
Original Article

Influence of hedonic and utilitarian values in determining attitude towards malls: A case of Indian small city consumers

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ABSTRACT Mall development, which was restricted to the bigger cities in India, is now making inroads to the mini-metros and smaller cities of the country. Change from traditional retailing formats to an organized multi-assortment format is expected to transform Indian consumers' shopping behaviour. This research article examines the influence of hedonic and utilitarian shopping values on consumers' attitudes towards malls in the smaller cities of India. Emotional and rational shopping motives are supposed to govern the consumer's attitude towards malls. The research was conducted in five mini-metropolitan cities in Northern India (n=325). ANOVA and multiple regression tests were administered to analyze the data. The results show that the hedonic and utilitarian values of small city consumers influenced their attitude towards malls. Results also showed the influence of age in consumers' attitudes towards mall attributes.

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INTRODUCTION

The traditional retail formats with limited assortments catered to the convenience and utilitarian shopping values. The liberalized policies of the Indian government towards retailing and the focus on organized retailing have fuelled a major change in Indian consumers' shopping behaviour. Babin *et al* (1994) state that consumers can have multiple shopping motives and the primary motive is termed as utilitarian. The transition of shopping motives from only utilitarian to more of hedonic or

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pleasure seeking has been triggered by an exponential growth in the number of malls in India. They are set to revolutionize the shopping behaviour of consumers and have an impact on their lifestyle. For most consumers shopping implies more than the fulfilment of a task (Bloch *et al*, 1986) and provides experiential and non-utilitarian values (Sheth, 1983; Holbrook and Corfman, 1985; Babin *et al*, 1994; Buss, 1997; Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Fiore and Kim (2007) suggest that a 'consumer's shopping experience vacillates between or enmeshes rational and hedonic elements'. The consumers' shopping behaviour is a result of integrative elements and the store design and décor enhance the pleasurable components of shopping, improving the utilitarian value of the products (Baker *et al*, 2002). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) propose that in contrast to utilitarian values, some shopping environments can add to the experiential values wherein interaction with product and services can be intrinsically fulfilling. The research has combined two elements: the hedonic and utilitarian shopping values of Indian consumers and its impact on consumers' attitudes towards malls.

The expansion of mall culture across the country has significantly affected the Indian consumers' shopping motives. The cheaper real estate prices in Tier II and III cities offer excellent investment opportunities to set up malls in these areas (KPMG, 2010). The stagnating growth in metropolitan cities coupled with increased competition among mall operators has prompted retail growth in the smaller cities in India. The smaller cities offer low entry costs as compared with saturated space in the bigger cities (Dwivedi, 2010). This research aimed to study the influence of hedonic and utilitarian values on consumers' attitudes towards mall attributes that is, aesthetics, escape, flow, exploration, role-enactment, social and convenience. The hedonic and utilitarian shopping values were adapted from the scale developed by Babin *et al* (1994) and the seven mall attributes were adapted from the scale used by Ahmed *et al* (2007). The influx of mall activity would change the shopping behaviour of an Indian small city shopper; however, the mall operators and retailers also need to understand the implications of consumer needs while planning malls in smaller cities. The consumers in small cities of India are different from their counterparts inhabiting the metropolitan cities. The differences lie in their income levels, purchasing power, social class and lifestyle. Thus, the mall culture, which has transformed the life of the metropolitan cities may not get similar results in these cities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hedonic and utilitarian shopping values

A consumer's behaviour is a result of motives, attitudes and values and may manifest into purchase and consumption behaviour. Westbrook and Black (1985) posit that some shopping motives are utilitarian in nature whereas others are hedonic. The utilitarian and hedonic values have been the focus of much interest and research (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Batra and Ahtola, 1991; Babin *et al*, 1994; Wang *et al*, 2000; Millan and



Howard, 2007; Teller *et al*, 2008). Consumer values have been broadly termed as utilitarian (Bloch and Bruce, 1984; Batra and Ahtola, 1991; Engel *et al*, 1993; Babin *et al*, 1994) which are more task oriented in nature and hedonic which are related to entertainment and fun-seeking behaviour (Bellenger *et al*, 1976). Bloch and Richins (1983) postulate that hedonic values are characterized by heightened arousal, excitement, adventure and entertainment. Shopping behaviour provides excitement whereas the consumer interacts with the store environment and gives cues while they examine products (MacInnis and Price, 1987) that may be perceived as enjoyment.

Consumers with strong hedonic values may not be satisfied with the functional aspects of shopping and may look for pleasurable stimulants (Fischer and Arnold, 1990; Wang *et al*, 2000). The hedonic values are related to gratification of the senses enhanced through experiences of pleasure, entertainment, fantasy and playfulness (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Babin *et al*, 1994). The consumer values have been defined in terms of being intrinsic and extrinsic; the extrinsic values are related to the functional attributes of shopping, and are mainly 'utilitarian' in nature. The intrinsic values signify the 'enjoyment, fun and leisure' motives (Babin *et al*, 1994). The utilitarian values are based upon rational and analytical information processing whereas the hedonic values comprise of arousal of the senses (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman, 1983; Fischer and Arnold, 1990) and self gratification.

The traditional shopping behaviours of product acquisition and consumption may no longer explain the shopping 'experience' the consumers seek when they go to a store or a mall. They look beyond mere assortment of products and functional attributes. Babin *et al* (1994) state that most consumption activities must combine both utilitarian and hedonic attributes and their absence may not reflect the totality of shopping experience (Bloch and Richins, 1983). Research in the past few years has recognized the pivotal role hedonic values play in shopping and how they add to the emotional value (Langrehr, 1991; Babin *et al*, 1994; Roy, 1994).

Mall attributes

Malls are viewed as centres of social interaction (Robertson, 1995) and are organized as social spaces for entertainment, interaction with friends and family and excitement (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993). To attract consumers, malls are coupling traditional selling activity with other value-added services, which make malls retail-entertainment complexes (Csaba and Askegaard, 1999; Stoel *et al*, 2004; Laroche *et al*, 2005; Michon *et al*, 2008). Carr (1990) posits that shopping motives range between pleasurable/hedonic to functional and malls that are able to deliver fun retail formats (Cope, 1996; Burke, 1997; Wakefield and Baker, 1998) will be successful. Shopping malls have been of interest for researchers (Goss, 1993; Robertson, 1995; Buss, 1997; Miller, 1998; Csaba and Askegaard, 1999; Castaldo and Botti, 2001; Yavas, 2003; Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Resciniti, 2004; Rintamäki *et al*, 2006; Ahmed *et al*, 2007; Ooi and Sim, 2007; Michon *et al*, 2008; Teller *et al*,

2008) as they suggest a multitude of factors influencing consumers' shopping behaviour.

The attractiveness of a mall is affected by different attributes (Stassen *et al.*, 1999) and researchers have examined the factors that contribute to mall and retail patronage and its attractions (Howell and Rogers, 1980; Finn and Louviere, 1990; Finn and Louviere, 1996; Swait and Sweeney, 2000; Darian *et al.*, 2001; Yavas, 2003; De Juan, 2004). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggest that malls are a central point of community entertainment and interaction and contribute to a city's social and economic environment (Hernandez and Jones, 2005; Padilla and Eastlick, 2009). The factors influencing consumers' shopping behaviour in malls are categorized under seven attributes:

Belk (1975) suggests that the ambience, layout and design of a store affect shopping behaviour. The *aesthetics* variable in malls relates to the design, facilities, interiors, décor, aisle, heating, lighting, colour, crowd, music, cleanliness and layout (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Bellizzi and Hite, 1987; Donovan *et al.*, 1994). The presence of positive stimulants encourage consumers to visit malls (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Phillips and Sternthal, 1977; Bone and Ellen, 1999; Laroche *et al.*, 2005) and the retail store environment has an effect on the consumer's moods, perceptions and attitudes (Gardner, 1985; Michon *et al.*, 2008) consequently influencing their purchase motivations and intentions. The store atmosphere affects the emotional and cognitive elements of consumers (Stockil, 1972; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Bitner, 1992; Jackson and Konell, 1993; Babin and Attaway, 2000; Beyard *et al.*, 2001; De Nisco and Napolitano, 2006) and influences the consumer's evaluation of products (Baker *et al.*, 1994). The design and ambience of malls add to their theatrical and pretentious character (Belk and Bryce, 1993; El Sayed *et al.*, 2004; Ooi and Sim, 2007).

The mall environment provides cues or stimuli that help consumers to relax and improve their moods (Bitner, 1992; Michon *et al.*, 2005). This enables them to *escape* from their daily work pressures. Batra and Ahtola (1991) have stated that utilitarian values are related with rational motives and hedonic values are more related with 'playfulness and fantasy' (Babin *et al.*, 1994). Thus, this dimension of escapism can help consumers relax in the mall environment and spend time in a 'friendly environment' (Dennis *et al.*, 2001). Hedonic consumers look for shopping experience (Kim, 2002) and the escape variable enhances their experience.

The *flow* variable is defined 'as the state in which people are so intensely involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter, the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at a great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The flow variable includes dimensions such as concentration, control, challenge and enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Ghani and Desphande, 1994). Babin *et al.* (1994) have discussed the enjoyment motive in shopping and flow shopping behaviour enables consumers to become involved in mall stores and lose sense of time (Lui, 1997) in a recreational activity.

Arnold and Reynolds (2003) have recognized six dimensions to the hedonic shopping values, which comprise of adventure, gratification,



role, value, social and idea shopping. The consumers' choice of mall is governed by being able to *explore* an assortment of outlets (Lindquist, 1973; Messinger and Narasimhan, 1997; Wakefield and Baker, 1998) and this affects store patronage (Yavas, 2003). Malls offering a range of stores (Abratt *et al.*, 1985; McGoldrick and Thomson, 1992; Prendergast *et al.*, 1998) appeal to both utilitarian and hedonic shopping motives.

The *role enactment* attribute has its roots in the motivational and personality theories, where most people seek ego-enhancement (Goffman, 1959). Shopping helps people to exhibit various roles and they seek 'ego-enhancement to their self concept' (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Westbrook and Black (1985) state that shopping motives are governed by a consumer's role in society and the duties they have to fulfil towards their family. These are prescribed by culture. Tauber (1972) states 'Many activities are learned behaviours, traditionally expected or accepted as part of a certain position or role in society – mother, housewife, husband or student. A person internalizes these behaviours as "required" and is motivated to participate in the expected activities'. The utilitarian shopper visits malls in order to perform their responsibilities of being a father, mother, wife or husband whereas other consumers enjoy shopping for hedonic values (Babin *et al.*, 1994).

Tauber (1972) states that people go shopping when they desire attention, interact with peer groups and want to meet people with similar interests. Malls try to increase the consumers' patronage by appealing to their *social* motives (Chandon *et al.*, 2000; Solomon, 2002; Rintamäki *et al.*, 2006). Malls are often a central point for community interaction and entertainment and fulfil the social and hedonic shopping needs of consumers (Tauber, 1972; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Malls provide social space (Bowlby, 1987) and impersonal space (Chaplin and Holding, 1998).

Convenience in shopping can be perceived as the functional benefits that malls provide to consumers (Sheth, 1983) that help to maximize cost, time and place benefits. Consumers perceive monetary savings (Chandon *et al.*, 2000) as a utilitarian benefit, which can enhance the satisfaction a consumer feels with a store. Seiders *et al.* (2000) define convenience as the ratio of inputs to outputs and energy and effort spent for acquiring products. Malls with a variety of outlets reduce the effort expended by consumers in looking for an assortment of products in dispersed shopping environments (Kirkup and Rafiq, 1994).

Hypothesis 1: Hedonic and utilitarian values will have a positive relationship with all the seven mall attributes.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a difference in the attitude between age groups with respect to mall attributes.

Hypothesis 3: The two genders would differ in their attitudes towards mall attributes.

Hypothesis 4: There will be an interaction effect of the hedonic and utilitarian values of the consumers on their attitude towards mall attributes.

Hypothesis 5: The hedonic values, utilitarian values, age and gender of the consumers will influence their attitude towards mall attributes.

‘A wide selection of products also can minimize the perceived costs (for example, travel time, effort) associated with each shopping trip and ease the shopping task’ (Pan and Zinkhan, 2006). Malls are spacious and provide shoppers with access to all kinds of products under one roof (McDonald, 1999). Miceli *et al* (1998) state that having more variety would be major contributor in drawing store traffic in to malls as it fulfils the consumers’ need for convenience. The consumers’ perceived expenditure of time and effort affects their choice of retail outlets as they give priority to service convenience (Berry *et al*, 2002). In malls, they have to expend less time on their routine shopping and can get discounts and promotional offers. The convenience may also be attributed to the easy accessibility the consumer has to the shopping centre, thus location convenience would also influence preference for malls (Bearden, 1977; Bellenger *et al*, 1977; Severin *et al*, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire comprised of two sections. The first section of the questionnaire was adapted from Babin *et al* (1994) comprising of hedonic and utilitarian shopping values. There was a total of 11 items in the hedonic variable and there were four items for the utilitarian values. The total number of items in this section was 15. The second section of the questionnaire was adapted from the mall attributes developed by Ahmed *et al* (2007) and Bloch *et al* (1994). The total constructs in this section were segregated under seven mall attributes comprising of aesthetics (five items), escape (seven items), flow (three items), exploration (four items), role enactment (two items), social (two items) and convenience (four items). The total number of items in this section was 27.

The data was collected from five cities in Northern India (Ghaziabad, Banaras, Bareilly, Modinagar and Allahabad). A random sampling technique was used, and respondents were contacted through the mall intercept method. A total of 80 questionnaires were filled out from each city. The respondents were requested to help in the research and asked to complete the questionnaires. The constructs were rated on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 – strongly agree to 5 – strongly disagree. The total sample size was 400, but only 325 completed questionnaires were received. The 75 other questionnaires could not be used, as they were illegible and incomplete.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The reliability testing of the questionnaire was done to understand whether the scale could be used for further research purposes. Chronbach’s (1951) coefficient α measures the extent to which the scale items cohere with each other. The reliability of the items by computing the Chronbach’s α and the score for the same was 0.707 for hedonic and utilitarian scale and for mall attributes scale it was 0.860. According to Nunnally (1978), reliability coefficients of 0.70 or more are considered as



a criterion for an internally consistent scale constructs, however, the use of a minimum α value of 0.60 is also considered appropriate for initial research instrument validation.

The total number of male respondents was 168 comprising of 51.7 per cent and there were 157 females comprising of 48.3 per cent of the total respondents. The sample consisted of four segments of consumer age groups (Table 1).

To understand the relationship between hedonic and utilitarian shopping values and the mall attributes (seven), correlation was computed. The results are shown in Table 2.

The Correlation results show a positive relationship between hedonic values and mall attributes. The results are significant at 0.01 levels and 0.05 levels. The results suggest that most consumers consider malls as a venue for enjoyment, relaxation and entertainment and support the assumption of Sheth (1983) that non-functional motives of consumers are related to associating shopping centres with 'social, emotional and epistemic values' and functional motives are related to time, possession and place need. Malls are supposed to fulfil the functional needs of consumers by maximizing cost, time and place utilities and consumers perceived malls as fulfilling their primary needs of shopping. This supports earlier research that shows that consumers are attracted to malls as they help them to fulfil the primary need of buying products (Sheth, 1983; Rintamäki *et al.*, 2006). The utilitarian benefit can be interpreted from the monetary (Chandon *et al.*, 2000) and time saving benefits that consumers look for in the mall shopping experience. Thus, for Indian small town shoppers, malls enhance the experiential, emotional and functional benefits. The research findings support earlier research that suggests that malls are perceived as enhancing the shopping experience

Table 1: Age segments

Age groups	Frequency	Percentage
20–30 years	180	55.4
30–40 years	68	20.9
40–50 years	48	14.8
50 years and above	29	8.9
Total	325	100

Table 2: Correlation between hedonic and utilitarian values with mall attributes

	Aesthetic	Escape	Flow	Exploration	Role	Social	Convenience
<i>Hedonic</i>							
Pearson correlation	0.397**	0.501**	0.438**	0.476**	0.172**	0.383**	0.346**
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.000
N	324	323	325	325	324	324	322
<i>Utilitarian</i>							
Pearson correlation	0.332**	0.279**	0.343**	0.372**	0.231**	0.269**	0.340**
Significance (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	324	323	325	325	324	324	322

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Buss, 1997; Wakefield and Baker, 1998; Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Hypothesis 1 gets accepted that there exists a relationship between hedonic and utilitarian shopping values and mall attributes.

To understand, if any, significant differences exist between the various age groups of consumers and their attitude towards the seven mall attributes, an ANOVA test was run (as shown in Table 3).

The ANOVA results for the hedonic, utilitarian and mall attributes show that between different age groups there was no significant difference in hedonic and utilitarian values for escape, flow, exploration, role and convenience attributes. The various age groups differed in their attitude towards the aesthetic and social attributes of the mall. The results

Table 3: ANOVA for age

	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	Significance
<i>Hedonic</i>					
Between groups	119.749	3	39.916	1.413	0.239
Within groups	9037.498	320	28.242	—	—
Total	9157.247	323	—	—	—
<i>Utilitarian</i>					
Between groups	17.918	3	5.973	1.187	0.315
Within groups	1609.524	320	5.030	—	—
Total	1627.441	323	—	—	—
<i>Aesthetic</i>					
Between groups	98.248	3	32.749	3.721	0.012*
Within groups	2807.380	319	8.801	—	—
Total	2905.628	322	—	—	—
<i>Escape</i>					
Between groups	89.154	3	29.718	1.215	0.304
Within groups	7776.970	318	24.456	—	—
Total	7866.124	321	—	—	—
<i>Flow</i>					
Between groups	8.809	3	2.936	0.545	0.652
Within groups	1723.496	320	5.386	—	—
Total	1732.306	323	—	—	—
<i>Exploration</i>					
Between groups	36.143	3	12.048	2.383	0.069
Within groups	1617.595	320	5.055	—	—
Total	1653.738	323	—	—	—
<i>Role</i>					
Between groups	4.865	3	1.622	0.797	0.496
Within groups	648.763	319	2.034	—	—
Total	653.628	322	—	—	—
<i>Social</i>					
Between groups	19.101	3	6.367	3.176	0.024*
Within groups	639.518	319	2.005	—	—
Total	658.619	322	—	—	—
<i>Convenience</i>					
Between groups	9.245	3	3.082	0.464	0.708
Within groups	2106.986	317	6.647	—	—
Total	2116.231	320	—	—	—

*Significant at 0.05 level.



are significant at 0.05 level ($P=0.012$ for aesthetic and 0.024 for social). The results show that younger consumers (age groups 20–40 years) give more importance to the ambience and layout of the malls as compared to the older consumers. The young generation considered malls as places for socialization, meeting friends, outings with the family and entertainment. For the older generation, the social attribute of the mall is not as important. The younger consumer groups are more enthusiastic about the tangible and experiential aspects of malls. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is partially accepted.

The ANOVA test for gender was also run, but the results were not significant between the genders. Hypothesis 3 gets rejected as the females and males showed a similar attitude towards hedonic and utilitarian values and mall attributes.

For the next tests, the seven mall attributes were taken as one variable. The mall attribute variable was the sum of all of the seven mall attributes. The purpose was to see whether the hedonic and utilitarian values of the consumers interacted in influencing the consumers' behaviour towards the mall attributes. An ANCOVA test was performed (Table 4).

Hypothesis 4 is rejected, as there is no interaction effect of hedonic and utilitarian variables on consumers' attitudes towards mall attributes. The $P=0.076$ shows that the results are insignificant. There is limited or no association between hedonic and utilitarian values and consumers' attitudes towards mall attributes.

Multiple regression tests were run to understand the demographic and psychographic predictors to mall attributes (Table 5).

Table 4: ANCOVA

Variable	F	Significance
Hedonic	5.594	0.000
Utilitarian	2.168	0.011
Hedonic×Utilitarian	1.282	0.076

Full model F statistic=3.248, significance=0.000.

Adjusted $R^2=0.498$, $n=325$.

Dependent variable: mall attributes.

Table 5: Multiple regression analysis – predictors to consumers attitude towards mall attributes

Values	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Significance
	B	Standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	19.393	3.550	—	5.463	0.000
Hedonic values	1.141	0.105	0.506	10.900	0.000**
Utilitarian values	1.434	0.249	0.268	5.753	0.000**
Age of respondents	1.160	0.512	0.095	2.264	0.024*
Gender of respondents	-0.776	1.009	-0.032	-0.769	0.442

**Significant at 0.01 level.

*Significant at 0.05 level.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: MALL ATTRIBUTES

The hedonic and utilitarian values, age and gender, were taken as independent variables. The results show that $P=0.000$ for hedonic and utilitarian values and for age $P=0.024$. The consumers' attitudes towards mall attributes are influenced by the hedonic and utilitarian values as well as age. The gender of the respondent does not play a significant role in consumers' attitudes towards malls. The results postulate that for Indian mini-metropolitan consumers malls combine the hedonic and utilitarian aspects, which place high value to the experiential attributes. Shopping involves not only the functional components but also involves seeking pleasure, socialization, information and self gratification (Sheth *et al*, 1999). The results are in tandem with earlier research that suggests that malls make shopping a relaxing, self-gratifying, entertaining and emotional activity (Westbrook and Black, 1985; Dawson *et al*, 1990; Babin *et al*, 1994; Kang and Kim, 1999; Rintamäki *et al*, 2006; Millan and Howard, 2007; Teller *et al*, 2008) and that psychological factors play an important role in shopping behaviour and consumers' attitudes towards malls (Bloch *et al*, 1994; Donovan *et al*, 1994; Millan and Howard, 2007). Shopping malls with food courts, shopping areas, cinema theatres and gaming areas cater to different consumer age groups. The reason for visiting malls varies across age groups as consumer motivations differ significantly. These findings support earlier research which states that shopping malls are convenient for the utilitarian shopper because of the peripheral location, parking facilities (Teller *et al*, 2008) and variety of stores at one location (Lindquist, 1973; Messinger and Narasimhan, 1997; Wakefield and Baker, 1998). The different brands available at malls make it easier for consumers to compare their features, prices and offers. The recent growth of malls has given small city shoppers the advantage of exploring both the hedonic and utilitarian aspects of shopping. There used to be limited branded stores in small cities. The malls have provided not only variety but also have changed the nature of shopping from being merely utilitarian in nature to more exploratory and hedonic. The coming of malls is looked at with considerable excitement in small cities.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In the small towns of India, even though malls are being looked upon with considerable interest, the question remains whether consumers would prefer to shop at the malls. The consumers in these cities are accustomed to the local stores for purchasing products. They are used to the local stores that stock products according to their needs. The malls, with their branded stores, air conditioned ambience and spatial layouts are considered exciting. The youth frequent the mall because it enables them to meet friends, watch movies and enjoy the food at the food courts. Families frequent it as it provides them with a place to spend Sundays and spend time together. However, the expensive products at the stores in the malls may not be a major attraction for mall goers of small towns. The incomes and purchasing patterns of small town consumers is different from that of metropolitan city consumers. The metropolitan city consumers with higher incomes, higher social class and larger disposable



incomes can afford to spend time and resources at the malls. However, the small city shopper may not be able to make purchases at the malls. The stores would encourage and motivate them to visit the malls but may not compel them to make purchases. The psychographic and demographic variables in small cities are different from bigger cities. This must be considered while planning the malls in small cities. The new malls coming up in the mini-metros in India should include cinema theatres, gyms, gaming spaces for kids, food courts and stores that cater to the pockets of the consumers.

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