CHAPTER VII

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CONSUMER PREFERENCES IN COIMBATORE CITY

7.1 Introduction:

In the earlier chapter (5, 2, 3) the hierarchy of shopping centres has been identified and it was found that there exist a five levels of hierarchy in Coimbatore city. It is generally found that the variation in the hierarchy leads to the variation in consumer travel pattern. Therefore, in this section an attempt is made to identify the consumer travel pattern for selected goods and services in Coimbatore city. It is also expected that the hierarchy of shopping centres manifests in consumer travel patterns and consequently in the size relationships of the resulting trade areas.

7.2 Consumer Travel Maps:

A series of maps for first and second choice trips for respondents in Coimbatore city was completed. These maps are based on a total of 395 respondents interviewed in Coimbatore City. Special care was taken to select the goods and services which would normally be used by all the respondents. In this connection it may be pointed out that there were few respondents who have reported that they do not obtain some of the goods or services from any of the shopping centres.

The various maps (7.2 to 7.13) use desire lines which connect residences of the respondents to the locations of purchase. One desire line represents one respondent. The dots in the map
represent the purchase made by respondents in the local shopping centre itself (situated in the same street) or from mobile vendors. The spatial distribution of the sample respondents in the Coimbatore city is shown in the figure 7.1.

7.2.1 Consumer Travel Pattern for Vegetables:

Figure 7.2 shows the first choice trips for vegetables. It is found that a considerable amount of purchases are made in the local shopping centre or in the nearby neighbourhood shops. In addition to this, longer trips are also made for the purchase of vegetables in higher order shopping centres. 'The Central Business Core' attracts a large number of respondents. The other centres to which the consumers travel long distances, are the 'Departmental Store' or 'Super market' located in the Mettupalayam Road shopping centre and as well as in Cross-cut Road shopping centre. Purchases are also made at Divan Sahadur Road Centre, Tatabad Centre, Ram Nagar Centre and Ramnathapura Centre. In the second choice trips for vegetables (Fig. 7.3) about 15 per cent of the respondents are served either by local shopping centres or by mobile vendors. It has resulted in the absence of desire lines in the Western part of the residential areas. Here it is noticed that most of them undertake long distance trips to 'Central Business Core' and to the 'Super Market'.

7.2.2 Consumer Travel Pattern for Provision:

Figure 7.4 of the first choice travel for provision shows clearly that the 'Central Business Core' and the 'Super Market'
at Nettupalayam Road, Cross-cut Road and Ramanathapuram Centres are preferred by large number of respondents. To these centres long distance trips are undertaken by the respondents. In the case of second choice travel for provision (Fig. 7.5) it is seen that next to the Central Business Core, the Divan Bahadur Road, Nettupalayam Road, Cross-cut Road and Ramanathapuram shopping centres are visited by a considerable number of respondents. The Ramanathapuram Centre is preferred by the consumers for the second choice purchase mainly due to the location of a new Super Market in this area.

7.2.3 Consumer Travel Pattern for Cloth:

From figure 7.6 it is clearly seen that most of the first choice trips carried out for the purchase of new cloth tend to concentrate around the Central Business Core. The second and third order shopping centres like Nettupalayam Road, Divan Bahadur Road and Cross-cut Road are also patronaged. Further, the Jail Road and Ramanathapuram shopping centres are also visited by very few respondents. In the case of second choice trips (Fig. 7.7) for new cloth, the Central Business Core is preferred by less number of respondents which is reflected in the increased patronage of the Divan Bahadur Road, Cross-cut Road shopping centres and the Departmental store at Ramanathapuram. It is clearly seen that the local purchases of new cloth are very few when it is compared with trips made for obtaining vegetables and provisions as cloth is a higher order goods.
7.2.4 Consumer Travel Pattern for Movie Theatre Entertainment (Cinema):

Figure 7.8 and 7.9 show the travel pattern relating the movie theatres. The first choice map shows that a majority of the respondents visit the Central Business Core for movie theatre entertainment, as more number of movie theatres are located in this area. A considerable amount of patronage is also observed to the movie theatres located at Divan Bahadur Road and Mettupalayam Road. A few respondents also visit the other theatres located at Trichy Road, Satyamangalam Road, Sai Baba Colony and Ramanathapuram. In the case of second choice trips (Fig. 7.9), the theatres located at Mettupalayam Road and Trichy Road are visited by more number of respondents, and consequently there is less patronage to Central Business Core theatres. Further, it is observed that long distance trips are more in the case of first choice trips than the second choice trips.

7.2.5 Consumer Travel Pattern for Pharmacy Service:

A distinct contrast to previous set of maps (7.2 to 7.9) is observed in the case of travel for Pharmacy service (Fig. 7.10) which produces almost clear trade areas of the different order of centres. It is found that the Super Markets have more patronage than Central Business Core. This is because of the fact that medicines are sold free of tax in these Super Markets. In the case of second choice relating to Pharmacy Service (Fig. 7.11) the difference is not significant. However, it is found that purchases are also made at the local shopping centres.
7.2.6 Consumer Travel Pattern for Footwear:

Figures 7.12 and 7.13 show the first and second choice trips for obtaining footwear. The first choice trips clearly show the dominance of Central Business Core by the majority of the visits made by most of the respondents. Other than the Central Business Core, Makkal Elam and Cross-cut Road Departmental stores attract more number of respondents. The shopping centres at Divan Bahadur Road, Jail Road, Pappanayakkam and Ramathapuram are also visited by some of the respondents. In the case of second choice trips (Fig. 7.13) for footwear, less number of respondents visit Central Business Core and there is a considerable increase in the patronage of Divan Bahadur Road and Ramathapuram shopping centres.

Careful analysis of the various consumer travel maps (Fig. 7.2 to 7.13) drawn for different goods and services indicate that the Central Business Core of the city serves the entire city, by virtue of its functional range and functional specialization. It is also noticed that Makkal Elam Road emerges as an important second order centre. This is mainly due to the location of the "Super Market" (Main Office) which provides all goods and services under one roof besides providing a good shopping atmosphere. Further, these Super Markets sell controlled goods and medicine without sales tax. Out of the total respondents, it is found that about 60% of them are members in the Super Market. The consumer preference also revealed the fact that Avamasi Road
shopping centre, though it belongs to the second hierarchy, does not attract any respondents for the goods and services discussed above. This is mainly because of the fact that this shopping centre specialises in engineering and machinery goods. It is observed that virtually in all cases travel is to a higher order shopping centre.

In the earlier section (3.6.3) it has been concluded that the spatial pattern of shopping centres in Coimbatore city is mainly controlled by factors such as historical growth, land use zones and distribution of population. Further, it was stated that the socio-economic characteristics of the population also play an important role in the spatial variation of the shopping centres. The analysis of consumer travel preferences also reveal the fact that the oldest part of the city where the Central Business Core is situated attracts respondents from all parts of the city. Further, the other shopping centres like Nettupalayam Road, Trichy Road and Avanasi Road are also found in the older part of the city. But, the later two shopping centres namely Trichy Road and Avanasi Road do not attract more consumers because of the fact that these centres specialise in engineering machinery. The Divan Bahadur Road and Cross-cut Road shopping centres attract considerable amount of respondents from the residential areas of Hatamashaputhipuram and Gandhipuram, which are planned residential extensions, where the population
consists mostly of middle and upper middle class people. The Race Course area, one of the high class residential areas, has not encouraged any important shopping centre to emerge. The respondents in this area generally visit the Central Business Core for the goods and services analysed here. This is due to the fact that all the respondents in this locality possess cars and hence long distance trips are common.

After the careful analysis of the consumer travel pattern maps for selected goods and services in Coimbatore city, it is found that the 'Chinthamani' Super Market has played an important role in the consumer travel pattern. 'Chinthamani' with its four branches situated at Mettupalayam Road (Head Office), Cross-cut Road, Big Bazar Street and Ramanathapuram have attracted a considerable number of respondents from various parts of the city. Further, it is found that about 80% of the respondents normally visit the Super market and out of this 82% of them are members of the Super Market. This is mainly due to the fact that Chinthamani Super Market provides good shopping atmosphere, i.e., all under one roof, excellent customer service, neat packing of goods, availability of controlled goods such as cloth, baby food etc. From this it can be concluded that the Chinthamani Super Market plays a dominant role in the consumer travel pattern.

From the above mentioned observations it becomes clear that the consumer travel pattern is influenced by the historical growth, land use zones and the socio-economic characteristics of the population.