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**BUYER'S BEHAVIOR IN ORGANIZED RETAIL: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Assessing shopper's behavior in retailing scenario in India is of a subject of great relevance for present Indian Retail Industry. The growing need for evaluating drivers of retail shopping behavior forms a subject for research and analysis as the retailing environment is continuously changing. Shopper expectations and choices are the pivotal change elements. It is pertinent for Indian retailers to understand this aspect which leads a customer towards evaluation of store attributes based on their shopping motives. Taking cue from these evaluations, retailers would realign relevant marketing strategies to bring customers to their stores. A methodology based on the framework using a qualitative and quantitative framework was incorporated to study the phenomenon. The construct consisted of Retail Merchandize, Shopping Convenience, Atmospherics, Retail Communication, Utilitarian, Socialization and Gratification dimensions. A cross section of shoppers was intercepted in major north Indian cities to respond to these. Findings on Utilitarian, Socialization, Atmospherics, Retail Merchandize, Gratification dimensions towards shopping motives were obtained which emerged as factors driving Retail Shopping in India.*

**KEYWORDS**

Shopper's Behavior, Retailing, Store Attributes, Shopping Motives.

**INTRODUCTION**

Retailers operate in a competitive environment facing changes in customer needs, demographics, and types of retailing, technology and retail ownership. In such an environment the understanding and prediction of buyers behavior is of great importance. Now a days customer wants more than product quality and variety, that is a combination of multiattributes that creates favorable retailer and store image. As a result it is important for Retail managers to determine factors affecting buyer's behavior.

In order to understand the factors affecting buyer behavior in retailing scenario, various store image attributes were explored which were considered by the customer as important. The customer buying behavior is affected by the physical environment of the store, the various procedures they have to follow, the moment of contact with the personnel's and the core offer of the retailer i.e. product variety, assortment, quality and pricing policy (Morschett et al. 2005). This evaluation of the total retailers offer in the customer mind is defined by Martineau (1958) as "Store Image".

**LITERATURE REVIEW OF STORE IMAGE AND SHOPPING MOTIVATION**

Lindquist (1974/1975) synthesized store attributes into nine dimensions: merchandising, service, clientele, physical facilities, convenience, promotion, store atmosphere, institutional factors and past transactions. Among these, product-related considerations (e.g. assortment, quality and price) appeared to be the most critical dimensions, while Ghosh (1990) introduced eight elements: location; merchandize; store atmosphere; customer services; price; advertising; personal selling; sales incentive programs. In 1994 Bloch et.al examined the effect of mall physical environment on consumers' emotional states and found that malls were viewed by consumers as a place not only for shopping, but also for other activities, such as entertainment.

Thus, Store attributes can be defined as the "summation of all attributes of (Baker, Donovan, 1994) product assortment (Grewal 1999) store price format (Bell and Lattin 1998) customer service (Sparks 1995) store as perceived by the shoppers through their experience of that store" (Omar, 1999, p. 103). Store attributes were viewed as part of the overall image of a store (Bloemer and De Ruyter, 1998). A recent study by Erdem et al. (1999) yielded three store attributes – status, merchandise, and price. They found that status was the most important store attributes. Towards deciding the most important attribute in choosing a store Arnold (1997) and Kim and Jin (2001) found that location being the most important followed by low prices and product assortment were found as important store choice criteria in the work of Arnold (1997). The role of store environment was examined in the study of Koo (2003) who proposed seven components: store atmosphere; location; convenient facilities; value; employee services (EMS); after sale services (AFS) & merchandising. Bodkin and Lord (1997) too concluded that the most important reasons for selecting malls were convenience, presence of a specific store in the mall, services and prices. Terblanche (1999) in his study too highlighted the impact of four dimensions on shopping centre patronage, namely, functional, recreational, socializing, and convenience. He found that recreation appears to be the major benefit pursued by shoppers that patronize a super regional shopping centre.

Malls visit towards entertainment was studied by Nicholls et al. (2000) and he found that Chilean consumer visited malls being driven, primarily, by purchasing factors while consumers in the USA visited their mall for more diverse reasons, largely revolving around entertainment. Further Nicholls et al. (2002) found that today's mall patrons tend to be more leisure driven than shoppers in the early 1990s. Thus studies have pointed out the importance of shopping centre image as a critical determinant of consumer patronage decisions (Finn and Louviere, 1996; Sit et al., 2003).

Motivation is an important factor in understanding behavior. The importance of motivation is reflected in the following definitions.

*Motivation can be described as the driving force within individuals that impels them to action (Schiffman et al., 1997, p. 90).*

Motivation, then, influences people's behavior in the way it stimulates and directs behavior. Therefore, motivation can be represented in terms of its strength and its direction (Solomon, 2002, p.103). Tauber (1972) conducted an exploratory study to uncover the reasons why people shop. The sample used in the study, both men and women, was quite different to samples used in previous studies such as those of Stone (1954) and the Chicago Tribune (1955). These two studies focused solely on females. By including men in the sample, the study findings may have been enriched. The most interesting finding from Tauber's study was the recognition of non-product motives. Tauber stressed that "an understanding of shopping motives requires the consideration of satisfactions which shopping activities provide, as well as the utility obtained from the merchandise that may be purchased" (p. 58). This view provides a new insight on shopping typology. Specifically, Tauber's typology is divided into two main categories (pp. 47-48). The first category, personal motives, consists of:

A) *Role playing.* This motive relates to the role of the shopper in the society. Housewives tend to view grocery shopping as one of their roles in society.

B) *Diversion.* Some people use shopping as a recreational activity.

C) *Self-gratification.* In this case shopping is seen as a medium for expressing different emotional states or moods.

d) *Learning about new trends.* Finding information about new products and model provides motivation for some people to go to the store.

e) *Physical activity.* Going shopping is an alternative for doing exercise.

f) *Sensory stimulation.* Some shoppers go to the store in order to gain some sensory benefit.

The second category of shopping motive category is social:

a) *Social experiences outside the home.* Shopping is viewed as a medium for socializing.

b) *Communication with others having a similar interest.* Some people go shopping for the opportunity to interact with others having similar interests.

c) *Peer group attraction.* Shopping is a way to self-express, to be with one's peer group or a reference group.

d) *Status and authority.* Some people go shopping to gain attention and respect.

e) *The pleasure of bargaining.* Shopping brings pleasure through bargaining over the price.

A later study by Westbrook and Black (1985) concluded that motivation-based shopping typology is the most appropriate way to classify shoppers. This framework is viewed as guiding retail strategy formulation as well as advancing efforts to develop more comprehensive theories of shopping behavior. In addition, "the consideration of motivation is implicit in extant typologies" (Westbrook and Black, 1985, p. 35).

Westbrook and Black's shopping typology is as follows (pp. 86-87):

a) *Anticipated utility.* Some people go to the store with the aim of obtaining a particular product. They expect to gain the utility offered by that product.

b) *Role enactment.* The idea of this shopping motivation is arguably similar to role playing in Tauber's shopping typology. The motive for going to the store is largely affected by the person's role in society, which is culturally defined.

c) *Negotiation.* Some people gain satisfaction if they can negotiate the price, believing they gain a good value product. Tauber (1972) named this motive as the pleasure of bargaining.

d) *Choice optimization.* For some people, shopping is a way to find a suitable product to fulfill their need.

e) *Affiliation.* Socializing with other persons in the store is another shopper motivation. Westbrook and Black (1985) added the term of indirect affiliation, to express the intention to interact with a particular group. This idea encompasses three of the motives in Tauber's shopping typology: social experiences outside the home, communication with others having similar interests and peer group attraction.

f) *Power and authority.* Shopping for some people is seen as a means of improving their social position.

g) *Stimulation.* Some people go to the store with the main purpose of interacting with the store environment in order to feel stimulated. This shopping motive was also raised in Tauber's shopping typology.

As can be seen, although Westbrook and Black provided different norms and focused on motivation, many of their resulting categories are similar to those proposed by Tauber (1972).

In the retail context, Arnold and Reynolds (2003) stresses that "hedonic shopping motives are similar to the task orientation of utilitarian shopping motives, only the task is concerned with hedonic fulfillment, such as experiencing fun, amusement, fantasy and sensory stimulation" (p. 78).

The hedonic shopping motivation typology developed by Arnold and Reynolds (2003, pp. 80-81) is as follows:

a) *Adventure shopping.* According to this motive, going shopping is an adventure. Arnold and Reynolds explain that people with this kind of motive expect to gain "adventure, thrills, stimulation, excitement, and entering a different universe of exciting sights, smells, and sounds" (p. 80).

b) *Social shopping.* Socializing is the main purpose for some shoppers when they go shopping.

c) *Gratification shopping.* Life nowadays is so complex and the level of tension has increased in society. Some people go shopping to ease this tension.

d) *Idea shopping.* Shopping could update people's knowledge about the development of new trends and models.

e) *Role shopping.* Arnold and Reynolds highlight the concept of this motive by stating "role shopping reflects the enjoyment that shoppers derive from shopping for others, the influence that this activity has on the shoppers' feeling and moods, and the excitement and intrinsic joy felt by shoppers when finding the perfect gift for others" (p. 81).

f) *Value shopping.* Some people go shopping to find a good value product.

## RESEARCH GAPS

Researchers who investigated store image reported a wide variety of store attributes but no consensus has been reached on the store attributes that should be prioritized by the retailers that have impact on consumer buying behavior. Past studies have neglected to investigate differences between clusters of customer in terms of priorities they place on different store attributes. Both past and recent empirical studies mostly pertain to USA and European countries. There is paucity of research examining shopper behavior in retailing in India. Little attention has been paid to the shopping motivation of consumers. The shopping motivations of Indian consumers are largely unexplored which formed the basis for this study.

## EXTRACTED RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The study singled out two major objectives on the basis of the literature review done and the research gaps identified. They being

a) To identify key dimensions that explains shopping motivations among Indian customer.

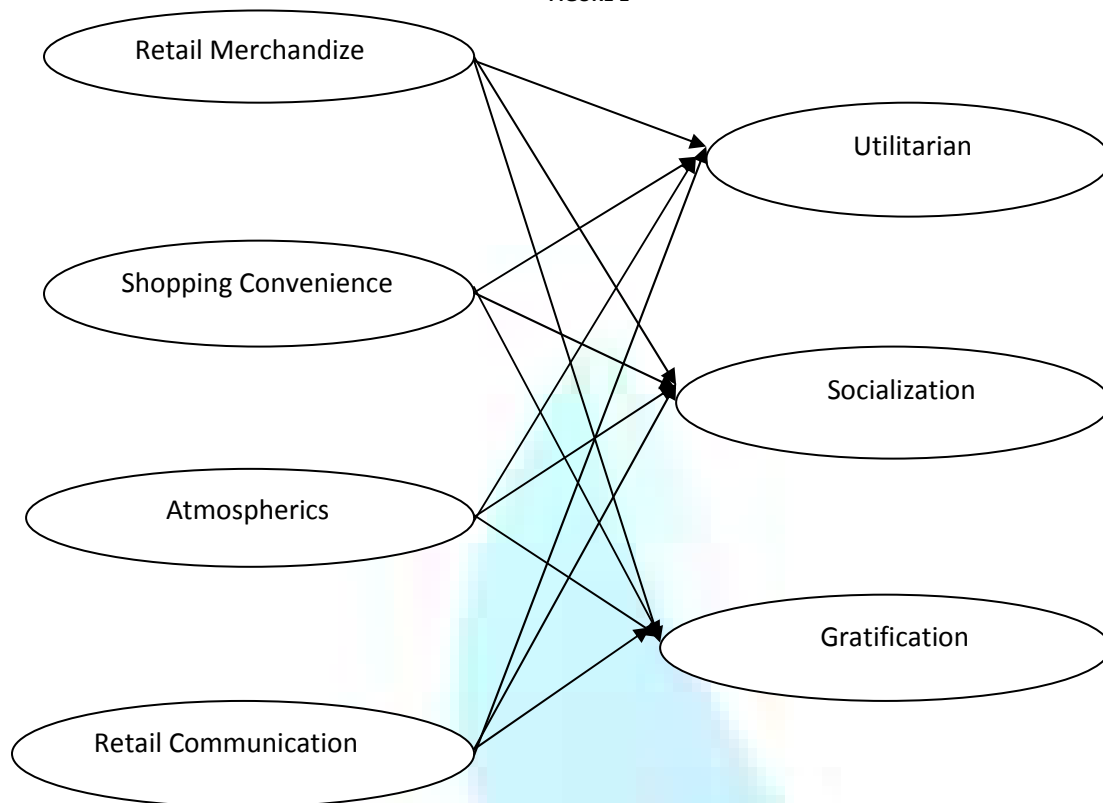
b) To explore retail store image attributes influencing shopping motives

## MODEL AND VARIABLES IDENTIFIED

The extracted frame of reference for the study was designed as follows which formed the basis for exploring the objectives of the study by studying the interaction.



FIGURE 1



#### RETAIL MERCHANDIZE

Retail Merchandising refers to the various activities which contribute to the sale of products to the consumers for their end use. Every retail store has its own line of merchandise to offer to the customers.

Literature has indicated that elements of product mix capture quality and assortments of goods as well as their presentation (Lindquist, 1974). A perception of great assortment certainly influences store image and satisfaction with the store (Anselmsson, 2006). Juhl et al. (2002) found that product quality is one of the important elements of store image. Hansen and Solgaard (2004) identified that product assortment was the single most influential variable affecting the choice of retail formats.

Pricing either in conjunction or isolation with product policy contributes to a great degree to the retailers positioning and "personality" (McGoldrick, 1990). The retailers pricing policy refers to the monetary costs i.e. the costs of good purchased or to be purchased. Pricing is found to be the most important attributes in grocery shopping decisions (Hortman et al., 1990). Further price level has found to be an influential factor in terms of retail format choice and determinant of different customer groups (Carpenter and Moore, 2006;)

#### SHOPPING CONVENIENCE

Shopping convenience consists of in store convenience and service convenience the store provides. The in store convenience represent an important attribute of a store. In store convenience consists of the store layout and design, which helps customers to plan their trips. They also become skilled in understanding the various signs and labels and control their exploration and trip (Bitner, 1990; Spies et al, 1997). The successful layout of the store depends on whether it has clear and legible concept. The various labels, information posters and sign can contribute to the concept of layout design in creating a favorable and attractive store environment (Spies et al, 1997).

Service is another important component of shopping convenience. The service provision includes interaction with store personnel's, information enquiries, guidance to the location of goods, cashiers, etc. so the relationship between consumer and retailer is enhanced by the service provision which increases the customer buying experiences (Reynolds and Beatty, 1999).

#### STORE ATMOSPHERE

Store atmosphere is another important store image attribute. It is an atmosphere which is created by combining a set of visual elements of the store environment (colours, displays, decorative features ease of movement etc) and stimulation of senses (smell, temperature, music and lighting) enabling a favorable customer response. Store with favorable atmosphere are likely to increase the positive buying experience (Babin and Darden, 1996).

#### UTILITARIAN SHOPPING MOTIVATION

Utilitarian shopping behavior is characterized by task related, product oriented, rational and extrinsic motivations (Babin et al., 1994).

#### SOCIALIZATION

Social shopping grounded in affiliation theories of human motivation reflects socializing aim of shoppers while shopping (Reynolds and Beatty, 1999).

#### GRATIFICATION

Gratification shopping grounded in tension reduction theories of human motivation involves shopping for relieving stress. (Lee et al., 2001)

#### RETAIL COMMUNICATION

Retail Communication consists of special offers by store, new product advertising in the store and high visibility and display of product in promotion (Ghosh, 1990)

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for the study involved a research design comprising of the Store Image and the Shopping Motives variables. These further comprised of sub variables for store image named as Retail Merchandize, Shopping Convenience, Atmospherics and Retail Communication and for Shopping Motives named as Utilitarian, Socialization and Gratification. A questionnaire in English was drafted containing Likert scaled items scoring from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) to measure 52 items. The questionnaire also contained the demographic information. The data obtained by a pilot study was subjected to assess its reliability & a value of 0.767 Cronbach Alpha was obtained for the overall construct. Further it was subjected to the scrutinization by industry experts & academicians to judge for its validity. A few changes were incorporated on the suggestion of the experts meeting the questionnaire fit to be administered for execution for studying the objectives of the proposed study. The questionnaire on the basis of sampling design was subjected to shoppers intercepted post

shopping activity. The population for the study consisted of both male and female shoppers who come to shop in shopping malls in Delhi & NCR. Delhi & NCR were selected as survey sites as they are planned cities and new stores have started operating in them. The sampling frame consisted of shopping malls in Delhi & NCR. In order to have a representative sample a list of selected stores in Delhi & NCR was generated. Convenience Sampling, intercept survey method was used to collect the data. The sample size consisted of 1200 shoppers as used in the previous studies.

Some of the limitations were identified in the study. They ranged from non response to partial response by the respondents as they had come for shopping and entertainment and did not want to be intercepted for filling a survey. Many were not ready to discuss details of their response as they felt it was bothering their shopping visit. Also shopping malls did not appreciate their shopper being disturbed & hence an in shop interception for collecting response was not possible and responses were generated only outside the shops. An inside shop response would have generated a more valid data giving further detailed insight to the study being conducted.

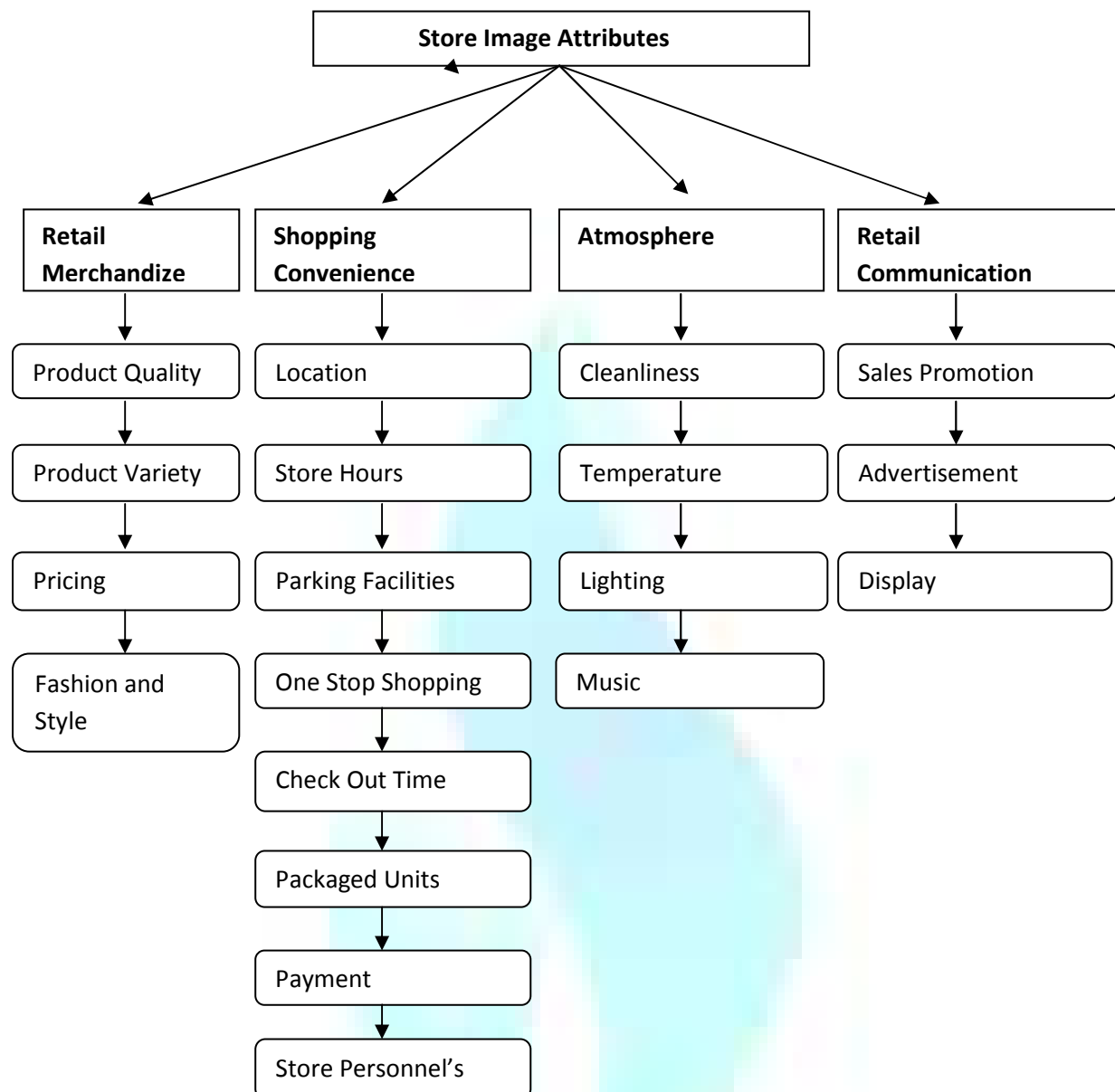
## FINDINGS

TABLE 1

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	685	57
	Female	525	43
	Total	1200	100
Age	< 20	69	6
	20-30	716	60
	30-40	329	27
	40-50	86	7
	Total	1200	100
Income in Rs	<25000	706	59
	25,000-50,000	331	27
	50,000-75000	93	8
	75,000-100,000	48	4
	>100,000	22	2
	Total	1200	100
Educational Qualification	High School	36	4
	Senior Secondary	68	6
	Graduation	728	60
	Post Graduation	368	30
	Total	1200	100
Marital Status	Married	742	62
	Unmarried	458	38
	Total	1200	100

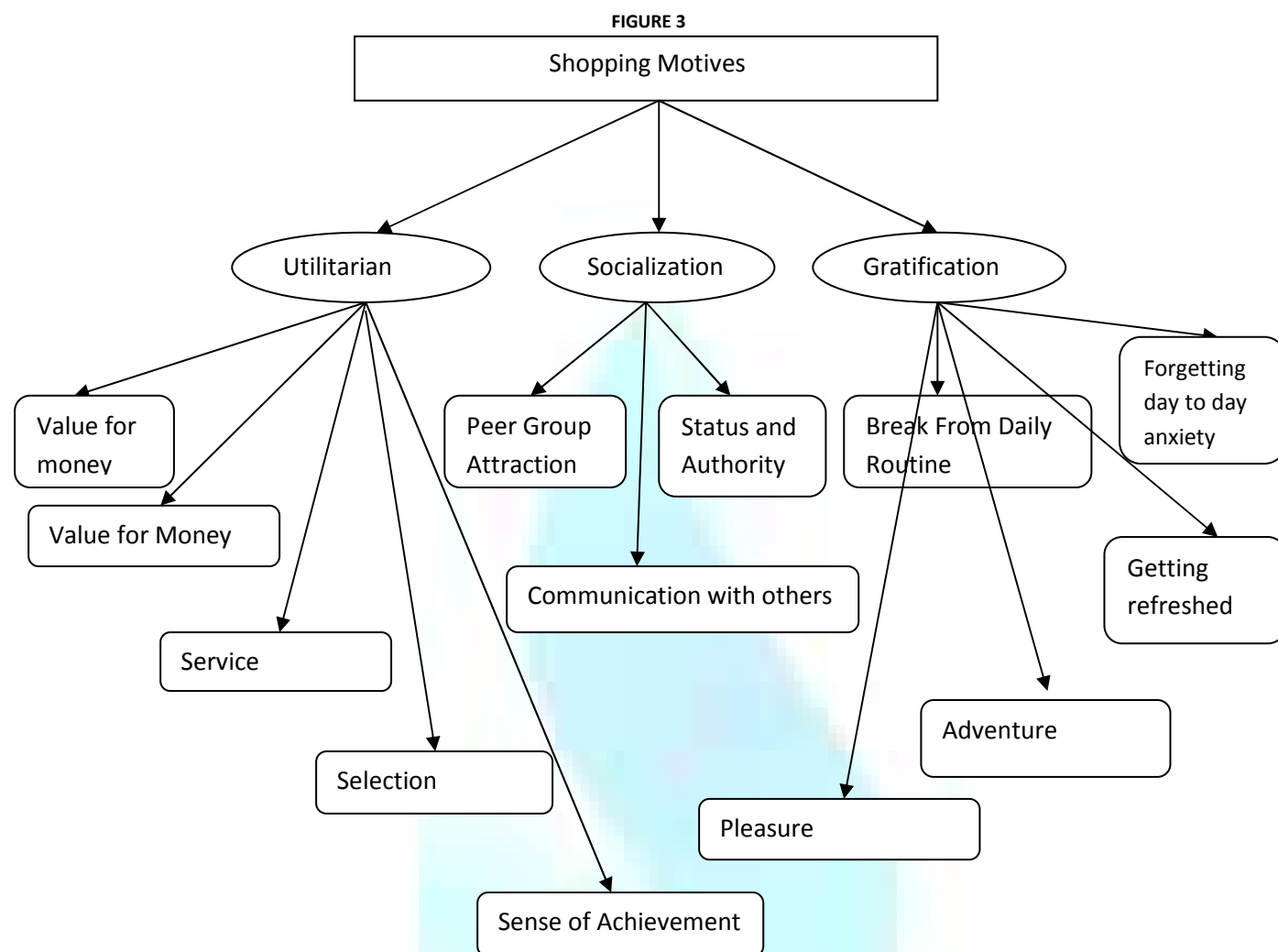
Examination of the respondents (N=1200) indicated a majority of males 57% compared to females 43%. 6% of respondents aged < 20 years, 60% aged between 20-30 years, 27% aged between 30-40 years, 7% aged between 40-50 years. 59% of respondents indicating monthly household income of < Rs25000, 27% indicating income between Rs. 25000-50000, 8% indicated income between Rs.50000-75000 and 4% indicated income between Rs.75000-100000 and 2% indicating an income of >100000. 4% indicated that they have a high school degree, 6% indicated that they have a Senior Secondary School degree, 60% percent indicated that they have a graduation degree and 30% indicated that they have a post graduation degree. A total of 62% percent of sample indicated that they are married and 38% indicated that they are unmarried.

FIGURE 2



The most important attribute for store selection is Retail merchandize followed by Shopping Convenience followed by Atmospherics followed by Retail Communication. Retail Merchandize consisted of Product Quality, Product Variety, Prices with respect to competitors, Fashion and Styling. Among this Product Quality were the most important considerations while choosing a store. Prices with respect to competitors were the second most important store attribute for selection of a store. The third most important attribute among the Retail Merchandize was Product Variety followed by fashion and styling for choosing a store. Shopping Convenience consisted of location of the store, the store opening hours, parking facilities, one stop shopping, the checking out time and ease of handling the packaged units, among these location followed by store opening hours, parking facilities and checking out time were the most important attributes as preferred by customers for selecting a store. Atmospherics consisted of Cleanliness in the store, the temperature and interior design, width of the aisles, carpeting, lightning and music. Among these cleanliness, temperature lightning music and interior design were the most important attributes considered by the customers while selecting a store. Retail communication consisted of the display of the merchandize and sales promotion and advertizing facilities adopted by the stores. Among these all the three display advertising and sales promotion were considered as important attributes while selecting a store. The findings have been found to be similar to that by Lindquist (1974/1975), Arnold (1997) and Kim and Jin (2001) where the most important attributes for store selection was Location, Product Assortments and Low Prices.

The shopping motives of the shoppers can be interpreted on the basis of following model:



The customer motives for shopping can be divided into three categories, i.e., Utilitarian, Social and Gratification. The utilitarian motives consist of shopping for value for money, value for time, shopping for services provided by various retailers and shopping for a sense of achievement. Among these customers prefer to shop for value for money followed by services value for time and sense of achievement. The social motive consists of communicating with others having same interests, peer group attraction, status and authority. Among these the primary motive for shopping is to have a peer group attraction followed by status and authority then communicating with others having the same interest. Gratification consists of shopping for getting a break from daily routine, shopping for forgetting day to day anxiety, shopping to get refreshed, shopping for adventure and shopping for pleasure. Among these the primary motive for shopping consisted of shopping to get a break from daily routine, shopping to forget about day to day anxiety, shopping to feel better shopping for pleasure and shopping for adventure. The findings have been found to be similar to that of Tauber (1972).

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study present a significant contribution, for both scholars and practitioners. The study reveals an interesting finding about store image attributes. Four major attributes were highlighted: Merchandize, Convenience, Atmosphere and Retail Communication. All of the attributes are considered as important by the customers for selecting a store to shop. The findings from the study suggest that the motivation to shop consist of utilitarian, social and gratification seeking motives. More specifically, the findings of this study would seem to suggest that visiting a retail store is more task oriented and rational behavior stimulated by extrinsic motivations (Babin et al., 1994). On the contrary Hedonic motivation of visiting a retail store appears to be only marginal (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982).

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings suggests a number of implication for store managers, the store managers should improve store image attributes such as Merchandize, Convenience, Atmospherics and Retail increase frequency of consumer visits. Mall managers should stimulate gratification seeking motives to influence shoppers to stay longer and buy more. This requires positioning strategies to focus on motivations of shoppers such as excitement, entertainment, fantasy and fun.

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