

# Lack of Safety and Security Provisions is affecting the optimum utilisation of Retail Business Space in the Shopping Malls: A Study with reference to Rajasthan.

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**ABSTRACT:** : This paper has been prepared on primary data collected from 372 active shopping mall goers. The authors understand the importance of optimum utilisation of business retail spaces like Shopping Malls, which are a huge investment. It is important that these business spaces function profitability as well as provide a much-needed shopping eco-system that is safe and secure for the shoppers. During this study, it was found that most of the shopping malls lack safety and security provisions because of which shoppers prefer traditional shops. The authors do not advocate the replacement of traditional shops with Shopping Malls but promote the idea of a sustainable shopping environment with the co-existence of traditional shops and world-class shopping Malls.

**Key Words:** Shopping Malls, Safety and Security, Retail Business Space

## Introduction

'Shopping Mall' is synonymous with organised retail in India, especially in the small towns and cities of India. In small towns, any modern retail format or a shopping complex is referred to as a 'mall'. It speaks volumes of recognition that the concept has gained in barely two decades in India. In India, the regular mass's understanding of the concept of Shopping Mall is undergoing refinement due to their growing interaction with malls. Many malls that were developed during the initial phases are in the doldrums concerning their profitability. The prime reason for this was the mismatch between the shopper's expectations and what these malls offered. As quoted by the renowned Greek philosopher, Heraclitus "Nothing is permanent except change", shopper's expectations from shopping malls are witnessing radical changes. Here, change means opportunity. The time calls for the developers, mall manager and retailers to capitalise the shift and reposition and revolutionise the not-so-clear status of the Moguls of Organised Retail in India - The Shopping Malls.

One of the most neglected aspects when it comes to shopping malls is the provision for safety and security. This is the characteristic that when worked upon can be of great importance for the development of shopping malls of India and here, undoubtedly lies a great potential to build a business on providing world-class safety provisions for the malls.

## Review of Literature

According to Yuksel (2007) has identified the potential for shopping to develop into a tourism resource. This depends largely on the quality, attractiveness and safety of the environment involved. Perceived and actual risks associated with shopping while on vacation are likely to place serious constraints on tourist's shopping behaviour. The 'identity of the shopping mall' as a 'public or central meeting place' for a community to interact with 'social, economic or political issues' is limited. (Staeheli and Mitchell, 2006) In the community access to the shopping mall owners and managers have to be consistent with the mall's primary function: increasing consumerism.

## Research Gap

Shopping malls in India are at present is the cusp of retail revolution. With jaw-dropping discount offered by online retailers and emergence of new retail formats, consumers are changing their evolving their preferences. It is need of the hour to reflect on the existing shopping malls, which are facing fierce competition and are also being challenged in metro cities of India. With their vitality endangered, many become dead malls or getting converted into office spaces in the metro cities of India, a phenomenon that has increased over recent years. With more and more e-retailers staring to open up brick-and-mortar stores, the preference of off-line shopping is indispensable in the Indian context.

An interesting dilemma is that; shopping malls are profit-oriented private properties; on the other hand, a shopper can spend a whole day in a shopping mall without doing any shopping. Shopping malls have become public magnets. That's why shopping malls are new public spaces: because people prefer them. People like to have fun and spend their leisure time at shopping malls. Even, when tourists come from out-of-town or from another country, they mostly visit popular shopping malls.

There is a dearth of studies that have tried to analyse the problem areas that have to be worked upon in that are impeding the sustainable growth of retail properties, especially shopping malls in India.

### Objective of the Study

Shopping malls in India are at present is the cusp of the retail revolution. With jaw-dropping discount offered by online retailers and the emergence of new retail formats, consumers are changing their evolving their preferences. It is need of the hour to reflect on the existing shopping malls, which are facing fierce competition and are also being challenged in metro cities of India. With their vitality endangered, many become dead malls or getting converted into office spaces in the metro cities of India, a phenomenon that has increased over recent years. With more and more e-retailers staring to open up brick-and-mortar stores, the preference of off-line, the myth of the last couple of decades, i.e. 'If you build shopping malls, shoppers will come' has been blasted. This approach doesn't work. With this in mind, the objective of this study is to explain the problems and prospect of Shopping malls concerning the retail landscape of Rajasthan through empirical analysis.

- To assess and determine the present scenario of the safety and security provisions in the shopping malls of Rajasthan
- To find out if there is an association between the safety provision in a shopping mall and the customer's preference for a shopping mall.
- To find out the potential of business development in the areas of providing safety and security solutions to retail properties.

### Research Methodology

The Universe of the study comprises the urban population of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota. The Sampling technique used for this study is simple random sampling. A semi-structures questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample size of 372 respondents who were shopping mall goers.

The statistical analysis was done through the use of Pearson r correlation.

#### 3.4.1 Variables taken in the Study

On the basis of the objective and review of literature with reference to global and Indian context, the following variables were taken in the study.

- **Dependent Variable**

The Dependent Variable (DV) of this study is: **Customer Preference for Shopping Malls**

**Sub-components of Dependent Variable:-**

1. Frequency of purchase (purchase at every visit)
2. Frequency of Visit (once a week)
3. Excitement to visit
4. Recommend a friend/family/colleague to visit a shopping mall (Mall Patronage)
5. Time spent per visit (2-4 hours)
6. Distance as a deciding factor for visit
7. Enhancement in shopping experience
8. Shopping Malls are better than traditional markets
9. Shopping Mall visit is a social activity
10. Enhanced customer handling and service at a Shopping Mall.

- **Independent Variable - Safety and Security Provisions**

**Sub-components of Independent Variable:-**

- Medical assistance
- Mock Drills
- Armed security personnel
- Emergency exits
- Frisking
- Safe Restrooms

## Hypothesis

**H<sub>01</sub>** - There is no significant association between safety and security provisions at a shopping mall and customer's preference for a shopping mall.

**H<sub>a1</sub>** - There is a significant association between safety and security provisions at a shopping mall and customer's preference for a shopping mall.

## Inference from Correlation Matrix:

A Pearson r correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between consumer's satisfaction with respect to the safety and security provisions (shopping mall attribute) and their preference for a shopping mall (dependent variable). The data from 372 active mall goers was used in the computation.

The correlation analysis also shows moderate positive correlation between **Safety and Security Provisions** and Preference of a shopping mall,  $r = 0.077$ ,  $n = 372$ ,  $p = 0.139$ , but the p value is not significant. Thus accepting the null hypothesis i.e. **H<sub>01</sub> - There is no significant association between safety and security provisions and customer's preference for a Shopping Mall.**

## Findings of the Study

Safety and Security Provisions is a key shopping mall attribute because of which people prefer a shopping mall over a regular market. In this study safety and security provisions has a 'positive correlation' with the customer's preference for a Shopping Mall but not a significant one. Thus, this can be identified as one of the problem area that is hampering the optimum utilisation of this retail property thus making it a profitable business venture.

## Implications of the Study

The other benefit that can be derived from this study is that there is a lack of professional safety and security services for retail properties. The shopping malls have to work seriously on this attribute and devise strategies to increase the footfalls and enhance the brand image that would help them in their positioning strategies.

Here, lies a huge potential for the development of world-class business that could bridge this gap. Thus, this study can also be used as a study for assessing and identifying the potential for business providing safety and security solutions in retail properties like Shopping Malls.

Shoppers should feel a sense of security while walking inside a Shopping Mall. As a shopping mall accommodates a large number of people at one time, it is prone to terrorist attacks and accidents. The existing shopping malls in Rajasthan are not adhering to the safety and security norms.

Following suggestions can be used by the policymakers and mall managers for ensuring the safety of the shoppers: -

- The first step has to be taken during the mall design itself. Provisions should be made for huge atriums, open spaces, emergency exits and divergent corridors that can evenly distribute the crowd.
- No gaps should be left between railing and railing should be very strong as sometimes shoppers lean on them.
- CCTVs are installed inside most of the malls, but the display screen is with the management. The mall management should ensure to provide display screens to shoppers as well. This can help to entail responsible behaviour of staff and shoppers and also ensure in maintaining decency among the gentry overall thus enhance the shopping experience of the shoppers.
- As shopping malls are public places they are vulnerable to terrorist attacks and stampedes. To be prepared to handle such casualties, regular mock drills and disaster management awareness sessions should be conducted.
- Sufficient emergency exits and stairways should be present. Shoppers should be made aware and instructed about the emergency exits.

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