



## The trend of mall culture in India and shopping behavior of the youths: A perspective of Store Attributes

**Suparna Biswas**, Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Om Dayal Group of Institutions, Uluberia  
**Mainak Ghosh**, Associate Professor & Head, Department of Architecture, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

*Abstract-- In the present days the malls are no longer only places to purchase products. They have become weekend destinations of many, especially the young generation, a meeting place, a rendezvous to enjoy with family and friends. The urban culture is almost incomplete without the mall experience. Shopping habits of Indians are changing with the rise in the young population with their increased affordability and upgraded living standards. The trend conscious young generation has a desire to look and feel good and therefore, tend to spend more on shopping. To fulfil the shopping needs there is a boom in the development of shopping malls, equipped with all modern amenities, all over India. The paper explores the attributes responsible for the ambient atmosphere of the malls in the background of the rising trend of mall culture in India, analyses the customer psychology and the significant impact of the mall ambience on the buying behavior of the customers, especially the young generation.*

**Keywords-- emerging trend, mall attributes, buying behavior, customer psychology, impulsive buying, purchase behavior**

### I. INTRODUCTION

Indian retail scenario is undergoing huge changes augmented by the participation of big corporate houses and the increased brand consciousness among different demographic groups of shoppers. A good percentage of the prospective shoppers flocking the malls are the youths from the nuclear families of the country. It is important to understand and ascertain the prime aspects of attraction with respect to atmospherics of the shopping malls for the youths of the society. Hence significant concern needs to be expressed regarding the shopping psychology of the youths, variations in shopping trends, as well as evaluation of the ambient shopping environment. The multi-storied malls with modern amenities proliferating the metros and the urban areas, have introduced a completely new shopping environment and opened up new arenas of entertainment for their customers and thus have contributed to the growth of mall culture nowadays omnipresent in the lives of the citizens, particularly the young generations (Sathish, D. & Venkatrama Raju, D., 2010).

### II. MALL CULTURE AN EMERGING TREND

With a fast growing economy, a changing population, the target customer group with enhanced purchase power and updated lifestyle, modern technologies and favorable policies; the organized retail sector in India is experiencing a metamorphosis and is gradually augmenting to satisfy global

standards (Handa, V. and Grover, N., 2012). In the long run India's retail has grown in an extensive manner from 'weekly markets' and 'haats' to the smart and lavishly designed shopping malls with modern amenities and comfortable store environment. This again is having a deep emotional impact on the customers to make impulsive or unplanned purchases. The impulsive buying is more predominant in the younger customers having a different attitude towards shopping. The retailers are giving utmost effort to satisfy the young minds and meet their demands and have given new dimension to the shopping experience. Nowadays the modern shopping malls in the metros are not only a place to shop but a place for enjoyment, socializing and entertainment with multiplexes, salons, spas, food courts and restaurants with a variety of exotic cuisine, gaming zones in a congenial atmosphere under one roof (Patil, S. G. 2019). In order to boost the imagination of the young customers the malls are arranging impressive and eye catching events like live concerts, exhibitions, fashion shows or festivals. Apart from these big deals, discounts, attractive prizes and lucrative schemes are also playing a big role in alluring the customers. The malls, with their store ambience and all the modern amenities have turned into a shoppers' paradise. Also these malls provide refuge to the shoppers from the extreme weather and also bring relief in their stressful life. The enchanting effect of the shopping malls act as a means of escape from the real world as well as poor living standards and conditions. Moreover the shopaholism or addiction for shopping has turned out to be one of the most significant promotional aspects of mall culture of India.

### III. THE ORGANIZED RETAIL SCENARIO IN INDIA

With a fast growing economy, a changing population character, the target customer group with increased purchase power, modern technologies and favourable policies, the organised retail sector in India is experiencing a metamorphosis and is gradually augmenting to satisfy global standards. Availability of a wide range of brands both local and global is luring the brand conscious customers specially the young generation. Along with the spread of telecommunication and networking in the emerging urban areas, demands for electronic goods, mobile phones and accessories have made a strong foothold in the retail market (Handa, V. and Grover, N., 2012). The clothing and apparel section, attracting the fashion and trend conscious young generation, is also following a fast growth rate curve and has

been recognised as the greatest benefactor in the organised retail sector in India. The increase in income level of the citizens leading to their improved purchase power combined with the stimulation for shopping and exploring the new facilities and brand consciousness of the prospective customers have given a new dimension to the consumer market in India. With the revolutionary changes in the format of retailing the customer expectation along with their purchase behavior are also being altered. Indian retailers are making coalitions with foreign companies introducing new products to attract customers, introducing innovations aiming to get maximum return. In order to keep pace with the demands and the expectations of the customers the organized retail sector has to cope with high cost of operation and maintenance. The modern technology and ambient store atmospherics of the malls have made an emotional impact on the customers to make impulsive or unplanned purchases. Understanding the psychology and purchase behavior of the customers is one of the key factors of the growth of the organized retail (Dash, M. and Chandy, S., 2009).

#### IV. THE MALL ATTRIBUTES

The mall attributes either tangible or intangible create an impression on the minds of the customers and which in turn affect their purchase behavior. Customer satisfaction and loyalty depend largely on the positive influence of the environmental cues of a retail outlet. With proper design and application of the environmental attributes, the customers can be motivated to spend more time in that environment which in turn can lead to impulsive buying. The window shopping also encourages impulsive buying and hence utmost care is taken for window display patterns for important brands. Moreover the pleasantness imbibed in the customers' mind can facilitate positive responses and influence their shopping patronage. Store attributes with respect to the retail sector can be grouped in terms of "store atmospherics"( Kotler, P., 1973).It is the stimuli from the atmospherics of a retail environment which is responsible for the customer evaluation and consequent behavioral responses, positive or negative (Turley, L.W. and Milliman, R.E., 2000).The stimuli that generally respond to the sensory perceptions like vision, touch, hearing and smell are intangible attributes like colour, light, brightness, shape, size as visual variants, materials used for the store and its furniture are the tactile variants. The prevalent ambient odor is responsible for the olfactory stimuli and the music played in the store for the hearing perception. Apart from this, crowding in the store and the comfort of the ambient environment determined by the controlled temperature also act as intangible cues guiding the customer mind for positive or negative response. The tangible cues are the store layout design, the display pattern, the ambient interior, the furniture used, the landscaping, the fixtures and gadgets used in the store creating a desired atmosphere and a pre-conceived store ambience for generating customer satisfaction. On the other hand, the "perceived atmosphere" is determined by the psychological impact of the customers created by the intangible attributes like color, light, smell, odor and crowding which again is not always controllable as it varies with the mind-set of the customers (Donovan, R.J., Rossiter, J.R., Marcoolyn, G. and

Nesdale, A., 1994). The store arrangement along with the products displayed also can influence the perception of consumers about pricing of the products and in the long run motivate a long stay in the store and guide their purchase intention by enhancing positive vibes. Apart from these attributes the entertainment facilities, availability of good food, the comfortable environment for socializing, the mall access, security, also determine the approach–avoidance behaviour of the customers which in turn influences their purchase decisions.

- The atmospheric attributes can again be categorized as:
- Exterior variables (the entrance, the external window display, the signage, the architectural features of the building, location and approachability, the traffic congestion, the neighbouring stores, landscaping, parking facility, etc.)
  - Interior variables (floor, wall, ceiling, colour scheme, display, lighting, odour, temperature, cleanliness, music, width of corridors, the products, etc.),
  - Layout variables (allocated space formats, placement of furniture, displays, grouping of products, traffic flow and circulation pattern, dead ends, etc.
  - Variables at point of purchase( displays, decoration and signage, display of certificates, paintings and artworks used for decoration, product and price displays, display of any instruction, etc.)
  - Human variables (employee behaviour, crowding, privacy, etc.)

Though the application and presentation of the mall attributes vary with each store and age, sex, mental make-up and socio-economic and financial backgrounds of the customers, the ultimate aim is the creation of an influential environment catering to the customer satisfaction and delight and meeting their demands which can be translated to probable purchase (Turley. et al., 2000).

#### V. THE INFLUENCE OF MALL ATTRIBUTES ON CONSUMER SHOPPING BEHAVIOR

The store atmospherics influencing the probable buying behaviour of the consumers consist of myriads of in-store variables perceived by the customers in terms of two psychological states of mind i.e. pleasure and arousal. These two emotions of the customers appreciably moderate their intentional purchase behaviour in the store (Robert, D. and John, R., 1982). Environmental psychologist Mehrabian and Russell has suggested that three basic emotional states e.g. pleasure-displeasure, arousal - non arousal and dominance-submissiveness mediate the approach –avoidance behaviour of the customers. Based on these emotional states Mehrabian and Russell have proposed a theoretical model for examining the influence of the store attributes on the shopping behaviour (Mehrabian, A. and Russell, J.A., 1974).

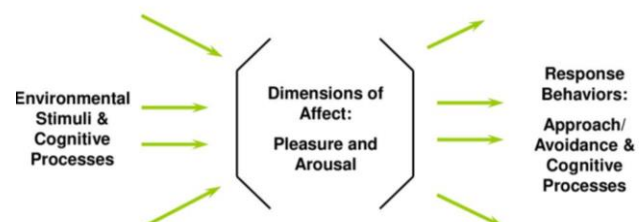


Fig. 1. The Mehrabian-Russell Model source: Donovan and Rossiter (1982 )

In general retailing terms the above model predicts that the customers will enjoy spending more time and money in those retail stores where they feel pleasurable with a moderate to high degree of arousal. Pleasure-displeasure refers to the magnitude of happiness or customer satisfaction in a particular store environment, arousal- non arousal refers to the amount of the excitement, stimulation, alertness or activeness a customer experiences and dominance – submissiveness refers to the extent to which the individual customer feels in control of, or frees to act in. These emotional dimensions are orthogonal. Mehrabian and Russell model suggests that there is a conditional interaction between pleasure and arousal to ascertain approach or avoidance. In a neutral environment moderate arousal enhances the approach behavior whereas very high or low arousal leads to avoidance behavior of the customers. In a pleasant store environment, the greater the arousal, the greater will be the approach behavior, but in an unpleasant environment, the higher the arousal the greater will be the avoidance behavior. Russell and Pratt (1980) have proposed an alteration of the Mehrabian-Russell Model in which the dominance factor was removed as they felt that the two orthogonal elements pleasure and arousal i.e. emotions like pleasant-unpleasant and arousal-sleepy were sufficient enough to correlate and speak for the customers emotional responses specially in a retail environment (Russell, J.A. and Pratt, G., 1980).

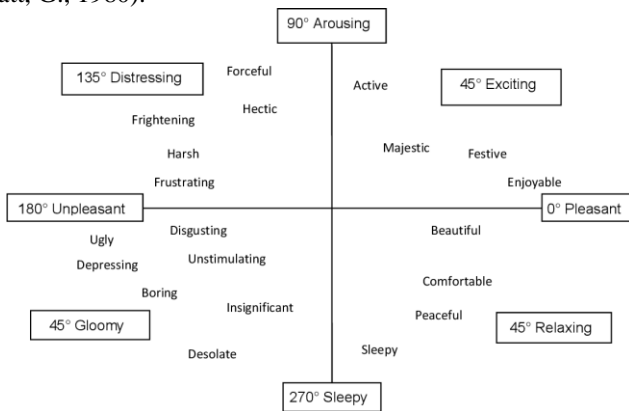


Fig. 2. Alteration of The Mehrabian-Russell Model source: Russell and Pratt (1980)

It has been observed that the response to the environmental stimuli varies from individual to individual. Mehrabian especially relates to the individual differences in the arousal factor relating differently to the atmospheric stimulus. The behavior of an individual can be categorised as approach or avoidance behavior (Groepel-Klein, A., 2005). Approach behavior of a customer in a retail environment is associated with feeling of satisfaction, willingness to stay, move on and explore, interact positively and leave with a desire to return. Avoidance behaviors relate to the opposite i.e. customer dissatisfaction, feeling of discomfort, anxiety and boredom, a desire to leave the environment without any idea to return again. All these individual behaviors is guided by the emotional state of a person in particular environment which again is the impact of the environmental psychology arising from the impact of the atmospheric attributes- visual or sensory, tangible or intangible. According to the Mehrabian-

Russell Model these emotional states of the individuals can be represented by primarily two factors i.e. pleasure and arousal and to some extent by a third element – dominance. Pleasure and arousal interaction causes boosting of approach behavioural aspect in a pleasant environment and avoidance aspect in an unpleasant environment (Grossbart, S.L., Mittelstaedt, R.A., Curtis, W.W. and Rogers, R.D., 1975). Apart from the store image the retailers should give attention to the psychological impact of the store environment on the shoppers and the correct combination of the emotional feelings of pleasantness and arousal of the shoppers caused by appropriate store attributes which can stimulate their purchase behavior and increase the shopability.

## VI. PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTHS IN MALLS

The psychological dimension of the customers are guided by sensory elements composed of five human senses like touch, feel, taste, sight and hear, cognitive parameters or the thinking capability and affective elements featuring feeling of the customer towards a particular object or situation. Studies have revealed that financially independent youths visit malls more frequently than others and this is an important aspect in studying the shopping behaviour and frequency in shopping is an important consideration in studying customer purchase behaviour. Moreover, the pleasant or ambient environment induced by the mall attributes discussed earlier appear to be a strong cause of consumers spending extra time exploring and browsing and transforming their demand into actual purchase and also resulting in unplanned purchase without having been influenced by the perceptive attributes of the merchandise like the quality, variety of the products and also value for money. Apart from the mall attributes, the choice of brands and products also influence their shopping behaviour especially in the case of fashion conscious young generation having a demand for global brands symbolizing status and self-identity. Mind has an important role to play in making purchase decisions. Pre-conceived ideas and notions of shopping experience, memory and emotions also trigger the purchase intention. Shopping behaviour, having a gender overtone, is also influenced by the customer personality, the socio-economic background, the lifestyle and the diverse cultural attitude of the people. Besides being a household task, shopping has also become a leisure activity, a form of entertainment and relaxation (Bawa, R., Sinha, A. K., & Kant, R. 2019).

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

In the background of the rising trend of mall culture in India and gradual rise in the population of young shoppers with increased income having an inclination to buy branded products, the atmospheric mall attributes either tangible or intangible have become highly crucial with respect to the customer purchase behavior and increase in the purchase probability. To satisfy the millennial shoppers, the shopping malls and organized retail outlets are introducing a new culture far different from traditional shopping. The new shopping experience is also stimulating impulsive buying. This study points out the important aspects of this dynamic transformation of the malls in the present scenario and their

effects on the purchase behavior of the young generation in India.

#### VIII. REFERENCES

- [1] Bawa, R., Sinha, A. K., & Kant, R. (2019). Emerging Mall Culture and Shopping Behavior of Young Consumers. *Advances in Anthropology*, 9(03), 125.
- [2] Berman, Barry, and Evans, Joel R.: *Retail Management: A Strategic Approach*, 6th Edition, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ. change how shoppers behave inside a store. 1995.
- [3] Dash, M. and Chandy, S., 2009. A study on the challenges and opportunities faced by organized retail players in Bangalore. Available at SSRN 1435218.
- [4] Donovan, R.J., Rossiter, J.R., Marcoolyn, G. and Nesdale, A., 1994. Store atmosphere and purchasing behavior. *Journal of retailing*, 70(3), pp.283-294.
- [5] Groeppel-Klein, A., 2005. Arousal and consumer in-store behavior. *Brain research bulletin*, 67(5), pp.428-437.
- [6] Grossbart, S.L., Mittelstaedt, R.A., Curtis, W.W. and Rogers, R.D., 1975. Environmental sensitivity and shopping behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 3(4), pp.281-294.
- [7] Handa, V. and Grover, N., 2012. Retail sector in India: Issues & challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(5), pp.244-264.
- [8] Khare, A., 2012. Influence of mall attributes and demographics on Indian consumers' mall involvement behavior: An exploratory study. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 20(3), pp.192-202.
- [9] Kotler, P., 1973. Atmospherics as a marketing tool. *Journal of retailing*, 49(4), pp.48-64
- [10] Markin, R.J., Lillis, C.M. and Narayana, C.L., 1976. Social-psychological significance of store space. *Journal of Retailing*, 52(1), p.43.
- [11] Mehrabian, A. and Russell, J.A., 1974. *An Approach to Environmental Psychology*. Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- [12] Michon, R., Chebat, J.C. and Turley, L.W., 2005. Mall atmospherics: the interaction effects of the mall environment on shopping behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(5), pp.576-583.
- [13] Patil, S. G. (2019). Mall culture: A rising trend. *Journal Homepage: <http://ijmr.net.in>*, 7(08).
- [14] Rana, D. and Damanhoury, A.M.S., 2013. Growth Pattern of Retail Industry: Current Retail Scenario in India. *Life Science Journal*, 10(3).
- [15] Robert, D. and John, R., 1982. Store atmosphere: an environmental psychology approach. *Journal of retailing*, 58(1), pp.34-57.
- [16] Russell, J.A. and Pratt, G., 1980. A description of the affective quality attributed to environments. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 38(2), p.311.
- [17] Sathish, D. and VenkatramaRaju, D., 2010. The growth of Indian retail industry. *Advances in Management*.
- [18] Turley, L.W. and Milliman, R.E., 2000. Atmospheric effects on shopping behavior: a review of the experimental evidence. *Journal of business research*, 49(2), pp.193-211.
- [19] Turley, L.W. and Milliman, R.E., 2000. Atmospheric effects on shopping behavior: a review of the experimental evidence. *Journal of business research*, 49(2), pp.193-211.