Consumer Perception Towards Shopping Malls : Evidence from a Tier II City

** Pooja Khanna*
*** Suresh Seth*

Abstract

The concept of shopping malls in India is undergoing a tremendous change. Having attained maturity in tier I cities, these malls are treading onto tier II and tier III cities with positive anticipation. Retailers see a greater scope for growth in these cities. Pressurized by sky - high real estate prices, immoderate rentals, inflated development costs, and low foot-falls, retailers are shifting to tier-II and tier - III cities. Turning these malls into a profitable venture will be a great challenge in the foreseeable future. Mall developers and retailers need to understand the psychology of consumers and gain a deep insight into the factors which give them satisfaction. This study attempted to analyse the factors that had an impact on consumers shopping in malls in a tier-II city. Use of exploratory factor analysis revealed that Aesthetic Ambience, Physical Infrastructure, Hedonic Factors, Service and Convenience, Escape/Stress Relieving, Promotional Offers, Merchandize, Shopping Enjoyment, and Excitement were the most important factors influencing customers' perception about shopping malls. The results of regression analysis further revealed that Enjoyment, Promotional Offers, Hedonic Factors, Stress Relieving, and Excitement had a considerable impact on customer perception about shopping malls in a tier II city.

Keywords : **retail, shopping malls, consumers, shopping experience, factor analysis, regression**

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The Indian retail market size stands at about USD 585 billion and is expected to grow at a compounded annualized growth rate (CAGR) of 13% to reach USD 1080 billion by 2020 (Indian Retailer.com, n.d.). This rapid growth in the retail sector is driven by income growth, urbanization, and attitudinal shift. According to a survey by ASSOCHAM, one-third of the retailers at shopping malls in tier I cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, and Bangalore are eyeing tier II and tier III cities to unearth the untapped opportunities ("Shopping mall retailers shifting to tier-II and III cities", 2014). Growth of shopping malls in tier I cities has reached a saturation point. Exorbitant real estate prices lead to high rentals in metropolitans. On the contrary, smaller cities offer lower operational costs and high growth potential, thus promising better returns that lure the retailers (Dungarwal, 2016). The demand appetite in tier II and tier III cities is expected to grow from US$ 5.7 billion to US$ 80 billlion by 2026 (Bapna, 2014). Tier II and tier III cities promise a huge potential for malls. Various studies have figured out the size of the Indian middle class to be between 350 - 400 million people, out of which around 100 million people live in tier II and tier III cities (Bapna, 2014).

Shopping malls are no longer about shopping alone - when consumers visit shopping malls, they look for an experience that goes way beyond traditional shopping (Jones, 1999). Population from nearby rural areas also throngs to the air-conditioned retail outlets in the malls to get a taste of convenient shopping. Shoppers in tier II cities have a sensible and realistic approach towards shopping malls. They evaluate malls on the basis of hygiene factors (Ghosh, Tripathi, Saini, & Agrawal, 2010).

** Research Scholar,* I.K. Gujral Punjab Technical University, Kapurthala, Punjab. E-mail : poojabhandari@apjimtc.org
*** Director - Principal,* Rayat Institute of Management, Chandigarh. E-mail : Drsureshseth9@gmail.com

Income of consumers is more in tier I cities as compared to their counterparts in tier II cities. However, because of higher cost of living, consumers in tier I cities have lesser disposable cash. Research has revealed that an average consumer in tier II and tier III cities is well travelled, well aware of various brands, and has exposure to all kinds of media (Dungarwal, 2016).

In Punjab, there has been an increase in the number of shopping malls in tier II and tier III cities. Smaller cities offer attractive opportunities by offering space at low rentals and operating costs. The cheaper real estate prices, low entry costs, and availability of space in these cities offer excellent investment opportunities (Dwivedi, 2009). This, in turn, is creating opportunities for both large and small retailers. There has been a significant change in the choices and preferences of consumers. Major factors stimulating the changes in shopping pattern of consumers include rise in disposable income, increasing awareness among the consumers, and improving lifestyles. Furthermore, the e-commerce revolution and the rise of digital technologies are reshaping consumer expectations. The e-commerce industry is expected to grow at an estimated compounded annualized growth rate (CAGR) of 45% from 2017 to 2020 (Lamba, 2016). In today's competitive scenario, a mall that has a good brand mix, high quality entertainment, food & beverage options, and focuses on providing enjoyable shopping experience to the customers will survive in the long run. Hence, it becomes imperative for the industry stakeholders to reach out to their customers with differentiated value proposition in order to have a long term association with them.

Studies on the shopping behaviour of consumers in tier II and tier III cities reveal a very limited research. The present study has been conducted to reduce the existing gap in research in this area. The aim of the study is ,therefore, to identify the factors that have an impact upon the perception of shoppers while visiting any shopping mall in tier II and tier III cities, which would help the mall developers and retailers to develop a radical approach to attract and retain customers so that malls do not lose their charm.

Review of Literature

In India, shopping is a family activity. Research indicates that nearly 70% of the shoppers visiting the malls are accompanied by their family and 74% see shopping as a social experience to be shared with family and friends. Many studies have been conducted on shopping malls, with respect to their perception and image.

Goswami (2007) conducted a study in Kolkata (tier I city) and explored the shopping orientation of urban Indians and classified Indian shoppers into four categories: Utilitarian Shoppers, Conservative Shoppers, Hedonic Shoppers, and Socialising Shoppers. The findings of her study revealed that loyal consumers preferred stores near their workplaces and homes. Rintamaeki, Kanto, Kuusela, and Spence (2006) posited that consumers view malls as entertainment and cultural centres. Another study by Singh and Prashar (2013) elicited that shoppers look beyond the basic chore of shopping, and experience plays a major role there.

Wakefield and Baker (1998) explicitly mentioned shopper's excitement and desire to stay at a mall being a result of factors like: ambience, design, layout, and variety. These factors composed of various statements that covered attributes like interiors, overall design, temperature, parking facility, and lighting. A study was conducted on various other factors like distance and travel time by Huff and Rust (1984), keeping in mind the convenience dimension while visiting any mall. Atulkar and Kesari (2016) observed in their study that the shopping experiences of customers were unpredictable and were positively influenced by dimensions like enjoyment, emotional attachment, comfort, uniqueness, and impulsiveness.

Consumers prefer to stay in a mall where the sales staff is courteous, helpful, and friendly (Loudon & Della Bitta 1993). Ismail El-Adly (2007) found that mall developers and retailers should focus on providing comfort to the shoppers which would enhance the attractiveness of the mall. The intense competition these days has made it very challenging for the retailers to allure customers (Jha & Singh, 2013). Reimers and Clulow (2009) emphasized on convenience as a vital factor considered by shoppers. Elements studied under convenience were parking, spatial convenience, hedonic attributes, and services provided to the shoppers. Deepa and Chitramani (2016) recognized

the shopping experience of customers from a retailer's perspective. They analysed that strong brand retail awareness would help the retailers to attract customers and convert them into loyal customers.

The literature provides evidence of factors affecting consumers' perception about shopping malls. However, little practical consideration seems to have been paid to exhibit these characteristics for consumers of tier II and tier III cities. The existing gap in research in the area of shopping behaviour justifies the rationale of the study at hand. The objective of this study, therefore, is to explore the factors that are considered by shoppers while deciding which mall to visit. This would help the mall developers to come up with appropriate strategies for tenant mix and simultaneously for retailers to design the appropriate marketing mix.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected from 150 respondents of Jalandhar city in the state of Punjab. The research was conducted during the second quarter of the financial year 2017 (i.e. April to June). Descriptive research design has been applied to conduct this study. Respondents were asked to provide their response on a 5 - point Likert scale wherein they were supposed to give their *level of agreement* or *disagreement* with statements regarding significance of different attributes relating to their perception of shopping malls.

The respondents were the people who visited the shopping mall. Data for this study was collected from four major malls of the city. These malls were selected on the basis of their relative importance in terms of the number of footfalls in these malls. Use of factor analysis was done to list the factors that affect consumer's perceptions. Regression analysis was applied in order to check the impact of the factors identified.

Data Analysis and Results

An exploratory factor analysis was used to figure out the factors which affect consumer preferences while shopping at malls. The generated value of KMO (.638) supports the usage of factor analysis on the sample considered to explore the underlying structure of various factors that influence the shopping pattern of consumers. The Bartlett's test of sphericity depicts chi-square value of 945.512 which is significant at the 1 % level of significance. The Table 1 highlights the results of KMO and Barlett's test of sphericity. The factor analysis generated nine factors explaining 70% of the variance regarding customer's perceptions, as explained in the Table 2.

Table 1. KMO & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**.638**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	**945.512**
	Df	**406**
	Sig.	**.000**

Table 2. Rotated Matrix for Mall Attributes

	Components								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
I am happy with the food court / eating joints available in the mall I generally visit.	0.578								
Existence of fun spaces for kids and youth in the mall I visit is satisfactory.	0.749								
I am happy with the decoration inside that mall.	0.746								
The overall design of that mall is interesting.	0.817								

I am satisfied with the physical facilities such as escalator, air conditioning, and wash rooms in the mall I generally visit.	0.823							
I am happy with the convenience factors like security, cleanliness, parking space, width of the shopping mall, and overall comfort in the mall I generally visit.	0.662							
Music and layout of the mall has a positive impact on the excitement and my desire to stay in the mall.	0.631							
I am satisfied with the architectural design (ceiling, flooring, carpeting, architecture, internal view, and layout) based on luxurious design, furnishing, and sophisticated elements.	0.726							
I feel a sense of joy to look at the merchandise in the mall I visit.		0.666						
Compared to other things I could have done, the time spent in that mall is truly enjoyable.		0.517						
I consider my shopping trip is successful when I find bargains.		0.534						
The working hours of the mall are satisfactory.		0.688						
I am happy because my time is saved as there are no queues.			0.509					
It is easy for me to get to the food areas of the mall I generally visit.			0.834					
I am satisfied with the sitting arrangement available during shopping inside the mall I visit.			0.567					
Presence of fun and entertainment avenues in the mall I generally visit are satisfactory.			0.668					
The mall staff is friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable.			0.641					
A shopping trip to the mall truly feels as an escape from life pressure as it helps me to release stress and relax.				0.709				
While shopping, I general forget my problems.				0.839				
For me, shopping in the mall is a way to do something different from my daily routine.				0.726				
I am happy with the sales offers available at retail outlets in the mall.					0.759			
I will continue doing shopping in the mall I generally visit and would not consider switching to any other mall.					0.771			
I prefer shopping in the mall I visit because it has a variety of products and activities that makes the shopping experience more enjoyable and satisfying for the entire family.						0.519		
I am satisfied with the good memories that I make while shopping in the mall I generally visit.						0.821		
The layout of that mall makes it easy to get around and reach wherever I want to inside the mall.							0.741	
I like shopping in the mall to get ideas about new trends, fashion, and style.							0.484	
I generally recommend the mall I visit to my friends and colleagues.							0.587	
I feel happy going to the mall because of its environment .								0.903

Notes: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

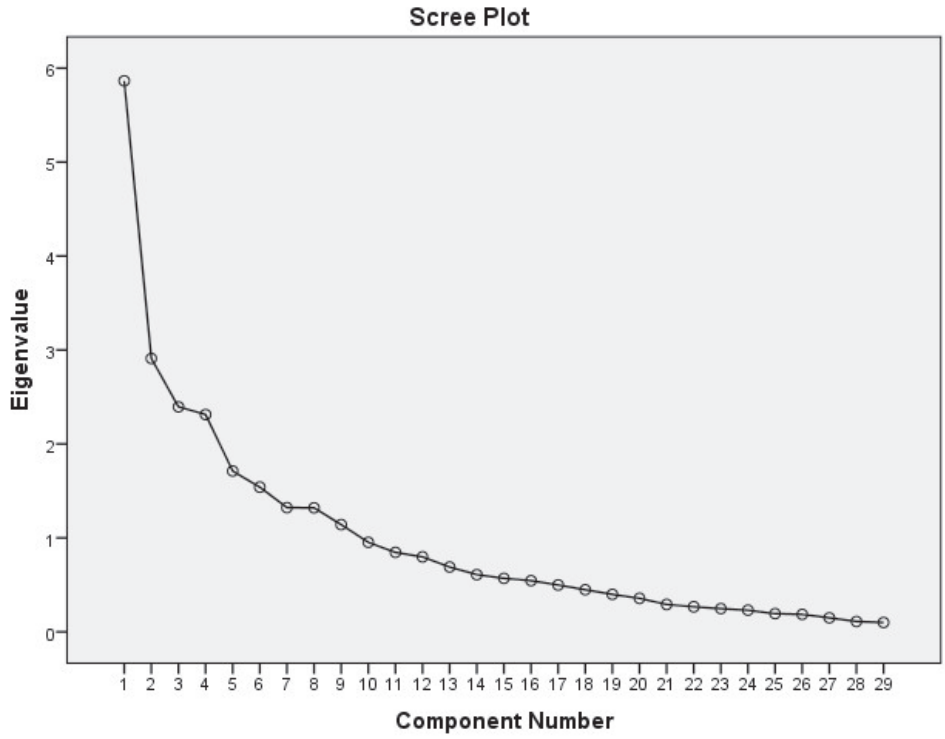
Table 3. Consolidated Factor Output

Factor Title	Items / Variables Included	Factor Loadings	Factor Number
Aesthetic Ambience	I am happy with the food court / eating joints available in the mall I generally visit.	0.578	
	Existence of fun spaces for kids and youth in the mall I visit is satisfactory.	0.749	**F1**
	I am happy with the decoration inside that mall.	0.746	
	The overall design of that mall is interesting.	0.817	
Physical Infrastructure	I am satisfied with the physical facilities such as escalator, air conditioning, and wash rooms in the mall I generally visit.	0.823	
	I am happy with the convenience factors like security, cleanliness, parking space, width of the shopping mall, and overall comfort in the mall I generally visit.	0.662	**F2**
	Music and layout of the mall has a positive impact on the excitement and my desire to stay in the mall.	0.631	
	I am satisfied with the architectural design (ceiling, flooring, carpeting, architecture, internal view, and layout) based on luxurious design, furnishing, and sophisticated elements.	0.726	
Hedonic Factors	I feel a sense of joy to look at the merchandise in the mall I visit.	0.666	
	Compared to other things I could have done, the time spent in that mall is truly enjoyable .	0.517	**F3**
	I consider my shopping trip is successful when I find bargains.	0.534	
	The working hours of the mall are satisfactory.	0.688	
Service and Convenience	I am happy because my time is saved as there are no queues .	0.509	
	It is easy for me to get to the food areas of the mall I generally visit.	0.834	
	I am satisfied with the sitting arrangement available during shopping inside the mall I visit.	0.567	**F4**
	Presence of fun and entertainment avenues in the mall I generally visit are satisfactory.	0.668	
	The mall staff is friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable.	0.641	
Escape / Stress Relieving	A shopping trip to the mall truly feels as an escape from life pressure as it helps me to release stress and relax.	0.709	
	While shopping, I general forget my problems.	0.839	**F5**
	For me, doing shopping in the mall is a way to do something different from my daily routine.	0.726	
Promotional Offers	I am happy with the sales offers available at retail outlets in the mall.	0.759	**F6**
	I will continue doing shopping in the mall I generally visit and would not consider switching to any other mall.	0.771	
Merchandize	I prefer shopping in the mall I visit because it has a variety of products and activities that makes the shopping experience more enjoyable and satisfying for the entire family.	0.519	
	I am satisfied with the good memories that I make while shopping in the mall I generally visit.	0.821	**F7**
Shopping Enjoyment	The layout of that mall makes it easy to get around and reach wherever I want to inside the mall.	0.741	
	I like shopping in the mall to get ideas about new trends, fashion, and style.	0.484	**F8**
	I generally recommend the mall I visit to my friends and colleagues.	0.587	
Excitement	I feel happy going to the mall because of its environment.	0.903	**F9**
	I feel excited about walking into that mall I generally visit.	0.487	

The results of Table 3 indicate that Aesthetic Ambience significantly contributes towards the perception of shoppers. Shoppers considered the presence of fun space for kids and youth before deciding their visit to a mall. Presence of food-court and eating joints makes them happy. They were also pleased with the overall design and decoration in the mall. Various items covered in design are ceiling, flooring, carpeting, internal view, and layout of the shopping mall. Shoppers looked forward to physical facilities (Physical Infrastructure) such as escalators, air conditioning, wash rooms, security, cleanliness, parking space, and overall space when they go to any mall for shopping. Music and layout of the mall also play an important role and have an impact on the satisfaction level of consumers. These results are supported by Loudon and Della Bitta (1993), who stated that physical facilities such as escalators, air conditioning, and washrooms influenced the decisions of the consumers while deciding which mall to visit.

Feeling a sense of joy and excitement when the shoppers see the merchandise in the mall attributes towards the Hedonic Factors. Shoppers like to spend time in the mall and consider their shopping spree successful when they find good bargains. The working hours of the mall also impact the happiness/level of satisfaction of the shoppers. This finding is supported by the study of Kaur and Singh (2007), who posited that Indian youth primarily shop from a hedonic perspective. Contribution of Hedonic Factors has also been explored in the past by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) as they explained the contribution of symbolic, hedonic, and aesthetic factors while shopping. Kim, Kang, and Kim (2005) also postulated a new classification as hedonic and utilitarian. Staff of the mall is an important factor affecting perception of customers as stated by the Service and Convenience Factor. The sitting arrangement available during shopping inside the mall makes shopping more convenient. Shoppers are satisfied as their time is saved because they do not have to stand in long ques. This reinforces the findings of Loudon and Della Bitta (1993) who stated that consumers generally desire to trade where sales people are courteous and helpful. The Figure 1 depicts the scree plot and the corresponding Eigen values of various statements.

Figure 1. Scree Plot



Shoppers felt that shopping in malls truly felt as an escape from life's pressure as it helped them to release stress and relax. Shoppers also have a tendency to forget their problems while shopping. The factor - Escape/Stress Relieving explains that shopping to them was a way of breaking the monotony. Bloch, Ridgway, and Dawson (1994) identified various factors that were considered by consumers while visiting any mall. These factors are aesthetic, escape, flow, exploration, role enactment, social, and convenience. This was further reinforced by Sit, Merrilees, and Birch (2003) who mentioned that there are three major motivational factors that influence consumer behaviour namely, thrill seeking, escapism, and socializing. Further, Kaur and Singh (2007) also confirmed in their study that shoppers viewed shopping in a mall as a means of diversion to alleviate depression or break the monotony of daily routine. Promotional Offers also play a vital role in defining customers' perceptions. The results suggest that shoppers opined that they would continue shopping in the same mall and would not consider switching to any other mall as long as they kept getting impressive discounts and offers in the same mall. This finding is also supported by the results of the study conducted by Hutcheson and Moutinho (1998) that focused on the occurrence of low prices and the frequency of promotions as an important factor in choosing a store. A study by Venugopal (2001), however, took a different approach by focusing on the retail business from a retailer's perspective and his expectations from the suppliers.

Consumers were happy with the Merchandize at the retail outlets in the malls. A variety of products and services makes the shopping experience more enjoyable. Research reveals that suitable stores in the mall tend to attract more customers (Singh & Sahay, 2012). They also cherish good memories they make while shopping at the mall. A wide variety of products can also minimize the perceived costs (e.g., travel time, effort) associated with each shopping trip and ease the shopping task (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006). The retailers need to ensure that the merchandize they are offering meets the expectations of the consumers (Ghosh, 1990). Shoppers liked to shop in malls as they got to know about latest trends, fashion, and style that contributes to 'Shopping Enjoyment'. So, they generally recommended the malls to their friends and relatives. Enjoyment and entertainment facilities were further endorsed by Bloch et al. (1994), who stated that consumers visit shopping malls for many reasons other than shopping, such as entertainment and socializing with family and friends. Excitement while shopping creates an overall pleasing environment while shopping. Shoppers felt happy while going to the mall because of its environment. The study by Terblanche (1999) further confirmed this finding by stating that entertainment, restaurants, food court, cinemas, socializing areas, promotional areas, children's play areas, and relaxation are a major component considered by shoppers in a shopping mall. Sit et al. (2003) attributed entertainment to an exciting shopping experience.

The Table 4 highlights the cumulative percentage variance explained by the factors under consideration.

Regression Analysis : The regression model has been employed to quantify the impact of these nine factors on customer perception in shopping malls. In order to measure the impact of the nine factors identified, the following model has been developed :

$$CP = \alpha + \beta_1 AA + \beta_2 P_I + \beta_3 HF + \beta_4 SC + \beta_5 E + \beta_6 PO + \beta_7 M + \beta_9 SE + \beta_9 EXC + \varepsilon \qquad (1)$$

where, CP is the Customer Perception, α is the constant, and β_1 to β_9 are the slopes associated with different independent variables which have emerged from factor analysis. The regression specifications have been depicted in the Table 5.

The results of the stepwise regression are depicted in the Table 5. It is evident from the table that factors like Enjoyment exert a significant impact on the satisfaction level of shoppers (t - stat of 6.194 with p - value of 0.000). Enjoyment commands a strong position in impacting the level of satisfaction of consumers to a considerable extent with t-stat of 8.317 and significance level of 0.000. These findings are supported by other research, which stated that recreational and entertainment facilities in malls influence consumer's buying behaviour (Klara, 1997 ;

Table 4. Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.865	20.223	20.223	5.865	20.223	20.223	3.325	11.466	11.466
2	2.910	10.034	30.257	2.910	10.034	30.257	2.912	10.040	21.506
3	2.395	8.258	38.516	2.395	8.258	38.516	2.649	9.133	30.639
4	2.313	7.976	46.491	2.313	7.976	46.491	2.596	8.951	39.590
5	1.711	5.901	52.393	1.711	5.901	52.393	2.482	8.558	48.147
6	1.540	5.310	57.703	1.540	5.310	57.703	1.828	6.304	54.451
7	1.322	4.558	62.261	1.322	4.558	62.261	1.790	6.172	60.623
8	1.320	4.552	66.813	1.320	4.552	66.813	1.511	5.209	65.832
9	1.141	3.935	70.748	1.141	3.935	70.748	1.426	4.916	70.748
10	.953	3.286	74.034						
11	.846	2.916	76.950						
12	.798	2.751	79.700						
13	.690	2.378	82.078						
14	.609	2.099	84.177						
15	.569	1.963	86.140						
16	.545	1.879	88.019						
17	.498	1.718	89.737						
18	.448	1.545	91.282						
19	.398	1.374	92.656						
20	.357	1.232	93.888						
21	.291	1.004	94.892						
22	.267	.920	95.812						
23	.247	.852	96.664						
24	.230	.794	97.457						
25	.193	.666	98.124						
26	.185	.638	98.762						
27	.149	.514	99.276						
28	.110	.380	99.656						
29	.100	.344	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Kasrel , 1998; Wakefield & Baker,1998) followed by Factor 6, Promotional Offers having *t* - stat value of 5.389 and significance level of 0.000. This is supported by the study of Chattopadhyaya and Sengupta (2006) who said that marketing activities and marketing strategies formulated by retailers attributed towards distinct positioning of the mall further resulted in increased customer patronage. Factor 3, Hedonic Factors and Factor 5, Stress Relieving variables show *t*-stat values of 3.854 and 3.353, respectively. This is supported by earlier research, which stated that shopping malls enable consumers to escape from their stressful daily routines (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993 ; Michon, Yu, Smith, & Chebat, 2008). The significance level of Hedonic Factors is 0.000 and that of Stress Relieving is 0.001. Research provides evidence that people shop for recreational and hedonic purposes (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994 ; Martineau,1958 ; Pessemier, 1980). The quality of shopping experience has an impact on

Table 5. Results of Stepwise Regressions Conducted on Various Combinations of Independent Variables

	(i)		(ii)		(iii)		(iv)		(v)	
Independent Variable	***t-stat***	***R^2***	***t-stat***	***R^2***	***t-stat***	***R^2***	***t-stat***	***R^2***	***t-stat***	***R^2***
Enjoyment	6.194	0.344	7.581	0.497	8.110	0.574	**8.317**	0.633	8.124	0.656
	0.000		0.000		0.000		**0.000**		(0.000)	
Promotional Offers			4.664		5.038		**5.389**		5.217	
			0.000		0.000		**0.000**		(0.001)	
Hedonic Factors					3.603		**3.854**		3.953	
					0.001		**0.000**		0.000	
Stress Relieving							**3.353**		3.439	
							0.001		0.001	
Excitement									2.151	
									0.035	

Note : All values are significant at the 1% level of significance.

the Hedonic Factors (Boedeker, 1995 ; Jarboe & McDaniel, 1987). Factor 9, Excitement shows a *t*-stat value of 2.151 and significance level of 0.035. The results show that five factors considered in the study collectively explain 65.6% of the variance in customer satisfaction.

A good mall in tier II and tier III city gives more options to residents, simultaneously allowing various brands to enter the city. It has been inferred from the research that mall attributes like Aesthetic Ambience, Physical Infrastructure, Hedonic Factors, Service and Convenience, Stress Relieving, Promotional Offers, Merchandize, and Shopping Enjoyment influenced the perception of shoppers. These results support the findings of other research on malls, which posited malls as a place for socializing, enjoyment, and spending time with family and friends. The store atmosphere comprises of affective (emotional or psychological) elements and cognitive elements (Babin & Attaway, 2000 ; De Nisco & Rosario Napolitano, 2006 ; Ghee & Ahmad, 2010 ; Jackson & Konell, 1993 ; Ooi & Sim, 2007).

Discussion and Conclusion

Rising income and changing consumer dynamics have significantly impacted purchasing habits of consumers in tier II and tier III cities. This has further changed the shopper's attitude towards shopping. We observe from our study that consumer's attitude towards malls is governed by factors such as Aesthetic Ambience, Physical Infrastructure, Hedonic Factors, Service and Convenience, Merchandize, and Promotional Offers. The focus of the study was to figure out the factors that impacted the perception of shoppers while shopping in malls in a tier II city like Jalandhar. The results of the research clearly indicate that consumers gave due weightage to Aesthetic Ambience, Physical Infrastructure, Hedonic Factors, Service and Convenience, Merchandize, and Promotional Offers while choosing which mall to visit. Customers visit a shopping mall for many reasons other than shopping. For them, shopping is a vital source of enjoyment, so they look for ease and efficiency. Shoppers look for a rich and immersive experience, rather than purchasing products only. This experience includes services, activities, and convenience that delight a consumer.

A study conducted by Reimers and Clulow (2009) established the value of convenience. Rishi and Singh (2012) examined various attributes of convenience in their study, that is, spatial convenience, temporal convenience, parking convenience, and shopping convenience. The stakeholders (developers and retailers) must very carefully

deal with these factors in order to encash the potential that lies ahead of them. Our findings are also in line with the study results obtained by Venkateswarulu and Uniyal (2007), who identified five factors that defined attractiveness of a shopping mall : Appeal and Convenience, Amenities and Atmospherics, Ambience, Personnel and Parking, and Seating.

Implications

The research was conducted in a tier II city in Punjab with the motive of unearthing the perceptions of small-town shoppers. An average shopper in a small city is more used to visiting and shopping at unorganized retail outlets. The upsurge in the number of malls in these cities is bound to change the lifestyle of the consumers. The magnetic effect of the malls, because of the classy ambience, variety of brands, and facilities lures the customers. Lifestyle of consumers in a tier II city is different from consumers in metropolitans because of the difference in income and other expenditures. However, the question here is : would they be willing to buy products from malls and what factors are perceived as important by them while visiting such places ?

Classy ambience is not the only most important factor that enhances the magnetism of a mall. Besides, retailers in malls and mall developers need to be thoughtful about the creative promotional strategies because the aim is not just to attract consumers, but also induce them to shop. The frequent discounts offered by malls make them an attractive destination for shoppers. Promotional strategies that are relevant to consumers bring more walk- ins to the retail outlets in the malls as consumers hold the perception that they get more value at a relatively lesser price. The investment in malls in tier II cities is inevitably going to change the shopping orientation of consumers.

The factors identified in this research would help the mall developers and retailers in formulating effective strategies for mall management and getting an insight into consumer behaviour in tier II and tier III cities. The developers and retailers must try to retain their customers by giving an enthralling mall visit to consumers to have a loyal clientele. For this, it is suggested that retailers and developers ought to go beyond the store atmospherics and focus on the merchandise and promotional efforts.

Consumers in metropolitan cities have a wider exposure to the quality and range of products. They also have more disposable income at hand, which enables them to spend money on luxurious facilities like multiplexes, branded products, and air-conditioned ambience in malls. All these factors need to be kept in mind while planning mall strategies for tier II and tier III cities.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

This study was conducted only in one city of Punjab. Further research can be carried out in other cities so as to get a clear picture of the perception and expectations of consumers regarding their shopping experience. Research can also be carried out with consumers from various age groups. A comparative study can also be carried out by focusing on digital shopping and mall shopping behaviour as consumers these days consider online shopping as a crucial part in their shopping journey. This would give a deeper insight to mall developers and retailers regarding the changing consumer dynamics and can help in improving mall planning decisions.

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About the Authors

Pooja Khanna is a Lecturer with Apeejay Institute of Management Technical Campus. She earned her MBA in Marketing in 2001. Her area of research is Retail Management, Shopping Malls, and Consumer Behaviour. Out of her 15 years of experience, she has more than 7 years of industrial experience in Operations and Sales Management and seven years of teaching experience. She has presented several papers and has attended national and international conferences.

Dr. Suresh Seth is Campus Director at Rayat Bahra Group of Institutes. He earned his MBA in Marketing and Finance in 1990. He completed his PhD in Business Administration in 2006. He has a meticulous experience of 27 years, with a blend of academic and industry. His major area of research has been Marketing and HR.