilities on the topmost floor and majority had multiplexes with 4 screen theatres, but none had lesser than 3 screens.

- It was found that the choice of movie to be screened was decided by the multiplex companies (like Big Cinemas, PVR, Fun Cinemas etc) and further that the distributor mostly had the say for how long a movie was to be screened.

- Few malls / hypermarkets provided the facility of valet parking and majority replied negatively on their providing the facility of shuttle services to and from the parking lots. Managers asserted unanimously, when it came to the issues of having adequate security and thorough check up at all entry points, having
CCTVs installed at strategic locations in their malls / hypermarkets and having adequate fire fighting equipment and readiness.

- Majority of them said they kept their websites updated with the latest information; had special exhibits and keep hosting shows and promotional events, held live concerts and jam sessions, all in order to make the visit of the customers as interesting as possible and as much participative. Almost all the managers said that they always made certain their attendants were knowledgeable, polite and courteous to the visitors.

- Managers also felt that the malls / hypermarkets should have the facility of lockers for bags, bagpacks, purses etc so that visitors could have a hassle free shopping experience. Another aspect they strongly felt was, that the malls / hypermarkets should have adequate facilities for handicapped persons and the elderly, like sufficient wheelchairs, suitable ramps, helpers etc which would help in improving the image of the mall / hypermarket.

- Managers agreed collectively on having gaming arcades like Bowling Alleys, Skating Rinks etc, Restaurants (other than the regular food courts) besides a having day care for toddlers / kids would help substantially in increasing the duration of stay of the visitors and thereby increase the probability of translation of footfalls into buying behaviour. Mall / hypermarket managers advocated the need for having in place, an effectual customer service centre and centralised info / help desk where list of store schedule information, list of current sales, discount coupons, activities, schedules etc can be obtained.

- It was also established that mall / hypermarket managers need to liaison extensively with the advertising agencies, irrespective of the type of
establishment and it should be done on part of the mall as well as on the part of the retail establishments also. They also need to liaison with retailers to acquire information about promotional strategies, products, discounts, offer packages, new innovative ways to work as a team for the success of the Mall / Hypermarket.

- A substantially large number of the managers strongly agreed with the notion that speciality malls are a riskier investment as compared to the rest of the general malls.

- Managers were unanimous in their replies that multiplexes had arrived in a big way in the Indian theatre and were here to stay. The multiplex movie buffs had an advantage that after viewing the movies, they had the convenience of supplementing services available like shopping, beauty salons, eating / dining etc, and they did not have to go out to a market place outside if they wanted to shop or relax or eat out, which according to them was a major convenience factor. According to the managers, Indian public felt a sort of status symbol visiting the multiplexes compared to the traditional cinemas. According to multiplex managers, especially those who have worked in both the theatre formats, the type of crowd coming to a multiplex is better.

- The managers, felt that as almost all the malls are located on the outskirts of the cities, people have to travel a greater distance to view movies as compared to the traditional cinemas which have the superior advantage of being located almost centrally in the heart of the towns. Prompting further on the downsides of these newer theatre formats, managers responded that there is a serious problem of
revenue sharing with the film producers which results in problems of revenue generation.

- Mall / hypermarket, managers were unanimous in their opinion that the amount of distances a customer had to walk inside the premises, impacted inversely on his willingness and ability to shop. Large distances fatigued the customer and the layout of the mall / hypermarket had to be optimised very precisely and rationally.

- They also agreed strongly with the fact that there should be clear & proper signages and / or displays along the aisles of a mall / hypermarket, so as to facilitate the easy movement of the visitors and also in order to help them and guide them towards their areas of interest, apart from the public conveniences.

- Managers also stated that customers today preferred to stay away from malls / hypermarkets, which lay in an area of high traffic density or if the customers had to traverse through areas of high traffic congestion to reach them. Availability of public transportation and the variety of travel modes available and also the topography of the region carried little weight with the Indian customer today, according to these managers.

6.1.4 **MALL / HYPERMARKET DEVELOPERS / BUILDERS**

- It was found that the average time taken to construct the malls / hypermarkets as revealed by the developers was anywhere between 5–6 years and in some cases even more. Majority of the promoters said that their mall was located on a main highway. A larger number of them said that they had kept an eye out for any building / structure that could have a negative / positive consequence in its being
located near the mall, for e.g. a religious place, school, stadium etc. while deciding on a site for a mall / hypermarket.

- Majority of the builders said that their mall had 3 floors with 2 basements and almost all the promoters said that the parking in their establishment lay in the 2 basement levels and the ground floor. In the malls, the lower and upper basement levels were for the visitors and the ground floor parking was exclusively reserved for the retailers or the shop owners only, which was done, generally, as a part of the promotional strategies of the mall while drawing the retailers to invest or set up businesses in their malls.

- Most of the builders said they had installed CCTVs at strategic locations in their malls / hypermarkets and almost all replied having adequate fire fighting equipment and readiness, besides having excellent unparalleled security in their malls / hypermarkets.

- Many of the promoters also pointed out their malls had a huge locational disadvantage over the other retail stores lying in the heart of the cities, which enjoyed closer proximity to the customers and benefited from lesser rentals too, as compared to the mall rentals. Moreover the mushrooming of the malls, and especially in concentrated areas around the cities, had led to division of choice amongst the visitors, consequently resulting in decreasing footfalls.

- The promoters were unanimous in their opinion that the essential trait they looked for in a mall manager was at least graduates, preferably MBAs and / or have a Post Graduate Diploma in Hospitality Management or Retail Management, and should have worked in a similar capacity in a similar field.
• The promoters also felt that the travel distance to a particular mall / hypermarket inversely affected the propensity and / or willingness of a visitor to shop and the same was also influenced by the amount of walking required in a Mall / Hypermarket. The builders agreed that there should be multiple entrances and exits to a mall / hypermarket, which almost none of the malls in India have incorporated in their architecture, as is the case in the malls in the United States or United Kingdom, where there are numerous exits and entrances into the main building. They preferred that a mall / hypermarket should have wide aisles, easy to follow layout and should have a big lounge area / atrium.

• All the developers replied in favour of well–organised parking, which has become a major focus area for such kind of commercial establishments, especially those located in the heart of the towns or heavily congested areas, and these could possibly be the reasons which might make or mar the success of any shopping mall / hypermarket. Further, according to most of them, there should be multiple parking lots, geographically spread around the mall / hypermarket, to cater to visitors approaching from all directions so that they do not have to drive all around the premises to get to the parking lot. Further, all 10 developers / builders agreed unanimously upon having parking on the ground floor as well, which has come to be reserved for the exclusivity of the shop owners in the shopping malls, as a promotional strategy by the mall builders to entice retailers.

• The same amount of importance was given to the providing of sitting lounges for the visitors, adequate fire safety provisions and security and safety measures. Though providing sitting lounges favoured the increase in the ‘mall–rats’
hanging out in more numbers, still, developers were in favour of providing resting areas and sitting lounges for genuine mall visitors also.

- Mall developers agreed in majority that the food courts should be located on the topmost floors and felt that on the remaining floors, there should be other restaurants and fast food outlets also, which can be another major source of revenue generation.

- On the issue of escalators, mostly builders replied in favour of having 2 pairs of escalators for each floor. A majority of them desired a combination of stairs, escalators and elevators as they felt that having a combination of stairs and elevators only or a combination of stairs and escalators only would not do justice to the huge amounts of crowds visiting the malls / hypermarkets these days and would be insufficient to handle them.

- All developers / builders agreed that having ATMs inside the mall / hypermarket premises would help in providing a complete and wholesome shopping experience to the customers, most of them further felt having hair salons, amusement parks and gaming arcades would increase the probability of the visitors having absolute gratification, including their shopping experience.

- On being enquired as to which of the establishments did the promoters consider to be the ideal anchor stores, majority of them replied in favour of having hypermarkets as the ideal Anchor tenants for any kind of mall, since they are the biggest and the largest crowd pullers and also the prime revenue generators in the initial period of operations of the mall, which are the periods of extreme criticality and might determine the course of success the said mall would take in the future course.
Mall developers felt that the multiplexes had a loyal following and the people who had decided on watching a movie in a multiplex will do so irrespective of the distance and location of the mall in which that multiplex was located in. The promoters strongly believed that the multiplex goers’ category did not give much significance to the locational aspect when deciding on viewing a movie and would not mind driving further and paying higher. According to the mall developers, multiplexes should be located on the topmost floor of the shopping mall and they unanimously voted for 4 screen multiplexes.

A majority of the promoters replied in the negative on the misconstrued notion of operational costs of the theme malls being lower than the general malls. Mall developers did not agree with the thought that speciality malls would be smaller in size, and contended with the responses that running a mall in itself is an extremely costly venture, and in no way could they be considered as smaller and therefore having lower operational and maintenance costs. But the promoters unanimously agreed that theme malls were a riskier business proposition than the general malls, since the former remained limited to a particular product category or a theme only.

According to all the developers, local brands and non–branded product retailers do not show even the slightest of interest in setting up shops inside such super–speciality malls and therefore, they would not find favour or any takers from the local area traders.
6.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study has produced some important results that have implications for both research and practice. Visit to a mall and / or hypermarket in itself represents the suitable, cheap and convenient outing to break the daily routine and feel part of a different world. On the basis of the responses of the customers and retailers, regarding various factors, concerning mall location, situation, promotional strategies etc, the mall / hypermarket developers and managers should create appropriate activities and services inside the premises to attract such clientele, like affordable coffee shops and discount stores, without sending out a message of inferiority. Marketing plans and strategies should be more focused and fine-tuned to each different type of shopper visiting the mall, rather than utilizing a mass marketing strategy with no specific target group in mind. It is the challenge of any mall / hypermarket to make every visitor feel that the mall was created solely for him / her. Therefore, the findings of the study can be used as guidelines by the managers and they should realise that it is important to promote their mall / hypermarket as a unique brand and take care of the environmental context surrounding the mall / hypermarket, like the architecture, interior design, decorations and anchors related to the mall as they seem to play an integral role in shaping visitors’ reasons for going to and spending time at the mall.

Mall developers also have to create distinctive identities for their specific malls, much like the identities that have developed over time for major shopping high streets in various cities in the country. Their work is not done just when the mall has been commissioned. This research / study can serve as a guideline for the scores of mall / hypermarket builders / developers / promoters / owners to not just rush into
setting up a mall or a hypermarket overnight based solely on their whims and fancies, but plan delicately and wisely according to the market requirements and chalk out detailed and meticulous strategies so that they do not have to shut shop overnight. Professional third party mall management service providers are hence likely to come to the fore. They not only understand these business challenges, but also have the ability to help retailers effectively deal with them.

As for the would-be retailer tenants, this study serves as an important means to make them appreciate that merely moving into a mall does not guarantee business for them. They have to work as hard to draw consumers to their own stores once the latter have entered the mall, and then have the right value proposition for them to get converted into customers, and then become repeat customers. Their sales personnel should be trained to understand and relate to the needs and the wants of the average customer.

And today with proper retail mix and anchors in place, the malls are doing well. But mall leasing is just one aspect for the success of a mall, whilst running a mall efficiently with all tenants doing good sales, getting regular footfalls, mall maintenance and its management, events and promotions in the mall, all this together confirms the success of the mall.

6.3 LIMITATIONS & AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Besides the apparent and influencing limitations of time and cost, there were certain other limitations of the current research, which future studies in this area can / should seek to overcome.
The findings of this study cannot be generalised to other parts of the country, where the average Indian customer has an altogether varied temperament and personality disposition, and consequently different buying behaviour and diverse decision making criteria. Undoubtedly, future research should focus and look upon the other markets as well like those of Western India, Southern India and Eastern India. The present study was limited to only the Northern part of India and that too did not include several major areas like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan etc. Sufficient response could not be generated from the Mall Promoters / Builders and Mall Managers, since most of the times they were unavailable or difficult to approach and sometimes responses were difficult to be evicted from them. Future research may target these sample populations in further depth and scale in order to test the possible generalizations of this study and to entice further responses.

Customer loyalty and purchase decision behaviour is a complex and multifaceted concept, and can seldom be predicted or understood with utmost clarity. Future studies can incorporate other variables that impact store loyalty, environment sensitivity, variety seeking tendencies etc. This study opens doors to many more research ideas and investigations. Deeper insights can be gained into the types of stores visited and their decision making criteria on these accounts, by shoppers inside shopping malls. Furthermore, a closer investigation of the relationship between occasions or specific times of the year and types of shoppers visiting the mall and types of activities performed can also provide deeper insights to the reasons behind visiting malls and why malls are particularly crowded or overwhelmed on specific occasions such as Diwali, New Year and Christmas and accordingly set the ground for future research in this area.
Further studies can be done to determine the correlates of mall visits frequency and also carry out a study between customer characteristics (demographics and motivations) and their measured frequency of shopping. Future investigations can cover theme malls in more detail and depth, and also examine the upcoming concept of bargain malls and strip malls, where discount stores are aplenty, which would certainly provide additional insights into mall / hypermarket visiting and shopping behaviour and its antecedents, with much more clarity and precision.