
A Paradigm of Traditional Market Culture and Mall Culture- A Perceptual Study

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Abstract: *Introduction of malls has not been able to replace traditional markets, which are still popular among the pocket conscious people, but has definitely added a new adventure to the shopping experience. The retail sector will see over 34 million sq ft of shopping centre space by the year end, said the report on shopping centre development in India. 'To the present generation, shopping means much more than a mere necessity and malls are now fast becoming image benchmarks for communities.' Malls in India frequently open up with great fanfare; the glitzy stores, the 'deals' and the simple desire to spend some time in attractive (think novelties such as transparent lifts and escalators), climate controlled environs means that there is sufficient footfall to begin with. At the most, 20 percent malls delivering on the customer and financial counts, one can clearly say that the mall revolution has not been a grand success in India. Keeping the above observation, this paper attempts to focus on the evolution of mall culture in the research area (Mangalore City – Coastal District of Karnataka State) and focus will be on to study the new paradigm of 'Mall Culture' and about the evolution & negative trend of Mall Culture*

Key Words: *Mall Culture, Traditional Market, Business, Survival etc.*

1 Background

The skyline is filled with boxes built of mirrored windows, skeletons of new malls and billboards promising a better life for the country's modern maharajas. Shop at Tommy Hilfiger and eat at Pizza Hut. The toilets flush automatically, The floors are spotless. "There's a new culture coming now," said Pawan Sharma, sitting at McDonald in Globus Mall, which opened last year. "The Western culture, the mall culture is coming. This is not really the traditional India."

This is closer to the opposite of India. In this country, people traditionally shop at local markets, where vegetables are sold in one tiny shop and milk in another. Shoppers go from one store to the next, buying flowers here, chicken there. They bargain for better deals. The markets often are filthy, littered with garbage. But the malls offer everything under one roof, even stores such as Big Bazaar, a smaller, more chaotic version of Wal-Mart are out of fashion now. There is central air conditioning, a novelty here. Signs tell people how to ride the escalators, still new to India. Songs of different varieties and Radiohead blare over mall loudspeakers. People speak to each other and also with the sales personnels in English instead of local language.

2 Conceptual Framework

“To the present generation, shopping means much more than a mere necessity and malls are now fast becoming image benchmarks for communities.” Shopping orientations are related to general predisposition toward acts of shopping. They are conceptualized as a specific dimension of lifestyle and operationalized on the basis of activities, interests and opinion statements pertaining to acts of shopping. Malls in India frequently open up with great fanfare; the glitzy stores, the ‘deals’ and the simple desire to spend some time in attractive (think novelties such as transparent lifts and escalators), climate controlled environs means that there is sufficient footfall to begin with. In view of this, related terminologies have been highlighted below:

A shopping mall, shopping center, shopping arcade, shopping precinct, or simply mall is one or more buildings forming a complex of shops representing merchandisers, with interconnecting walkways enabling visitors to walk from unit to unit, along with a parking area – a modern, indoor version of the traditional marketplaces.

The concept of a mall having one or more ‘anchor stores’ or ‘big box stores’ was pioneered early with individual stores or smaller-scale chain stores intended to benefit from the shoppers attracted by the big stores.

2.1 Why People in India Come to a Mall?

Based on interaction with people who visits Big Bazaar, City Centre and Easy Day especially in Mangalore, we find out that for different age groups, there are different reasons to come to mall. Here are some of the reasons in descending order of popularity:

05-14: For toys which some shops offer, some because their friends goes there, or they saw a TV ad

14-20: To see some good looking opposite sex, Chill out, time pass or to show off

20-45: Shopping, Dinner, movie or Kids force them

45-above: Kids force them, Shopping, Hell with malls or when having no work.....

3 New Paradigm of Mall Culture in Mangalore

Mall culture has become big business, as shopping malls have evolved into multi-storied structures housing a large number of stores that sell diverse products and services. Shopping malls house a collection of retail stores and restaurants. The shopping scene in Mangalore has taken a 360 degree turn. What people avoided because of lack of choice earlier has today become an experience to enjoy. Thanks to the new malls that have swept the city by storm. Everyone wants to be part of this new 'happening' experience. Retailers and mall owners too have left no stone unturned in wooing customers. Mangalore, as a shopping destination, has made great progress in the last few years. The emergence of malls has changed the face of the city and gives us a glimpse of the cosmopolitan lifestyle that is slowly creeping in. A few years ago shopping meant Hampankatta (Heart of Mangalore city, where most of the business houses are located) and a few other stores around the city. But today the mall seems to be the one-stop for every shopping enthusiast.

'Brands' being the new mantra, customers have a choice of many big names in the consumer world. Brands like Nike, Reebok, Pepe, Adidas, Levi's, Pantaloon and Fabindia which were available only in bigger cities have now paved their way into Mangalore. The time has gone when we requested our friends and relatives abroad to bring us trendy clothing, accessories or even chocolates. Today almost everything is available here.

Home makers no longer do their grocery shopping at local or fair price shops but at super markets like Food Bazaar and Nilgiris. There are lifestyle stores like Big Bazaar and Pantaloon that cater to both the young and the old. Exclusive stores for furniture, jewellery, books, sportswear or even music are some of the reasons many throng these places. Escalators in these malls never fail to amuse children.

Youngsters have gaming zones for entertainment. Bowling is the new craze today. The sport has made a very good comeback after the failure of Megabowl a few years ago. This time it is Amoeba at the Empire Mall and the city has welcomed it with arms wide open. The Adlabs Multiplexes too have become a big hit among movie buffs. Old theatres are taking a back seat. No more standing in long queues because online booking is in.

Café outlets like Coffee Day in the city made a few bucks only on weekends but today with new outlets in Bharat and Empire Mall, they are packed almost throughout the week. The same goes with the other restaurants like Yo! China and food courts at malls. Students or even the average middle class families do not mind spending a little more to get an experience of a ‘happening’ restaurant. Pizzas from Pizza Hut or Pizza Corner are no more a delicacy for children but a regular meal.

The rapid change in the spending patterns of Mangaloreans indicates the huge growth in the city’s economy. With the IT industry taking over, changes in lifestyle are just round the corner.

Malls are not only about shopping. They are more of a hangout today. In the past, Saibeen Complex was the only place one could see youngsters on weekends. Mangalore would come to a standstill on Sundays. But that’s history. Hanging out with a cup of hot corn has becoming a daily affair. Gelatos have taken the place of ice creams and even though they cost almost five times more, people do not mind trying them out. Gelatos are Italian ice creams that come in a variety of flavours and are available at Bharat Mall.

Another new experience for the people is the shopping carnivals. It is the first time that Mangalore has experienced such festivity while shopping. The Empire Mall carnival has drawn huge numbers this year. Tattoos, magic shows, art exhibitions, singing and dance competitions, war of the DJ’s, ice cream eating competition, cooking competition, exclusive events for women apart from being novel ideas at malls have been great crowd pullers.

Gone are the days when people went to other cities for shopping and entertainment. Today Mangalore has joined the race to become a metropolitan city. Mangaloreans are spending more time outdoors and indulging in various new experiences. With investments high and money flowing in, the mall culture has creped in and is here to stay, leaving shopping redefined.

4 Evolution of Mall culture in Mangalore

The mall culture in Mangalore was evident since many years. The stages of evolution of mall culture are highlighted in the following paragraphs:

4.1 Saibeen Complex: The glimpse of mall culture was very much visible soon after the establishment of Saibeen Complex, a big commercial complex housing many retail shops and one super market by name 'Zufri' Super Market'. It was the only place one could see youngsters on weekends. It would be called as Mall because it has some of the basic features of mall like children play area, game zone, food joints, space for new product launch and also providing promotional space for exhibiting art , antique furnitures etc. But it was not fullfledged mall.

4.2 Super Markets: Then the trend of super markets started with the opening of outlets like 'More' by 'Adithya Birla Group, Nilgiris' by Mohtisham have been successful to a certain extent. These are no doubt a joint where people get many items under the same roof but not covering all the features of a mall. This is also a new kind of trend setter towards mall culture.

4.3 Empire Mall: The emergence of Empire Mall is mainly due to the limitations of Saibeen Complex and Super Markets. The empire mall was started with a bang and it shook the entire Mangalore with new brands, very spacious food court, centralised air conditioning system, escalators, lift facilities, walk ways, parking facilities and huge space for product launch. In other words, it is combination of supermarket, branded products showrooms, international standard restaurants, food courts, game zone etc.

4.4 Bharat Mall: The success of Empire Mall has led to the emergence of big version of Empire Mall in the form of Bharat Mall. This Bharat Mall is managed by Future Group. The value addition in the Bharat Mall consist of Multiplex theatre, Big Bazaar, Food Bazaar, Electronic Bazaar, Furniture Bazaar, Pantaloons, Provogue, Book Mark, coffee day joint, Pizza Hut, and free parking area. Moreover, floor space is much greater than Empire mall which an added features of a mall.

4.5 Easy Day and Hyper Market: The success of the concept of Big Bazaar has led to the surfacing of Easy day and Hyper market. These were had little advantage of accessibility to the people when compared to Bharat Mall but not upto the mark as it remained just another big shopping complex.

4.6 City Centre: When people of Mangalore were thronging into these type of malls with great enthusiasm, people in the corporate world thought of bringing up new joint of international standard. So, City Centre with great fanfare started to woo the people of Mangalore with almost all the features of a mall of international repute. The value addition in this mall includes the opening of some international brands like Max, Westside, Citizen Watches, and Lifestyle. The credit of opening asia's famous hyper market by name 'SPAR' / 'Auchen', 'KFC' outlet and 'kobe' goes to City Centre. The famous brand outlet like 'Reliance' on a huge scale has been opened in this mall with a bang. Moreover, the mall has facilitated 'Two way Escalators', spacious lift facility and walkways. The unique concept of this mall is to celebrate 'Indian and Local Festivals' with pomp and show to attract all types of customers. There is also 'Week End Dhamaka' with good offers which have been appreciated by the people. The structure wise look and five floors parking has been an added advantage when compared to Bharat Mall and Empire Mall.

4.7 Capita Malls Asia: This Mall is, now, the talk of the town. It is also called as 'Forum Fiza Mall'. This is one of the largest listed shopping mall developers in Asia. This is really giving other malls run for their money as this happens to be a new concept in the mall culture as it occupies larger space than other malls so far in the vicinity.

5 Mangalore: Towards Negative Trends of Mall Culture

The inevitable has started to happen. The mall culture in Mangalore has started showing a negative trend. In the recent months the people visiting the malls was declining in numbers and shopkeepers there are feeling the pinch. All this, even while the city has already witnessed the largest mall in South India promoted by Mohtisham, named City Centre.

There is perhaps no medium sized city which does not have a Mall of its own and it is common for the young minds to throng to those places and spend time with their friends and cousins in the sterling interiors of a Mall. It is 'groovy and fundoo' to be in there and spending some 'quality time'.

Malls are truly fun, a number of shops in assorted themes, a chain of eateries right from a common Chaat shop to the international Pizza chain which survive side by side. Even the common Sugar cane juice vendor has a cane churning machine that looks like large size photocopier. The pristine

interiors, fully air-conditioned, brightly lit and many more attributes could be found in the modern Malls to the liking of the youngsters.

The aroma from the popcorn stall fills the air and you run to grab a carton but the prohibitive cost shocks you. It is at least 10 times costlier than the ones you get in the corner shop or in the city fairs. The common cane juice costs three times more and assorted candies come at a premium price and nothing less than Rs. 100 per fifty grams.

Among the city nucleus families, it has become a common practice to visit a mall on Sundays with one agenda 'everybody for himself'. The lady of the house goes shopping with a cart, the teenage girl goes into the large super market or boutiques and loses herself to the family for the next three hours, the teenager boy either vanishes into one of the multiplexes or into the game arcade, their pop has other things on his mind as he strolls down into a tavern and spends time 'guzzling down' and watching cricket match that is played at the other end of the world. Is this what family outing has come to be?

Despite all these social aberrations the malls have made their mark, but things are not like before. People have found out that going to Malls have become the biggest drain in their family income and parents and peers are dissuading the youngsters from going to the malls.

The people who have burnt holes in their pockets say that a family outing into the Malls cost them dearly, each outing may cost nothing less than Rs. 3000, each ticket in the multiplex costs not less than Rs. 150, carton of popcorn and a 200 ml tumbler of coke costs nothing less than Rs. 65, a piece of pastry costs a whopping Rs.50-60 and the list goes on and only up.

Conclusion

The Mall culture in Mangalore in particular and India in general looks very artificial and gives sense of false prestige and affluence and young minds can be influenced easily. But the true world was is outside, the crowded city buses, the bills to pay, failing power, limited domestic water, loads of homework to do, help parents with household chores, ironing, washing, gardening and many more.

Drawing a line between the artificial environment and the realities need to be shown to the youngsters which has to be done by their peers, teachers

and parents so that their youngsters do not lose sight of the reality in the melee of finding pleasures of the Malls. Introduction of malls has not been able to replace traditional markets, which are still popular among the pocket conscious people, but mall culture has definitely added a new adventure to the shopping experience.

Moreover, the conclusion can be drawn looking at the crowd movement in malls and how far the impact of mall culture on the people but definitely nobody can defend the following.....

“BIG BAZAAR becoming small bazaar, MORE becoming less and EASY DAYS becoming difficult days and even closing down of Easy days outlet”.

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