



Shopping Mall, Consumption Culture And Different Age Group: Review Of Literature In A Sociological Comparative Framework

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ABSTRACT

Many studies had examined the consumption pattern and the way shopping mall is working to satisfy the consumption needs of both young and elderly. This article aims to study consumption culture among different age group. Further it also tries to understand how the social environment and environmental factors of a shopping mall allows for open access to a wide variety of potential participants. Considering various studies, article explores the respective literature and identifies gap for future research. Through a detailed study of theoretical review with focus on different age groups, this study examines ‘elderly’ and ‘young’ and ‘adolescent’ as ‘shoppers’ in consumption spaces. This study contributes to the emerging literature of consumption culture.

KEYWORDS

Aging, youth, adolescent, consumption culture, shopping mall.

INTRODUCTION

Shopping mall

Trade has been a part of humanity from the beginning of time. There were open markets in beginning where people exchanged their products through Barter system. While trading they used to travel long distances and meet new people. It was because of trade that there was a huge cultural exchange across globe. Over the past decades, organized retail format has evolved a lot. The retail area in developing business sectors are getting increasingly more serious as huge western style malls have overwhelmed retail scene.

According to Richard A. Feinberg and Jennifer Meoli (1991), the historical backdrop of shopping mall began in the United States in 1920, in 1907 in Baltimore and during 1920s in California. A gathering of little merchants, in Baltimore, combined and involved a vehicle leaving to make an open market. Further, in California, vendors who exchanged with Europe, discarded little merchants and opened new shops with a tremendous assortment of items from exchange. In 1922, in Kansas city, a gathering of shops which can be accessed only by car were build. In 1931 in Dallas the gathering of shops with its own vehicle leaving were opened. In 1956, in Minneapolis, the primary encased strip mall was created. It was the primary shopping center identifying with the contemporary idea.

In India shopping malls is best defined by International council of shopping centre (2004) as cited by Pitt et.al, (2009)

“Shopping mall is the most common design for regional and super-regional centres. The walkway of ‘mall’ is typically enclosed, climate-controlled and lighted, flanked on one or both side by storefronts and entrances. On-site parking, usually provided around the perimeter of the centre, may be surfaced or structured” (p. 41).

Consumer Culture

Self as explained by Cote, (2006)(as cited by Deutsch et.al, (2010)) in an article on identity study as a social construction created by individual in interaction with social world, identity is constructed in part through consumption (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998) (as cited by Deutsch & Theodorou, (2010))

While describing consumerist society, Stearns, (2006) describes a consumerist society as one

“in which many people formulate their goals in life partly through acquiring goods that they clearly do not need for subsistence or for traditional display. They become enmeshed in the process of acquisition—shopping—and take some of their identity from a procession of new items that they buy and exhibit” (p. 8).

As described by Stearns in his work it is very evident that there is a relationship between identity and consumption. In this postmodern society people place themselves in social groups which define their social positioning, these social groups are very much influenced by their consumption pattern.

There are different facets of consumer culture as society is evolving, according to G.Ritzer (2001) (as cited by Djukic et.al, (2016)), modern consumer gives a distorted picture of social relations. Shopping centres are transforming the nature of social relationships. They are working as a cohesive force for strengthening relations not only in society or community but also in family. These places function as family places where family spend a quality time together (Patwary, 2020).

This study will try to expand the concept of consumer culture in relation with shopping mall and different ages through a closed and detailed examination of different studies in a comparative framework.

METHODOLOGY

This paper covers review of 55 published articles in leading academic journals specialising in consumption culture. Different articles are taken into consideration mainly focussing on shopping malls. These articles were roughly categorised under three categories – elderly, youth and adolescent. Further in this study a comparative framework has been developed among these three age groups.

THEORETICAL REVIEW OF LITREATURE

The Elder: Concept and Definitions

According to WHO (World Health Organisation) the age limit between adult and elderly is 65 years for developed countries and 60 years for developing ones. As of now 12.3% of total populace is matured 60 years or more seasoned and this rate is relied upon to ascend to 22% by 2050 attributable to life expectancy and declining birth rate. (UNFPA,2015)

Not only the number of elderlies is on rise, their annual purchasing power is also expected to grow from \$8 trillion in 2010 to more than \$15 trillion in 2020. Keeping in mind this huge section of population, companies, consumer organisation and market are trying to understand consumer-related needs and decisions.

The elderly section of society now became one of the prominent sections of consumer, with a wide array of needs and demands. They consume with a hope of securing a quality of life in old age that fit their respective needs. (Moschis, 2012)

The Aging Process: Chronological Aging and Cognitive Aging

Aging should be treated as a natural process which goes on as the time passes right after birth – this is what chronological aging means (Glen,1974). In advancing years study observed that

passing time bring more individuality and diversity rather than uniformity in both elderly behaviour and lifestyle. (Cole, 1983)

While the Cognitive age has been characterized as "the age one sees one's self to be" (Stephens, 1991). It has been seen as a point of view (Schiffman and Sherman, 1991) and a critical component of self-idea (George et.al, 1980; Stephens, 1991). The possibility of cognitive age is more comprehensive than chronological age since it comprises of four sub-measurements: "feel-age," "look-age," "do-age," and "intrigue age" (Barak & Schiffman,1981).

The aging process causes naturally biological, physiological and social changes that aggregate changes in daily life and influence behaviour of elderly people.

The biological aging can be viewed as one's present position with respect to full life span. Biological aging refers to changes within biological system and its subsystem (Brunett, 1989)

Psychological aging is continuous development of one's personality and cognition. Personality refers to behavioral pattern and self-concept of individual and cognition refers to perceptions, judgement and decision making. (Moschis, 2012)

Finally, the social aging is determined by the quality and quantity of social relations of individual within community and society. It is determined by socioeconomic status, education, profession or gender (Barak and Schiffman, 1981). Social capital is what one has acquired in terms of social relation during his entire course of life. It acts as a buffer of negative consequences of biological and psychological aging (Grundy, 2006).

Youth: Concept and Definition

The definition of youth varies across agencies. As indicated by, United Nations, those matured between 15-34 years are youth (United Nations, 2009). Administration of India in its draft National Youth Policy of 2012 characterizes the age gathering of 16-30 years as youth populace. Further, the youth policy classified youth age in three unique classifications like matured (16-20 years) have adolescent necessities, those matured (21-25years) try to achieve training and attempt to enter the workforce and those matured (26 - 30 years) intend to build up themselves as an expert and perhaps near and dear life (marriage). In India, youth people in the age-bunch 15-34 years are expected to ascend from 353 million out of 2001 to 464 million of every 2021 lastly to slide down to 458 million out of 2026 (Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 2006). Youth is one of the significant segments of society to visit shopping center and this gathering has inspirational demeanor towards all parts of shopping center (Kuruvilla and Joshi, 2010).

According to Wani (2007),

“Youth shoppers are considerably less tradition-restricted, more modern and quicker in accepting novel thought as compared to other shopper groups. Generation y holds different attitude and motives regarding shopping mall than other generation.” (p. 1).

Adolescent: Concept and Definition

Adolescence alludes to the period that denotes the progress from youth to adulthood. For the most part, this ordinarily ranges from 12 to 18 years old, which generally relates to the time from pubertal beginning (i.e., explicit hormonal changes) to independence and autonomy (i.e., the lawful meaning of "adulthood" in numerous nations)

Shopping malls and shopping behaviour

Different studies used different parameter to explain shopping behaviour in shopping malls. Gender is considered as to be foremost significant. It was discovered that females will in general experience more hedonic value when contrasted with male and respond all the more well to shopping center cleanliness and amusement factors (Masood and Abbas, 2013). Echoing with this study Wong et.al,(2012) (as cited by K. J. T. Perera, Sutha. J, (2018)) also found that as compared to males, while shopping, females have a more propensity towards hedonic value and are more delighted and have more fun at shopping malls thus spend more time as compared to males.

Pushing forward, Nam et al. (2007) noticed attire shopping inclinations of old mature ladies in America. They found that older matured ladies while looking for clothes go more for comfort than for joy and need. Further, their buy choices are more affected by fit and solace when contrasted with style. Repeating this discovering, Littrell et al., (2005) additionally show that older mature purchasers (matured 60-75 years of age) vary from more youthful ages in their inclinations in characteristics of clothing and different qualities related, for example, solace, design and pattern. They likewise incline toward real items and ethnic clothing. While contradicting both these theories, Thomas and Okleshen, (2009) found that women over 65 years of age continue to remain socially active and need fashionable and variety of outfits to exhibit. The importance of products is determined by gender as female shoppers are more important. (Burt & Gabbott, (1995))

Burt and Gabbott, (1995) while conducting a study in United Kingdom, found that “older” age group give preference to local stores, while “younger” age group exhibit preference for national clothing claims. Older consumer is more focussed on product-related attributes not on store

attribute unlike their younger counterparts. Adding on this theory, Lambart and Laurent (2010) also show that younger consumer explore market more in comparison to the older ones. Hence, they had more propensity to change their preferred brand due to innovativeness. On the contrary, older consumer exhibit more propensity to remain attached to brand. An examination by Parment, (2013) which investigated youthful age show a serious level of familiarity with the manufacturing brands over retail brand. Youthful age try not to pay more for the buys than needed. Thus, store marks that like to offer some incentive at the cost are probably going to be more effective in engaging youth customers.

In terms of adventure cognitively younger older people are more adventurous than those chronologically aged older people, they less likely equate wealth with success and happiness. While talking in terms of gender it was evident that older women are more adventurous than men, they receive more enjoyment in shopping than their male counterpart. They also generally possess more market-relevant knowledge in the form of shopping smarts. (Sherman et.al., (2001))

Hu et.al, (2007) observed

“Malls are generally regarded as the destination for fashion goods. But our interviews indicate that as malls attempt to accommodate younger generations, especially teenagers, the industry might be losing touch with the older generations. We do not intend to argue against the trend of marketing towards youth in malls, but we consider it problematic when the only fashion specialty retailers for mature women are Christopher & Banks or Coldwater Creek, and mature men can only find the types of clothing they demand in department stores.” (p. 32).

Existing writing further demonstrates that utilization preferences change when buyers go into the mature purchaser gathering (Kim et.al, (2009)). With respect to shopping centers, results show that the kinds of stores mature buyers disparege change. As they approach retirement, and particularly after retirement, they depend less on products and enterprises identified with work and consequently they saved on merchandise, for example, work garments. This extra unspent pay would now be able to be utilized for their home, pastimes, travel, etc.

Through the study of different researches, it was evident that adolescents are very much influenced by their peers in their shopping decisions and information related to products. (Moschis & Moore, 1979; Tootelian & Gaedeke, 1992). Moreover, the younger section of consumers, that is adolescent are likely to spend less time in gathering information about product as compared to older section (Moschis & Moore, 1979).

while among girls, it was quite evident that they are much influenced by their mothers shopping behaviour, if mothers are very frequent to malls and are fashion conscious, this tendency was apparent also in their daughters.

Mature consumers have also changed their mall shopping behaviors. Further Hu et.al, (2007) made a significant observation regarding timings at which elderly are frequenting malls.

“They prefer to shop in the morning or early afternoon and are likely to shop weekdays rather than weekends to avoid crowds. However, mature shoppers still make frequent trips and spend as much time in malls as younger age cohorts. They also prefer malls to be relaxing and restful rather than noisy but exciting.” (p. 32).

While analysing changes in Carolina mall, as mentioned above, author also found that several restaurants at mall offered free or discounted coffee for early-morning senior walking clubs. Not only discounted coffee but many other efforts could be extended like affordable ticket seating for new theatre or seasonal event towards intergenerational audience to generate a sense of community. White et.al, (2015) in his investigation named "Seniors in Shopping Mall" found that older generation isolate themselves as expected in time, not in space. As opposed to famous portrayals, that older individuals are unfortunate of youngsters, seniors reacted that they are not apprehensive and that the presence of youngsters were not an issue, even they have grandkids at home.

Shopping centre as a leisure place

Malls are progressively turning out to be spot for relaxation. As per Moss, (2007), there is a proof of expanding extent of individuals saying that they invest energy checking out the shops as a relaxation movement, and this pattern is more normal among more youthful grown-ups. Not only the younger generation, but there is existing evidence that mature consumers frequent to these shopping centre other than consumer needs (Bloch et.al, 1994; Mayers & lumbers, 2008; White, 2007). There are not many investigations that analyse mature consumers' shopping behaviour in shopping centres. It gave the idea that when contrasted with other age gatherings, more older adults use shopping centres as a venue for exercise and amusement all the more frequently, and less as an approach to make purchases. (Bricklayer and Smith, 1974; Lumpkin 1985). While analysing adolescent, according to Kim et.al, (2009), it was found that

“teens’ mall shopping motivations consisted of five dimensions: service motivation, economic motivation, diversion motivation, eatingout motivation, and social motivation. Results support the related research (Bellenger & Korgaonkar, 1980; Bloch et al., 1994; Kang et al., 1996; Roy, 1994) suggesting that consumers go to the

mall for experiences offered by malls, as well as the utility of consuming and buying process.” (p. 161).

For some shopping mall is a popular destination for family trips. In a study on teenagers, respondents to the study told that they first came to mall with their family and then started coming with their friends too (Kim et.al, 2009).

Shopping centre attributes

Researcher also gave considerable attention towards how different age groups perceive centre attributes and these close examinations recommend that youth shoppers have more inclination towards present day plan of shopping mall (Boger et.al.,2011), location convenience and entertainment factors, even mall hygienic factors, (Jackson et.al., 2011) and various other shopping mall components like music, light, architecture, and assortments inside the mall, amusement highlights, pubs and lounges, and food had positive effect on longing to remain and to re-visitation of the shopping center. (Martin & Turley, 2004). While analysing mature consumers, mobility was one of the key issues. Mobility refers to both how one reaches shopping mall and then how they move within shopping mall. Other than this car parking, types of floor (if they are slippery or not, or if they are too hard and thus bad for joints), seating and escalators (White et.al., 2015).

Echoing with above arguments Hu et.al, (2007) argued that

“In the minds of mature shoppers, malls provide convenience mainly because all of the stores in a mall are under one roof, which not only saves them time comparison shopping among stores but also reduces the total walking required, which can be a serious concern for mature consumers that have health conditions.” (p. 25).

Elizabeth et.al, (2015) present an elaborate case study of Carolina mall, popular destination for older adults in north Carolina. Carolina mall developed with time and tried to shape itself according to needs and desires of older consumers. Interior landscape was altered to become a more inviting space for older consumer in order to increase mall retail business. More number of seating arrangements and carts are few of the efforts on the part of Carolina mall.

Not only for “young” shoppers, but service of shopping mall employees and the functionality of shopping equipment effects the preferences of elderly people. Even appropriate placement of different product on shelves are one of the few major issues with elderly and all these issues drive their preferences (Pettigrew et al., 2005). They esteem quality more than amount of commodity.

This is in similar lines with the results from Goodwin and McElwee (1999) (as cited in Hu et.al (2007),

“But more specifically, the mature consumers in our sample do not tolerate poor service overall. Our interviews indicate that mature shoppers may resort to alternative shopping venues such as the Internet, or they may even stop patronizing retailers with poor service altogether. They also prefer healthier food than fast food in the food court.” (p. 31).

Further, there are instances of handbag stolen and pick pocketing, hence security was also seen as one of the major comfort issues. (White et.al, 2015)

For adolescent it was found that expressive physical attributes are more important than economic attributes (Kim et.al, 2009). Findings of Massicote et.al, (2011), support above studies, as they recommend that the youthful segment of society are more inclined towards amusement and entertainment in shopping mall, which reflect their image of being free and charged. Hence, these studies show that for adolescents’ entertainment is one of the major attributes of shopping mall which drive their preferences.

The Food & Beverages range in a mall comprises of food courts as well as QSRs, and different other formats like stands, kiosks, cafes, bistro, fine dine restaurants, casual dine restaurants, and even bars and lounges. Shopping mall developers are trying different concepts and formats to charm customers. An alluring focal eating space fills in as a gathering point, and malls have been quick to make food courts as comfortable, eye-getting and feasible for customers. More than just about serving food, the food courts in mall business have acquired noteworthy responsibility of creating an emotional and enthusiastic bond with new age shoppers. De Castro, (1989) exhibited that the sum individual eat at supper increases within the sight of others. The extent of impact, of this social facilitation, depends on the number of people present at the meal. Interestingly, outsiders have lesser degree of a facilitative effect than recognised people. De Castro, (2002) clarified how various settings social, mental, and transient circumstances impacts the food admission among elderly consumers and has affirmed that the social assistance impact the food admission of these consumers.

Specifically, Kim et.al, (2005), researched the connection between loneliness and older consumers’ mall patronage motivations. The research concluded that loneliness drives mature shoppers more to shopping centre. They frequent these centres for different amenities and assistance, for example medical assistance, banking services, boutiques and so on. They additionally found that the loneliness among older consumers and the penchant to look for diversion and amusement in shopping mall is positively correlated.

Appeared differently in relation to adults, loneliness among teens might be due to inadequate social relationships with their companions and friends (Lewis et.al., 1995)

Moschis, 1987). Further other insufficient social relationships might be prompted from an absence of relational correspondence among family members and relatives, a new demise or genuine sickness in the family or of a dear companion, or may be guardian's separation (Kostelecky et.al,1998; Weiss,1974).

As stated above that for adolescent expressive mall attributes are more important than economic ones. Kim et.al, (2009) in their study on teens loneliness found that for emotionally isolated teens, mall provides an opportunity to enjoy malls' interior beauty, food courts, restaurants and many more services. They can hang out with their friends and watch crowd; hence they fulfil their socialising needs and resolve loneliness.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Talking about the limitations, this paper only covers the consumption pattern of different ages in a broad sense. This can be further elaborated on basis of various other parameters like class and gender among elderly, youth and adolescent. Further this study is based on around 55 journal articles, a much more comprehensive study and comparison is possible covering other uncovered ones, hence these findings cannot be generalised.

Maybe the most observable gap in this writing is a fundamental comprehension of what choice methodologies kids have at various ages. An impressive commitment could be made by exploring when kids secure different kinds of compensatory and non-compensatory strategies and how these procedures emerge over a long run.

The effect of corona virus on these shopping malls and consumption pattern of different section can also be studied. In Lucknow (city in India), it was observed that many shops in shopping malls are selling matching masks with apparels. Even retail stores filled their shelves with immunity boosters and kadhas (an Indian immunity booster drink), and also gave discounts on chawanaprash (cooked mixture of sugar, honey, ghee, Indian gooseberry (amla) jam, sesame oil, berries and various herbs and spices).

Earlier shopping malls had spa and many other body relaxing centre, it will be very interesting to see and observe that due to corona will there be new centre for Naturopathy or other disease treatment practices under AYUSH (The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy of Indian government).

CONCLUSION

This paper found that the shopping mall as a consumptive space were used for a wide array of activities. The activities and preferences change with aging. With choice of theme of shopping mall allows to study different age groups through their consumption pattern. Generally, result drawn from the past explorations is that more younger consumers frequently have consumption attitudes, experiences and perceptions that contemplates essentially from those of older mature consumers.

The studies also reflect on the issues of loneliness in adolescent stage and elderly stage. Shopping mall is acting as a space not only to counter these issues but also being a destination where people spend some quality time with their family.

While comparing different ages, it was found that each section of age demography is having different shopping behaviour and pattern. Going through all the reviews, it was found that shopping mall as an entertainment and recreational centre gives more importance to the aspiration of youth and adolescent as compared to elderly section. The occupation of older adults (though largely non-consumer) may still have positive impact on malls economic health. To neglect such a big consumer array in future development are extremely short-sighted (Elizabeth et.al, 2015).

The idea of Positive Aging gives a valuable approach to consider things, for instance where seniors 'hang out' and the issues related with this utilization of social space. However, as Asquith, (2009) and Aberdeen and Bye, (2011) call attention to, while positive aging as a standard may have all the reserves of being progressive, how it is given life in strategy, practice and approach can make incredible changes in the life and social experiences of elderly adults.

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