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Shopping Malls: The New Employment Avenues for Women

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Abstract

With the advent of globalization, new market formats such as supermarkets, departmental stores, hypermarkets, specialty stores and shopping malls are fast coming up. A shopping mall is a common place in which a large number of stores are located while every shopping mall has one or even a couple of anchor stores, the variety of retailers that are located within them are quite different from each other. These anchor stores are usually given the sites at much subsidized rates as the promoter of the shopping mall has a lot to gain from their mere presence. Modern retailing requires skilled employees with creative bent of mind, good communication and inter-personal capabilities. Due to their ability to be pleasant and patient with customers, women are considered more suitable for certain roles in retail. Women employees are considered quite suited to jobs in shopping malls due to their ability to provide emotional labour. Women employees are the preferred choice in certain product categories like food and grocery, cosmetics, kids, jewellery, home décor and apparels. They smilingly serve the customers and their income improves their social standing. But many of them may find the job tough and too demanding. Therefore, the present study was conducted to study the socio-economic profile and employment conditions of women working in shopping malls in Punjab. The study was conducted in shopping malls in Ludhiana and it was found Shopping malls are providing new avenues of employment to women. About 40 per cent of the employees in malls are women. They are employed as sales officers, salesgirls, security guards and sweepers. Among the total sales staff, the number of women is even more than 50 per cent. Majority of the women employees are just 18-25 years old and are educated upto 10+2 level. Though the shopping malls are operating in big cities yet they are providing employment to a large number of rural women. In the shopping malls under study, about

29 per cent women employees belonged to rural areas. The rural women who work as security guards belong to farm labour class families. Instead of being farm labour, they find better being security guard in malls in cities as it gives them a regular income and comparatively better working conditions. Almost all the sweepers working in the shopping malls are migrants from states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh etc., and they originally belong to the rural areas of those states. They migrated by marriage while in some cases they belong to the second generation of the migrants. Before joining the present job they had been working as domestic labour. They find the job in a mall better as now they do not have to move from house to house to perform their duties. The present job gives them almost the same income from one job. Women working in shopping malls come from low income families and majority (32.36 per cent) of them get salary of Rs. 5000-7000 per month. They contribute a major part of their salary to the family income and spend a very little sum on self. While security guards and sweepers work for 7 and 8 hours a day respectively, salesgirls and security officers have to work for 10 hours a day. On the whole, they are happy with their jobs and hope for a still better future.

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of globalization, new market formats such as supermarkets, departmental stores, hypermarkets, specialty stores and shopping malls are fast coming up and are introducing the Indian customer to shopping experience like never before. A shopping mall is an arrangement of retail stores and places for leisure activities such as dining, entertainment etc., selected according to their contribution to an overall merchandising plan and is run as an integrated business by an individual or an organization to which independent retailers pay for opportunities to participate (Vedamani, 2009). In these malls there is something that will catch the eye of one and all- whether one is six or sixty. Toys, books, movies, food, clothes, electronic gadgets etc. and a variety of brands make the mind boggle (Menon, 2008). Thus, a shopping mall is a common place in which a large number of stores are located while every shopping mall has one or even a couple of anchor stores, the variety of retailers that are located within them are quite different from each other. These anchor stores are usually given the sites at much subsidized rates as the promoter of the shopping mall has a lot to gain from their mere presence. As a result of these anchor stores which are known for bringing in substantial customer traffic, many other prospective retailers are also motivated to have their own stores within the same shopping mall especially if the products in the anchor stores are complementary to their own products (Vedamani, 2009).

Indian retail industry is the largest among all the industries, accounting for

over 10 per cent of the country's GDP and around 8 per cent of the employment (Dhanabhakyam and Shanthi, 2011). Management graduates are required for Inventory management, Brand management, Supply Chain management etc. Finance professionals are in great demand for accounting, cost control and analytical functions. In this customer oriented industry human resource managers are needed for training, motivation and manpower management. A large number of employees are required for marketing and sales and skilled manpower is employed for security and safety management. Bitner (1990) is of the view that employees are a significant part of the image of a retail organization. They are in many cases a reflection of the retailer. Summer et al. (2000) found that increasing use of technology in retailing brings new demands on workforce and retailers require better educated employees equipped with modern skills in merchandise preparation, information processing and decision making. In coming times retailers will have to compete more effectively due to limited supply of educated and skilled staff. Mukherjee (2007) found that some of the biggest players in the organised retail are looking up to the fairer sex, especially when it comes to dealing with the problem of high attrition rates. Women employees are considered quite suited to jobs in shopping malls due to their ability to provide emotional labour. Emotional labour refers to the labour that goes beyond the physical or mental skills needed to deliver quality service. It means giving smiles, making eye contact, showing sincere interest, and engaging in friendly conversation with people who are essentially strangers and who may or may not even be seen again. Friendliness, courtesy, empathy, and responsiveness directed towards customer, all require huge amounts of emotional labour from the frontline employees (Zeithaml et al., 2008). Looking at another dimension of importance of women employees, Ramnani (2008), in a recent study, conducted by the National Institute of Criminology and Forensic Sciences, points out that 60 per cent of women shoppers feel insecure in a shopping mall. Mall owners are now going all out to ensure that their lady shoppers feel safe while shopping. They are now providing women shoppers with an all-woman attendant brigade to ensure an ideal mall mix for them- shoppingrelaxing-entertainment. Malls are recruiting women security guards. In contract with the security agencies, some malls clearly lay down that 30 per cent of the security staff should constitute women attendants. They want women customers, perhaps the largest spenders, to feel safe and secure in the retail environment. Shikha (2009) found that in organized fresh fruits and vegetables retail outlets in Ludhiana about 40 per cent of the employees were women. 46 per cent of the employees belonged to rural background and majority belonged to the age group of 20-30 years. Goyal et al. (2009) conducted a study in the organized retail outlets and found that this sector is offering jobs to the educated young and smart girls. In most of the cases

the male head of the family is not working and under these circumstances, their earnings are the mainstay of the entire household.

Modern retailing requires skilled employees with creative bent of mind, good communication and inter-personal capabilities. Due to their ability to be pleasant and patient with customers, women are considered more suitable for certain roles in retail. With customer being the king for all retailers, women are quite expectedly becoming the choice in most front-end profiles, which require constant interaction with customers (Kumar, 2008).

Women employees are the preferred choice in certain product categories like food and grocery, cosmetics, kids, jewellery, home décor and apparels. They may be executives, cashiers, salesgirls, security personnel or even sweepers. By their earnings, they support their families and in some cases even get higher education. They smilingly serve the customers and their income improves their social standing. But many of them may find the job tough and too demanding.

Therefore, the present study was conducted to study the socio-economic profile and employment conditions of women working in shopping malls in Punjab.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in July 2011 in the city of Ludhiana, known as the Manchester of India and the financial capital of Punjab. It has the largest number of shopping malls in the state. Five malls were randomly selected. In each selected shopping mall the anchor store was approached and primary data was collected from all women employees working therein. Besides this, all women employees employed in common facilities like security, and cleaning etc. were also the respondents. Primary data was collected from the respondents with the help of structured, non-disguised questionnaire. The data so collected was analyzed with the help of frequency distributions and per centages.

FINDINGS

In the shopping malls under study, women are mainly employed for four types of jobs. The anchor stores had two types of jobs for women i.e. sales officer and salesgirl. Salesgirls were either the employees of the stores or were employees of various multinational companies selling their branded products from the company counters put up inside the anchor stores. Outside the anchor stores, in a shopping mall, women were employed as security guards and sweepers. Security and cleaning jobs were outsourced by all the malls under study. Therefore, these women workers were not direct employees of the mall but they were the contract workers providing their services through a contractor.

It was found that in the shopping malls, the majority of the employees (60 per cent) were males while 40 per cent were females. In case of sweepers, security guards and sales officers, the number of men employees was higher than women employees. Among male employees the per centage of those working as sweepers, security guards and sales officers was 73.17 per cent, 71.43 per cent and 64.29 per cent respectively while among women employees this per centage was 26.83 per cent, 25.57 per cent and 35.71 per cent respectively. In the salesgirl/boy category, 51.09 per cent women were employed while men were 48.91 per cent only (Table 1).

On the whole out of the total number of women employees found in the anchor stores and common facilities of the shopping malls, the majority i.e. 65.69 per cent were salesgirls, 13.73 per cent were security guards, 10.78 per cent were sweepers and only 9.80 per cent were sales officers.

Table 1

Gender wise distribution of employees working in various categories of employment in shopping malls

Gender	Sweeper	Security Guard	Salesgirl	Sales Officer	Total
Male	30(73.17)	35(71.43)	70(51.09)	18(64.29)	153(60.00)
Female	11(26.83)	14(25.57)	67(48.91)	10(35.71)	102(40.00)
Total	41(100)	49(100)	137(100)	28(100)	255(100)

Age

The profile of women employed in shopping malls was studied and it was found that while 44.12 per cent of them were in the age group 20- 25 years, 30.39 per cent were just 18-20 years old (Table 2). Only 7.84 women employees were in the age group 30-45 years. This shows that about two third of the women employees employed in shopping malls are very young i.e. 18- 25 years old.

In all the categories of employment, majority of women were 18- 30 years old. In case of women working as sweepers, the majority (36.36 per cent) were 25-30 years of age while 8.18 per cent of them were in 40-45 years age group. Majority of women working as security guard, salesgirls and sales officer were in the age group of 20-25 years. None of the sales girl was found in the higher age groups i.e. 35-40 and 40-45 years. About 37 per cent of them were just 18- 20 years old while only 11.94 per cent and 2.99 per cent were in 25-30 and 30-35 years of age groups respectively.

Table 2 Socio-Economic Profile of women employees in shopping malls

age (years)	Sweeper	Security Guard	Salesgirl	Sales Officer	Total
18-20	2(18.18)	3(21.43)	25(37.31)	1(10.00)	31(30.39)
20-25	3(27.28)	4(28.57)	32(47.76)	6(60.00)	45(44.12)
The state of the s	4(36.36)	3(21.43)	8(11.94)	3(30.00)	18(17.65)
25-30	4(30.50)	2(14.29)	2(2.99)	-	4(3.92)
30-35		1(7.14)		-	1(0.98)
35-40	2(8.18)	1(7.14)	men - me D		3(2.94)
40-45 Total	11(100)	14(100)	67(100)	10(100)	102(100)
Marital Status					
Married	10(90.91)	5(35.71)	14(20.90)	4(40.00)	33(32.35)
Unmarried	1(9.09)	8(57.14)	53(79.10)	6(60.00)	68(66.67)
Widow	Sales Office	1(7.15)		2 - 000	1(0.98)
Total	11(100)	14(100)	67(100)	102(100)	102(100)
Background	(15,800)	(10.36)70	(FLEE)III	((3.85))	sints
Rural	3(27.27)	13(92.86)	11(16.42)	2(20.00)	29(28.43)
Urban	8(72.73)	1(7.14)	56(83.58)	8(80.00)	73(71.57)
Total	11(100)	14(100)	67(100)	10(100)	102(100)
Education		Jane Cook III II			
Illiterate	9(81.82)	T-Mac T T a			9(8.82)
Primary	1(9.09)		General Trees	may * hall	1(0.98)
Middle	1(9.09)	4(28.57)	(my can all	an governal	5(4.90)
Matric	100	8(57.14)	8(11.94)	-	16(15.69
10+2		2(14.29)	30(44.78)	-	32(31.37
Undergraduate	molto- mis	Sup 21st tall	17(25.37)		17(16.68
Graduate	nutrial ais hi	bend my bu	11(16.42)	1(100)	12(11.76
Postgraduate	K-81 Jul 6	Water State of the later	1(1.49)	9(90.00)	10(9.80)
Total	11(100)	14(100)	67(100)	10(100)	102(100

Among women sales officers only 10 per cent were in the age group of 18-20 while 60 per cent were 20-25 years old and rest 30 per cent were 25-30 years old. None of the women working as sales officer was found above the age of 30 years.

Marital Status

About 67 per cent of the women working in shopping malls were unmarried, 32 per cent were married while only one woman (0.98 per cent) was widow. Further analysis shows that the majority of women employees ie 57.14 per cent, 79.10 per cent and 60 per cent were unmarried in case of those women working as security guards, salesgirls and sales officers respectively (Table 2). The case was otherwise with regard to the women working as sweepers where majority of them i.e. about 91 per cent were married while rest of about 9 per cent were unmarried.

Thus, it was found that majority of the women employed as security guards, sales girls and sales officers are unmarried while majority of those employed as sweepers were married.

Background

It was found that though the shopping malls are operating in big cities yet they are providing employment to large number of rural women. In the shopping malls under study, about 29 per cent women employees belonged to rural areas. Majority of them were from nearby villages but in some of the cases they came from villages as far as 50 kilometers away from the mall. The percentage of rural women was the lowest (16.42) among salesgirls and the highest among security guards (92.86). The study revealed that rural women who work as security guards belong to farm labour class families. Some of these women have done beauty parlour courses but they think that villages do not have good employment opportunities in that regard. Instead of being farm labour they find it better being security guard in malls in cities as it gives them a regular income and comparatively better working conditions. While working as security guards they enjoy a sense of authority and majority of them dream of joining police department in near future.

Women security guards who belong to the rural areas and are unmarried, are provided a room to live in somewhere near the mall by the security agency i.e. the immediate employer. Generally 4-5 girls share a room so provided by the employer.

Almost all the sweepers working in the shopping malls are migrants from states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh etc. and they originally belong to the rural areas of those states. Many of them migrated by marriage while in some cases they belong to the second generation of the migrants. Before joining the present job they had

been working as domestic labour and had to work in 4-5 households to earn a sum of Rs 2000-3000 per month. Also, they find it better to work for a company rather than working for an individual. They find the job in a mall better as now they do not have to move from house to house to perform their duties. The present job gives them almost the same income from one place.

More than 80 per cent of the salesgirls belonged to urban areas. About 36 per cent of them had prior work experience from 6 months to one year. Before joining the job in mall, many of them had been working in factories as labour or as primary teachers in small unrecognized schools. Only 6 women had been working as salesgirls in shops in the same city.

Education

The highest percentage of the respondents (31.37) was educated up to the 10+2 level. About 17 per cent were undergraduates, 11.76 per cent of them were graduates and only 9.80 per cent had studied up to post graduate level. It was found from the study that 8.82 per cent of the working women were illiterate while 0.98 per cent, 4.90 per cent and 15.69 per cent of them had studied up to primary, middle and matric level respectively.

The percentage of illiterate women was the highest (81.82) among sweepers. More than fifty per cent of the women employed as security guards in the shopping malls had studied up to matric level while 28.57 per cent and 14.29 per cent had formal education up to middle standard and 10+2 level respectively. In case of the salesgirls majority (44.78 per cent) were educated up to 10+2 level while 25.37 per cent, 16.42 per cent and 1.49 per cent had education up to under graduate, graduate and postgraduate level respectively. In almost all the cases the salesgirls had done a computer course. Majority of those employed as sales officers had done M.B.A. degree.

Table 2 shows that as we move up the employment level from sweeper to sales officer, the level of education goes on rising among women employees.

Family Size

Distribution of women employees on the basis of family size shows that among sweepers and security guards family size is larger as compared to that in case of salesgirls and sales officers (Table 3). In case of 69.61 per cent employees, 2-3 family members were earning. The percentage of the cases where even 4-5 members were earning was the highest (45.46) among sweepers.

Table 3 Distribution of women employees on the basis of family size and number of earning

Family size	Sweeper	Security Guard	Salesgirl	Sales Officer	Total
1-3	1(9.09)	3(21.43)	11(16.42)	1(10.00)	16(15.69)
3-6	6(54.54)	6(42.86)	51(76.12)	9(90.00)	72(70.58)
More than 6	4(36.37)	5(35.71)	5(7.46)	NEXT DE L	14(13.73)
Total	11(100)	14(100)	67(100)	10(100)	102(100)
Earning Mem	bers				usnel-usnas
Only 1	2(18.18)	2(14.29)	6(8.96)	1(10.00)	11(10.78)
2-3	4(36.36)	7(50.00)	52(77.610	8(80.00)	71(69.61)
4-5	5(45.46)	4(28.57)	8(11.94)	1(10.00)	18(17.65)
>-6		1(7.14)	1(1.49)	Min office an	2(1.96)
Total	11(100)	14(100)	67(100)	10(100)	102(100)

Family Income

Women working in shopping malls come from low income families. About half of the women employees had their family income upto Rs. 10,000 per month only. While about 2 per cent had only Rs. 5000 per month, 48 per cent had their family income of Rs.5000-10000 per month. Another 30.39 per cent had monthly family income ranging from Rs.10, 000 to 15000. Only 1.96 per cent, 4.90 per cent and 3.93 per cent of the women employees employed in shopping malls had family income Rs. 20000-25000, Rs. 25000-30000 and equal to or above Rs. 30,000 per month respectively.

None of the women workers except sweepers were found having their family income Rs. 5000 per month. In case of the sweepers 18.18 per cent had their monthly family income up to Rs.5000 only while the majority (36.36 per cent) had monthly family income Rs. 5000-10000 and the same proportion was earning Rs. 10,000-15000 per month. The majority of the women working as security guards (78.57 per cent) had their family income from Rs.5000-10000 while 21.43 per cent had family income of Rs. 10000-15000. About 50 per cent of the salesgirls had their family income between Rs. 5000-10000 while 35.82 per cent, 11.94 per cent and 1.49 per cent had family income of Rs.10000-15000, Rs. 15000-20000 and Rs. 25000-30000 respectively. None of the salesgirls' family had income above Rs. 30000 per month.

Table 4
Distribution of women employees on the basis of family income per month

Family Income (Rs.)	Sweeper	Security Guard	Salesgirl	Sales Officer	Total
Upto5000	2(18.18)	-	s read .	on out	2(1.96)
5000-10000	4(36.36)	11(78.57)	34(50.75)		49(48.04)
10000-15000	4(36.36)	3(21.43)	24(35.82)	mars.	31(30.39)
15000-20000	1(9.10)	DISTA - TO	8(11.94)	nomit .	9(8.82)
20000-25000	-		-	2(20.00)	2(1.96)
25000-30000			1(1.49)	4(40.000)	5(4.90)
> 30000	-	-	-	4(40.00)	4(3.93)
Total	11(100)	14(100)	67(100)	10(100)	102(100)

Among women sales officers 80 per cent had family income of Rs. 25000 or above while in 20 per cent cases only it was Rs 20000-25000.

Monthly Salary

The respondents were asked about the salaries they were getting. It was found that majority (32.36 per cent) of the women employees were getting Rs. 5000 to 7000 per month. Almost equal number (30.39 per cent) were getting Rs. 3000-5000 per month and about 20 per cent of were getting wages up to Rs. 3000 per month only. About 10 per cent and 2 per cent of these were enjoying their salary between Rs. 9000-11000 and Rs. 11000-13000 per month respectively.

Table 5

Distribution of women employees on the basis of Salary

Salary (Rs.	Sweeper	Security Guard	Salesgirl	Sales Officer	Total
Upto3000	9(81.81)	11(78.57)	GOOD COLD OF	e some of vir	20(19.61)
3000-5000	2(18.19)	3(21.43)	26(38.81)	amount (d)	31(30.39)
5000-7000	a ghallar sa	OF SUP NO.	32(47.76)	1(10.00)	33(32.36)
7000-9000	- 100 H 2 100 V 1	-	6(8.96)		6(5.88)
9000-11000	-		3(4.77)	7(70.00)	10(9.82)
11000-13000		0000 - 11 0	ar nordonal	2(20.00)	2(1.90)
Total	11(100)	14(100)	67(100)	10(100)	102(100)

In case of sweepers and security guards, majority were getting only up to Rs 3000 per month. Majority of the salesgirls got a salary of Rs 5000-7000 per month and they were the employees of anchor stores. About 14 per cent earned from Rs 7000 to as high as Rs 11000 per month because they had more than 5 years' experience and were employed by various companies window displaying their brands for sale inside anchor stores. In case of all the employees, contributory provident fund was deducted.

The respondents were asked about the money they generally spend on self out of their salaries. As reported by the sweepers and security guards, they spend about Rs 500 on self for various requirements like tea, or other necessities. As they walk down to and from the work place, they do not spend any money on transportation. Each salesgirl spends Rs 1000-1500 per month. Their major item of expenditure is auto-rickshaw fare and sometimes they buy some cosmetics for themselves. Sales officers, however, reported that they spend about 50 per cent of their salaries on self. They spend mainly on petrol, cosmetics, and garments. These women employees contribute a major part of their salary towards family income.

Working Conditions

In shopping malls, women work in two shifts. For the job of sweepers each shift is of nine hours' duration and the timings are 8.00 am to 5.00 pm and 1.00 pm to 10.00 pm. Security guards have shifts from 9.00 am to 4.00 pm and 4.00 pm to 11.00 pm and each shift is of seven hours' duration. Salesgirls and sales officers have the longest working hours. Their shifts are from 9.30 am to 7. 30 pm and 11.30 am to 9.30 pm and the shift is ten hour long.

Unlike other jobs, security guards are deployed at the entrances at the ground floor and in the basements. Those employed in the basements have bad working conditions as the places are dark, dingy and even suffocating. In such an environment it would not be surprising if psychologically they themselves feel scared.

Security guards reported that they have only 15 minutes break in the whole shift and during this time they can have their food. There are no regular timings for

Sweepers take half an hour rest break to have their meals. Salesgirls and sales officers are given two tea breaks, each of 15 minutes duration and one lunch break of half an hour duration. In tea breaks, tea is provided by the employer. Salesgirls and sales officers were quite satisfied with these facilities. Sweepers and security guards do not get any weekly break or holiday. If any day they are unable

to be on duty, the wages are deducted. Salesgirls and sales officers get one weekly day of rest and are paid at double the normal rate of payment if they work on national holidays.

Salesgirls and security guards are provided no facility to sit. These women told that in the first few months of their employment, standing throughout the day was a great difficulty but now they had become used to that.

Security guards are not provided much training. They were given training only for a day before joining the job. Majority of the salesgirls had attained training from their computer course academy before joining the job. This academy not only trained them but also acted as a recruitment agency. After joining the job they were given three months' training by the employer. On-the-job training included modules on English speaking, personality development, personal grooming, product knowledge and selling skills. These young women are, on the, whole happy with their jobs and hope they would get still better jobs in future due to their experience in their present jobs.

CONCLUSION

Shopping malls are providing new avenues of employment to women. About 40 per cent of the employees in malls are women. They are employed as sales officers, salesgirls, security guards and sweepers. Among the total sales staff, the number of women is even more than 50 per cent. Majority of the women employees are just 18-25 years old and are educated up to 10+2 level. Though the shopping malls are operating in big cities yet they are providing employment to large number of rural women. In the shopping malls under study, about 29 per cent women employees belonged to rural areas. The rural women who work as security guards belong to farm labour class families. Instead of being farm labour, they find better being security guards in malls in cities as it gives them a regular income and comparatively better working conditions. Almost all the sweepers working in the shopping malls are migrants from states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh etc. and they originally belong to the rural areas of those states. They migrated by marriage while in some cases they belong to the second generation of the migrants. Before joining the present job they had been working as domestic labour. They find the job in a mall better as now they do not have to move from house to house to perform their duties. The present job gives them almost the same income from one job. Women working in shopping malls come from low income families and majority (32.36 per cent) of them get salary of Rs. 5000-7000 per month. They contribute a major part of their salary to the family income and spend a very little sum on

self. While security guards and sweepers work for 7 and 8 hours a day respectively, salesgirls and security officers have to work for 10 hours a day. On the whole, they are happy with their jobs and hope for a still better future.

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