CHAPTER - IV

CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF ORGANISED RETAIL
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This study is aimed at learning about the perceptions of retail consumer’s, specially focusing on the differences between the general categories of retail stores to that of specialty malls situated in Bangalore city.

Perception is the process by which the sensations are selected, organized and interpreted. Sensation refers to the immediate response of our sensory receptors/organs (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, fingers) to basic stimuli such as light, colour, sound, Odours, taste and textures.

Perception is defined as the process, by which an individual selects, organizes and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world.

Different persons may view the same event differently and thus respond in a different manner. In other words, the general tendency on the part of the people is to view the same phenomenon/event/situation differently and respond in the way they perceive the objects/things.

In other words, perception is the process of selecting, organizing and interpreting or attaching meaning to events happening in environment. It is a mental process, whereby an individual selects data or information from the environment, organizes it and draws significance or meaning from it. Perception is basically a cognitive or thinking process and an individual’s activities, emotions, feelings etc., are based on his or her perceptions of their surroundings or environment.

The conventional wisdom says that the buying behaviour of industrial consumer is different from that of a consumer products buyer. Within the consumers also, the
retail sector is unique in its nature, and different in characteristics when compared to other buyers who buy from conventional stores. The researcher tried to probe into various aspects of retailing that may influence and affect the buying behaviour of a retail consumer. Typically, the marketing operations start with the customer and ends with his satisfaction, retail marketing is no exception to this principle. In order to give the findings a meaningful direction, the consumer behaviour has been studied comparing the two important formats of retail that is general category and specialty malls under three broad sections as give under.

a) The customer centric factors (Intrinsic and Extrinsic factors)

b) Inducements that retailers would use like – products mix, Store design and layout, influence through CSA, Store specific Drives, motivational factors like advertisements and promotional issues

c) The ultimate decisive views that have influence on a consumer behaviour

Customer centric factors

The reason d’être for any marketing activity is ‘its customer’. Therefore, for successful marketing operations, it is essential to begin with the nature and characteristics of a shopper. For the purpose, it is essential to study the factors that influence the buying and consumption behaviour within him. In other words, these characteristics of a buyer are called as ‘intrinsic factors’ of buying behaviour. Be it is a shopper to a mall or a road side store, the nature and characteristics within the visitor or a buyer remain same, and they do not vary considerably, but the behavioural aspects and expectations will be different when the same shopper is exposed to different shopping environments.

In order to have a comprehensive understanding of a shopper, it is important to initially to learn about the intrinsic factors in detail. Within the intrinsic factors demographics of the shoppers gives lot of insights. Generally the demographical issues that have influence on purchasing decisions are their age, gender, income level, academic background etc. Therefore, the researcher has tried to identify the perceptions of a retail consumer and thereafter analyze the differences between a shopper of general category store to that of a specialty mall, to give meaningful insights about a shoppers’ buying behaviour and the factors that influence them.
Primarily the perspectives that bring into light to customer centric factors are broadly discussed:

a) The demographical differences that have an influence on buying behaviour
b) The factors that impact the customers i.e., Motivational factors
c) To understand the perceptual differences between customers.

Demographical differences

In the demographical differences, the important parameters to observe are age, educational background and the income groups. While analyzing the categories of different types of retailer consumers, the behavioural pattern and their purchasing activities are mainly influenced by either income or age. Therefore, the researcher has identified the following findings, by analyzing the behavioural aspects of general category of stores and specialty malls consumers on these perspectives.

Age

Age is one significant factor that influences the minds of the consumers. Typically, what a teenager prefers the same may not be preferred by a senior citizen. Similarly, the brand preferences are learnt by experience over a period of time, therefore brand consciousness is found more in seniors than youngsters. Hence, it is important to study the variable which has a significant influence in the buying behaviour of shoppers.

On keen observation of the age profile of shoppers visiting the general malls, 41 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of 21 to 35 years, and 25 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of 61 years and above. The third largest group of respondents falls in the age group of 36 – 45 years, who constitute 20 per cent of the total respondents and the last age group is 46 to 50 years constitute another 20 per cent.

From the above data, it is obvious that an overwhelming majority (65 per cent) of the respondents are in the age group of 21 to 50 years. This age group has youngsters and also the matured buyers.
While comparing the same set of shoppers (i.e., in the age group of 21 to 35 years) that visit these specialty malls are more or less similar, to be precise it is 58 per cent of the respondents fall in this age group. More interestingly the people between 35 to 50 years comprise of 42 per cent. It is noticeable here that specialty malls attract younger age groups, and surprisingly above 51 years aged respondents have been found less in specialty malls. This does not mean and can be concluded that people above 60 years do not visit the specialty malls, but they form exceptions to the assumption of researcher’s views.

On the contrary, there is a considerable difference between the age group of respondents from specialty malls to that of general malls. By this it can be inferred that majority of the respondents fall in the age groups of 21 to 50 years in both the categories of malls.

Many researchers explain the teenagers as the “transmitters” of information and curious on lookers and collectors of new information, new trends and disseminate their observations and views to the people with whom they are concerned and to his family members. In General, the people fall in the age group of 21 to 25 are considered as ‘transformers’ who are new entrants into the earning population of a country and become independent in terms of their earnings. They would like to be self reliant and the act positively to the changes that is observed as favourable to them. They also easily accept these changes they observe in the environment with less resistance and display a resilient behaviour and they quickly adapt to the new trends with their reasoning qualities.

An analysis of the Indian population also corroborates this fact, that India is a country to reckon with the growing purchasing power due to prevalence higher percentage of middle aged population45. It can be inferred from the above, people below the age group of 25 to 50 years are willing to change their purchase behavior from traditional uni-brand stores to malls where a lot of variety of branded products are available and where the people are confident and assured of the quality. For this purpose, the researcher has made the following hypothesis.

45
Hypothesis 3:

Specialty malls are usually frequented by higher income groups

H0: More number of higher income customers usually visit to speciality malls than ordinary malls

H1: Higher income customers of speciality malls do not visit ordinary malls

In order to test the above hypotheses, two proportion- one tailed test has been adopted

\[ z = \frac{(p_1 - p_2)}{SE} \]

\[ Z = 1.0.25/ (0.25x0.75/150)^{1/2} + 0 \]

\[ = 21.4 \]

Hence, it has been proved that higher income people are customers of speciality malls and not ordinary category of stores.

The Retail inducements

Interestingly, the variables that act as stimulants or as inducements have been analyzed in the study. Broadly, the inducements have been studied under various heads, such as

Product mix

Store design and layout

The role of CSA

Store specific Drives

Factors like advertisements and promotional issues

For this purpose, a detailed statement is made on all these parameters and they are appended hereunder.
Product mix

One of the strong reasons behind the success of few successful malls or retail stores is product mix. The successful stores are the ones which always strive to provide diverse offerings. It could be in the form of wider product range, deeper in its assortments with consistency in its offerings. Most importantly, the prices at which the product-mix is offered will also have a significant bearing on the buying behaviour. Whether it is a specialty mall, or a discount oriented retail outlet, the success and survival of many retailers would largely depend on its product mix.

If the in-house layout, design, decors and architecture brings the footfalls to a mall, to convert these footfalls into consumers and make them loyal to those malls or a retail store largely depends on the perceived value of the product offerings. Some of the malls emphasize on brands and some on the brand equity the retail stores built over a period of time. Some of the stores focus on the quality image of the products offered in the form of their store owned labels, by bringing the latest and trendy products, sometimes with augmented products. As a matter of fact, the real strength of any mall lies in maintaining a mix of all these factors to mobilize the masses for its success. For this purpose, the researcher has tried to collect information on some important variables that act as inducements to a buyer.

This can be substantiated on observing the following important factors collected during the study.

a) Products of interest:

The products of interest to general malls consumers is ‘Groceries’ which constitute 37 per cent, and the next category of products of interest to the same respondents is household goods which constitute 25 per cent. The household requirements include Cooking apparatus, consumer durables like Mobiles, Music systems, TV’s, Washing machines etc.

On the contrary, in case of specialty malls, the products of the interest to the respondents are the garments which constitute 51 per cent of the total products. The next largest products being purchased by the specialty mall respondents are household items like perfumes, consumer durables like Mobiles, TV’s, Music systems etc. These
items constitute 43 per cent of the total items being purchased by specialty mall respondents.

On observing the products of interest to these two sections of respondents, the General mall shoppers display a behaviour that are low brand conscious and predominantly show a budget oriented approach and where they try to economies. This can be clearly understood in the products they buy.

The similarities between the general category and the specialty malls are household items. On a general observation of specialty of malls, the household items also occupy prominent place. While the respondents of general malls display a different approach towards the products they buy. They are relatively conscious about the economies that a shopper derives by buying from these stores.

Therefore, product mix is of great concern to a retailer, and this is one important area to differentiate themselves from the conventional stores. It is important and interesting to note that respondents of specialty malls show less interest in the items offered on discounted prices, which constitute only 4 per cent.

There is no much appreciable difference noticeable in terms of the products sought and bought by the visitors to both specialty and general purpose malls except food and grocery items.

Along with the product mix, the gifts, compliments, and the surprise bounties, that come in their way while making their purchases from a retailer; psychologically influence a buyer to increase their loyalty to those retail stores.

**Hypothesis 4:**

Food and groceries are the principal attracting products in both category of retail stores that is general category stores and specialty malls

\[ H_0: \text{Food and groceries are the attracting products in both ordinary and speciality malls (} p_1 = p_2) \]
H1: Food and groceries are the attracting products in case of ordinary mall than speciality malls( p1>p2)

In order to test the above hypotheses, using the similar population, double proportion - Two tailed test and followed by Z test has been used.

\[ z = (p_1 - p_2) / SE \]

\[ P_1 = 56/150 = 0.37 \quad p_2 = 1/150 = 0.006 \]

\[ Q_1 = 1-p_1 = 0.63 \quad q_2 = 0.994 \]

Z test

\[ Z = 0.37 - 0.006 / (0.37 \times 0.63/150)^{1/2} + (0.006 \times 0.994/150)^{1/2} = 8.08 \]

Since the z value is greater than 3, it has been proved that food and groceries offered under the product mix are not attracting of both category of consumers.

*Fig. 4.1: Store layout and design*
Store Layout and design

From the shoppers’ point of view, the primary aim is to create a retail space that forms an effective link between the brand through its products (that are the main focus of the space) and the consumer. In doing so, the stores have to go beyond average thumb rules of floor planning, and the objective of any design must be to supersede these mere functionalities. Therefore, there is no common rule in designing the store layout or design. It is how one delineates the space according to the design strategy that obviously takes into account product type, customer interaction with the product and manner and sequence in which customers should experience the space.

Shelves arrangement

The general impression about a mall is formed based on two important parameters, viz., the externalities or the internalities of a mall or retail store which includes the architectural view of a mall, anchors used, the interiors, and the overall layout of the mall, the number of branded outlets available in a mall etc., The internalities to a mall is judged based on the section wise and flow of product assortments, isles, the pathways, the product assortments, the product storage racks versus the products arrangements, the elevators, lifts etc., Obviously the interiors enhance the image or project a positive image about the mall in the eyes of a consumer.

However, based on the informal discussions had with the mall promoters, and also the general views expressed by the respondents about the shelves arrangement and the sections flow also play an important role in attracting shoppers.

Views expressed by general malls respondents on this aspect are as given under.

As many as 26 per cent of the respondents have felt that maps at entrance of the malls are required for better guidance to shoppers. Similarly, 34 per cent of the respondents have stated that direction sign boards should be fixed at each and every section to make the flow and movement of shoppers easy.

While on the subject, 23 per cent of the respondents have felt that arrangement of the sections is to be in such a way that section wise and product wise movement made
easy, and 16 per cent of the respondents stated that product assortments are well
arranged.

**Views expressed by Specialty malls respondents:**

Six per cent of the respondents have felt that Maps at entrance of the malls are
required for better guidance to visitors, 25 per cent of the respondents have stated that
direction sign boards should be fixed at each and every section to make the flow and
movement of visitors easy.

While on the subject, 39 per cent of the respondents felt that arrangement of the
sections are made in such a way that section wise and product wise movement made
easy, and about 30 per cent of the respondents stated that product assortments are well
arranged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL. NO</th>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>TOTAL RESPONDENTS TO ORDINARY STALLS BY CONSIDERING DIFFERENT VARIABLES</th>
<th>TOTAL RESPONDENTS TO SPECIALITY STORES BY CONSIDERING DIFFERENT VARIABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AGE GROUPS</td>
<td>21-35 YRS, 61 RESPONDENTS, 41%</td>
<td>21-35 YRS, 87 RESPONDENTS, 58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td>MALE, 96 RESPONDENTS, 64%</td>
<td>MALE, 107 RESPONDENTS, 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>OCCUPATION</td>
<td>PROFFESIONALS, 45 RPS, 30%</td>
<td>BUSINESS, 66 RPS, 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ACADEMIC PROFILE</td>
<td>GRADUATES, 70 RPS, 47%</td>
<td>POST GRADUATES, 75 RPS, 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>INCOME</td>
<td>15001- 30000, 54RPS, 36%</td>
<td>45001 &amp; ABOVE, 150 RPS, 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>INTEREST ITEMS</td>
<td>GROCERS, 56 RPS, 37%</td>
<td>GARMENTS, 77 RPS, 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CONSUMER LEARNING</td>
<td>FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES, 64 RPS, 43%</td>
<td>EYE CROSSED OVER, 113 RPS, 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS</td>
<td>VARIETY OF PRODUCTS, 44 RPS, 29%</td>
<td>PROXIMITY TO RESIDENCE, 69 RPS, 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>INTERESTED SECTIONS</td>
<td>GROCERS, 45 RPS, 30%</td>
<td>APPAREL, 76 RPS, 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>FREQUENCY OF VISIT</td>
<td>ONCE IN A WEEK, 67 RPS, 45%</td>
<td>MONTHLY, 114 RPS, 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>BUYING HABITS</td>
<td>NOT FROM MALLS, 48 RPS, 32%</td>
<td>AS AND WHEN REQUIRED, 109 RPS, 73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BILLING ARRANGEMENTS</td>
<td>SPL COUNTERS IN PEAK HOURS, 51 RPS, 34%</td>
<td>SPL COUNTERS IN PEAK HOURS, 88 RPS, 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>SALES ASSOCIATES</td>
<td>INADEQUATE IN IMP SECTIONS, 39 rps, 26%</td>
<td>INADEQUATE IN IMP SECTIONS, 53 RPS, 32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>SECTION LAYOUT</td>
<td>DIRECTION SIGNS NEEDED, 51 RPS, 34%</td>
<td>SECTION WISE AND PRODUCT WISE MOVEMENT MADE EASY, 59 RPS, 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>CUSTOMER CARE</td>
<td>SIT OUTS, 60 RPS, 40%</td>
<td>NOTHING, 75 RPS, 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>CLEALINESS</td>
<td>ALWAYS MAINTAINED CLEANLY, 55 RPS, 37%</td>
<td>ALWAYS MAINTAINED CLEANLY, 84 RPS, 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>PRODUCT OFFERINGS</td>
<td>PAR TAILLY, 91 RPS, 67%</td>
<td>YES, 99 RPS, 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>SHELVES ARRANGEMENT</td>
<td>SHELVES DELICATE &amp; IMPROPER TO ITEMS, 54 RPS, 36%</td>
<td>KEPT WITH IN REACH OF CUSTOMERS, 99 RPS, 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>NEW PRODUCT INFORMATION</td>
<td>SPL DISPLAY SHOW CASES AT ENTRANCES, 63 RPS, 42%</td>
<td>SPL DISPLAY SHOW CASES AT ENTRANCES, 86 RPS, 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>DIFFUSION OF MALL ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>TOTAL INFORMATION NOT PROVIDED, 63 RPS, 42%</td>
<td>BENEFITS AND DISCOUNTS OFFERED TO EARLY BIRDS, 101 RPS, 68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>PRICING MATTERS</td>
<td>DISCOUNTS OFFERED ON NON POPULAR BRANDS, 68 RPS, 38%</td>
<td>DISCOUNTS OFFERED ON NON POPULAR BRANDS, 84 RPS, 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>ACCEPTANCE OF CREDIT CARDS</td>
<td>YES, 145 RPS, 96%</td>
<td>YES, 150 RPS, 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>MALL ATTRACTIONS</td>
<td>ENTERTAINMENT OF CUSTOMERS BY INTRODUCTORY OFFERS, 57 RPS, 35%</td>
<td>FOOD COURTS, 137 RPS, 91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>MEASURES TO ATTRACT CUSTOMERS</td>
<td>SPL DISCOUNTED PRODUCT IN SECTIONS, 49 RPS, 33%</td>
<td>CUSTOMER PRIVILEGE CARDS, 71 RPS, 47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>QUALITY OF MERCHANDISE</td>
<td>MAJORITY OF PRODUCTS BRANDED, 37 RPS, 25%</td>
<td>MAJORITY OF PRODUCTS BRANDED, 126 RPS, 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>REINFORCEMENT</td>
<td>YES, 129 RPS, 89%</td>
<td>YES, 150 RPS, 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>CUSTOMER PREFERENCE</td>
<td>AMBIENCE, DISCOUNTS &amp; OFFERS, 44 RPS, 29%</td>
<td>EASY ACCESSIBILITY, 107 RPS, 72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>SHOPPING EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>GOOD, 74 RPS, 50%</td>
<td>GOOD, 144 RPS, 96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Customer care at Specialty malls

The extent of care a mall takes about its customers or the concern it has for its customer may be assessed on various facilities provided inside the malls. The facilities or amenities include provision of rest rooms, providing drinking water at convenient places, sit-out arrangements, provision for restaurants or refreshment zones, and the coffee shops inside the malls. Many western retailers do provide sitting zones for the elderly people to relax, game zones to engage and entertain the shoppers' children during shopping hours of parents, and make shopping a convenient activity. Some of the malls do provide children zones, so that parents can do shopping in a relaxed way and children do not disturb them in making shopping a good experience.

Views of General Mall respondents

On a study of the opinions of the respondents of general category of stores about the requirements of facilities and amenities required in a store, 44 per cent of the respondents felt that small cafeteria are required, and 8 per cent of the respondents expressed that restaurants are required, and 37 per cent of the respondents felt that sit outs zones are required, and 2 per cent have felt it necessary to provide drinking water in the stores, and about 1 per cent of the respondents stated that Indian stores do provide any amenities to its shoppers.

Views of Specialty Mall respondents

As many as 10 per cent of the respondents visiting to the specialty malls are of the opinion that the retailers in the malls are keeping the products in right type of shelves suiting packing and compatible to the nature of products, 25 per cent of the respondents felt that shelves are delicate and improper to the items. While 66 per cent of the respondents felt that goods are kept within reach of them in the malls

Indian shopping culture has not improved enough to think of these concepts and provide right ambiance and infrastructure to address these divergent needs of shoppers.
Specialty stores-New products information and awareness

The unorganized retailers do not have provision to give due care in promoting the new products and the products newly launched. This may be due to non-availability of sufficient space and also skilled sales force to answer to the quarries of the onlookers or prospective buyers. Even to the established organized retailers, handling the new product launch poses serious challenges. On this front, the organized retailers are relatively in a better position to conduct such activities. This exercise does not mean just providing a window to show case the products but to provide a platform to disseminate the information and to convert the enquiries into potential sales which is the ultimate objective of any new product promotion programme.

However, the opinions of the respondents in India are different, and some of the malls do provide separate windows, 2 per cent of the respondents stated that malls have provided special windows and places for such activities, 41 per cent of the respondents stated that special launch platforms are created for such activities and 57 per cent of the respondents said that special display show cases are earmarked at entrances to attract the attention of the shoppers and onlookers.

a) Motivational Factors

To know the influence of motivational factors on the purchase decisions, the researcher has identified following variables for the purpose of ascertaining their learning and motivational factors. In general, the factors that influence the motivational process are categorized into personal and environmental variables.

The perceptions of shoppers do vary from individual to individual. But to generalize them is rather difficult. However, the researcher has made an attempt to gather information on certain parameters which can act as motivators to visit a mall or a retail store. They may be

i) Variety of products offered
ii) Quality of offerings
iii) Proximity to residence
iv) Reasonable and competitive prices
v) Availability of needs at all times (i.e., consistency of offerings)
It can be analyzed from the respondents of general malls views that about 29 per cent of the respondents do visit the malls for the sake of variety; this is followed by 22 per cent of total respondents considering quality of offerings as the second important variable. The third priority in the minds of consumers is proximity to their residence which constitutes 16 per cent of the total respondents. It is interesting to note that the reasonable prices is considered as their fourth ranking variable motivating them to visit these malls, this factor is rated by as many as 9 per cent of the respondents.

The general view behind the visit of people to any mall or a store is to get all their needs in one visit under one roof. If the needs are on their visit, they would prefer to visit again the same mall or store. Hence it is important from the retailer’s point of view that the needs of the customers are always maintained in their stores.

The researcher has made an attempt to learn the views of the respondents about the status of availability of needs in the four specialty of malls. 66 per cent of the respondents have agreed that the goods are made available.

For the purpose of studying the motivational factors of a store or a mall, a comparative rating scale method is adopted, and the results are provided in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational factors</th>
<th>Ordinary malls</th>
<th>Speciality malls</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variety of products offered</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of offerings</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable and competitive prices</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of needs at all times (i.e., consistency of offerings)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On analyzing the above table, it can be inferred that the following factors would form the order of priority in the minds of the respondents:

1) Proximity to residence
2) Quality of offerings
3) Variety of products offered
4) Availability of needs at all times
5) Reasonable and competitive prices

b) Opinion about shelves arrangement

In these competitive markets, every object, opportunity is tried and explored to attract the attention of the prospective shoppers. The shelves are also playing its role in making people to know about the products its features and also to come near by virtue of its attractiveness. When we are discussing about the shelves, attributes like the colour, size, height, shape, accessibility, it's positioning in the store are prominently used to influence the on lookers views.

About 10 per cent of the respondents visiting to the four specialty malls are of the opinion that the retailers in the malls are keeping the products in right type of shelves suiting packing and compatible to the nature of products, 25 per cent of the respondents felt that shelves are delicate & improper to the items. While 66 per cent of the respondents felt that goods are kept within reach of them in the malls.

c) New products information

Variety seeking buyers always look for something new and always try to visit those stores, malls which offer new products. Some malls conduct new product related activities on the week ends, as a mechanism to get new shoppers, and also as a revenue earning mechanism. Therefore, the mall operators treat this segment of customers as another niche segment, and try to exploit this segment to their best advantage.

Opinions of the respondents in India are different, and some of the malls do provide separate windows. About 2 per cent of the respondents stated that malls have provided special windows and places for such activities, 41 per cent of the respondents stated that special launch platforms are created for such activities and 57 per cent of the respondents said that special display show cases are earmarked at entrances to attract the attention of the shoppers and on lookers.
Key Drivers behind the buying behaviour

It is generally observed that at some point or other it is asked what a consumer “think” or “feel” about a particular object, issue, activity or person. *The way one responds to such questions expresses one’s attitudes.*

Social psychologists have viewed attitudes as a major, basic construct leading to behaviour, i.e., attitude have been considered as *a major factor affecting behaviour.*

Attitudes do invariably affect and influence the perception of human beings. Products, brands, people, constant exposure to and comprehension of information, choice of friends and so on do convey or reflect a person’s perceptions, attitude and living style and culture.

It is vital to gain insights into customers minds, in rightly assessing the factors which influence them to create stimulus in a mall environment are the challenges to be addressed by the mall organizers. This is possible only when restructuring brand and sales planning, new product development, marketing investments and other business planning process are in tune with the customer’s expectations.

The process of analyzing data about attracting and retaining the customers with the malls is the crux to gain insights about their perceptual process. It is the difficult to precisely to elicit data by a simple set of questions, but it needs a careful and methodical interview of the respondents, as no two individuals are alike in responding or in the way they respond to the same question. Many questions are arranged in seriatim in the questionnaire to ascertain this difficult but omnipotent subject.

They are:

a) Creation of awareness about the existence, to increase the mall popularity  
b) The factors that prompts to visit the malls  
c) Which media is the right media to attract the shoppers  
d) After attracting the customers to their malls, how to retain them  
e) For the success of mall what type of assortments are ideal  
f) What promotional activities are required to make the customers exciting and make them to visit repeatedly
As a matter of fact, a reader might find little difference between the ‘variety of products’ and ‘choice to choose’. While the variety refers to a wide range of products within a product, whereas the researcher means a large number of products like number of SKU’s offered to choose from. For example, a customer is looking for a music system, or a TV, the number of brands, different sizes, variety of options available in the TV or a Music system is considered as variety of products.

The choice to choose refers to a large number of products like more than 100 variety of vegetables and fruits offered in a section (within the apples of Fiji, US, Australian, Shimla, Kashmir, and Chinese origin refers to variety to choose), giving a customer whole range of options to choose from.

Especially for the residents of cities, who are time starved, and facing parking problems for their vehicles, every single effort to reduce these concerns is a welcome measure, and makes people comfortable, and relaxed to think about those shops or malls favourably. This is evident from the respondents point of view, as 5 per cent of the respondents felt that they would visit the malls for the reason they offer parking facility, and 4 per cent of the respondents felt that door delivery is also important, and another 4 per cent of the respondents stated that delivering the goods until the parking area, where their vehicles is parked.

Hence malls location in the residential areas, vehicle parking facility, door delivery, and loading the goods into their vehicles at parking slot are also considered as one of the prominent area influence in attracting the potential shoppers to a mall or retail store.

**Interested sections**

The malls activities are judged by how many verticals or division of products they offer. In recent times, the shoppers are conscious about the length and breadth of the products offered by each mall. For this purpose, majority are trying to adopt those malls which offer widest product verticals in a mall, to attract the prospective buyers.
It is clear from Table No. 3.9, that the visitors to the malls are more interested in two important sections to fulfill their physiological needs, i.e., food and groceries and clothing, which represent 29 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. For other sections, like footwear, books and stationary, music sections the visitors interested represent 7 per cent for each section, food courts are attracting 5 per cent of the respondents, whereas sports, art galleries, electronics section are attracting 4 per cent of the respondents in each category. The household materials is attracting only 3 per cent of the respondents, jewelry section is able to woo about 2 per cent of the respondents to come to their malls. Interestingly, in case of general category of malls for entertainment and vegetables are no more considered as attractors, as majority of these malls do not operate in combination with multiplexes, nor offering ticketing facility for the multiplexes. However, some of the general malls like Spencers, Fabmall, Food world, to a considerable extent are strong in vegetable sections, if all general purpose malls are taken into account, vegetables are no more an attractive section for the shoppers.

CSA role

During the year 2007, Wharton Institute of Management has surveyed the reasons for customer Dissatisfaction. According to this survey, one in three dissatisfied customers tells others about a problem he or she encountered at a store, and those people go on to tell an average of four others. Half of all shoppers have chosen not to visit a particular store because of someone else’s bad experience. Consumers’ opinions covering major retail aggravations, including trouble finding a parking space (33%) and product stock outs (22%) but shoppers are more forgiving of those problems than they are of bad sales help.¹

The CSA’s role is less apt to talk about it ‘when things to go well’, since they are one the front lines, these employees become the most visible target for complaints when there is problem. “When something goes wrong, the sales associate gets wrong, the sales associate gets blamed for it – fairly or unfairly.”

The survey revealed differences in dissatisfaction by age, with older shoppers reporting fewer problems. The average number of problems, experienced per consumer is highest among those 18 to 29 years old. They also complain more
frequently than older shoppers about not finding items due to disorganized stores and employees lack of product knowledge. Typically, younger people have less loyalty to stores and highly demanding consumers. They are used to being catered to; perhaps that makes them more demanding."

Based on their distinct characteristics, the Customer Sales Associates are categorized into four broad categories. They are discussed in detail hereunder.

The most important is being an "engager." Associates fitting this description smile and interrupt whatever they are doing to help a shopper. "Problems associated with not finding an 'engager' are most prevalent overall, and across all store types,"

The second most important type of sales person is the 'educator'. This employee is able to explain products, make recommendations and tell customers where products can be found.

Another type of ideal sales associate is the 'expeditor'. This employee is sensitive to customers' time and helps speed them through long check out lines". You see this one at the airport or other locations where there is some clog up in the system," This sales person recognizes that, with their intervention things can keep moving forward.... Someone has to notice the problem and go out of their way to alleviate it."

Finally the customers always want an "authentic" sales help. These associates let customers browse on their own and appear genuinely interested in helping regardless of whether a sale is made or not. "No one wants to be ignored, but there is a balance between the right level of engagement and sense of genuineness". Customers have different expectations that are not necessarily driven by demographics, but by psychographics or lifestyle, there are some individuals who want a great deal of service from a store and other who are irritated if they are talked to too much. Finding the right balance is something that we're always working to achieve."
For the purpose of study, the researcher has studied the role of the Customer Sales Associate on following critical areas.

a) Whether the number of CSA’s are sufficient to the size of the mall or the retail store
b) The size of the team is sufficient in all sections
c) On the behavioural pattern of the CSA’s was right and well mannered, attentive and busily involved in their jobs
d) Sufficient guidance and service is rendered, especially in case of new products, technical oriented products
e) The CSA’s are diligently performing their role and providing good guidance, and always available around bins,
f) Knowledge of different languages

*The views expressed by respondents are as follows:*

About 26 per cent of the respondents have stated that most of the mall operators have not employed sufficient number of sales assistants or associates in important sections to provide guidance on products.

The next important factor, rated by 18 per cent of the respondents that the sales associates are ought to be well mannered.

About 14 per cent of the respondents sated that majority of the buyers normally seek more information about the newly launched products or services

The sales associates are required to fill in the exhausted items in the bins, but this activity is required not at the cost of not attending to customer’s quarries constitute 11 per cent of views of the respondents.

As much as 10 per cent of the respondents state that sales associate has to provide guidance about the products which is considered as fifth most important variable.

The other factors that are associated with sales associate is knowing more than one language and making sufficient number of sales assistants available in each section constitute 7 per cent each.
The last two expectations from a sales associate is that, they are required to be around the bins was the opinion of 3 per cent of the respondents and the sales associates need to be more attentive and should take genuine interest in assisting the visitors is of the view 4 per cent of respondents.

For example, prompting a sales person to simply open a second register when a long line begins to form gets more to the root of the problem.

The competitive pressures in the retail industry probably would not permit stores to change associates’ behaviour by offering big bonus or higher pay as a way to find people who are naturally good “engagers” or “educators.

Realty check

On the whole, the customers are driven by what they perceive from the promotions and advertisements given by these malls or retail stores. These retailers can attract the buyers for once with the help of these promotional measures or advertisements, but the fact remains, that what they advertise and how they are practiced and implemented in reality lies the focal point from the buyers perspective. On this subject, the researcher has tried to provide some insights on three variables as detailed below.

a) Realty of the facts advertised & their implementation
b) Whether the shoppers are benefited by these campaigns.
c) The shoppers perceptions about the benefits portrayed in their campaigns

The respondents of specialty malls felt that about 16 per cent of these retailers do not provide total information with sufficient clarity and 17 per cent of the respondents stated that what is said is implemented in reality. A major percentage of the respondents to the extent of 68 per cent stated that these benefits and discounts are offered to only early birds.

On analysis of the respondents of general malls, it can be understood that 42 per cent of the respondents felt that these retailers do not provide total information with sufficient clarity and 24 per cent of the respondents stated that ‘what is said is
implemented is reality’, but as much as 35 per cent of the respondents stated that these benefits, and discounts are offered to only early birds.

On the whole, it can be stated that 76 per cent of the respondents are not satisfied with the facts and information provided in the campaigns of these malls.

**Frequency of visit**

Frequency of visit to malls is considered to be a barometer for the satisfaction index of the consumers. The higher the frequency, better are the customers satisfied with that mall and vice versa.

It is based on the premise that liking a place would increase the chances of increased frequency of visit to a mall or a retail store. The frequency is an indicator to judge the malls capability to is make a long lasting impression in the minds of buyers. By making the buyers comfortable, the malls are trying to influence the minds of the buyers thereby frequency of visit is increased, which is the reason for existence and survival of the malls.

For the purpose of studying this aspect, researcher has studied this point by way of four different time intervals, that is once in a week, once in fortnight, once in a month, and the unwanted response from the malls point of view, is visiting as and when the customer wants to visit or have their requirement.

A whopping 45 per cent of the total respondents stated that they would like to visit the general malls once in a week, and as many as 24 per cent of the respondents state that they would like to visit once in a month, while 16 per cent of the respondents felt that they would visit these malls once in a fortnight. The last option which is not a desirable variable from malls perspective is to have occasional visitors, representing 14 per cent of the total respondents.

**Decisive Views**

In this section, exogenous variables like the role of technology, the non-buying variables, competitive advantages of a retailer, brand image of a group or a chain of stores are considered for ascertaining the decisive views.
Technology

Technology is now-a-days playing its decisive role in deciphering the consumer minds through investigative research devices to know their liking and disliking towards newly launched products or knowing the order of preferences of the various brands to replenish the stocks of fast moving, slow moving and non-moving stock. Some of the technological devices used such as RFID tags, Pay Mate’s Interactive Voice Response Systems, Bar Coding systems, Software to customized needs of Inventory control systems. Networking of branches started yielding market related research activities assist in streamlining the retail operations.

Especially, Supply Chain and logistical operations need lot of technological support to know the stock updates, and availability of rare stocks at various branches, help to service the customers, and also to delivery support systems. To cite a classical example, Wal-Mart took the technology to its advantage in gaining competitive advantage over its rivals.

In India, the usage of RFID tags is limited to inventory replenishment systems and to avoid stock outs of merchandise. In many countries, this devise is also used to gain insights into Consumer Feedback, Marketing Research activities, knowing about the Customer’s Perceptions about various products, and quickly respond to the consumer needs and requirement patterns.

Imagine a customer walks into a store and picks up material from shelves and walks out without hassles of waiting in the billing and giving payments for each every item he picked up. Tracking of items, pricing and billing is done and respective payment against the customers bought is collected from the customer’s credit card automatically, this is reality in RFID enabled stores.

RFID systems collect data accurately and real time data and communicate data through radio waves. A typical RFID has three components viz., tags, reader and radio frequency unit. The RF reader reads the signals from tags and sends it through radio waves, when customer confirms the details of his credit card are furnished, the credit card details are also deciphered from radio waves, the bill is generated and the
payment against the bill amount is recovered from the credit card details provided by customer.

Technology is rapidly changing the way we live. During the last three centuries, three industries shaped the way the world lived and worked. In the 19th century it was textiles, in the 20th it was the automobile ("The machine that changed the world!") and in the early 21st century it is information technology which facilitated global mobility of capital. It is not just global financier, but global consumerism also is changing in many ways due to technology. This can be witnessed in the movements in the share markets in almost all developing countries. When internet was borne, there are concerns about the death of book stores and also the people's newspaper reading habits. But Consumer's book buying and newspaper habits did not so dramatically alter even though the publishing business has learnt to entice the customers in newer ways. Digital downloads of music is now being feared to have the potential to spell death to music stores. With the emergence of search engines, there were apprehensions about its impact on the market share of the newspapers and magazines, yet they still manage to live in co-existence.

**Building products into lifestyle**

In-store consumer durable comparisons are not centered on product features. Brands that can pack-in the maximum number of features at a given price don't necessarily sell the most. There is more to the purchase motivation than features. Durables do not just fit into a family; they fit into a family life stage viz. job, marriage, childbirth, new home etc.

To create impact, display brands/products by budget range or life-stage. Buyer can see more and compare better without having to move around to see different options offered by different brands. Retail needs to move away from the 'LG range', 'Samsung Range' and 'Sony range' mindset to the 'Single Executive Set', 'Newly wed set' etc. This could also help brands leverage their portfolio through clubbed financing and gives the shopper a reason to pick up more than one product at a time.

The other way of displaying durables at the last mile could be on the basis the size of the living room or kind of dwelling unit. Retail could start by asking 'what are the
dimensions of your room where the TV/Audio system has to be put? Instead of ‘which model/brand do you want to buy?’ This approach would turn the durable purchase into a home building exercise rather than a plain purchase situation.

**Building Brand image by perceptual Processes**

Marketing is largely a game of getting the customer to perceive your product or service in a certain way. Perception occurs when one of the five senses - vision, hearing, taste, smell and touch - is affected. In this way, marketers use color, sound, flavors, scents and surface to shape your perceptions. Customers (and site visitors) will react to these things; even if they are unaware they are doing so.

But with these perceptions in mind, marketers can better execute their strategy. Nowadays marketer have learned how to leverage the five senses to improve their marketing efforts.

**USE COLOUR TO SHAPE PERCEPTION**

Colour influences moods and physical responses of human beings. In layman terms, we think about color, basically the colours are used to sensitizes human beings in terms of two colour *hues* (warm and cool), degrees of *colour saturation* (what we call richness), and levels of *depth* (light or dark) as ways to influence customer perceptions.

Colour psychologists have found that warm colors (red, orange, and yellow) generally encourage activity and excitement, whereas cool colors (green, blue, violet) are more soothing and relaxing. That's why so many soaps, lotions and body washes come in packages with cool colors; they're trying paint a calming picture of their product. That's also why kids toys and candies are often in the warm colors; they're trying to encourage perceptions of fun and energy.

Colour can have great effect on whether or not your customer likes your product. In fact, some marketers use experts to help forecast which colours consumers will like two or three years down the road. Researchers have also found differences among social classes in colour preference. Hot, bright colours usually appeal to lower-end markets, which deep, rich colours have historically appealed to higher-end markets.
Accordingly, the lifestyle formats, food groceries segments use the colour that is apt to their stores.

Normally this is applicable to food courts in a mall. They would probably choose reds, oranges and yellows so that customers perceive an on-the-go product. This will get them in and out of the restaurant faster (even if they don't realize it), increasing table turnover. If, however, a fast-food restaurant brand conveys comfort, then a hot color scheme may in fact undermine brand equity. Clearly, an effective color scheme should be consistent with the brand or ambiance and target segment while also producing the desired customer perceptions.

**USE SOUND TO SHAPE PERCEPTION**

Sound represents an important form of sensory input. Interestingly, music can influence physical behavior. Fast music, like the kind one would hear at a health club, tends to energize consumers. Slow music can be soothing. The type of music played can have dramatic and direct effects on business. For example, researchers found that a slow temp can increase sales as much as 38 percent in retail stores because it encourages leisurely shopping. Alternatively, a fast tempo is more desirable in restaurants because customers will eat faster, thus allowing greater table turnover and higher sales.

Sound can also impact moods. Likeable and familiar music can induce good moods, whereas discordant sounds can create bad moods. This is important because moods may affect how customers feel about products.

Because both sound and colour can affect moods, marketers use the two together to strongly shape customer perceptions. A massage studio, for example, may want to use cool-colour décor with melodic harp music playing in the background. A nightclub, on the other hand, may want to use hot colors and loud, fast music to produce perceptions of energy and excitement. Using the wrong colors and music together may undermine the marketing efforts.
By using colors and sound markets try to derive the best advantage in a given environment. Customers might not even know they're leaving due to the color and sound, but they might anyway just like in a restaurant.

USE SMELL TO SHAPE PERCEPTIONS

Smell also produces physiological and emotional outcomes. Some studies report that certain scents make people can feel tense or relaxed. The smell of peppermint, for example, arouses us; the smell of lily of the valley makes us feel relaxed. Also, some of our basic emotions are linked to smell. For instance, researchers have found that the smell of the ocean or freshly baked cookies can revive very emotional and key childhood memories.

This has important implications for marketing is usage of smell/fragrance to draw customers to its environs repeatedly. For example, Kmart Corp. recently reconfigured its Super Kmart stores so that the bakery kiosk, with its smell of freshly baked breads, pretzels, cinnamon rolls and muffins is the first food area customer’s encounter in the store. The sense of smell can also be used to expose customers to stimuli. Some perfume and cologne ads, for example, are doused with the product to increase sensory processing.

Researchers have found that providing a pleasant-smelling environment can have a positive effect on shopping behavior. The fragrances are used in air-conditioners at retail stores and shopping malls not only to remove the bad odours but also to give soothing environments to the visitors of the malls. This is one of the aspects the current day malls are trying to adopt taking into the consideration the local tastes and preferences in mind.

USE TOUCH TO SHAPE PERCEPTIONS

The distinct advantage the organized retailers enjoy over its conventional mom n pop stores is to make its customers to touch and feel the products by them selves using the touch to shape the perceptions of shoppers.

We know far less about the sense of touch than of smell; nevertheless, the way things come it contact with our skin is a very important element for many products and
services. Touch has important physiological and emotional effects. Research has shown that customers touched by a salesperson are more likely to have positive feelings and are more likely to evaluate the store and the salesperson positively.

Some products, like skin creams and baby products, are liked because of the way they feel. When making a purchase, customers often want to touch before they buy. The way shoes, clothes and jewellery feel on our bodies is a critical purchasing factor. Some marketers have incorporated touch in novel ways into their products. Especially selling deodorant sprays, perfumes need this mechanism more to make their products to sell.

Retailers are using the touch and feel a stray our product pleasant to the touch. For a restaurateur, making tables and chairs too comfortable may encourage customers to stay a long time, thus reducing turnover rate and increased sales, and higher conversion of footfalls to actual buyers.

**USE TASTE TO SHAPE PERCEPTIONS**

Taste perception is most relevant for food products. But what tastes good to one person may be disgusting to another. Moreover, clear cross-cultural differences in taste preferences have important marketing implications; what might taste good to one culture (Veggiemite for Australians) may be disgusting to another (Americans hate the stuff).

Now, you can use these ideas to not only shape perceptions, but also to shape your sales.

**Competitive advantages**

Technology, however, may provide some solutions. Many retail experts suggest that sales associates in large home improvement stores could be outfitted with hand-held devices, listing products and aisles where they could be found. When a customer pulls an associate aside to ask about an item, the employee could simply punch it upon the hand-held. Retailers, could do more with signage to direct customers to merchandise, and category killers in particular could make better use of information kiosks to shift some of the educators’ work onto consumers themselves.
All four traits necessary in good sales associates are possible to develop in any employee as long as they get the right instruction and are monitored on the retail floor, Courtney says. “The good news is that all of this is trainable.”

**Consumer Learning:**

Certain customers are self reliant, would like to depend on their own learning, otherwise they would not adopt anything, without having comprehensive knowledge and convinced about the new information. They try to apply logical reasoning behind learning. Another category of customers are homemakers who are considered as most powerful segment, whose spare time gossips, exchange of information through grape wine communication processes is at times proves to be very successful tool to spread the messages. The researcher has made an attempt to know about various customer learning processes about the malls and their activities.

This is clearly evident from the fact that visiting the specialty malls against their own observations rather than collecting opinions from others, which constitute 75 percent rather than advertisements and taking reference from friends and colleagues which represent 25%.

**General malls**

It is clearly evident from the data analysis section, that majority of respondents of general malls would like to visit a mall based on the guidance and observations from others (which include learning from friends and colleagues 25 per cent and learning from neighbours is about 7 per cent) which totally constitute 32 per cents rather than traditional form of learning that is advertisements which constitute 12 per cent of the total respondents. Some respondents are predominantly exhibit an independent behaviour and they would like to believe in their own sources are influenced by what they have seen and learned on their own, constitute a dismal 14 of the total respondent population. They are influenced just because they have seen something new out of their own observations.
Specialty malls

It is clearly evident from the fact that respondents of specialty malls, visit the malls against their own observations rather than collecting opinions from others, which constitute 75 percent rather than advertisements and taking reference from friends and colleagues which represent 25%.

On the whole, to sum up, it can be summarized that this study has not made significant strides in terms of identifying the new leads but a sincere attempt is made to different studies carried out on a piece meal basis, but by consolidating all the views under one study. Especially, this study has updated the earlier studies, as the contextual environment varied appreciably from time the earlier studies were conducted.