



PERCEPTION ON EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING OF SHOPPING MALLS - A STUDY OF FORUM SUJANA MALL

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on shopping experience as an example of experiential marketing using shopping malls online reviews as secondary data. The study will make use of qualitative and quantitative content analysis. In this study, the qualitative research method is used to derive particular concepts involved in the shopping experience from the reviews. Similarly, quantitative content analysis methods will be used to provide rich and valuable information about the concepts explored from the qualitative data. The study briefly reviews the literature on the experience economy and the shopping experience as well as the basic theories and studies that involve the shopping context. Finally, the results of preliminary studies are illustrated, which reveal the effectiveness and applicability of the study in bringing about new outcomes to the field of shopping experience that contribute to the academic interest in the field of experience economy.

Keywords: shopping experience, experience marketing, hedonism, intentional behavior, retailing, forum sujana mall

1. Introduction

Experiential marketing, sometimes called "engagement marketing", "event marketing", "on-ground marketing", "live marketing", "participation marketing", or "special events" is a marketing strategy that directly engages consumers and invites and encourages them to participate in the evolution of a brand or a brand experience. Rather than looking at consumers as passive receivers of messages, experiential marketers believe that consumers should be actively

involved in the production and co-creation of marketing programs, developing a relationship with the brand.

Consumer Engagement is when a brand and a consumer connect. Experiential marketing is the live, one-on-one interactions that allow consumers to create connections with brands. Consumers will continue to seek and demand one-on-one, shareable interaction with a brand.

Experiential marketing is a growing trend which involves marketing a product or a service through experiences that engage the customers and create emotional attachment to the product/service. Physical and interactive experiences are used to reinforce the offer of a product and make customers feel as if they are part of them. Experiences are positively related to customer's attitudes, mood and behaviours. They also represent a means through which a company can gain competitive advantage by differentiating itself from competitors. To achieve success, an experience should be engaging, compelling and able to touch the customer's senses and capture his/her loyalty.

There are many aspects which differentiate traditional marketing from the experiential one. First, experiential marketing focuses on providing sensory, emotional, cognitive and rational values to the consumers. Second, experiential marketing aims to create synergies among meaning, perception, consumption and brand loyalty. Furthermore, experiential marketing requires a more diverse range of research methods in order to understand consumers.

Nowadays, experiential marketing is getting more technologically advanced and personalised. The wide spread of the Internet and the increasing competition among online retailers has led to the rise of virtual experiential marketing (VEM). VEM uses the Internet and its various channels to create an enriched and engaging experience by using visual and audio tools. VEM relies on an electronic environment that engages customers and arouses their emotional responses to create an unparalleled experience and consequently capture their loyalty. The elements which characterize virtual experiential marketing are: sense, interaction, pleasure, flow and community relationship. Furthermore, affective involvement has been identified as a key factor which affects online purchase intention. Thus, the online experience must emphasize an emotional appeal to the consumer in order to build purchase intention.

1.1 Forum Sujana Mall – A brief profile

The Forum Sujana Mall was opened in September 2014, this is one of the most desirable malls in Hyderabad. The Prestige Group, in association with CapitalLand and Sujana Group, has gifted the city of Hyderabad 8,50,000sq.ft. of exquisite retail space, with presence of over 100 outlets.

Anchors comprise brands like Zara, Central, M&S, Forever21, Westside and more. Forum Sujana brings to Hyderabad brands like adidas Originals, Zara, GANT, Nautica, Sephora, Avirate, Forever21, Starbucks and TGIF.

For entertainment, there is PVR Cinemas with 9 screens and SVM with both a bowling alley and a gaming arcade.

Forum Malls incorporate several innovative features to minimize environmental impact and conserve energy and natural resources. All the malls are designed in a way to allow maximum ventilation. They have intelligent Building Management System (BMS) in place, which increases efficiency and thus the productivity of resources. They also provide high creativity, higher aesthetics and highest technologies to all their customers.

The group believes that the success of malls largely depends on the area they are located in and to this intent, they have positioned each mall relevant to their catchment. Their attempt is to make the mall more interesting for the consumers. At the same time, as the younger segment of the Indian population keeps increasing with more than 60 per cent of the shopper Walk-inns being below the age of 27 years, they try to engage this segment with events, activities, and promotions. In addition, looking at the increasing consumption pattern of Indians, they believe that malls and shopping centers will form the next big social infrastructure. After home and office, it will be the mall that people will head to.

2. Review of Literature

A majority of retailing malls in India are to provide divergent experience of shopping to consumers (Jhamb&Kiran 2012). Holbrook (1982) states that malls are attractive place which aids social interactions and entertainment. Bloch et al. (1994) & Geuens et al. (2001) identified different patterns of the shopping malls.

These patterns were high levels of purchasing experience the mall aesthetics, architectural design, appearance, a relief from boredom, substitute for monotonous life, exploring new brands and outlets within the mall and enjoyment of communicating and socializing with others. Anuradha and Manohar (2011) investigated the customer shopping experience in two malls in Chennai (India). The study concluded that the reasons identified were (in the order of preference): shopping ambience, availability of different types of shops, entertainment offered at malls, parking facility, ease of shopping, good product quality, discount and sales promotion, pride and prestige attached shopping.

Consumers visit shopping malls with the sole intention of entertainment and for making use of all facilities under one roof, Wakefield and Baker, (1998) and Rajagopal (2008). These days, consumers tend to be selective because of the growing number of malls. They are more likely to patronize malls that are more attractive and have a wide variety of stores and merchandise that match their preferences (El-Adly, 2007). Therefore, it is essential for mall managers to keep in mind the attractiveness attributes while developing their malls, (Wong et al., 2001). A comprehensive review of the shopping mall attractiveness attributes that drive mall patronage is outlined in the table below

Table 1: Shopping Mall Attractiveness Attributes

Authors and Attributes	Assortment of Merchandise	Nice Packaging of products	Improved Quality	Proper Display	Reasonable Price	Availability of Brands	Availability of Products	Exchange facilities	Parking Facility	Adequate Dressing Rooms	In-store Promotions	Pleasant Ambience	Children Play Area	Trained Sales Personnel	Convenient Shopping Hours	Suitable Location
Dubihlela & Dubihlela (2014)	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓
Gudonavičienė & Aljosiene (2013)	✓		✓			✓			✓						✓	
Wong et al. (2012)														✓	✓	
Jhamb & Kiran (2012)	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓				✓	✓		
Anuradha & Manohar (2011)									✓			✓			✓	
Jain & Bagdare (2010)	✓	✓		✓						✓		✓				
Patel & Sharma (2009)	✓					✓		✓		✓	✓			✓		✓
Teller (2008)									✓							
Rajagopal (2008)	✓			✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

3. Objective of the Study

1. To evaluate the online reviews of The Forum Sujana Mall.
2. To identify and study the factors influencing experiential value of the 'The Forum Sujana' Mall visitor.
3. To study the Experiential Marketing in The Forum Sujana Mall.

4. Research Methodology

Sources of data – Secondary data in the form of online customer reviews have been used. The data has been sourced from makemytrip.com.

Type of study – A descriptive study was done to understand the effect of Experiential Marketing on the customers of Forum Sujana Mall.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis of the data collected is as follows

Visitor type

One of the factors influencing the consumer behavior is the accompanying person to a retail outlet. This also influences the experiential value he attains.

Table 1
Visitor type

Visitor Type	No. of Reviews	% of Reviews
Families	29	42.65%
Couples	10	14.70%
Solo	3	4.41%
Friends	26	38.24%
Business	0	0%
Total	68	100%

Source: <https://www.tripadvisor.in>

The above table reveals the type of visitors visiting the ‘The Forum Sujana Mall’. It is evident from the above table that of the total sample 42.65 percent are families, 38.24 percent are friends and followed by 14.70 percent of couples. In a nutshell, the majority of the visitors prefer visiting the mall either with families or friends. Singles visiting the malls are a mere 4.41 percent. The same is shown in the graph.

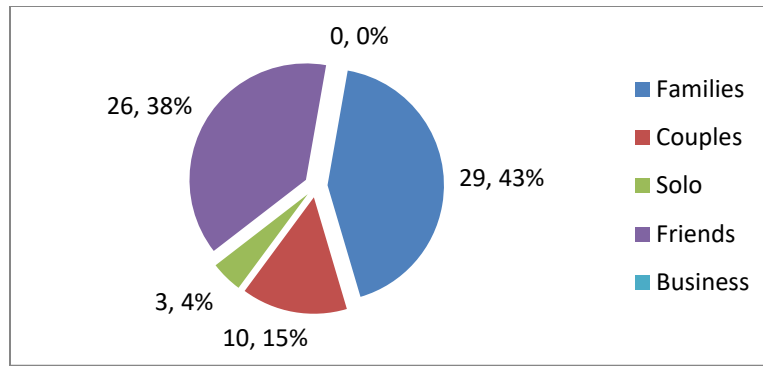


Figure 1

Visiting Period

Time of the year a visitor visiting the mall is an important demographic variable to be studied.

Table 2

Time of Year

Time of Year Visitor Visiting	No. of Reviews	% of Reviews
Mar-May	22	29.73%
Jun-Aug	20	27.03%
Sep-Nov	15	20.27%
Dec-Feb	17	22.97%
Total	74	100%

Source: <https://www.tripadvisor.in>

From the above table it is evident that 29.73 percent of the total sample visits the mall in the months March to May. 27.03 percent visiting during June to August, visitors visiting in September to November constitute 20.27 percent followed by 22.97 percent visiting in the period December to February.

By and large the visitors' visiting the 'The Forum Sujana Mall' is consistent round the year and can be depicted in a graph as below.

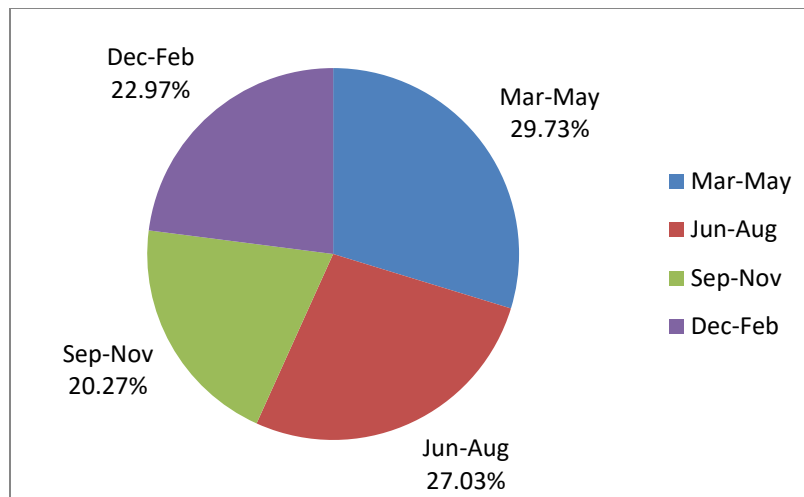


Figure 2

Shopping experience

Shopping experience is very closely related to experiential value attained. A positive shopping experience means a positive experiential value attained. The table below summarizes the findings.

Table 3

Shopping Experience

Response	No. of Reviews	% of Reviews
Excellent	5	50.00%
Very Good	5	50.00%
Average	0	
Poor	0	
Total	10	100%

Source: <https://www.tripadvisor.in>

Out of the total 76 reviews 10 have explicitly discussed shopping experience with adjectives such as amazing, good, lovable and awesome. The ten reviewers have rated shopping experience as *Excellent* and *Very Good* at 50 percent each. The same is shown in the graph.

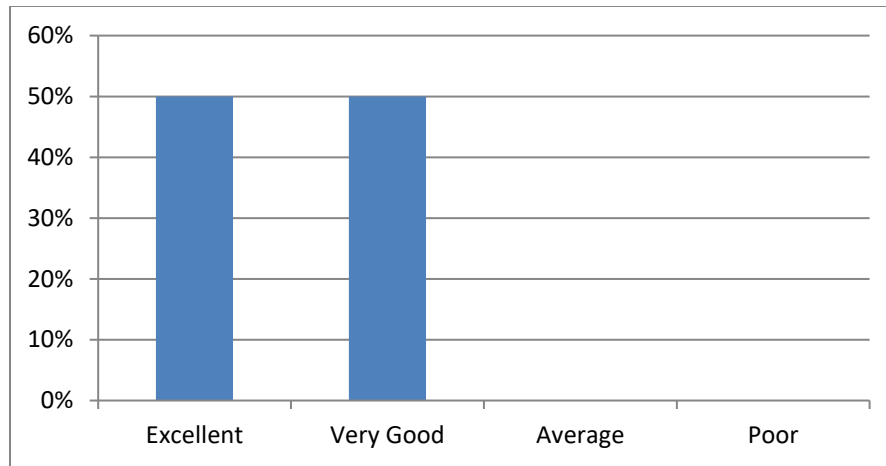


Figure 3

Food court

Dining has become part of outing and particularly for people residing in Hyderabad who are food freaks and a lot of experiential value is at stake.

A total of 29 reviewers have reviewed on the food court present at ‘The Forum Sujana Mall’ the rating are which are depicted in the following table.

Table 4

Food Court

Response	No. of Reviews	% of Reviews
Excellent	14	48.27%
Very Good	12	41.38%
Average	2	6.90%
Poor	1	3.45%
Total	29	100%

Source: <https://www.tripadvisor.in>

48.27 percent of the reviewers have rated the food court of ‘The Forum Sujana Mall’ as *Excellent* while 41.38 percent have rated it as *Very Good*. On the whole an outstanding 89.65 percent of the reviewers gave a very positive verdict. The graph below projects the same.

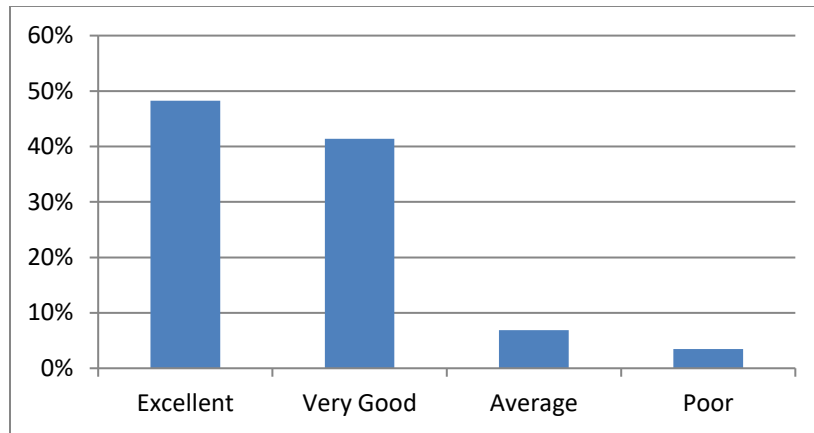


Figure 4

MultiPlex

Standalone cinema halls are a passé now days, with a majority of the people preferring a combo entertainment and value for money.

13 reviewers out of the total 76 have reviewed on cinema, multiplex and PVR cinemas to be precise. Further statistics of which is as follows in the table below.

Table 5
Multiplex Cinemas

Response	No. of Reviews	% of Reviews
Excellent	4	30.77%
Very Good	8	61.54%
Average	1	7.69%
Poor	0	0.00%
Total	13	100%

Source: <https://www.tripadvisor.in>

61.54 percent of the reviewers who discussed about multiplexes have rated *Very Good* followed by 30.77 reviewers who have given a rating of *Excellent*. On the whole 92.31 percent of the reviewers are overwhelmed by the presence and experience of the PVR cinema at ‘The Forum Sujana Mall’. The graph below gives a pictorial version of the same.

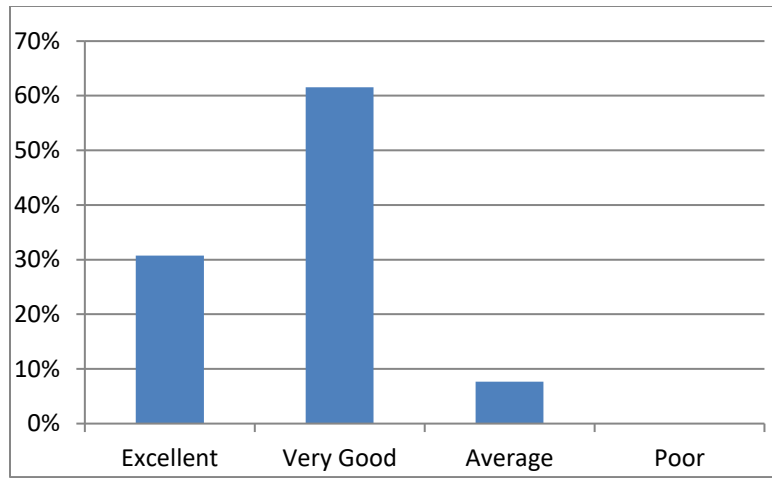


Figure 5

Parking

Parking now a days has become a decisive factor and is responsible for a person’s decision on where to go and where not to. Parking heckles can ruin a day’s fun, whereas a good parking means peace of mind.

Around 18 people have reviewed on parking experience, the responses of which can be tabulated as follows.

Table 6

Parking

Response	No. of Reviews	% of Reviews
Excellent	6	33.33%
Very Good	9	50.00%
Average	2	11.11%
Poor	1	5.56%
Total	18	100%

Source: <https://www.tripadvisor.in>

With regard to parking experience 50 percent of the reviewers have rated *Very Good* and 33.33 percent as *Excellent*. A meek 5.56 percent only have rated the parking experience as *Poor*. Overall 83.33 percent have very favorable views on parking at ‘The Forum Sujana Mall’. The same is shown in the graph.

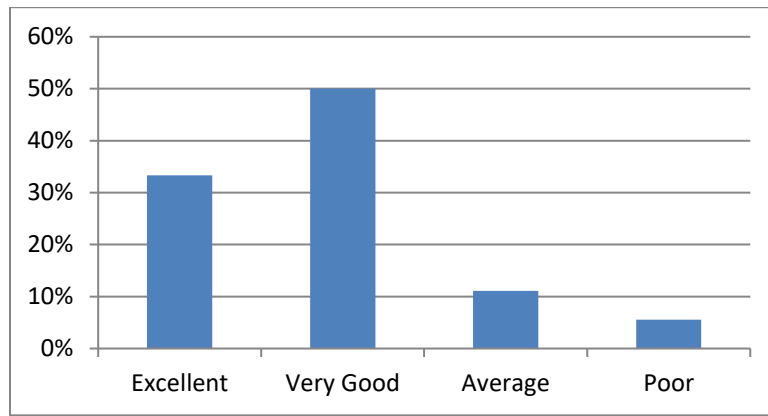


Figure 6

Overall

The overall rating encompasses the individual scores and is very influential for others to make a choice. The table below gives a glimpse of the same.

Table 7

Overall Rating

Response	No. of Reviews	% of Reviews
Excellent	34	45.95%
Very Good	33	44.59%
Average	6	8.11%
Poor	1	1.35%
Total	74	100%

Source: <https://www.tripadvisor.in>

It is clear from the above table that 45.95 percent of the people have rated *Excellent* in the online reviews of ‘The Forum Sujana mall’ complimenting this 44.59 percent of the people have rated *Very Good* for ‘The Forum Sujana mall’. An insignificant 1.35 percent have rated ‘The Forum Sujana mall’ as *Poor*. The graph below sums up the same.

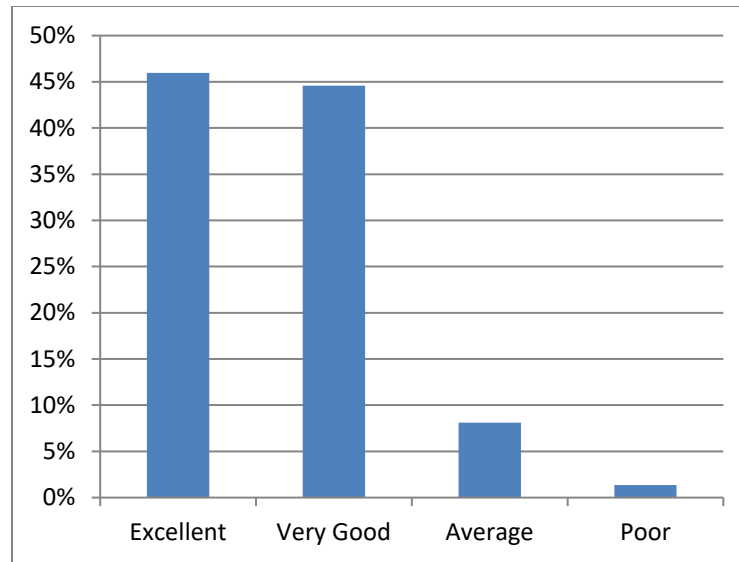


Figure 7

6. Conclusion

Extant studies identify online customer reviews as a data source that can reflect consumer perceptions and feedbacks (Chatterjee, 2001; Hu, Liu, & Zhang, 2008; Vermeulen&Seegers, 2009). Reviews provide personal consumer perceptions from those who experience an event. It is also noteworthy that review writers are volunteer participants who offer valuable insights about the subject of the study; they are less biased toward a research purpose. These writers also feel free to provide details about their experiences due to the anonymity or lack of identifying disclosure and also because they are not pressured to offer a review. Moreover, use of the Internet is growing and is likely to soon become a primary source of information. Another feature of review writing is that it offers no monetary reward, so there is no possibility that this source of information utilized is biased toward aggressive ratings.

In the current study on ‘The Forum Sujana Mall’ based on the rating by the reviewers the web portal <https://www.tripadvisor.in> has given an overall rating of 4½ ★. It has inbuilt search engines which mine-out the reviews based on the keywords that are frequently used in feedbacks and reviews.

A number of factors in the form of keywords were studied and their rating analyzed. Most of the reviews were very positive and attracted positive adjectives reflecting the prevailing Mall culture of the society.

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