

Title: A Study of 'Ambience of Malls' as an Influencing Factor in Increasing Customer Satisfaction

Dr. Rashmi Sharma¹

H.O.D. and Research Guide

Bhusawal Arts, Science and P.O.Nahata Commerce College, Bhusawal Dist-jalgaon (M.S.)

Bhagyashri Patil Chaudhari²

Research Scholar

Abstract:

Indian consumer segment is largely segregated into urban and rural markets which is attracting marketers from across the world. A huge middle class, comparatively large affluent class and a small economically disadvantaged class is included in this sector and its spending is estimated to more than double by 2025. The increasing purchasing power and growing influence of the social media have enabled Indian consumers to spend on good things. The Indian consumer sector has grown at an annual rate of 5.7 per cent between the years 2005 to 2015. India's nominal year-on-year expenditure growth rate is 12 per cent which is more than double the global anticipated rate of 5 per cent. It will lead to India becoming the third largest consumer market by 2025. Shopping malls attract customers by providing enough time to make choices as well as a recreational means of shopping. Mall developers and management have to consider alternative methods to build excitement in customers due to competition among malls and traditional shopping centers. The management of malls continuously change selling strategy every week, every month and attract the customer to visit mall. Malls are popular among customers because of variety, brands, price, facilities etc. Through present study researcher want to search how the effect of ambience of malls on customers.

Keywords: ambience, shopping, Malls, Customer, service.

Introduction to the study:

Customers often prefer going to the malls to chill out because of their hectic schedule. They go with their friends or family to roam around and to shop from the mall. If the ambience of the mall is very pleasing then, customers are attracted towards the mall. Ambient conditions consist of the background characteristics of the mall which are the exterior appearance like the interior of the mall, lighting, music, tempo as well as the scent or fragrance. Mall ambience should be inviting and comfortable to the customers. In most businesses, to keep customers around as long as possible is important. If they stay longer, they will generally spend more. Mall managers aim at providing such an ambience so that customer can enjoy when they come to the mall. Thus, making the store atmosphere welcoming, attractive and friendly is the responsibility of the mall managers. Mall owners should make an attempt

to decorate and provide a visually interesting space. Elaborate displays cannot take place of decoration. Proper lighting, well painted walls, correctly stacked racks, attractive decor, friendly yet modest sales personnel, soothing music is a few things the store owner can look into in the hope of increasing footfalls. The ambience plays an important role as to whether customers will feel inclined to step into the mall, stay or leave instantly.

Literature Review

Turley and Milliman (2000) had argued that store atmosphere contributes to a success or failure of business. Levy and Weitz (2009) had stated that store atmosphere is an attribute that aims to intensify the store environment with the combination of different cues such as lighting, colour, music, and scent. Yalch & Spangenberg (2000) stated that playing a familiar music will capture consumers' attention on the products or services in the store because customers are emotionally connected with the music played. According to James and Mehrabian (1976), lighting is the main factor of store atmosphere that has greater impact on consumer behaviour.

Sinha (2003) suggested in his research that the evolving retail environment in India seems to be affecting the orientation and Indian retailing is dealing with a transition. He established that the shoppers have a very limited choice of retail formats, an important variable in shaping orientation. He suggested that retailers in shopping malls need to take up the task of demonstrating the value added by the store – the format of the store could be the prime driver. The retailers providing the experience of 'fun' would need to offer wider assortment and an ambience where the shoppers would be willing to spend more time. Majumdar (2005) in his study on customer loyalty in shopping malls realized that mall ambience and mall accessibility have a major influence on mall loyalty. He also identified that mall loyalty, value perception and overall store impressions are found to be significant predictors of store loyalty. He indicated that if the customers are not satisfied with the shopping malls as such, their loyalty to a particular store will decrease and therefore he suggested that it is crucial for the mall managers to see that sound strategies are implemented for maintaining a satisfactory level of loyalty and patronage.

Anselmsson (2006) in his study found selection as the most important determinant of shopping mall choice and ambience of the mall. Third determinant of satisfaction was convenience, which includes parking, opening hours, ability to find one's location and ease-of-movement in the mall. If a shopping center enjoys high visiting rates, a better strategy may be to concentrate on present customers and build relationships through developing satisfaction management. Memon (2006) mentioned in his study that around 50% of the people purchase their products from organised retail stores (hypermarkets / malls), 28 % still buy from wholesale distributors who sell in bulk and rest 22 % buy from small kirana stores around their households. As per his findings a combination of price and location policy is the single most important factor for the buyer whereas a combination of price and availability of product is the second factor. Availability of a large range of products at one place is another factor scoring 20% of the respondents' liking for retailing stores, while ambience and service quality scored only 16% and 6% respectively. Rajagopal (2009) examined the impact of growing congestion of shopping mall in urban areas on shopping conveniences and shopping behaviour. Based on the survey of urban shoppers, the study analyzed the cognitive attributes of the shoppers towards attractiveness of shopping malls and intensity of shopping. The results of the study revealed that ambience of shopping malls, assortment of

stores, sales promotions and comparative economic gains in the mall attract higher customer traffic to the malls.

After reviewing the literature, it was found that ambience at the malls have profound impact on the behavior and satisfaction of customers. Thus, it would be helpful to study the customers' response to the ambience at the malls.

Need of the Study:

Today customer turn to malls and super shops because of quality, options, service and facilities. Ambience has more significance because it helps in attracting and retaining customers in the mall. Mall managers need to understand the effect of ambient conditions provided by them so that they can improve their services provided.

Research Methodology:

The objectives and problems became clearer after interacting with different customer who visited malls. It covers 15 talukas having 10 Malls. It is observed that all the malls are established in semi urban and taluka places. Researcher selects 100 % sample size for the study. The Researcher used Stratified Random sampling technique for the research work.

Objectives of the study:

- To study the ambience of the malls.
- To study the satisfaction of customers regarding the ambience of the malls.

Hypothesis:

H0- Customers are satisfied with the ambience in the mall.

H1- Customers are not satisfied with the ambience in the malls.

Data Collection:

Primary Data was collected through questionnaires which consisted variety of questions assisting in proving objectives of the research. The websites of service providers, research thesis of the research scholars, newspaper, research articles, research paper, etc. served as the source of secondary data.

Questionnaire:

Researchers distributed 150 questionnaires among customers who visited and purchased from mall, at the time of exit of the customer researcher fill-up questionnaire. Researcher selected 10 questionnaires from each mall. Structured Questionnaire was developed by researchers and all related questions are added in the questionnaire by using likert scale.

Table No. 1
Information of Questionnaire

SN	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Received	Questionnaire rejected	Questionnaire used for study
----	---------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	------------------------------

1	150	122	22	100
---	-----	-----	----	-----

Research Area:

Researcher Selected the Area of the study is Jalgaon District of Maharashtra State.

Scope of the Study:

Generally customers prefer Malls for purchasing. Individuals, family members visit malls and purchase everything as per their choice. Since last 10 years malls are popular because of branded product, variety of products, price, services and facilities provided to customers. Through this study researcher highlights the aspect effect of ambience.

Limitations of study:

The study is limited only malls established in Jalgaon District of Maharashtra state.

Data Analysis:

On the basis of data collected, the tabulation, analysis and interpretation was done with the help of relevant mathematical and statistical tools such as measures of central tendency, measure of dispersion, testing of hypothesis, graphical presentation has been used as per requirement.

Researcher asked eight questions to respondents which effect on customers directly at the time of entrance, during purchasing in the mall.

Table No. 2
Response of customers

Sr No	Issue	% of respondents who agreed with the issue either very strongly or strongly	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Value; (%)	Rank
1	Interior of the Mall	99%	88	11	0	1	0	13.67%	1
2	Decoration	97%	90	7	2	1	0	13.67%	1
3	Lighting	95%	73	22	0	4	1	13.00%	5
4	Colors	93%	84	9	2	3	2	13.22%	3
5	Music	92%	68	24	2	3	3	12.69%	6
6	Friendliness with the staff	90%	81	9	5	2	3	13.03%	4
7	Scent	90%	69	21	3	4	3	12.63%	7

Also the testing of hypothesis is as follows:

Table No 3
Hypothesis Testing and result

Sr No	Issue	P	S.D.	H ₀	H ₁	Z_cal	L.O.S.	Z_table	p_value	Decision
1	Interior of the Mall	0.99	0.01	P= 0.5	P ≠ 0.5	49.25	5%	1.64	0.0000	Reject H ₀ (i.e. p > 0.5)
2	Decoration	0.97	0.02	P= 0.5	P ≠ 0.5	27.55	5%	1.64	0.0000	Reject H ₀ (i.e. p > 0.5)
3	Lighting	0.95	0.02	P= 0.5	P ≠ 0.5	20.65	5%	1.64	0.0000	Reject H ₀ (i.e. p > 0.5)
4	Colors	0.93	0.03	P= 0.5	P ≠ 0.5	16.85	5%	1.64	0.0000	Reject H ₀ (i.e. p > 0.5)
5	Music	0.92	0.03	P= 0.5	P ≠ 0.5	15.48	5%	1.64	0.0000	Reject H ₀ (i.e. p > 0.5)
6	Friendliness with the staff	0.90	0.03	P= 0.5	P ≠ 0.5	13.33	5%	1.64	0.0000	Reject H ₀ (i.e. p > 0.5)
7	Scent	0.90	0.03	P= 0.5	P ≠ 0.5	13.33	5%	1.64	0.0000	Reject H ₀ (i.e. p > 0.5)

Findings:

From the above table It is found that out of seven factors which are very closely related with ambiances of mall and directly effective on customers. As per responses, out of seven factors respondents like seven factors and response is above 90 % and they are agreed that lighting, Scent, Music, Interior, Friendliness with staff, colour, and Decoration these factors effect on them positively.

Recommendations:

Researcher recommends that mall managers should maintain friendly and pleasant ambience in the mall. It is suggested that mall managers should train their staff to assist customers in a modest way so that they feel comfortable while buying from the malls.

Conclusion:

It is proved that there is effect of ambience of malls on customers. Management of the malls is successful in creating and maintaining appropriate and attractive ambience in and around the mall. Because of this reason customer prefer and choose malls for purchasing different products.

References:

1. <https://retail.franchiseindia.com/article/design-and-vm/store-design/Store-ambience-influences-foot-traffic.a92/>
2. <https://www.ibef.org/industry/indian-consumer-market.aspx>
3. Levy, M., & Weitz, B. A. (2009). Retailing Management (7th Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
4. Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1976). Environmental variables in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 3, PP.62-63.
5. Sinha, Piyush K. (2003). "Shopping Orientation in the Evolving Indian Market", *Vikalpa*, Vol 28 (2), Apr – Jun, pp 13–22.
6. Turley, L. W., & Milliman, R. E. (2000). Atmospheric effects on shopping behaviour a review of the experimental. *Journal of Business Research*, 49, 193-211.
7. Yalch, R. F., & Spangenberg, E. R. (1988). An environmental psychological study of foreground and background music as retail atmospheric factors. In: Walle A. W., editor. *AMA Educators Conference Proceedings*. Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association, PP.106-110.
8. Majumdar, Aveek (2005). "A Model for Customer Loyalty for Retail Stores inside Shopping Malls – An Indian Perspective", *Journal of Services Research*, Special Issue, December, pp 47–64.
9. Anselmsson, J. (2006). "Sources of Customer Satisfaction with Shopping Malls: A Comparative Study of Different Customer Segments", *International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, Vol. 16 (1), pp 115–138.
10. Memon, Sharif (2006). "Changing Face of Indian Retail Industry and Its Implications on Consumer Behaviour: An In–Depth Study", *The ICFAI Journal of Management Research*, Vol 5 (9), April, pp 49–58.
11. Rajagopal (2009). "Growing Shopping Malls and Behaviour of Urban Shoppers", *Journal of Retail and Leisuytre Property*, May, Vol 8 (2), pp 99–118.