

# **INFLUENCE OF CONVENIENCE ON SATISFACTION AND VISIT FREQUENCY IN SHOPPING MALLS**

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**Abstract:** The present study was undertaken to assess customer satisfaction towards various convenience attribute of shopping malls and investigate its effect on visit frequency. The study was conducted in three malls of Udaipur city. A sample of 90 customers (30 from each mall) was selected for the present study. Questionnaire technique was used for data collection. Frequency, percentage, Mean Weighted Scores and chi-square test were used for analysis of data. Majority of the customers (77.77%) were satisfied with convenience in malls and spaciousness of malls, width of walking aisles/passages and location of stairs escalators and elevators were the most satisfying aspects of convenience. The relationship between visit frequency and satisfaction from convenience was found to be significant at 5 per cent level of significance.

**Keywords:** Mall, Customer Satisfaction, Convenience, Visit Frequency, Retailing.

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**Introduction:** Accounting for around 14-15 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), the Indian retail industry is estimated to be worth around USD 500 billion currently. Home to one of the top five retail markets in the world, India offers immense scope of growth and opportunities in this arena. As of now, almost 90 per cent of the Indian retail sector is controlled by tiny family-run shops i.e. the unorganised segment. Thus, organised retailers have a lot of room for further penetration in this flourishing economy. In 2010, larger format convenience stores and supermarkets accounted for about 4 per cent of the industry and these were present only in large urban centres. Now the trend is changing and such concepts are mushrooming in smaller cities and towns as well. Organised retail segment is expanding at 20 per cent a year, driven by the emergence of shopping centers and malls and the growing middle class. (Retail Sector Report, 2013)

From the very beginning retail has been playing a vital role in Indian economy by making goods and services available to the end customer, but in an unorganized manner. The scenario is changing with growth in organized sector, which contributes ~6 per cent to the total market. Entry of big players in this segment is making it even more lucrative. Moreover, the changing lifestyle, rising per capita income, increasing population and improvement in standard of living are major drivers for this robust growth. The retail industry customers have been segmented in different segments such as women, children, old age etc. and different ranges of customized goods and services are regularly introduced to cater each of them, which are making retail a popular proposition. (Dewan, 2010)

Shopping mall is a global phenomenon that has its roots in ancient outdoor bazaars where people would go to buy goods from local artisans, farmers and craftsmen. The shopping malls that we know today were birthed in the beginning of the 20th century and have since then grew to cover the major cities of the world in a few different forms. Not only has the shopping mall become a place to find and purchase goods, it is also known as a cultural hot spot where people of all ages can come to interact. The phenomenon called, Shopping Center or Mall is astounding Indian metros and now even the smaller towns are bustling with the mall mania. The malls have become a sensation in terms of changing the life style of Indians- the way they are shopping and socializing.

The shopping mall concept is a big hit with the sole purpose to provide everything under the sun below one roof or in one big complex. It also heralded in a new urbanization concept where everything was taken to the consumer in his comfort zone, suburbia. Customers state that malls, supermarkets and hypermarkets are well organized and that there are no quality issues, the range of choices and value-for-money deals make them happy, the ambience is good, there are better deals across categories with more choices and they get everything under one roof and they get good deals on bulk buying and at the same there is more variety (Sharma, 2012). With this transition taking place, the shopping behaviour of customers is likely to change as these formats were not in existence in the country until recently.

In this context, it assumes significance to study the buying behaviour of customers especially with changes taking place in India's retail scenario. The scope of this research was to assess the customer satisfaction towards convenience in malls and to investigate the relative effect of mall attributes on visit frequency at shopping malls.

**Research Methodology:** The study was conducted in Udaipur city of Rajasthan state. There are three shopping malls in Udaipur city namely RK Mall, Celebration Mall and Lake City Mall. All the three malls were visited to select the sample for data collection.

Customers were surveyed using 'Time location cluster sampling' technique. This was necessitated by the fact that most of the malls have different customer segments visiting at different times at different locations in the mall. The customers in shopping mall were intercepted randomly at different locations (multiplex, food court, departmental store, apparel store etc.) and different time of the day (such as morning, afternoon, evening) so as to include all types of customer segments. The customers thus intercepted were screened to select the regular customers i.e. those who have visited a shopping mall of Udaipur atleast five times in the past one year. After screening, the data was collected from the customers. A total of 90 customers comprised the sample for the study with 30 customers selected from each of the three malls. Questionnaire technique was used for getting information from customers. A structured questionnaire was constructed by the investigator based on the available literature. Frequency, percentage, Mean Weighted Scores and chi-square test were used for analysis of data.

**Results:** A comprehensive, attractive and well-functioning physical environment of the shopping malls can affect the level of customer satisfaction. Furthermore, issues, such as fewer parking spaces, dysfunctional CCTV, lack of proper signage, unattractive layout and lack of spacious passages will decrease the number of customers. According to Syuhaily (2008), most shopping malls do not take note of the environmental impact on the shopping behaviour of customers when, in reality, the facilities and services will contribute to the number of customers visiting the place. In addition, there are shopping mall owners who are unable to identify reasons why customers in a shopping mall became ordinary customers. This really involves the level of satisfaction reached in a shopping mall, which makes it difficult for the customer to leave the place. This demonstrates the nature of "loyalty" in shopping mall customers. Therefore, in order to see the relationship between service and satisfaction, the factor of convenience is important in understanding the behaviour of retail industry customers. Convenience as an attribute includes location of the mall, modes of transportation, traffic congestion around mall, layout of the mall, ease in locating a store, space to move around in the mall, width of passages and aisles, comfortable sitting areas and location of stairs, escalators and elevators.

Table 1 depicts the satisfaction with various aspects of convenience. Maximum of the respondents agreed that the mall was spacious and easy to move around (MWS=4.06), followed by the statement that the walking aisles and passages were wide enough to prevent congestion (MWS= 4.02). Maximum respondents also felt that the area around the mall was congested and this caused a lot of inconvenience to them (MWS=2.82).

**Table 1:** Aspects of Convenience

S. No.	CONVENIENCE	MWS
	The location of the mall is convenient to me	3.55
	There are a number of modes of transportation available to reach the mall	3.51
	The area around the mall is mostly free from traffic congestion	2.82
	The layout of the mall is consumer friendly.	3.51
	It is easy to locate a store in the mall	3.64
	The entrance and exits of the mall are hassle free.	3.74
	<b>The mall is spacious and easy to move around</b>	<b>4.06</b>
	<b>The walking aisles/passages are wide enough to prevent congestion</b>	<b>4.02</b>
	<b>The location of stairs, escalators and elevators is appropriate</b>	<b>3.80</b>
	The mall has comfortable chairs/resting lounges	2.95

Table 2 depicts the distribution of respondents on their satisfaction level with convenience. Majority of the respondents (68.89%) were satisfied and 8.89 per cent were extremely satisfied whereas none were extremely dissatisfied.

**Table 2:** Satisfaction Level with Convenience

CONVENIENCE		
S. No.	Level of Satisfaction	Frequency (%)
1.	Extremely satisfied	8(8.89)
2.	Satisfied	62(68.89)
3.	Dissatisfied	20(22.22)
4.	Extremely dissatisfied	0(0.00)

It is clear from Table 3 that maximum percentage (41.11%) of respondents satisfied with convenience visited the mall more than once a month, whereas only 5.55 per cent dissatisfied respondents visited more than once a month. The association between satisfaction from convenience and visit frequency was found to be significant at 5 per cent level of significance. This shows that convenience in shopping and reaching the mall, particularly location of the mall, influences the visit frequency to a large extent. Anselmsson (2006) found that while the proximity of a mall had little impact on customer satisfaction, it was the major determinant of visit frequency

**Table 3:** Association of Convenience with Visit Frequency

Convenience			
Satisfaction level Visit frequency	Dissatisfied f (%)	Satisfied f (%)	$\chi^2$ -value
More than once a month	5 (5.55)	37 (41.11)	4.850*
Once a month or less	15 (16.67)	33 (36.67)	
*Significant at 5% level of significance			

Shopping is an essential and everyday activity (Ng, 2003). Recently, it has become very important to the public as a service for daily necessities and so on. According to Alexander and Muchlebach (1992), the management of shopping centres is planned and developed with two main purposes, which are intended to provide an optimal retail environment for retailers and to meet customer needs. This means that good management can increase the amount of rental space by the retailers as well as visitors, thus providing a good image for the shopping mall. Chebat *et al.* (2010) states that the quality of a shopping mall can be measured from the customer's perception and that the customer's view is important in improving the shopping mall. Therefore, to ensure that the objective of a shopping mall is achieved, the provision of services and facilities which provide convenience should be enhanced.

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