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CONTENTS

| Sr. No. | TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S) | Page No. |
|------------|---|-------------|
| 1. | SERVICE QUALITY OF HOTEL FLATS – EXPERIENCE OF PHILIPINO TOURISTS MAYA MADHAVAN & DR. A.P. GEORGE | 1 |
| 2. | CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF SELF HELP GROUPS IN MARKETING THEIR PRODUCTS K. LAKSHMI & DR. S. RAMACHANDRAN | 6 |
| 3. | A STUDY OF COMMERCIAL BANKING SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ABDUL KHALIQUE TALUKDER & DR. AMALESH BHOWAL | 10 |
| 4. | INFLUENCE OF 'GREEN ATMOSPHERICS' ON ECO – FRIENDLY CONSUMERS – A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO TAMIL NADU K. SHARIFA NIZARA & DR. I. MOHAMED SHAW ALEM | 14 |
| 5. | AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOB PERFORMANCE IN INDIAN MANUFACTURING SECTOR DR. DEVENDER SINGH MUCHHAL & DR. AJAY SOLKHE | 18 |
| 6. | A STUDY OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SELECT MALLS IN INDIA GRISHMA PATEL & DR. RAJENDRA JAIN | 22 |
| 7. | TIME VALUE OF MONEY: ISSUES & CHALLENGES WITH REFERENCE TO E-PAYMENT SERVICES IN PRIVATE BANKING COMPANIES IN BANGALORE DR. MAHESHA KEMPEGOWDA & SUJATHA.S.L | 28 |
| 8. | THE EFFECT OF REAL EXCHANGE RATE ON INDIA'S TRADE BALANCE DR. AMAL SARKAR | 32 |
| 9. | TEAM-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF STUDENT TEAMS ON CRUCIAL CHARACTERISTIC FACTORS FOR CREATIVITY YEH, YU-MEI, LI, FENG-CHIA & LIN, HUNG-YUAN | 38 |
| 10. | A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PROFITABILITY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS POONAM & V.K. GUPTA | 41 |
| 11. | SURVIVAL OF EARTHEN DOLL PRODUCTS AND THE CONTEMPORARY TRADE - AN ARGUMENT ON POTENCY OF BENGAL POTTERY KANDARPA KANTI HAZRA & DR. ARUP BARMAN | 45 |
| 12. | CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT: A REVIEW AND RESEARCH AGENDA | 49 |
| 13. | AJIT KUMAR NANDA & PUSHPENDRA KHANDELWAL BEHAVIOURAL ACCOUNTING PRACTICES IN STEEL AUTHORITY OF INDIA LIMITED TAJINDER KAUR | 55 |
| 14. | IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT ON BURNOUT: A STUDY AMONG THE EMPLOYEES IN RETAIL SECTOR IN INDIA | 58 |
| 15. | DR. AMAN KHERA TQM AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AT WORKING IRON AND STEEL FIRMS OF HYDERABAD-KARNATAKA REGION (C. CONOMIC PERFORMANCE AT WORKING IRON AND STEEL FIRMS OF HYDERABAD-KARNATAKA REGION | 63 |
| 16. | K C PRASHANTH THE EMERGING ORGANIZED JEWELRY RETAILERS IN INDIA AND THEIR CHALLENGES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY APPROACH DR. TANIL MARANC | 69 |
| 17. | DR. TANU NARANG A STUDY ON THE SCOPE OF SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IN KADMAT ISLAND, LAKSHADWEEP PAZHANISAMY.R | 72 |
| 18. | PRIORITY SECTOR LENDING BY COMMERCIAL BANKS IN RAJASTHAN | 78 |
| 19. | DR. POONAM NAGPAL, SHACHI GUPTA & PRACHI GUPTA A STUDY OF IMPACT OF RAW MATERIAL PRICES ON SHARE PRICES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CRUDE OIL PRICE AND NIFTY ENERGY INDEX SHALINI SAGAR & DR. RAKESH KUMAR | 82 |
| 20. | EMPIRICAL STUDY ON LABOUR WELFARE PRACTICES IN ORGANISED RETAIL TEXTILE SHOPS IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI CORPORATION LIMIT | 85 |
| 21. | DR. A. JOHN PETER & D. ALLEN ROSE SHAMINI IMPACT OF GST ON COMMON MAN | 91 |
| 22. | PARASURAMAN SUBRAMANI & DR. N. SATHIYA LIQUIDITY & PROFITABILITY ANALYSIS OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES OF INDIA | 97 |
| 23. | MINTIBAHEN BIJENDRA SINHA & DR. DEEPIKA SINGHVI A STUDY ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT & ITS IMPACT ON GROWTH OF FOOD & AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN INDIA | 100 |
| 24. | POOJA KUMARI & DR. P.SRI RAM ENUMERATION OF SERVICES AND CATEGORIZATION OF CUSTOMER'S PROBLEM ON MOBILE BANKING: A REVIEW | 104 |
| 25. | P. SARAVANA GUPTA & DR. K. SUBRAMANIAM CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS F M RADIO IN NORTH KARNATAKA | 106 |
| 26. | SHIVASHARANA G B & SURESH ACHARAYA MOTIVATION AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BASED ON MCCLELLAND'S THREE NEED MODEL | 110 |
| 27. | HANSIKA KHURANA & VAISHALI JOSHI RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF SERVQUAL DIMENSIONS – A STUDY ON RETAIL BANKING SERVICES OF INDIA POST ANINDRA KUMAR HALDAR | 117 |
| 28. | MODELING THE CAUSES OF STAGNATION OF A MATURED CAPITALIST ECONOMY WITH OPEN ECONOMY SAIKAT BHATTACHARYA | 122 |
| 29. | CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THEIR IMPACT ON IT COMPANIES PAYOJ RAJ SINGH | 127 |
| 30. | A STUDY ON STRESS MANAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO STERLING HOLIDAYS, OOTY K. SINDUJA & S. SUGANYA | 130 |
| | REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER | 134 |

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A STUDY OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SELECT MALLS IN INDIA

GRISHMA PATEL RESEARCH SCHOLAR SHRI VAISHNAV INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT INDORE

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ABSTRACT

India, a fast developing nation. Traditional markets to Mall culture now. Malls familiarizing Indian consumers with an implausible experience while utilizing its services for entertainment and shopping. This study is conducted in the selected four malls of India. The four malls are C-21 mall, DB city mall, Alpha One mall and In orbit mall. The aim of the study is to identify the perception of customers with respect to frequency of visit towards dimension of Service Quality of malls in India. Along with this research effort have been made to identify the Service Quality dimensions of mall to understand customer's view point. This study focuses on the frequency of visits of mall customers to give a clear view about the acceptance of malls in Indian society. It is concluded that Mall respondent's frequency of visit is mostly on monthly basis in the selected four malls in India. This indicates their experience, understanding and maturity on the perceived service quality that mall management offer them and their acceptance of the mall culture in Indian society. The mall management needs to devise the policies to magnetize more number of people to visit malls.

KEYWORDS

shopping malls, Frequency of visits, customer perceptions, service quality.

INTRODUCTION

ndian retail is moving towards the modernization. The change of the attitude of customers is seen due to changing life styles and shopping habits of customers. Traditional markets to Mall culture now. It is a need to understand service quality of malls to meet Customers demand.

"A shopping mall or popularly referred simply as a mall, is a building or set of building that contains store and has interconnecting walkways enabling visitors to easily walk from one store to another. The walkways may or may not be enclosed. Malls are also referred as shopping centre or shopping arcade. They have a super market/ hypermarket, a multiplex, stores, play zone, a food-court as well as options for different categories of merchandise. "

Mall culture can be seen in metro cities as well as in tier-II cities in India. There has been a considerable development of new retail formats such as malls, hypermarkets, supermarkets and lifestyle stores. This changing pattern establishing a baseline for today and future as development continues specially in India. Hence this study focuses on the frequency of visits of mall customers to give a clear view about the acceptance of malls in Indian society. It is important to understand and view the footfalls fundamentally shifting towards malls. services will vary from one shopping mall to another an excellent Service Quality could be a key for prospering in the competitive environment. The modern architectural designs of the malls attract Indians to explore new cities in the country. This study is conducted among the four malls in India. C-21 mall of Indore, DB city mall of Bhopal, Alpha one mall of Ahmedabad and Inorbit mall of Vadodara.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz (1996) developed and empirically validated a scale to measure retail service quality distinctively. The authors highlighted to capture customers" perceptions of service quality for retail stores. In retail setting, especially retail stores where there is a mix of product and service, retailers are likely to have impact on service quality more than on product quality. Their research examines the applicability of the RSQS (Retail Service Quality Scale), a revised SERVQUAL instrument for the Retail sector. Seventeen of the original 22 SERVQUAL items were selected. RSQS consist of five dimensions- physical aspects, reliability, personal interaction, problem solving and policy.

North & Kotze (2004) investigated the perceptions of patrons regarding the attractiveness of shopping centres in Pretoria in South Africa. The results of this study indicate that male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their perceptions of the general atmosphere like lighting, music, use of color and the attractiveness of decor in the centre. It can be argued that the young adults and consumers are more exposed to interior aspects in the centre than older people and regard shopping also as a leisure and social activity.

Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros, Schlesinger (2009) examined the creation of a customer experience from a holistic perspective. The authors proposed a conceptual model in which they discussed the determinants of customer experience and importance of the social environment, self-service technologies and the store brand.

The authors are in opinion that retailers around the globe have embraced the concept of customer experience management, by focusing on convenience, value and quality. They argue that prior customer experiences will influence future customer experiences and in practice suggest that experience-based strategies can create growth and would be helpful for big retailers.

Creating superior Customer experience management should be a retailer's strategy in such a way as to create value to both the customer and the firm.

The authors of this paper theorize several determinants of customer experience. These include the social environment, the service interface, the retail atmosphere, the assortment, the price and promotions and Branding. They assert that Self-service technologies are becoming an integral part of shopping, and hence are critical to examine in terms of their impact on customer experience. The manifestation of such technology enabled shopping mode to online retailing, self service, check-out counters. Customer experience management differs from customer relationship management as the focus is on the current experience of the customer, rather than the recorded history of the customer.

UBEJA S.K. AND. BEDIA, D.D (2012) investigated the effects of sales promotion mix on customer satisfaction in shopping malls of Jabalpur and Gwalior city of Madhya Pradesh. They have included sales promotion mix factors like Lucky by chance offers, Frequent and Warranty Offers, Monetary and Quantity Benefit Offers, Gift and Exchange offers. The authors concluded that Jabalpur and Gwalior city's customers are not much aware about sales promotion mix applicable in shopping malls. Customers are most recreational in their shopping but they are not sales promotion conscious. They want variety of products but with quality and good services. They do not attract to any type of sales promotion mix, which is available in shopping malls. The authors noted that Organizations need to retain existing customers while targeting non-customers.

Zia & Ghaswyne (2013) studied in their paper three dimensions on consumer loyalty. They are Execution Related Excellence, Expediting and problem recovery. The data was collected from Delhi NCR region. Their finding shows that expediting has the highest impact on consumer loyalty, which signifies this fact that quick and error free transactions is the one most important factor in organized retail setup which attracts consumers and make them loyal. Further it has been observed

that Shopping experience is an important determinant factor of consumer's loyalty. Thus, moving towards the new shopping environment where quality management, staff attention, new formats available for achieving shopper satisfaction and feeling of enjoyment is on the whole a good shopping experience. The author confirms that Indian consumers familiarizing with Mall culture not only in metro cities but as well as in tier-II cities.

Gudonaviciene, Alijosiene. (2013). develops suggestions of what factors affect the customer's selection of one or another shopping centre most and how to improve the perceptions of shopping centre patrons of the overall centre image. A review of the retailing literature reveals several attributes in shopping centre image studies: merchandising, accessibility, service, facilities, atmosphere, amenities, ambulance, entertainment, security and other.

The main aim of this paper is to identify the main image attributes that determine selection of shopping centre in Lithuania. Their Empirical study revealed the following results that merchandising, Macro accessibility, Entertainment, Micro accessibility, Atmosphere as five most important image attributes that make the highest impact on choosing the shopping centre. They also found in their study a large part of Lithuanian customers intends to visit shopping centres on weekends, once a week and they prefer shopping centres with their favourite shop.

Nagra Gagandeep & Gopal R, (2013) states that the western culture has affected each and every aspect of Indian Society. The online shopping is very common outside India and the authors are in the opinion that On-line shopping will be the future of shopping in the world. The retail strategies to provide services has now moved from advance payment to cash on delivery (COD).

Dnyandeo, N.K. (2014) focused Barter system is known as a first form of retail. With the emergence of mall culture the knowledge of the factors affecting buying behavior such as availability, variety, service, discounts and price, quality of products and promotion will prove to be helpful to the retailers to formulate new strategies and attract more consumers.

By studying out in Phoenix market city pune, Author concludes that Advertisements & offers provided by mall effects on customer buying decisions. The customer considers Location, Product Variety, Product Quality and price criteria while shopping. House women make the major part of the population visits mall, followed by working professionals and students. The author emphasized that malls are providing customer with 3 'V' i.e. value, variety and volume. hence in such a cut throat competition scenario these retailers should learn and understand the buying behavior as well as the preference of the customers.

Kumar Ajay, Thakur Yashwant Singh (2014) in their research article indicated that the shopping mall is a global phenomenon. The shopping malls that we know and have in India today were birthed in the beginning of the 20th century and have since then grew to cover all the major cities of India. safety and security is a factor which affect to customers to shopping in mall with family and children. The main affecting factors towards mall are availability of branded, quality and variety of product, alternative and ease of find product. The authors discussed that the competitions among the shopping centres become violent. Today The shopping centre is now not only a place for shopping, but also for a form of family entertainment, satisfying a social need and cultural hot spot where people of all ages can come to interact.

Aggarwal Manav (2014) studies the importance and growth of online shopping in India. The author strongly believes that the prospect of online marketing is growing in India. The increasing internet literacy, easy availability of internet and wifi facility in India has enlarged this trend. The trend of online shopping has many benefits and is increasing especially in the youth. They prefer their shopping at home and avail discounts benefits, saving of fuel, time and energy and home delivery facility which saves time as well as 24*7 shopping.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

On-line shopping is a recent phenomenon. in the Business. Many malls in North America and other western countries are considered "dead" for the purposes of leasing. Without the pedestrian traffic, decline in sales volumes for almost all stores and hence the untimely payment of rent by store owners and gradually could not sustain the costly maintenance of the malls. The study is vital to understand customer perceptions towards malls service quality with respect to frequency of visits. The mall management needs to plan or make some new marketing strategies especially for bringing more footfalls in the malls. They should devise the policies to magnetize more number of people to visit malls.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mall development and its maintenance is expensive. Malls and the, stores in the malls need enough revenue to meet its expenditure. Ease of shopping, availability of brands, quality and variety of product and services under one roof and a place where civilians can move in safely is a mall concept. Even in sweltering heat of 40 degree people can enjoy shopping and entertainment. hence it is essential that customers visit malls regularly and frequently.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. To know the frequency of visit of customers in select malls in India.
- 2. To study Demographic variable of frequency of visit on basis of customer perceptions towards service quality dimensions of the selected shopping malls in India.
- 3. To suggest ways to improve the service quality of shopping malls in India.

HYPOTHESES

H01- There is no significant difference in the perception of customers with respect to frequency of visit towards Aesthetics dimension of Service Quality of malls in India

HI1- There is significant difference in the perception of customers with respect to frequency of visit towards Aesthetics dimension of Service Quality of malls in India

H02- There is no significant difference in the perception of customers with respect to frequency of visit towards **Convenience** dimension of Service Quality of malls in India.

HI2- There is significant difference in the perception of customers with respect to frequency of visit towards Convenience dimension of Service Quality of malls in India.

H03- There is no significant difference in the perception of customers with respect to frequency of visit towards Policy dimension of Service Quality of malls in India.

HI3- There is significant difference in the perception of customers with respect to frequency of visit towards **Policy** dimension of Service Quality of malls in India. H04- There is no significant difference in the perception of customers with respect to frequency of visit towards **Customer Service** dimension of Service Quality of malls in India.

HI4- There is significant difference in the perception of customers with respect to frequency of visit towards **Customer Service** dimension of Service Quality of malls in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

THE STUDY

The study is exploratory in nature. Customers were surveyed in mall and interactive conversation was done with the mall visitors of the select Malls in India. **THE SAMPLE**

The sample of the study constituted of 400 respondents of the selected malls in India.

SAMPLE UNIT

This study is conducted among the four malls in India. C-21 mall of Indore, DB city mall of Bhopal, Alpha one mall of Ahmedabad and Inorbit mall of Vadodara are taken as the sample unit.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Simple Random Sampling technique was used for the selection of malls whereas judgmental Sampling Technique was used for selection of respondents from the malls.

TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The primary data were collected by means of a self designed structured questionnaire and interviews with the customers of the selected Malls. Secondary data have been collected from books, magazines, websites and research articles from journals.

TOOLS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

A questionnaire comprising 22 items has been developed to study with respect to customer perceptions of the service quality in select malls in India. The data was collected through the questionnaire on five-point likert- scale. The four dimensions of mall service quality comprise **Aesthetics, Convenience, Policy and Customer Service.** SPSS 20. (Statistical package for Social Science) software used to analyze the primary data. Questionnaire for measuring service quality is quite reliable as the alpha value is 0.852 and as the data values is normally distributed, The One-Way ANOVA (analysis of variance) are used to compute the result. Pie Charts, Bar Charts, are used to represent the results.

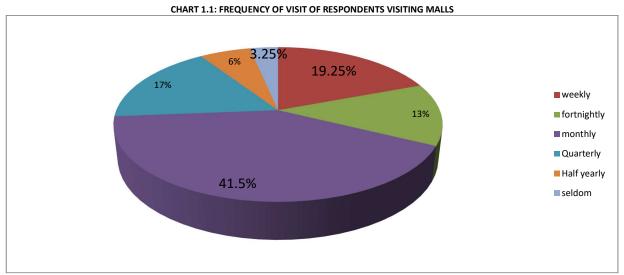
RESULTS & DISCUSSION

TABLE 1: FREQUENCY OF VISIT OF MALL CUSTOMERS

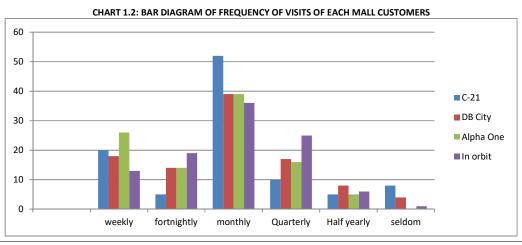
| | | | | | Total | |
|--------------------|------|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|
| Frequency of visit | C-21 | DB City | Alpha One | In orbit | Frequency | Percent |
| weekly | 20 | 18 | 26 | 13 | 77 | 19.25 |
| fortnightly | 5 | 14 | 14 | 19 | 52 | 13 |
| monthly | 52 | 39 | 39 | 36 | 166 | 41.5 |
| Quarterly | 10 | 17 | 16 | 25 | 68 | 17 |
| Half yearly | 5 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 24 | 6 |
| seldom | 8 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 3.25 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 400 | 100 |

Frequency of visits of mall customers is one of the important profile variables of the customers. It shows their level of understanding, experience and maturity on the perceived service quality of Malls. The above table depicts that 166 out of 400 respondents visits malls on monthly basis. i.e. which constitutes 41.5%. 19.25% respondents visits mall weekly, 17% mall respondents visits on quarterly basis and 13% respondents visit fortnightly. The respondents under this study visits half yearly or seldom constitutes 6% and 3.25% respectively. This gives a clear indication that only 41.5% in the survey among 400 respondents visit malls on monthly basis and mall management have to put efforts to increase footfalls in the malls.

The pie chart shows the percentage of each Frequency of visit of respondents visiting malls in India.



The bar diagram below shows the Frequency of visits of respondents visiting malls. it can be explored that respondents of C- 21 mall, DB City mall, Alpha One mall and In orbit mall visit mostly on monthly basis.



In order to test the hypotheses, One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is applied to study the Service Quality dimensions (Aesthetics, Convenience, Policy and Customer Service) of malls in India with respect to frequency of visit.

TABLE 2: ANOVA

| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------|
| Mall | Between Groups | 2.879 | 5 | 0.576 | 2.152 | 0.059 |
| Aesthetics | Within Groups | 105.412 | 394 | 0.268 | | |
| Aestrietics | Total | 108.292 | 399 | | | |
| | Between Groups | 3.675 | 5 | 0.735 | 1.551 | 0.173 |
| Mall Convenience | Within Groups | 186.701 | 394 | 0.474 | | |
| | Total | 190.375 | 399 | | | |
| | Between Groups | 1.053 | 5 | 0.211 | 0.567 | 0.726 |
| Mall Policy | Within Groups | 146.524 | 394 | 0.372 | | |
| | Total | 147.577 | 399 | | | |
| Mall customer | Between Groups | 0.873 | 5 | 0.175 | 0.487 | 0.786 |
| Mall customer Service | Within Groups | 141.315 | 394 | 0.359 | | |
| Service | Total | 142.188 | 399 | | | |

Above table shows that p value is greater than 0.05 for all service quality dimensions. It represents that p value in service quality dimension of Aesthetics 0.059, Convenience 0.173, Policy 0.726 and Customer Service 0.786. This means that null hypothesis H0₁, H0₂, H0₃, H0₄ are accepted at 5% significance level and it can be inferred that There is no significant difference in the perception of customers with respect to Frequency of visits viz., weekly, Fortnightly, monthly, Quarterly, Half yearly and seldom towards services quality dimensions of the malls in India. The alternate hypothesis HI₁, HI₂, HI₃, HI₄ stands rejected. Hence, it exhibited that none of the dimensions differed significantly on the basis of Frequency of visits. It concludes that perceptions of customers with respect to Frequency of visits do not significantly differ towards service quality dimensions (Aesthetics, Convenience, Policy and Customer service) of the selected malls in India.

FINDINGS

This study is conducted in the selected four malls of India. The four malls are C-21 mall, DB city mall, Alpha One mall and in orbit mall. The Demographic factor of frequency of visit of mall respondents does not differ over shopping malls service quality dimensions. It concludes that frequency of visit of mall respondents does not differ significantly towards service quality dimensions of the selected four malls in India. Their attitudes and opinions view almost the same.

CONCLUSIONS

Customer perception of service quality is essential in order to attract the customers on a longer basis. Mall respondents frequency of visit is mostly on monthly basis in the selected four malls in India which indicates their experience, understanding and maturity on the perceived service quality that mall management offer them and their acceptance of the mall culture in Indian society. Mall management has to create and develop strategies and interest to improve more traffic in the malls

RECOMMENDATIONS / SUGGESTIONS

Right now in India mall culture is in boom. More national and international real estate group are interested. Malls in the cities involve Architects, government and Indian society. A Lot of employment is generated. Government can help to the mall authorities by making law, policy and control. Employees of malls should be trained to handle customer's complaints effectively. Management should encourage promotions like random lucky draws for entrants and surprise children and a family group to encourage more and frequent footfalls in the malls. Malls should increase social activities and events to develop interests in the people to visit frequently.

LIMITATIONS & SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further this study needs to be carried in festive season and long weekend holiday. It would be interesting to understand the mall traffic and frequency of visit of mall customers. To apply the concept of this research in shopping malls focus on all the four service quality dimensions (Aesthetics, Convenience, Policy and Customer service) as a tool to encourage management performance score. This study provides more meaningful ways to identify and explore more focused marketing strategies to increase footfalls in the malls.

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ANNEXURE 1

TABLE 3

| | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | Minimum | Maximum |
|------------------|-------------|-----|--------|----------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | | |
| | weekly | 77 | 3.5102 | 0.6306 | 0.07186 | 3.3671 | 3.6533 | 1.57 | 4.86 |
| | fortnightly | 52 | 3.7775 | 0.43681 | 0.06058 | 3.6559 | 3.8991 | 2.86 | 4.86 |
| | monthly | 166 | 3.6407 | 0.46607 | 0.03617 | 3.5693 | 3.7121 | 2.14 | 5 |
| Aesthetics | Quaterly | 68 | 3.6723 | 0.51777 | 0.06279 | 3.5469 | 3.7976 | 2 | 4.71 |
| | Half yearly | 24 | 3.7917 | 0.60606 | 0.12371 | 3.5357 | 4.0476 | 2.43 | 4.71 |
| | seldom | 13 | 3.6374 | 0.51711 | 0.14342 | 3.3249 | 3.9498 | 2.43 | 4.29 |
| | Total | 400 | 3.6477 | 0.52097 | 0.02605 | 3.5965 | 3.6989 | 1.57 | 5 |
| | weekly | 77 | 3.3636 | 0.67724 | 0.07718 | 3.2099 | 3.5174 | 1.4 | 4.4 |
| | fortnightly | 52 | 3.5038 | 0.71124 | 0.09863 | 3.3058 | 3.7019 | 2.2 | 5 |
| | monthly | 166 | 3.2578 | 0.66899 | 0.05192 | 3.1553 | 3.3604 | 1.6 | 5 |
| Mall Convenience | Quaterly | 68 | 3.4441 | 0.72552 | 0.08798 | 3.2685 | 3.6197 | 2 | 4.8 |
| | Half yearly | 24 | 3.4583 | 0.78348 | 0.15993 | 3.1275 | 3.7892 | 2 | 5 |
| | seldom | 13 | 3.2462 | 0.48411 | 0.13427 | 2.9536 | 3.5387 | 2.4 | 3.8 |
| | Total | 400 | 3.3535 | 0.69075 | 0.03454 | 3.2856 | 3.4214 | 1.4 | 5 |
| | weekly | 77 | 3.4987 | 0.62713 | 0.07147 | 3.3564 | 3.641 | 2 | 4.6 |
| | fortnightly | 52 | 3.55 | 0.62356 | 0.08647 | 3.3764 | 3.7236 | 2 | 4.8 |
| | monthly | 166 | 3.406 | 0.55505 | 0.04308 | 3.321 | 3.4911 | 1.4 | 4.8 |
| Mall Policy | Quaterly | 68 | 3.4324 | 0.69421 | 0.08418 | 3.2643 | 3.6004 | 2 | 4.6 |
| | Half yearly | 24 | 3.4583 | 0.72106 | 0.14719 | 3.1539 | 3.7628 | 1.8 | 4.8 |
| | seldom | 13 | 3.4769 | 0.37893 | 0.1051 | 3.2479 | 3.7059 | 2.8 | 4 |
| | Total | 400 | 3.4525 | 0.60817 | 0.03041 | 3.3927 | 3.5123 | 1.4 | 4.8 |
| | weekly | 77 | 3.4961 | 0.73528 | 0.08379 | 3.3292 | 3.663 | 2 | 4.6 |
| Mall Customer | fortnightly | 52 | 3.4654 | 0.5844 | 0.08104 | 3.3027 | 3.6281 | 2 | 4.6 |
| | monthly | 166 | 3.3831 | 0.52173 | 0.04049 | 3.3032 | 3.4631 | 1.6 | 4.6 |
| | Quaterly | 68 | 3.45 | 0.60285 | 0.07311 | 3.3041 | 3.5959 | 1.8 | 4.8 |
| Service | Half yearly | 24 | 3.3917 | 0.7089 | 0.1447 | 3.0923 | 3.691 | 2.4 | 4.8 |
| | seldom | 13 | 3.3692 | 0.40699 | 0.11288 | 3.1233 | 3.6152 | 2.6 | 4 |
| | Total | 400 | 3.427 | 0.59696 | 0.02985 | 3.3683 | 3.4857 | 1.6 | 4.8 |

ANNEXURE 2

QUESTIONNAIRE

Below mentioned are the four malls amongst the four different cities. You are requested to select any one mall that you visit. please tick on the appropriate answer:

- € C-21 mall, Indore
- € DB city mall, Bhopal
- € Alphaone mall, Ahmedabad
- € Inorbit mall, Vadodara

PART-A

- 1. Name (Optional):
- 2. Age (Years): (i) Below 25 (ii) 26-40 (iii) 41-55 (iv) 56 & above
- 3. Gender: (i) Male (ii) Female

How frequently do you visit this shopping mall?

(i) Weekly (ii) Fortnightly (iii) Monthly (iv) Quarterly (v) Half yearly (vi) Seldom

PERCEPTION: The following statements relate to your feelings about the Particular Mall that you visit. Please show the extent to which you believe this Mall has the feature described in the statement. Here, we are interested in a number from 1 to 5 that shows your perceptions about the mall. You should rank each statement as follows:

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Aesthetics | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1.This mall ha | s modern looking equipment and fixtures. |
| 2.The physica | facilities at this mall are visually appealing. |
| 3.The materia | Is associated with this mall's service (such as Brochures, pamphlets etc) are visually appealing. |
| 4.The mall am | bience, air-ventilation, sound proof etc are comfortable for visitors to spend time. |
| 5.This mall ha | s clean, attractive and convenient sitting areas and restrooms. |
| 6.The mall lay | out at this mall makes it easy for customers to find what they need. |
| 7.The employ | ees of this mall are decent and neat appearing. |
| Mall Conveni | ence |
| 8. This mall pr | ovides plenty of convenient parking for customers. |
| 9. This mall pr | ovides easy accessibility to public transport. |
| 10. The websi | te of this mall is well organized and simple to use |
| 11. This mall I | nas operating hours convenient to all its customers. |
| 12. The mall la | ayout at this mall makes it easy for customers to move around in the mall. |
| Mall Policy | |
| 13. This mall o | offers high quality Indian and International brands. |
| 14. This mall i | nsists on computerized and well-maintained records. |
| 15. Special ev | ent programmer information is communicated timely and accurately by this mall. |
| 16. You feel s | afe and secured in your transactions within this mall. |
| 17. This mall | provides a sense of responsibility in serving society |
| Mall Custome | r Service |
| 18. The emplo | yees of this mall are able to handle customer complaints immediately and efficiently. |
| 19. Inquires a | re answered promptly in this mall. |
| 20. Employee | s in this mall are always willing and ready to respond to your needs. |
| 21. Employee | s in this mall are consistently courteous with customers. |
| 22. When you | have a problem, the mall management shows a sincere interest in solving it. |

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