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Mall shopping culture- a developing trend among the middle income group population in Patna

(A study conducted with special reference to the buying behaviour of the middle income group)

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Abstract : *Shopping habits have been changing and the advent of multi-brand retail outlets and malls, have brought about a drastic transformation in the buying behavioural habits especially that of the middle income group. This research is a blend of the study of buying behaviour vis-à-vis that of cultural changes. It aims at assessing and analysing the concept of retail buying habits of the middle income group in Patna.*

Keywords : *Middle income group; Awareness, Mindset and Perception; Malls and Conventional Grocery Stores.*

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Introduction :

The developing Indian retail market is characterized by luring domestic and foreign investors, its growing and ever hungry consumers and their apparently insatiable demand for all good things in life- from groceries to vegetables to fancy gadgets to fancier cars. Gone are the days when people had to buy different things at different places. Now, things have changed, thanks to the beautiful malls opened across the country in the last one decade.

According to Wikipedia-

"A shopping mall (or simply mall), shopping centre, or shopping arcade is a building or a set of buildings that contain stores and has interconnecting walkways enabling visitors to easily walk from store to store. The walkways may or may not be enclosed."

The concept of mall shopping culture has been globally accepted, and this research study is an attempt to access the mindset of the middle income group beneficiaries towards malls *(Frieden Bernard J. & Sagalyn Lynne B., Downtown Inc.:*

How America Rebuilds Cities (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 233).

Hypothesis of the Research :

Mall culture is like a revolution that is fast changing the way of life for millions of citizens of India. The trends and after-effects are visible in different cities of India which are now metamorphosing into the land of upscale shopping centres and malls.

Our research is based upon the hypothesis that by far the middle income group although aware of the shopping malls still relies upon the trust and faith of the kirana and grocery stores. The Indian customer is yet to vote for malls when it comes to making a concrete purchase and transform into turnovers and profits. But, the behavioural pattern of the Indian middle class is also undergoing a deviation and the move towards adopting the mall culture is fast setting in. *(Judd, 144-168)*

Objectives of the Research :

The following are the objectives of this research project:

- To assess, explore and analyse the mindset of the middle income groups in terms of their acquaintance level towards shopping malls.
- To study the spending mentality of the consumers in Patna.
- To judge the opinion of the different mall owners as regards their business and prospects.
- To judge the satisfaction level of the middle income group buyers with regard to the availability standard of the shopping malls.

Methodology of the Research :

Any research must follow a methodical line of action in terms of a disciplined methodology. These are the techniques used in collecting data:

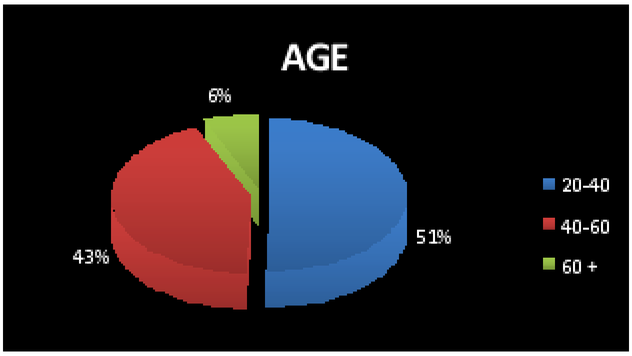
- Primary data source: It was gathered on the basis of :
  - Personal interviews with the middle income group buyers.
  - Questionnaires seeking information from existing customers.
  - Stratified random sampling was done. Stratification was done on the basis of strata of the society in terms of their views regarding shopping malls.
- Secondary data source: Some information was gathered from different newspapers, books, magazines, internet sites. Different brochures and pamphlets were also taken into consideration.

Major observations of the Research :

These observations have been extracted from the survey conducted amongst the middle income group population in Patna with special reference to their buying behaviour and their opinion about the 'Mall Shopping Culture' in the state capital Patna. The data represented below is based on the responses of 300 customers and 30 owners.

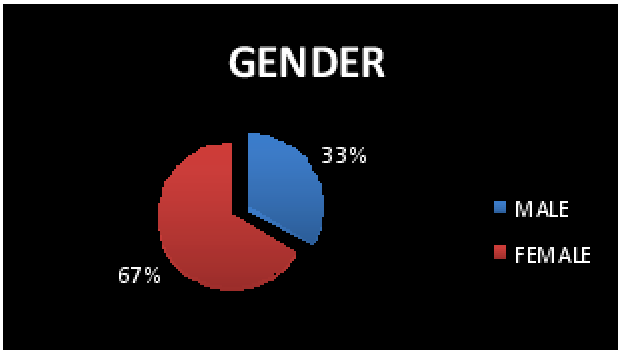
OBSERVATIONS BASED ON RESPONSES FROM

AUDIENCE GROUP



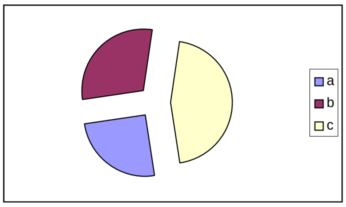
The above data has been collected from the people belonging to the following age groups.

GENDER



Out of the total 300 respondents, 100 are male and 200 are female.

OUTLETS GENERALLY PATRONISED



(a) DEPARTMENTAL STORES

(b) MODERN MALL TYPE OUTLETS

(c) CONVENTIONAL SHOPPING OUTLETS

From the survey, we derived that the ratio between the people patronizing conventional shopping outlets are 135, departmental stores- 75 and malls-90.

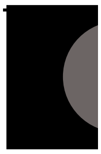
REASONS FOR PATRONISING

The reasons for patronizing the above mentioned outlets have been enumerated as per their grading.

FEATURES OF ATTRACTION

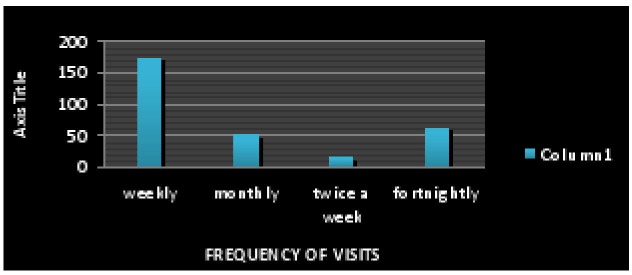
As per our survey, a large number of the people of Patna visit malls because of the above reasons.

PREFERRED LOCATIONS



When the people of Patna were asked to present their views regarding their preferences towards the establishment of new malls, the above were the commonly preferred locations.

FREQUENCY OF VISITS



The above graph clearly depicts how frequently the people of Patna visit the malls.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

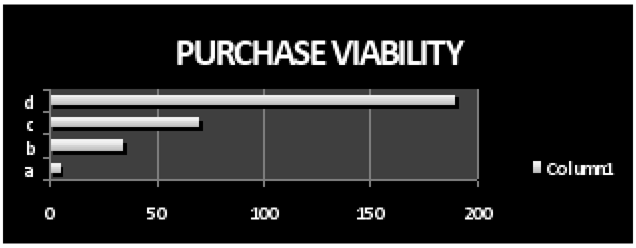
(a) Bright and prosperous

(b) Slow but developing

(c) Stagnant

This line diagram shows the future prospects of malls from the point of view of the customers.

PURCHASE VIABILITY



(a) Very economical

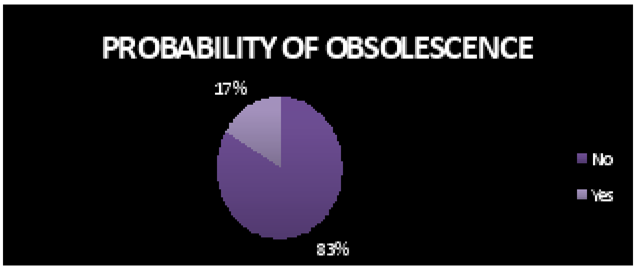
(b) Substantially economical

(c) Fairly economical

(d) Not much of a difference

About 63% people of Patna are of the view that purchases from malls make no difference to their purchase viability whereas only 23% find it fairly economical, 12% find it substantially economical and 2% very economical.

PROBABILITY OF OBSOLESCENCE



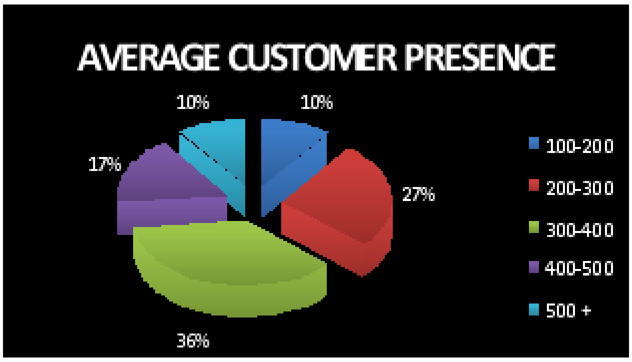
The above pie- chart represents the probability of obsolescence of the conventional shopping outlets as a result of the establishment of malls in Patna.

OBSERVATIONS BASED ON RESPONSES OF MALL PROMOTERS' PRODUCT LINE

PRODUCT LINE	MALLS (5)	DEPARTMENTAL STORES (5)	KIRANAS (20)
FOOTWEAR	02	–	–
GROCERIES	05	02	20
PACKED FOOD	05	03	15
READYMADE GARMENTS	05	01	–

The above table displays the product lines being handled by the malls, departmental store and kirana stores in Patna.

AVERAGE CUSTOMER PRESENCE



The chart depicts the average customer presence of the outlets.

RATIO OF INCREASE IN CUSTOMER BASE

(a) Yes

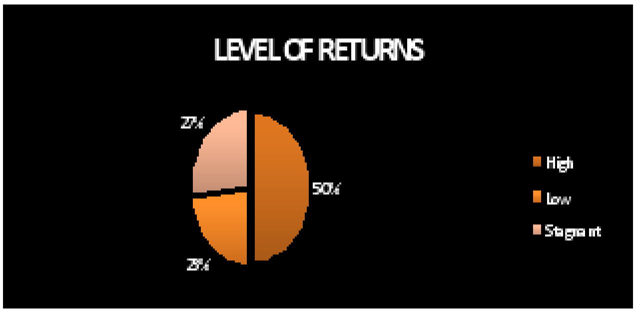
(b) No

(c) Substantial increase

(d) Substantial decrease

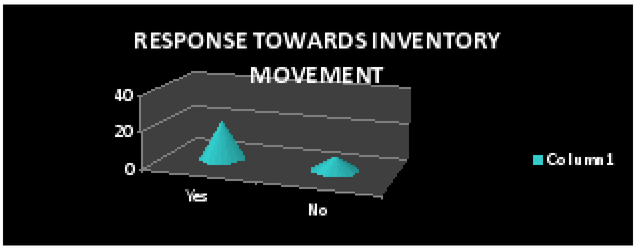
This graph shows the ratio of increase in customer base of the mentioned outlets since their establishment.

LEVEL OF RETURNS



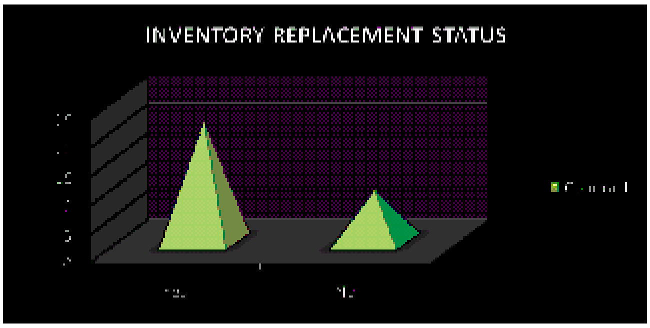
The pie- chart shows the level of returns of the respondents (owners).

RESPONSE TOWARDS INVENTORY MOVEMENT



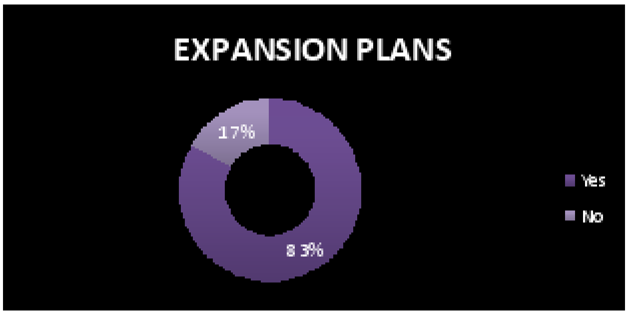
70% of the owners face the problem of non/ slow moving inventory due to lack of sales whereas the remaining 30% do not face any such problem.

INVENTORY REPLACEMENT STATUS



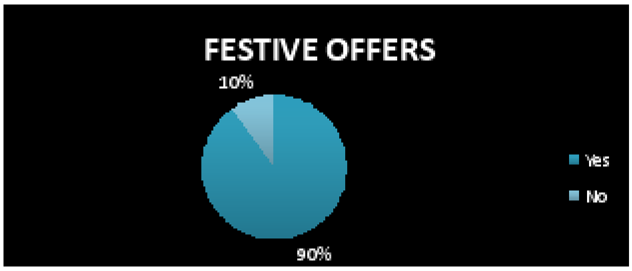
70% of the respondents get replacement of non/ slow moving inventory from their principals.

EXPANSION PLANS



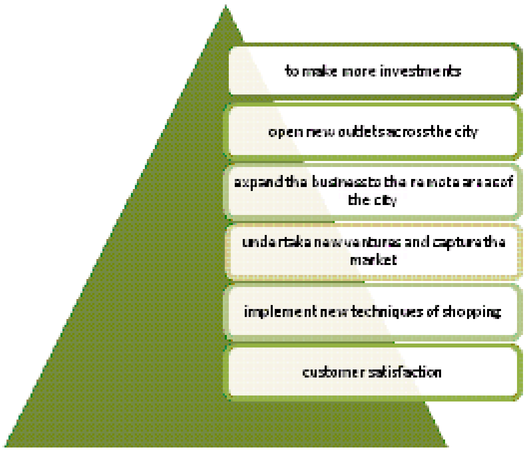
83% respondents are willing to expand their current business whereas the remaining 17% do not wish to do so.

FESTIVAL OFFERS



Around 90% of the owners provide festive offers so as to promote sales whereas 10% do not give any such offers.

FUTURE PLANS



The common answers of the respondents regarding their future plans are mentioned above.

Conclusion :

We come to this conclusion that Patna is a developing city and the establishment of new shopping malls is on the cards. But, conventional grocery outlets have their own importance and shopping malls have not replaced them. The main reason for this is the credit facility available in conventional stores, the personal contact between buyers and sellers, easy accessibility and so on. But, 'Mall Culture' is evolving in Patna and we hope Patna develops to such an extent that its people avail as many facilities as possible.

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