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Rationale of Locational and Situational Factors on Shopping Malls & Hypermarkets and their Impact — Developers' Perspective

Sandeep Singh Virdi* and R. K. Sehgal**

** School of Management Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala*

*** JSS Institute of Engineering & Technology, Kauli, Patiala*

Abstract

Research suggests that malls and hypermarkets - the physical expression of a society's retail desire - are booming. But the harsh truth is that the heady gold-rush days for organised retail are clearly over. Oversupply, fierce competition, high rentals, poor infrastructure and shoddy marketing are just some of the problems that are dogging these cathedrals of consumerism. Beneath the gleaming façades, colour coded displays and nattily turned out shop assistants, there is a hum of unrest. Success stories still abound, but tales (often untold till now) of vacant lots, lost investments and shattered expectations are growing with every passing day.

Developers/Builders of Malls and/or Hypermarkets were interviewed during the course of this research leading to significant results being revealed through this study, on the basis of their responses, regarding various factors, concerning mall and / or hypermarket location, situation, ambience, facilities etc. Mall and hypermarket developers have to create distinctive identities for their specific malls, much like the identities that have developed over time for major shopping high streets in various cities in the country. Their work is not done just when the mall or hypermarket has been commissioned. This research / study can serve as a guideline for the scores of mall / hypermarket builders / developers / promoters / owners to not just rush into setting up a mall or a hypermarket overnight based solely on their whims and fancies, but plan delicately and wisely according to the market requirements and chalk out detailed and meticulous strategies so that they do not have to shut shop overnight. Consequently, professional third party mall management service providers are likely to come to the fore. This study also proposes that mall / hypermarket developers and owners should focus principally on the facilities management in the mall / hypermarket vis-à-vis equipment management, ambience, security, housekeeping, sanitation etc. and utilities management like air conditioning, power, electricity back up, water resources, fire fighting etc. amongst many other significant variables affecting the success of a mall / hypermarket.

INTRODUCTION

Shopping malls are quickly becoming an integral part of Indian consumerism. The mall culture in Northern India is relatively new for mall promoters / owners / builders in the Indian skyline, which only around 7-8 years back did not have a single mall / hypermarket. According to mall developers, besides the clearance procedures, running it is a challenge with a huge investment that goes into it and the return which takes around at least seven years and maybe more in many cases. Though the demand projections for mall space in India are lucrative; however, the growth of malls in India over the last decade has suffered from issues such as the high cost of real estate and construction, poor infrastructure, a non-conducive policy framework, and the unavailability of professional expertise in mall development and management (Singh et al., 2010). This has resulted in undifferentiated malls, plummeting occupancy levels, and reduced profitability for tenants and malls. Most of these evils have their genesis in the inappropriate pattern of financing used by Indian mall developers. Funds are raised by selling the mall space to investors and speculators for quick recovery and rotation of funds. The mall is owned in a piecemeal manner by a number of stakeholders. Consequently many problems creep in. These include short-term orientation, distortions in zoning, disturbance of the overall concept of the mall and developer disinterest in promoting malls. All these vices convert the mall into just another 'shopping complex' and the future of the mall starts looking bleak overnight.

ORGANISED RETAILING

Though retailing as a concept is not new in India, it is only during recent past that Indian retail sector is witnessing a process of change and is poised to undergo dynamic transformation. India is now developing into a retail power where both organized and unorganized retail sector compete with each other.

Various urban areas have been at the center of attraction with emergence of different kinds of organized retail formats gaining momentum. A large number of retail models & retail formats have come in force offering a wide spectrum of merchandise and services.

RETAILING FORMATS IN INDIA

Some of the prevalent relating formats in India include :

Shopping Malls

Malls are an upcoming trend in Retail market. The concept is based on constructing centrally air-conditioned malls and renting the floor space out to individual shops. Shoppers use the same parking facilities and there is a combined brand pull of all outlets. Malls inspire fashion-based shopping, as distinct from the need-based shopping inspired by super-markets and discount stores. Examples are Mumbai's Inorbit, Delhi's Ansal Plaza, Amritsar's Alpha One Mall and Chandigarh's Paras Downtown Square.

Hypermarkets

The hypermarket combines supermarket, discount and warehouse retailing principles. Its product assortment goes beyond routinely purchased goods and includes furniture, large and small appliances, clothing, and many items. The basic approach is bulk display and minimum handling by store personnel, with discounts offered to customers who are willing to carry heavy appliances and furniture out of the store. Pantaloon Retail India's hypermarket store, Big Bazaar, is now emerging as India's largest hypermarket chain. Modelled along the lines of global hypermarket chains like Wal-Mart, the Big Bazaar stocks several product categories. The present estimate is that it stocks close to 1.5 lakh items across 18 product categories, including utensils, pharmaceuticals, electrical items, hardware and food & provisions.

Specialty Stores

Specialty stores, as the name implies, are ones that carry a narrow product line with deep assortment within that line. Typical examples are jewellery stores like Tribhavandas Bhimji Zaveri in Mumbai and P. C. Chandra & Sons in Kolkata. According to some marketing thinkers, the future scenario belongs to super specialty stores as they provide increasing opportunities for market segmentation, focused marketing and creation of brand equity.

Department Store

A department store carries several product lines, invariably all that is required by a typical household. These lines include food, clothing, appliances and other household goods, home furnishings, gifts and curios. In India these stores are still at the introduction stage and they are mainly located in metros like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and other cities like Bangalore and Hyderabad. The closest to the concept of department store are Lifestyle, Globus.

Supermarket

This is a large, low cost, low margin, high volume, self-service operation designed to serve the customer's need for food, laundry and household maintenance products. Once again one doesn't see these supermarkets in the true sense of the term in India, but some examples are Food World, Subhiksha, Nilgiri's.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous researches' conclusions regarding convenience and location are somewhat contradictory as well. On one hand, Burns and Warren (1995) found that consumers travel beyond their local shopping area to other shopping centres in order to access a wider selection of products than that available locally, and this satisfies "a need for uniqueness". At odds with this conclusion, research based on consumer responses by Severin et al. (2001) and Yilmaz (2004) showed that convenient location has the greatest impact on consumers' choice of centre.

Wakefield and Baker (1998) examined the relationship between three factors - tenant variety, mall environment, and consumer shopping involvement and studied the influence of these factors on shopper excitement and desire to stay at a mall. Their findings indicated a differential influence from the three factors. Tenant variety has the biggest impact on shoppers' excitement, while the mall environment has the greatest influence on their desire to stay. The authors gave more in-depth consideration to environmental factors by grouping them into music, lighting and temperature, layout, architectural design, and interior decor. Architectural design had the strongest positive influence on excitement, but no effect on desire to stay. Interior decor, on the other hand, had the strongest positive effect on desire to stay, but no effect on excitement.

Huff (1964 and 1966) concluded that the comparative size of the centres and the convenience of access were the primary characteristics that consumers sought when choosing a shopping centre to visit.

Retail store location and the distance the customers must travel to visit, was found to be the basic criteria in the store choice decisions (Gupta & Kaur, 2006). This research was similar to the design / aesthetic factors discussed by Baker et al. (2002) and Ghosh and Bawa (1999).

Ashley (1997) and Templin (1997) observed that over the years, the competition between shopping malls has increased significantly possibly due to the overbuilding of retail centres and changing consumer shopping activities. Another contributing factor is the similarity of the attributes of most shopping malls, with too many stores offering too much of the same merchandise. So given the apparent similarity in shopping center attributes, shoppers will probably choose to visit the nearest shopping mall when faced with the existence of more than one shopping mall within `reasonable' travelling distance.

Past research has revealed that many consumers make a decision regarding where to shop based on their attitude toward a mix of stores, the shopping center environment and entertaining shopping experience (Finn and Louviere, 1990; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Donovan et al., 1994; Burns and Warren, 1995; and Jones, 1999).

McCarthy (1980) had attempted to include transport mode / travel attributes in studying the role of the qualitative characteristics that influence the choice in shopping destination. Using the factor analytical technique, five sets of qualitative generalized attributes were generated. These generalized attributes include trip convenience, trip comfort, trip safety, shopping area attraction and shopping area mobility. He found that these generalized attributes, which were obtained from attitudinal information, are significant in an individual's choice of shopping area.

Anselmsson (2006) in his study found selection as the most important determinant of shopping mall choice, followed by atmosphere / ambience of the mall and third most important determinant of satisfaction was convenience, which includes opening hours, parking, ease-of-movement and ability to find one's location in the mall.

Rathod and Patel (2008) attempted to know the importance of different criteria for the selection of retail outlets amongst the customers. They found that availability of variety has been given highest importance by customers, second priority has been given to service quality and third most important criteria is convenient location.

Srivastava (2008) presented a picture of the changes in retail taking place in India. His paper looked at the changing scene in the retail sector in view of many MNCs and large industries entering into this segment. The findings presented that malls are more developed in the North and West part of India. On average 75% of customers spend about 1-3 hours in the mall. Malls with multiplexes such as cinema theatres, food courts, play - pens for children are becoming the centre for family outings.

Bhupta and Vaish (2010) in their study stated that developers and retailers need to plan the merchandising by the customer needs. Just the way a store has to choose appropriate merchandise, so does a mall need to have an excellent mix of good retailers. To get couple of anchor tenants is not enough to make a mall successful.

Chebat, Sirgy and Grzeskowiak, (2010) opined that one way to generate more traffic in a mall is to build a strong mall image perceived by shoppers as delivering a unique bundle of benefits. Such effort has to be guided by a performance metric, namely a comprehensive measure of mall image. They hypothesized that mall image could best be conceptualized in terms of five major retail branding dimensions: access, store atmosphere, price and promotion, cross - category assortment, and within - category assortment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

With the prime objective to investigate the various models and policies employed by the promoters and / or builders of malls / hypermarkets, as well as to have their perspective on the buying behaviour and the propensity of the Indian consumers to visit a mall / hypermarket, Mall / Hypermarket Promoters / Builder / Owners were interviewed in detail and administered questionnaires as well.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Scope

The research design for the current study was descriptive in nature. The study was directed at covering the shopping malls and the hypermarkets in the cities of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh UT and Delhi State + NCR.

Sampling Unit

The sampling units for the study were the Builders / Developers of the Malls / Hypermarkets wherein the term Mall / Hypermarket Builders / Developers related to the Persons / Trust / Management / Committee / Society / Organization / Party / Association / Agency responsible for the erection / construction / investment in the building and infrastructure of the shopping arcade and for promoting its interests.

Universe for the Study

All the malls and hypermarkets in the region of Punjab, Haryana and Delhi NCR were taken as the universe for this study. The universe for this research comprised of 58 Malls & Hypermarkets, which consisted of 31 Malls and 27 Hypermarkets.

Sampling Size & Type

There has been substantial debate over the sample size needed to appropriately conduct tests of statistical significance. The results of many multivariate techniques can be sample specific, and increase in sample size may ameliorate this problem (Schwab, 1980). As sample size increases, the likelihood of attaining statistical significance increases, and it is important to note the difference between statistical and practical significance (Cohen, 1969). In the present research, 30 Malls & Hypermarkets were surveyed (50% of the Universe was chosen as the sample for study, after rounding off) and Stratified Random Sampling technique was used during the course of this research.

Mall / Hypermarket Developers / Builders / Owners - 20 Mall Developers / Builders / Owners were administered questionnaires either in Person (Hard copies) or by way of Mail / Internet Questionnaires (Soft copies). During the pilot study, it was found that there are multiple Partners / Promoters / Builders / Developers / Owners involved in the commissioning or operations / ownership of a mall / hypermarket. Hence from the universe of 58 Malls & Hypermarkets, it was found that there were 78 Promoters / Builders / Developers / Owners in the said population. Therefore, a 25% sample was chosen for the purpose of this study, which came to 20 Developers / Builders (after rounding off) out of which 13 Mall / Hypermarket Developers / Builders / Owners responded back with filled questionnaires. After validating the filled questionnaires and doing a reliability check, 10 Mall Developers / Builders / Owners' responses were finalized for the purpose of analysis for the study.

Procedure

Source of the data was primary as well as secondary sources, and the tool used for primary data collection was questionnaire. The sample population was contacted by meeting in person and by sending soft copies of the questionnaire by way of email, in addition to which, an online survey was also carried out. Prior to the data collection stage for the study, the questionnaire was tested for its easy understandability, accuracy and verifiability. A pilot survey was also initially carried out on 5 Developers from Hypermarkets and Shopping Malls from the areas covering Delhi + National Capital Region, Haryana, Punjab and Chandigarh UT. The questionnaire was found to be reliable and valid for the current study and the scores were : Reliability 0.84 and Validity 0.90.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Mostly the promoters of these malls / hypermarkets include big shots of construction businesses as Paras Buildtech, Omaxe Limited, Uppal Group, Ansal's Group etc. in the mall development arena, who have recently diversified into

Retail Businesses. The average time taken to construct their mall / hypermarket as revealed by the promoters was anywhere between 5-6 years and in some cases even longer. Most of the malls that were researched upon, had their operations started around 2007-08. 80% of the promoters said that their mall was located on a main highway; the frequency was positively high in case of malls and lower in case of hypermarkets, since the latter tended to be located in the downtown areas.

60% said that their mall had 3 floors with 2 basement levels and 20% said that they had 2 floors with 2 basement levels. 40% of the mall builders replied that they had food courts on the 3rd floor and 60% of the mall promoters replied their multiplex facilities were on the 3rd floor but none of them had multiplexes on the ground floor. 80% builders said their multiplexes had 4 screen theatres and 20% housed 3 screen theatres.

Large majority of 80% promoters replied in the negative when asked whether their mall / hypermarket provided the facility of valet parking. And again the same per centage 80% replied negatively on their providing the facility of shuttle services to and from the parking lots. 60% of the builders agreed to having installed CCTVs at strategic locations in their malls / hypermarkets and 80% replied having adequate fire fighting equipment and readiness.

As shown in Table 1, all 10 developers / builders of the mall / hypermarket replied that they had excellent unparalleled security in their malls / hypermarkets. Moreover, 8 developers / builders, also stressed strongly on the fact that their mall / hypermarket had state-of-art interior designing, finer air conditioning and colourful and eye-catching lighting throughout the building and on the exterior / façade as well besides beguiling décor.

A majority of them also replied having hair saloons, restaurants (other than food courts), comfortable sitting lounges, maintaining exceptional hygiene and sanitation and ideal fire fighting facilities. But none of the mall developers interviewed, pointed that their mall had banks, ATMs, clinic services, night club, museum, physical fitness centre, pub and library, most of which are integral part of the malls abroad.

On the critical issue of the retailers vacating the malls and setting up shops in normal market places / plazas in the downtown or other similar areas, almost each one of the developers opined that it was primarily due to the ever increasing rentals and the high cost of operation in the malls, thereby making it virtually impossible for the retailers to maintain profitability in the malls. According to them, costs of upkeep and maintenance and high overhead costs, was also substantially high and in the view of the decreasing footfalls in the malls, the cost benefit ratio was

Table 1

Presence of Services / Facilities in Mall / Hypermarket

Which of the following services are there in your Mall / Hypermarket? *(Can Tick More Than One Option)*	**Responses of 10 Developers / Builders**
Banks	0
ATMs	0
Clinic / Medical services	0
Hair saloon services	7
Amusement / Theme parks	2
Gaming arcades like Bowling Alleys, Skating Rinks etc.	3
Nightclub	0
Museum	0
Swimming Pool	1
Physical fitness centre	0
Pub / Bar	0
Library	0
Restaurants (other than the food courts)	7
Comfortable Sitting lounges	5
Exceptional Hygiene and Sanitation	7
Appropriate provisions for Maintenance - both Breakdown / Preventive maintenance	7
Earthquake Resistant Building	2
Adequate fire safety provisions	7
State-of-art Interior Designing	**8**
Mesmerising Fountains	4
Colourful & Attractive Lighting	**8**
Beguiling Décor	6
Plays piped music	5
Superior Air conditioning	**8**
Organised parking with proper signages to the parking lot and guiding personnel	6
Enhanced safety & security	**10**
Total	**103**
Mean : 18.57; Standard Deviation : 6.11;	***Variance : 37.32***

[In all the subsequent tables, wherein there are multiple choices, the absolute count of ***10 Developers / Builders*** *has been taken into account, since those being multiple choice enabled statements, several options were cited by the developers / builders, with respect to their malls / hypermarkets].*

relatively quite low, thus becoming commercially unviable for the retailers in their malls.

Other reasons promoters cited were the small sizes of malls and lesser variety of goods and after effects of economic slowdown and recession. Indians are largely led by the faith inspired by the traditional shopkeepers, which is why the typical Indian customer still does not prefer going to shopping malls.

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

IMPACT OF SITUATIONAL & LOCATIONAL FACTORS ON BUYING DECISIONS

The promoters were interviewed on the aspects of situational and locational aspects of a mall / hypermarket and the kind of influence would these factors might have on the decision making of a customer in relation to his purchase behaviour. Promoters unanimously agreed (100%) on the fact that the mall should be ideally located outside a town / city (CoV 2.209%) and if possible, on a main / national highway (though the promoters were not unanimous on the latter issue being given much significance, CoV 12.448%), and a hypermarket should be located inside the town (if it is already not situated in the shopping mall, CoV 3.838%).

Another aspect which the promoters and the builders laid utmost significance upon (100%), was the consideration of the geographical area while deciding on the location for a mall / hypermarket (CoV 2.414%). But they did not agree to the fact that the location of a mall / hypermarket in a busy market place would increase the probability of footfalls (CoV 37.268%).

The promoters also felt that the travel distance to a particular mall / hypermarket inversely affected the propensity and / or willingness of a visitor to shop (CoV 3.846%) and the same was also influenced by the amount of walking required in a Mall / Hypermarket (CoV 3.056%). The builders also agreed (80%) that there should be multiple entrances and exits to a mall / hypermarket (CoV 5.250%), which almost none of the malls in India have incorporated in their architecture, as is the case in the malls in the United States or United Kingdom, where there are numerous exits and entrances into the main building. Of course this might compound the problem of security and management, but then the major focus should be on attracting the customer, focusing on his comfort and ease of movement and converting the footfalls into buying behaviour.

As shown in the following Table 2, the promoters strongly favoured that there should be adequate security & extremely thorough check ups at all entry points (CoV 9.317%) and the parking should be spacious, structured, organised & distance needed to walk to the mall / hypermarket should be less (CoV 10.648%).

Table 2

Influencing Situational / Locational Factors for a Mall / Hypermarket

	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	CoV %
How important is Geographical area while deciding on a location for a Mall / Hypermarket?	**4.97**	**0.12**	**2.414**
A Shopping Mall should be ideally located outside a town.	**4.98**	**0.11**	**2.209**
A Hypermarket should be ideally located inside a town.	4.95	0.19	3.838
Travel distance to a particular Mall / Hypermarket is inversely proportional to its appeal.	2.60	0.10	3.846
Number of competing Malls / Hypermarkets in a particular region would affect the drawing power of a particular Mall / Hypermarket and thereby increase or decrease the footfalls	4.00	1.22	30.619
A Mall / Hypermarket should be located on a Main / National highway.	4.40	0.55	12.448
A Mall / Hypermarket should not have other Malls / Hypermarkets in its vicinity.	4.40	0.89	20.328
A Mall / Hypermarket should be in a busy market place to increase the probability of footfalls.	**2.40**	**0.89**	**37.268**
Size of a particular mall / hypermarket is directly proportional to its appeal.	4.60	0.98	21.304
There should be Multiple Parking lots, geographically spread around the Mall / Hypermarket, to cater to visitors approaching from all directions so that they do not have to drive all around the Mall / Hypermarket to get to the parking lot.	4.40	0.55	12.448
Mall's architecture is exceptionally & extremely significant and should be such that it lends an attractive character to the façade.	4.98	0.89	17.871
A Mall / Hypermarket should have a big lounge area / Atrium.	4.60	0.55	11.907

Table 2 (Contd.)

A Mall / Hypermarket should have wide aisles and easy to follow layout	4.20	0.45	10.648
There should be multiple entrances and egresses in a Mall / Hypermarket	4.00	0.21	5.250
Toilets' layout & their design are an extremely important focus area from facilities' location point of view, while designing a mall / hypermarket.	4.20	0.84	19.920
Parking should be spacious, structured, organised & distance needed to walk to the Mall / Hypermarket should be less.	4.20	0.45	10.648
Amusement / Theme parks are an inherent component & a definite must for every Mall.	2.00	0.71	35.355
There should be Centralised pick up & drop off services for the visitors / staff.	2.99	1.05	35.117
Buildings should conform to the latest trends of being Eco-friendly buildings - Rain Water harvesting, Usage of Organic Material, Pollution Friendly.	4.80	1.32	27.500
Amount of walking required in a Mall / Hypermarket inversely affects the willingness of a customer to shop	3.60	0.11	3.056
A Mall / Hypermarket should have adequate security & extremely thorough check ups at all entry points.	4.80	0.45	9.317
CCTVs are an important & indispensable feature of security in today's Malls / Hypermarkets.	4.96	1.52	30.645

Parking rated as one of the most important factors amongst the developers / builders, when it came to construction of the building of the mall / hypermarket and designing the layout of the exteriors, with 80 % of the developers strongly voting in favour of this aspect. They opined that the parking should be organised, spacious, with proper signages and attendants to guide the vehicles and help them park. Besides this, it should also be taken into account that the distance needed to walk from the parking to the main building should be as less as possible.

They preferred that a mall / hypermarket should have wide aisles and easy to follow layout and should have a big lounge area / atrium (60%). According to most of them (80% agreed), there should be multiple parking lots (as is the case in the malls in the United States or United Kingdom), geographically spread around the mall / hypermarket, to cater to visitors approaching from all directions so that they do not have to drive all around the premises to get to the parking lot.

The factors which least mattered to the builders by and large (80% replied in negative) was the inclusion of amusement parks and / or theme parks inside the mall (CoV 35.355%), and also they did not give any importance to having centralised pick up and drop off services for the visitors / staff (CoV 35.117%). They also disagreed unanimously (80%) that the number of competing Malls / Hypermarkets in a particular region would affect the drawing power of a particular Mall / Hypermarket and thereby increase or decrease the footfalls.

Table 3

Locational / Situational Factors Affecting the Likingness of a Mall / Hypermarket

Which of the following locational factors, according to you, would affect the popularity / likingness for a Mall / Hypermarket? *(Can Tick More Than One Option)*	**Responses of 10 Developers/ Builders**
Topography of the region	6
Accessibility to the Mall / Hypermarket	**10**
Travel modes available	6
Being well connected	0
Public Transportation availability	4
Traffic Congestion	6
Any other, please specify,	0
Total	32
Mean : 3.13; Standard Deviation : 1.86;	***Variance : 3.47***

On the issue of the factors affecting the popularity / likingness for a mall / hypermarket, the promoters replied that the accessibility factor (all 10 developers / builders agreed unanimously) was one of the major drawing ones (Table 3), followed by the aspects of traffic congestion on the roads leading up to it, topography of the region and the travel modes available (cited by 6 developers / builders each), though this was in somewhat contrast to the replies given by managers.

On the aspects of infrastructure, the developers replied in favour of parking organisation (all 10 developers / builders unanimously agreed), how well it is laid out and the amount of walking distance required from the mall / hypermarket (Table 4).

Table 4

Ideal Infrastructural For a Mall / Hypermarket

A Mall / Hypermarket should have proper Infrastructure in terms of *(Can Tick More Than One Option)*	**Responses of 10 Developers/ Builders**
Parking organization, layout, distance from the mall / hypermarket	10
Layout of the stores	8
Sitting lounges	10
Sanitation	6
Hygiene	8
Maintenance - Breakdown / Preventive maintenance provisions	8
Earthquake resistant building	6
Adequate fire safety provisions	10
Security & other safety measures	10
Any other, please specify.	0
Total	76
(Since this was a Multiple Choice Enabled statement, hence instead of Count, the caption has been titled as Responses of 10 Developers / Builders)	
Mean : 5.09; Standard Deviation : 2.77; Variance : 7.59	

High importance was given to the providing of sitting lounges for the visitors, adequate fire safety provisions and security and safety measures (all 10 developers / builders unanimously agreed on each of these). Though providing sitting lounges favoured the increase in the 'mall-rats' hanging out in yet more numbers, still, developers were in favour of providing resting areas and sitting lounges for genuine mall visitors also. Similarly, every developer strongly advocated having of state-of-art and technologically sound fire fighting equipment and safety provisions, in case of an emergency. Having foolproof security and guards manning all the entry points to the mall / hypermarkets was also on the priority list, though most of the mall developers were in favour of out sourcing the security to professional agencies. These were followed by the design of layout of the stores, hygiene and the maintenance provisions (agreed upon by 8 developers / builders to each of these) of the mall / hypermarket.

Furthermore, according to 80% mall builders / developers, a typical shopping mall / hypermarket ideally should have 3 floors with 2 basement levels, on which almost they agreed in majority. Every developer agreed unanimously on having 2 levels of basements for parking, which has become a major focus area for such kind of commercial establishments, especially those located in the heart of the towns or heavily congested areas, and these could possibly be the reasons which might make or mar the success of any shopping mall / hypermarket.

Further, all 10 developers / builders agreed unanimously upon having parking on the ground floor as well, which has come to be reserved for the exclusivity for the shop owners in the shopping malls, as a promotional strategy by the mall builders to entice retailers.

Mall developers agreed in majority (80%) that the food courts should be located on the topmost floors, whether it be the 2nd or the 3rd floor or any other. Only 20% of them favoured the location of food courts on the ground floor. The promoters felt that on the remaining floors, there should be other restaurants and fast food outlets, which can be another major source of revenue generation and keep the reservation of food courts to the topmost floor only.

On the issue of having escalators per floor, the promoters replied in favour (60%) of having 2 pairs of escalators for each floor. Majority of them felt that having 2 pairs was sufficient and any increase beyond this number would result in increase of operational costs as well as maintenance costs, more importantly. They further replied that a majority of them (60%) would desire a combination of stairs, escalators and elevators, as they felt that having a combination of stairs and elevators only or a combination of stairs and escalators only would not do justice to the huge amounts of crowds visiting the malls / hypermarkets these days and would be insufficient to handle them.

Table 5

Ideal Ambience for a Mall / Hypermarket

A Mall / Hypermarket should provide the best Ambience in terms of *(Can Tick More Than One Option)*	**Responses of 10 Developers/ Builders**
Designing	**10**
Fountains	8
Colourful & Attractive Lighting	8
Décor	**10**
Play piped music	6
Any other, pls specify,	0
Total	**42**
Mean : 2.86; ***Standard Deviation : 1.42;***	***Variance : 2.03***

As Table 5 depicts, in terms of ambience, the developers unanimously agreed on providing the best of exterior and interior designing and beguiling décor (all 10 developers / builders agreed unanimously upon both the aspects), followed by providing fountains and colourful and attractive lighting (cited by 8 developers / builders for each of the aspects).

All 10 developers / builders agreed that having ATMs inside the mall / hypermarket premises would help in providing a complete and wholesome shopping experience to the customers, while 8 developers / builders out of 10 felt having hair saloons, amusement parks and gaming arcades would increase the probability of the visitors having absolute gratification, including their shopping experience (Table 6).

Table 6

Presence of Allied Services as an Influencing Factor

Presence of following allied services in a mall supplementingly affects the customer's shopping experience *(Can Tick More Than One Option)*	**Responses of 10 Developers/ Builders**
Banks	5
ATMs	**10**
Medical services	5
Dental services	3
Hair saloon services	**8**
Amusement parks	**8**
Gaming arcades like Bowling Alleys, Skating Rinks etc.	**8**
Any other you would like to suggest	0
Total	**47**
Mean : 4.18; Standard Deviation : 2.27;	*Variance : 4.97*

On being enquired as to which of the establishments did the promoters consider to be the ideal anchor stores, they replied in majority in favour of (80%) having hypermarkets as the ideal Anchor tenants for any kind of mall, since they are the biggest and the largest crowd pullers and also the prime revenue generators in the initial period of operations of the mall, which everyone understand are the periods of extreme criticality and vitality and might determine the course of success the said mall would take in the future course. The anchor tenants are the ones who provide the initial footfalls in a mall, and no one else but the hypermarkets can do justice fully to this stipulate. Food outlets came in a distant second and did not find many takers amongst the promoters, on this critical and decisive issue.

SUGGESTIONS

Parking today has become extremely cumbersome, and in many cases it was found that visitors had stopped visiting a mall / multiplex / hypermarket just because the parking there was not comfortable, organised and ordered. Congested and unorganised parking lots were found to be a big turn off for a majority of the visitors, therefore it is strongly suggested that this is one area where the builders and the management of the malls / hypermarkets should focus primarily on. The developers of these establishments should ensure there are proper signages and personnel guiding the vehicles to safe and ordered lots, in an effortless and hassle free manner. The parking areas should be well lit, and should send out signals of a secure environment, so that the visitors do not feel any sort of threat or any sense of insecurity. The parking bays / pillars should be numbered or serially ordered so that the visitors can locate their vehicles quite easily when they return from their shopping trips.

Moreover, it is recommended that the checkout lanes when exiting from the parking lots should be increased in number, so that the customers do not have to wait for long periods of time in their vehicles waiting for their turn to check out.

Mall owners and promoters should also make available an optimum retail mix and tenant selection. Appropriate policies and strategies should be chalked out to apportion and designate precious, limited and valuable mall space to the retailers willing to be a part of the mall, apart from judging their earnest desire and sincerity to work as a team and to strive towards an elite and exclusive image of the mall. It is further recommended that optimum placement and positioning of the retail outlets should be done in the mall, according to the category and grouping of the retail segment, and of course in tune with the overall ethos of the mall.

Models should be worked out and developed to differentiate rates for the retailers for same floor space and sizes, but on varying location and floors in a mall, depending primarily upon its value addition and also according to their economic contribution to the mall. Besides, developers should also try and maintain a delicate balance to ensure maximum occupancy of the malls, especially at the centre and around the atrium, and around the anchor tenants, and at the same time also ensure highest possible revenues by way of rentals.

CONCLUSIONS

The burgeoning of shopping malls and hypermarkets in India has almost been a revolution till now. But now they have become a way of life in our country. Malls and hypermarkets are redrafting and rephrasing the rules, developing a constitution of their own and are converting the basic need for recreation and shopping activity into a unique parameter or criteria for judging one's lifestyle statement.

Hypermarket and Mall owners and promoters should make available an optimum retail mix and tenant selection. Mall space should not be rented or leased out to anyone and everyone who is willing to shell out money. Judicious and well thought of policies and strategies should be chalked out to apportion and designate precious, limited and valuable mall space to the retailers willing to be a part of the mall, Hypermarket and Mall owners and developers in India strongly need to focus on vision, scalability and their processes so as to create a distinct proposition for themselves in the market.

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