

## **Emergence of shopping mall in twin cities: Transformation in consumer culture in Context of Consumer culture**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The influence of mass communication on consumer culture in the age of globalization is considered a major issue of discussion. There is a nexus between the terms globalization, communication and consumer culture. Communication has been playing dominant role in shaping consumer culture through its pervasive textual and visual content. The communication systems (print, electronic and internet etc.) are seen today as playing vital role in spreading globalization, facilitating flows of information across the countries through social media, television channels, online and print news media and films. Before globalization main stream media spread is limited to national or regional level and in very few instances international level also. Similarly globalization brought changes in consumer cultural practices are also in the traditional in the sense that consumer used purchase goods from small local provision stores (Kiran shops), general and fancy shops, medical shops and other retail vendors. In this backdrop present paper attempts to examine how shopping mall is changing consumer culture.*

**Key Words:** mass communication, mass media, consumer culture, globalization, shopping malls,

### **Introduction**

The advancement in new media and communication technologies, floating of information of through mass media is motivation globalization. Globalization is flow of good, people, technology, information across nations. It has influenced structural changes in politics, economy, culture, life style and consumption practices. Globalization is a process by which the world is made into a single place and leads to different kinds of global flows across the nations. According to Robertson "R, Lechner F. globalization as a form of compression of the contemporary world and the basis of a new hermeneutic for world history which equalizes all socio cultural formalities"<sup>1</sup> In India globalization has led to a development of big shopping malls in cities and big towns and they become integral part of urban rich and middle class sections in India. Shopping malls have become the integral part of a consumer's life and led to change consumer culture of purchasing with written list of products to choosing variety of brands displayed beautifully decorated stalls. Malls are attracting buyers by bringing vast variety of products and providing recreational activities in one place. Consumers feeling advantage with malls because, instead of going to different shops: provisions shops, grocery fancy store, clothes shoes, footwear shop, vegetable market to purchase different thing they can purchase all in one place.

Hyderabad has been a prominent center for trade and business in India for long period. The city offers everything from antiques to Handicrafts to Jewellery and from

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson R, Lechner F. Modernization, Globalization and the problems of culture in world systems theory. Culture and Society, 1985

dresses to leather goods to Pearls and semi-precious stones. Commerce in Hyderabad starts at around 11am. There are many commercial areas with transactions running into crores of rupees on a given day. The recent influx of various economic changes, which were unimaginable just a decade ago. In the mass media Hyderabad projected as a fast globalizing and information technology as its most important part. But, media hype apart, we can see much rapid changes in the pattern of consumer behavior and the ways in which the market is reaching the buyer than in computerizing the public spaces. One glaring example for this is the fact that, despite the ostensible governmental patronage and high levels of IT consciousness among the educated sections in the city, we can much easily walk into a round the clock shoppers' choice than to find a cyber cafe still open in an important localities like Ammerper, S.R. Nagar, Dilshuknagar, Kukatpally, Hi tech city in late nights.

## Objectives

This paper attempts to illustrate some of the points by giant shopping Malls in Hyderabad as a concrete manifestation of the globalization in developing world city with a history of four centuries and one that has been celebrated for multiculturalism and openness and flexibility sufficient to remain distinctly idiosyncratic. Research objectives:

- To analyze the transformation of consumer culture
- Examines the influence of shopping malls as site of communication.

**Research Design:** The study was being conducted in twin cities of Hyderabad and interview method employed to collect data. Data collected from staff and consumers of shopping mall.

## Analysis and discussion

Compared to many world capitals, the 'shopping mall culture' in Hyderabad is quite a recent occurrence. From a tedious shopping in stand-alone retail stores in different parts of the city to a one-stop shopping delight, consumers are waking up to an era of shopping malls. These offer an international shopping experience. These shopping malls provides Indian and western clothes, designer wear, gold ornaments, various kind of leather accessories, electronic goods of all the prominent international brand. Shopping mall trend has begun in late in late 90s, gradually developed by early 2010 and now it is reached peak stage with approximately 250 shopping malls in various location twin cities of Hyderabad and Secundrabad. Some of the popular shopping malls are: Amrutha Mall, Swapnalok Complex, Minerva Complex, Shoppers', Pantaloons, Lifestyle – Greenlands, MPM Plaza, Westside, Big Bazaar, Food World, Tanishq, DMart, Reliance etc.

Shopping Malls function in multiple ways namely indicators of a new stage in the development of the mechanism by which sellers and buyers meet. From a purely technical point of view, with big shopping complexes, consumers now need not visit more than a single place to buy a wide variety of goods. The concomitant advantages like the minimization of time and convenience of not having to visit different places, made Shopping Malls success and they have become much more than that. Besides being a technical improvement in the arrangement of the ultimate site of the transfer of the goods from the producers to consumers, Shopping malls function as Symbols of something really new as well as a different mode of offering something not so new though equally significant. From a macro point of view, Shopping Malls do communicate by being visible at prominent sites of the city not only to the immediate or occasional or prospective buyers but also to all those who could never hope, nor even know what there big buildings are there for, as manifestations of the change that is supposedly happening. But taking a shopping mall as an independent unit, this meaning is

read into the fact of a shopping mall than something inherent to it or a part of its designed effect.

Not only as the synthesis of the outlets of single commodity or limited commodities, has a shopping mall also changed the very pattern of the shopping process. The customary way of following the way of finding or feeling the requirement and then going for buying it (requirement - buying pattern) experiences a dramatic inversion in the case of a shopping mall. Since buyers know that everything households require is available there, they can just walk in without needing to be remembering or have a carefully prepared list. Everything is prominently displayed with prices attached to the good saving the usual embarrassments or anxieties and disappointments very common in a conventional situation of buying. As one respondent (customer) in Big bazar a leading shopping mall at Abids n the heart of the city, puts it.

"I used to spend a lot of time to prepare the list which in turn requires the presence of all my family members. Even that gives no peace of mind after returning from the shopping, one or the other member of my family remembers that s/he forgot something important when the list was being prepared or something like that or express their disappointment at the shape or the color or model of the particular order they made. Now it is up to each individual member of my family to select the things they liked for we started going all together. When we started visiting the shopping mall, we still prepared lists, but you can never remember all the things you need in a half an hour time nor can you spend days together on it. Moreover, we almost always ended up buying more things outside the list than from it. Earlier, it was not like this, whole family could not go to shopping and have sufficient time to spend to return home with full satisfaction of the full family. Now a day it's becoming like a mini pleasure trip to go shopping. Now you can spend as much time as you wish without having the risk of irritating your sales assistant or fellow customers. And, all this is for no extra cost. In this big store, I don't think they are charging you more for the things as the big hotels do."

"It makes your shopping much easier especially when you are having a hectic schedule. You can shop for the entire family in one building," says Anita, a reporter. These are a few of the small mercies for a shopper trapped in the time-crunched, fast-paced life of today and served in a feel-good environment knowing that the consumer is king.

This favorable assessment clearly shows the inversion of the conventional pattern in which feeling requirement precedes the act of buying. Here, in a shopping mall, convenient, appealing arrangement of a wide array of goods suggest you that you might need it, perhaps even more, that you must need it. And, here the deceptive nature of modern consumer culture presents itself in an abbreviated form. The very absence of a waiting salesman ready to listen from you in front of you makes you take your temptations, or carefully designed market trap for free exercise of choice or taste. Thus, the presentation of a good creates the need in the customers mind even if that 'need' means nothing more than just possessing an item. So much for technical and psychological aspects of the act of buying in a shopping mall. Let's now turn to the symbolic aspect of it. It is already said the external aspect of the symbolism this phenomenon of shopping malls represents. A shopping mall is much more than an attractive convenient ordered collection of goods. It is as much a site of symbols as it is of market. As much a site of exclusion, as an open organization of a lofty but costly place.

With the growth of a new middle classes in the city and the increasing migration of the well off families to the state's capital from the relatively rich regions of the state of

Andhra Pradesh there has been a marked increase (albeit only in absolute terms) in not only the number of affluent, ready to buy or even eager to buy sections. Shopping Malls are only one of the ways in which this section's needs are fulfilled. One important reason for the success of the shopping malls in the city is the existence of the demand for the cultural and symbolic means - among which consumption is one spectacular instance- to distinguish oneself from the rest of the populace. Near anonymity that characterizes almost any city's life style creates the need for the nostalgic propertied class person to search for the status he had really or purportedly enjoyed. For somebody like him or an enterprise like shopping mall offers a means to distinguish him from the rest. The very strategy with which it is affected is telling. Shopping Malls, like any other sites of spectacular spending, do not hide the fact that the costs of at least a considerable portion of goods are far from cheap even in contrast with the lesser shopping outlets. Here lies the trick. It is not that the buyer doesn't know that the same quality or even better quality goods can be bought for cheaper rates, nor even it simply that the buyer is under the spell of the advertisements. The buyer knows too well that it is the brand name that counts not the mere quality of the commodity. In this way, a phenomenon like Shopping Malls does not require to cheat or lure unfair means to hoodwink the consumer. Actually, they simply offer the opportunity to the affordable to maintain the distinction in the midst of a city where the at the mere sight of a person his or her status can not be deciphered. If this process of re-acquisition of the status one has lost or an upcoming person in the social ladder to get license to enter into the social strata one wishes to enter into or a sheer search for an identity of one's own that can be constructed with the help of the goods one can buy, so on and so forth is a positive process, it is as much a negative function. Distinction can not be made with out some distancing.

Therefore, the exclusion of certain sections of the prospective buyers a site for the function of distinction cannot discharge its duty; it has to close its doors to some. How it does in a shopping Mall situation is an interesting thing to delve into. Like any other business endeavor, Shopping Mall is constantly driven by the need to attract ever larger number of buyers. Here, the Shopping Malls face their greatest dilemma. If in their instinctual need to expand the consumer base they tend to offer the attractions that pull the buyers from the different sections of the society. As it happens, the very strategy or business instinct that attracts the buyers from the different sections paradoxically undermines the very attraction of the Shopping Malls. This dilemma is not with out its solution, though in a much convoluted way. By offering something that can be bought by those who are not among the prospective customers a shopping Mall compels the elite or exclusive buyers to go for ever newer models. Exclusivity does not necessarily entails secrecy. Infact, it is the opportunity or even the need to display which makes the former a coveted state of affairs. What can be the best place for the display to happen other than one like the Shopping Mall. Here, everything is ordered, but hierarchically. Even those who can not think of buying an expensive item are able to see and know how much it costs. So, the display can be much more hidden for it is accomplished much in advance. A Shopping Mall is a better place where the visitors will be introduced to things they can only dream of buying. Yet, they know about it including how expensive or what comfort it offers and naturally they can identify and show the appropriate social response it whenever they come across somebody owning it.

### **Conclusion**

In this way, even the technical issues become cultural issues and ultimately symbolic ones. In brief what can be observed in the Shopping Malls as far as its symbolic functions and meanings thrust upon them.

Firstly they communicate the idea that some sort of Development is happening by the very fact of their being visible in a major way and in prominent places at that. Given the media hype that has become even the election slogan and virtual mantra of the globalization ideology.

Secondly, they offer the opportunity for those who seek distinction from the rest of the people in the midst of otherwise anonymous urban culture. It becomes crucial particularly because of the demand for the continuity of the older hierarchy in some revised, renewed form both by those who want to maintain them as well as for those who seek to achieve a better place in the social ladder.

Thirdly, these business sites combine both the need to offer distinction for a selected few while not compromising the need to expand the consumer basis by means of recruiting the ever newer sections into its consumer fold by a distinct strategy though it can well be an unwitting outcome of the inner business logic of a relatively bigger enterprise like Shopping Mall. This strategy involves offering the same things today that symbolize distinction to those who are do not supposedly deserve them by which it compels the distinction seekers to go for ever newer and costlier items there by rendering the apparently peaceful, voluntary site a virtual arena of bitter class or status struggle.

Finally, the space of the Shopping Mall offers a unique opportunity by its displaying together the goods that can be seen by everybody but whose possession depends on the affordability. In this way, Shopping Malls provide the unique opportunity for the prospective owners of the status goods with the facility of in advance display thereby rendering the need to display the goods that are bought exclusively for display.

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