



SIGNIFICANCE VALUE OF BRANDING SHOPPING MALLS

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ABSTRACT

India's organized retail industry is gaining significant attention as one of the most attractive emerging markets globally. Shopping malls, as a prominent component of the urban lifestyle, have witnessed substantial growth and have become key destinations for shopping and entertainment. This study aims to explore the latest trends in Indian malls, factors influencing customer preferences, the importance of mall branding, challenges faced by mall managers, and strategies for enhancing the customer experience. By analysing the identified mall attributes, this research provides insights into the key factors that influence customers' mall preferences and proposes a retail marketing strategy to cultivate shopper loyalty. The study emphasizes the significance of staying top of mind and the role of effective branding in dominating the market, attracting desirable tenants, and ensuring long-term survival and profitability of shopping malls.

KEYWORDS: *Shopping mall, Brand Loyalty, Customer Preference, Organized Retail, Retail Strategy*

INTRODUCTION

The retail sector in India is undergoing a transformation, with traditional markets being replaced by modern formats such as departmental stores, supermarkets, hypermarkets, specialty stores, and shopping malls. Western-style malls have gained popularity in metros and Tier-2 cities, offering consumers an unprecedented shopping experience. The retail landscape is evolving rapidly, with currently 271 malls spread over 92.9 million sq. ft along with a projected increase in the number of shopping malls to 500 by the end of 2025. The growing middle class and untapped retail potential in India have attracted global retail giants, contributing to the sector's rapid growth. This study explores the significance of shopping malls in the Indian retail industry and their potential for economic prosperity. The focus is on understanding the latest trends, consumer preferences, and strategies for mall success.

Significance of the Study and Research Problem Identification
India's retail growth rate positions it as a key market for global retailers. The rising consumer spending power, particularly among the young population, and increased disposable income are driving the growth of organized retail. Even Tier I and Tier II cities have become attractive markets for retailers due to changing consumer preferences and lifestyles. However, in markets like Mumbai, where quality shops are abundant, shopping mall developers face challenges and need innovative strategies to seize untapped opportunities. This study aims to identify effective strategies for the success of shopping malls in India.

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To study and Propose strategies for branding malls and fostering customer loyalty.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Sampling Design: Purposive sampling technique was employed.

Data Collection: Data was collected using secondary data collection methods. Secondary data comprised information from newspapers, industry journals, and online sources about five main malls in Mumbai – In-orbit shopping mall, Oberoi Mall, Hub Mall, Central Mall, and Growls 101.

Retail Marketing Strategies for Branding the Mall and Creating Shopping Mall Loyalty

According to the findings of the study, modern retail offers a wide range of products and a superior shopping experience, while kirana shops benefit from their low-cost structure, convenient locations, and close customer relationships. Organized retailers have an added advantage due to their store image, variety of product availability, and discounts/offers (Chandramana, Sudeep B, 2015).

Based on this study, a retail marketing strategy is proposed for mall operators and managers to build their brand and foster shopper loyalty, ensuring repeat and dedicated patronage. With the increasing number of malls in Mumbai, it is crucial for mall operators to establish a strong brand identity that sets them apart from the numerous choices available to shoppers.

Mall managers can develop marketing strategies with three primary objectives: attracting shoppers to the malls, encouraging purchases, and influencing buying decisions, and motivating customers for repeat purchases within the same product categories. The significant attributes of shopping malls identified through factor analysis can contribute to building shopping mall loyalty and assist in designing the appropriate retail mix.



Retail Marketing Mix for shopping malls.

Kotler et al. (2013) emphasize the significance of the marketing mix in modern marketing theory. The important elements of the retail marketing mix for shopping malls, as identified in the study, are:

1. **One-stop store:** This includes merchandising, the physical environment of the mall, salesperson behaviour, guarantees, and loyalty programs.
2. **Convenience:** This encompasses the location advantage, parking facilities, security measures, and shopping time.
3. **Value:** Focuses on providing value for money, utility-oriented offerings, and credit facilities.
4. **Entertainment:** Includes features such as multiplexes, food courts, game zones, and organizing festival programs.
5. **Specialty:** Involves the presence of diverse stores, a comprehensive department store, availability of well-known brands, and anchor stores.

Retail marketing strategies for branding the mall and creating shopping mall loyalty

Modern retail offers product width and depth and a better shopping experience whereas the *kirana* shops have a low-cost structure, convenient location, and customer intimacy. The organized retailers are also having a greater advantage because of the store image, variety of product availability, and discounts and offers (Chandramana, Sudeep B, 2015).

Based on the present study, a retail marketing strategy has been proposed for mall operators and managers. The marketing strategy is devised to build the brand and create shoppers' loyalty, in order to ensure repeat and dedicated patronage. With more and more Malls being opened in Mumbai, it becomes imperative for Mall operators to build a strong brand to get distinguished among the many choices that shoppers have.

Mall managers' marketing strategies could be formulated considering three major objectives of attracting shoppers to shopping malls, encouraging them to buy, spend and influence the type and quantity of items, motivating them for further purchases, specifically for repeat purchases in the same product categories. The important shopping mall attributes identified from the factor analysis, could build shopping mall loyalty, and could be used for designing the right retail mix.

Proposed Mall Format: Considering the elements of the retail marketing mix, which are the shopping mall attributes identified above, strategies have been formulated for each of these attributes as explained in the following section.

One-Stop Store Strategy

The proposed one-stop store strategy for the mall aims to provide a place where customers can make routine purchases while comfortably spending quality time with their families in a climate-controlled environment under one roof. The interior and exterior design of the mall, basic amenities, and overall ambience play a motivating role in encouraging customers to spend more time and feel comfortable and stress-free.

1. **Enhancing Customer Experience:** The proposed one-stop store strategy focuses on creating an environment that encourages customers to spend more time in the mall. By offering a comfortable, climate-controlled space where families can shop together, malls can become a destination for both routine purchases and leisure activities.
2. **Interior and Exterior Design:** The interior and exterior design of the mall plays a pivotal role in attracting and retaining customers. Attention should be given to creating an appealing ambience, incorporating modern aesthetics, and ensuring a seamless flow throughout the mall. Thoughtful placement of stores, amenities, and seating areas can enhance convenience and promote exploration.
3. **Basic Amenities and Ambience:** Basic amenities such as clean restrooms, ample parking spaces, and well-maintained common areas contribute significantly to the overall customer experience. Creating a stress-free environment through proper ventilation, lighting, and noise control is crucial in providing a pleasant shopping atmosphere.
4. **Handling Defective or Damaged Goods**
 - i. **Fast and Hassle-Free Response:** To address issues with defective or damaged goods, an efficient response strategy is essential. Malls should aim to provide a seamless experience to customers by promptly resolving any product-related concerns. Implementing a "no questions asked" policy for returns or replacements can help build trust and ensure customer satisfaction.
 - ii. **Nationwide Return and Exchange Policy:** For mall chains, offering customers the option to return or exchange items at any store across the country can be a valuable differentiating service. This approach provides convenience and flexibility to customers who may have made purchases at different locations.

Convenience Strategy

1. **Customer Feedback and Analysis:** Regularly collect customer feedback to understand their needs, preferences, and pain points. Analyze this data to identify areas where convenience can be enhanced, such as parking facilities, store layouts, or amenities. Use customer insights to drive improvements and make informed decisions.
2. **Optimized Parking Solutions:** Continuously evaluate parking capacity and explore innovative solutions to maximize space utilization. Consider implementing technologies like automated parking systems or real-time parking availability indicators to help visitors easily locate parking spots. Offer valet parking services for added convenience.
3. **Seamless Navigation and Signage:** Improve wayfinding within the mall by implementing clear and intuitive signage. Ensure that maps and directories are strategically placed to guide visitors. Use digital signage or mobile apps to provide real-time store



information, promotions, and directions to enhance the overall shopping experience.

4. **Efficient Store Layout and Zoning:** Optimize the store layout to provide a logical and intuitive shopping flow. Group similar stores or complementary product categories together for easy navigation. Ensure that stores are adequately spaced and organized, allowing sufficient room for visitors to move comfortably.
5. **Streamlined Maintenance Activities:** Coordinate maintenance activities during non-peak hours to minimize disruptions. Use clear signage and temporary barriers to guide customers away from maintenance areas. Communicate with tenants and update them on maintenance schedules in advance to minimize inconvenience.
6. **Enhanced Digital Presence:** Develop a user-friendly and informative website or mobile app for the mall. Provide features like store directories, real-time promotions, and events calendars. Enable online shopping options for select stores within the mall and offer convenient click-and-collect or home delivery services.
7. **Personalized Customer Experiences:** Leverage technology to provide personalized shopping experiences. Implement loyalty programs or digital platforms that track customer preferences and offer tailored recommendations. Send personalized offers and promotions based on customer shopping history and interests.
8. **Collaborations and Community Engagement:** Partner with local businesses, cultural organizations, or community groups to host events, workshops, or exhibitions within the mall. Foster a sense of community and offer unique experiences that go beyond traditional shopping. Engage with customers through social media platforms to create a dialogue and build brand loyalty.
9. **Proactive Customer Service:** Train and empower staff to provide exceptional customer service. Encourage a customer-centric approach, where staff members actively assist visitors, answer queries, and provide guidance. Implement customer service stations or information desks throughout the mall for quick assistance.
10. **Continuous Improvement and Innovation:** Regularly evaluate and upgrade convenience strategies based on changing customer expectations and market trends. Stay updated with emerging technologies and industry best practices to continually enhance the mall experience. Encourage a culture of innovation and experimentation to drive continuous improvement.

By implementing these suggestions, malls in Mumbai can effectively manage and improve their convenience strategies, providing a seamless and enjoyable experience for their visitors.

Value Strategy

1. **Price Optimization:** Regularly assess pricing strategies to ensure competitive pricing without

compromising profitability. Conduct market research to understand pricing trends and customer expectations. Consider implementing dynamic pricing techniques, promotional offers, and loyalty programs to provide value to customers.

2. **Diverse Store Mix:** Curate a diverse mix of stores that cater to a wide range of customer preferences and budgets. Ensure a good balance between high-end brands, mid-range options, and value-focused stores. Continuously evaluate the store mix and introduce new brands or concepts to keep the offerings fresh and appealing.
3. **Specialized Value Sections:** Create dedicated sections within the mall that offer value-focused options. This could include discounted or outlet stores, clearance sections, or affordable dining areas. Highlight these sections through effective signage and marketing campaigns to attract value-conscious shoppers.
4. **Collaboration with Local Brands:** Partner with local brands or artisans to showcase unique and affordable products. Promote local craftsmanship and entrepreneurship within the mall to provide a distinct value proposition. Encourage pop-up shops or limited-time collaborations to generate excitement and variety.
5. **Value-Oriented Events and Promotions:** Organize events and promotions that emphasize value for customers. This could include seasonal sales, exclusive discounts, flash sales, or reward programs. Collaborate with brands to offer exclusive deals or limited-time offers that are only available within the mall.
6. **Customer Education and Engagement:** Educate customers about the value they receive from shopping at the mall. Highlight the quality, durability, and long-term benefits of products available in the mall. Provide informative content through digital platforms, such as blogs or social media, to help customers make informed purchasing decisions.
7. **Customer Feedback and Satisfaction:** Regularly seek customer feedback to understand their perception of value. Use this feedback to identify areas for improvement and address any issues promptly. Continuously monitor customer satisfaction levels and take proactive measures to enhance the value proposition.
8. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Establish partnerships with service providers or brands that offer additional value to customers. This could include tie-ups with transportation companies for discounted rides, collaborations with entertainment venues for bundled offers, or partnerships with fitness centers for exclusive membership deals.
9. **Value-Added Services:** Offer value-added services to enhance the overall shopping experience. This could include amenities like free Wi-Fi, charging stations, comfortable seating areas, or concierge services. Ensure these services are well-communicated and easily accessible to customers.



10. **Emphasize Quality and Customer Service:** Focus on providing high-quality products and excellent customer service. Train staff to be knowledgeable, helpful, and responsive to customer needs. Ensure a seamless and hassle-free shopping experience that exceeds customer expectations.

By implementing these suggestions, malls in Mumbai can effectively manage and improve their value strategies, attracting value-conscious customers and creating a positive perception of the mall as a destination for affordable yet high-quality shopping experiences.

Entertainment Strategy

1. **Diverse Entertainment Options:** Offer a diverse range of entertainment options to cater to different interests and age groups. This can include indoor amusement parks, gaming zones, cinema theaters, live performances, interactive exhibits, or cultural events. Continuously assess the popularity and relevance of existing entertainment offerings and introduce new and exciting experiences.
2. **Collaborations with Entertainment Brands:** Partner with popular entertainment brands, such as movie production houses, theater groups, or music labels, to bring exclusive shows, premieres, or live performances to the mall. Collaborate with local artists, performers, or bands to showcase their talent and promote the local arts scene.
3. **Regular Events and Promotions:** Organize regular events and promotions that revolve around entertainment themes. This could include hosting music festivals, fashion shows, art exhibitions, or seasonal celebrations. Create a calendar of events to keep visitors informed and engaged, and leverage digital platforms for event promotion and ticketing.
4. **Interactive Experiences:** Create interactive experiences within the mall that engage and entertain visitors. This can include virtual reality gaming zones, interactive installations, or experiential zones where visitors can try new activities or learn something new. Encourage visitor participation and provide memorable experiences that keep them coming back.
5. **Family-Friendly Activities:** Develop entertainment offerings that cater to families and children. This can include indoor play areas, kids' entertainment zones, storytelling sessions, or workshops. Create a safe and enjoyable environment for families, and consider offering family-oriented packages or discounts to encourage repeat visits.
6. **Cinema Experience Enhancements:** Enhance the cinema experience by offering premium formats such as IMAX or 4D screenings. Introduce luxury seating options, in-seat dining, or dedicated VIP lounges. Collaborate with movie distributors to host exclusive premieres or special screenings.
7. **Digital Engagement:** Leverage digital technologies to enhance the entertainment experience. Offer interactive mobile apps or digital platforms that provide information, ticket bookings, and personalized recommendations. Utilize social media platforms to

engage with customers, promote events, and create online communities around entertainment offerings.

8. **Food and Entertainment Fusion:** Integrate entertainment experiences with food and dining options. This can include themed restaurants with live performances, food festivals, or pop-up food stalls during events. Create a vibrant and lively dining atmosphere that complements the entertainment offerings.
9. **Feedback and Performance Analysis:** Gather feedback from visitors regarding the entertainment experiences and regularly assess performance metrics. Monitor attendance, ticket sales, customer reviews, and engagement levels to evaluate the success of entertainment offerings. Use this data to make data-driven decisions and improve future experiences.
10. **Continuous Innovation:** Stay updated with emerging entertainment trends and technologies. Explore opportunities to incorporate innovative experiences such as augmented reality, interactive displays, or immersive technologies. Foster a culture of creativity and experimentation to continually surprise and engage visitors.

By implementing these suggestions, malls in Mumbai can effectively manage and improve their entertainment strategies, providing engaging and memorable experiences that attract visitors and position the mall as a vibrant entertainment destination.

Specialty Strategy Based on the mall's brand positioning and image among the public, it should have a well-curated mix of national and global brands along with private labels. The mall should feature a full department store as well as different stores offering specialty product categories. Careful selection of stores can help the mall build a unique position and become the preferred choice for shoppers amid intense competition.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research highlights the importance of brand building for shopping malls in Mumbai. The objective of creating a unique brand image that sets a mall apart from its competitors is crucial in a city with a multitude of purchasing options. By focusing on attributes such as the one-stop store concept, value, convenience, entertainment, and specialty offerings, malls can effectively position themselves in the market and communicate their brand identity to customers. The research emphasizes the significance of understanding emerging trends through internal data analysis and customer feedback. By identifying and adapting to these trends, malls can formulate marketing strategies that cater to evolving customer preferences and expectations. These strategies should be designed to enhance the shopping experience, making visits more enjoyable and meaningful for customers, ultimately fostering increased customer loyalty. Furthermore, the research highlights the role of mall managers and retail shops within the mall in designing and delivering effective customer loyalty strategies. By aligning their efforts with the identified brand attributes, mall managers and retailers can work together to promote the mall and its retail shops, providing superior sales opportunities and attracting desirable tenants. This collaborative approach contributes to customer satisfaction and



ultimately leads to higher returns for investors. In the dynamic market of Mumbai, where competition is fierce, building a strong brand presence is essential for the long-term survival of a shopping mall. A well-branded mall can dominate the market, maintain top-of-mind awareness among consumers, and secure a loyal customer base. By consistently delivering a superior shopping experience and meeting the evolving needs of customers, a well-branded mall can position itself as a preferred destination and achieve sustainable success in the retail industry.

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