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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EMERGING SHOPPING MALLS IN BARASAT TOWN: A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Globalization is the common process of bounding all the civilian of the world into a global village. The urbanization process is also responsible for physiographic as well as socio-cultural change of a city. The cultural patterns like marketing behavior, customer-seller interaction, recreations etc. of urban areas are changing with the emergence of shopping malls. The tremendous rise of shopping malls in India is the direct result of globalization. Now, shopping malls are emerging in every city and they offer an array of various national and international brands at one place. There is an aim behind the establishment of malls that they will get a large number of shoppers and they will be able to provide more and more better and convenient services to the urban people in various ways. It is since 10 to 12 years malls came into existence in Barasat, the headquarters of the district of North Twenty Four Parganas. There is a new cultural intervention with the beginning of the present century in this town.

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INTRODUCTION

A shopping mall, shopping centre, shopping arcade, shopping precinct or simply mall is one or more buildings forming a complex of shops representing merchandisers, with interconnecting walkways enabling visitors to easily walk from unit to unit, along with a parking area — a modern, indoor version of the traditional marketplace. In another words, shopping mall or shopping center is a building or set of buildings that contain retail units and a multiplex with interconnecting walkways enabling visitors to easily walk from unit to unit, offering diverse brands and utilities at the same place. A shopping centre is a collection of independent retail stores, services, and a parking area conceived, constructed, and maintained by a management firm as a unit. Shopping centres may also contain restaurants, banks, theatres, professional offices, service stations, and other establishments.

The tremendous hike in the number of shopping malls in India is the direct result of globalization. India is basically a shopper's paradise. Be it handicrafts or herbs, paintings or antiques, traditional garments or modern fashion statements India has everything to offer. Nowadays, shopping malls are emerging in every city and they offer you an array of various national and international brands at one place. The number of shopping malls mushrooming across the country's landscape may make one wonder where they will find so many shoppers

and tenants. The fact is, the mall culture is still in nascent stages in the country when compared to developed and other developing countries.

Origin of the idea for shopping mall construction: The concept of developing a shopping district away from a downtown is generally attributed to J. C. Nichols of Kansas City, Mo. His Country Club Plaza, which opened in 1922, was constructed as the business district for a large-scale residential development. It featured unified architecture, paved and lighted parking lots, and was managed and operated as a single unit.

Objectives of the Study

- To view the age variation of consumers and the level of acceptance of shopping malls
- To find out the impacts of shopping mall
- To get the idea regarding different stakeholder

Study Area

Barasat town is located at a distance of about 25 km from Kolkata on the north. The town is located between 88°27' E to 88°31' 30"E longitude and 22°40'58"N to 22°44'44"N latitude. Barasat has a very old history of development and here the municipality was established in 1859 but since 1986 the town has become the headquarter of the district of North 24 Parganas. The two National Highways -NH34 and NH35 and a

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State Highway (SH 2) run through Barasat town, Barasat is also well connected by railway with Sealdah, Bongaon and Basirhat, the town is at a distance of about 16 kms from Bidhannagar, 21 kms from Sealdah, 23 kms from BBD Bag, 14 kms from Barrackpur, 45 kms from Bongaon, 39 kms from Basirhat and 49 kms from Hasnabad. As per reports of Census of India, population of Barasat in 2011 is 278,453 of which male and female are 140,822 and 137,613 respectively. The sex ratio of Barasat city is 977 females per 1000 males.

Location of the Study Area

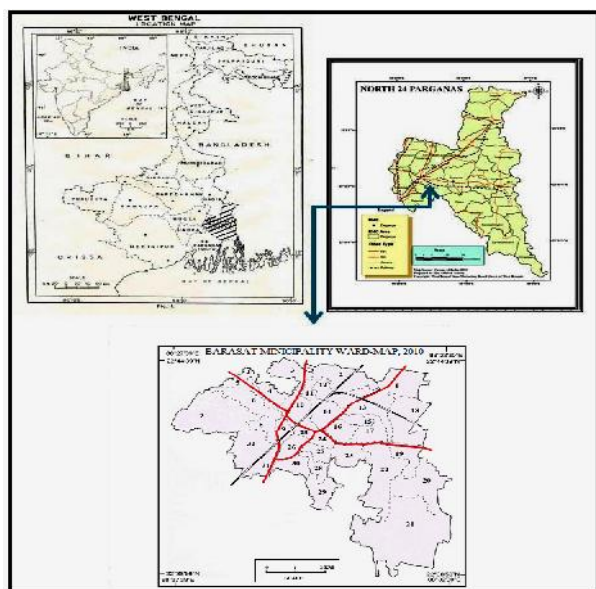


Fig 1

Source: Compiled by author from NATMO and Barasat Municipality

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study has been conducted among 60 individual and household survey, 4 retail shops and 5 shopping malls in Barasat. Survey also been conducted on the retail shops with one storied, while the shopping malls comprising huge horizontal and vertical stores. The selected street markets were near to the shopping malls and were held adjacent to the shopping malls. The sample respondents chosen in this study were those who frequently visit the selected retail stores as well as shopping malls.

Information collected through the questionnaires were reviewed for each respondent to ascertain quality and for analysis. The data collection process was not prolonged due to lack of time in conducting interviews with consumers, shop owners and managers of shopping malls. Two types of questionnaire have been framed to investigate the extent to which the selected variables for study have influenced the shoppers, shopping mall owners and consumers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Malls and Renounced Retail Stores of Barasat town

Most of the departmental stores are located along the NHs, and between the two NHs namely NH34 and NH-35. The said zone is fully compact with settlements and market and that is why there is maximum concentration of shopping malls and large retail stores. Location of the shopping malls and reputed retail stores (Fig 2) mostly found with end number of garments brands and some of them are with food and vegetable items (Table1).

Concentration of Malls at Core Area of Barasat



Fig 2

Source: Prepared by author from Google earth map

Table 1 Geographical Co-Ordinates and Features of Renounced Malls and Other Retail Stores in Barasat

Name	Geographical co-ordinates	Year of Establishment	Remarks	Escalator(E)/ Stair(S)
Vishal Megamart	22°43'37.7"N, 88°30'19.3"E	--	Varieties including garments.	S
I-core Planet	22°43'37.7"N, 88°30'19.3"E	2010	Dealt costly garments, food items, electronics, gold items etc	S+E
K-mart	22°43'17.8"N, 88°29'30.7"E	--	Garments	S
Budget bazar	22°43'15.7"N, 88°28'54.8"E	2004	Garments and household items	S
Raymonds	22°43'12.5"N, 88°28'53.6"E	--	Garments	S
Sreeniketan	22°43'08.6"N, 88°28'51.1"E	--	Garments, household items	S
City mall	22°42'45.7"N, 88°28'31.5"E	2011	Garment, cinema, restaurant	E
Ramel mart	22°43'06.9"N, 88°28'34.3"E	2012	Food items	One storied
More	22°43'10.2"N, 88°28'35.9"E	2008	Food items	One storied
Reliance fresh	22°43'22.4"N, 88°28'39.6"E	2007	Food items, vegetables	One storied
Mega bazar	22°43'21.8"N, 88°28'45.2"E	--	New constructing	
Sreeguru Bastralay	22°43'18.1"N, 88°28'50.5"E	--	Garments retails	S
Saha textile	22°43'18.1"N, 88°28'50.5"E	--	Garments retail shop	S
Kuttons	22°43'13.8"N, 88°28'59.3"E	--	Garments	S
Sun City Mall (Reliance Digital, Big Bazaar)	22°43'37.7"N, 88°30'21.3"E	2014	Garments, food items, vegetables	E

Source: GPS Survey, July 2012

Age Variation of Mall Consumer

As malls are in fact could be said as a modified traditional market place and here one can easily find out age variation of consumers. It is revealed that 35% of the mall consumers belong to the young age group between 18-27 years age. But this criterion of shopper is gradually lowering down with increasing age. The young people mostly visit as because they are more with a search for extracting offer and this is a new tradition of young group. They visit for time pass, cool environment, watching movies, to take fast food etc.; then it is found that the next level of consumers is in between 28-37 years. With increase in age the number of consumers decreases. The study also reveals that the second age group occupies 28.33% and the next age group of 39-47 years age group occupies 21.67% and more than these age group consumers occupies 15% only (Fig 3).

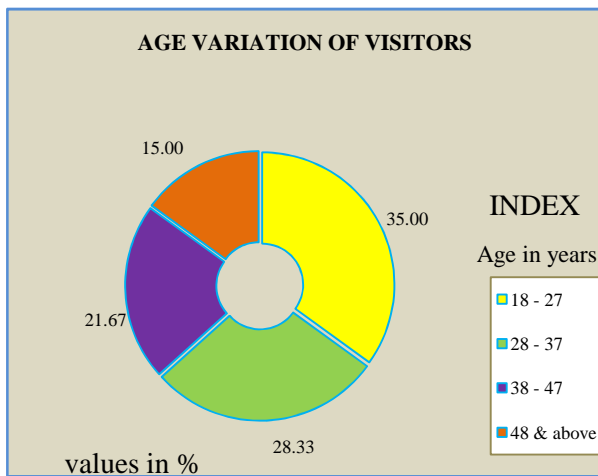


Fig 3

Source: Primary Survey

Acceptance of Malls for Occasional Goods

In Barasat town malls emerged very recently and most of them are with very short space and with less accommodation of goods. Besides there many reputed retail shops running with reliability and also with lending facility prior to coming of malls. Though malls emerged very recently there is a large acceptance of malls regarding occasional goods. From the household sample and also from mall consumers it is found that 48.33% people go to retail store and 31.67% person prefer mall and remaining 20% people expressed that they go to both (Fig 4).



Fig 4

Source: Primary survey

Problems of Malls

From the study, problems related to shopping malls at Barasat town are as follows:

1. The most important problem is that there is excessive number of shopping malls than the requirement to meet the demand of the consumers.
2. More space is required for malls as there is very short space in most of the malls.
3. There is decreasing demand by the middle and lower income group as most of the respondents expressed that there is higher price than local market.
4. Gentrification is a dominant changing factor in the locality, where new people are coming with new different cultural habits and behavioural pattern.
5. Some retail stores are facing extreme problem as they are not with well operating managerial advantages as well as financial backgrounds.
6. Malls are generally air conditioned so the rate of CFCs emission is increasing and pollution of air and noise are also a matter of thinking.
7. There is concentration of profit into a single or few hands.

Advantages of Malls

The advantages of shopping malls which have been expressed by most of the respondents as well as through the Focus Group Discussion survey are following:

1. Everything under a roof with good collection fashionable items. People can buy variety of items like small needle to accessories, dishes and modern appliances here.
2. Modern transaction system is available i.e. credit card and debit card facility.
3. There is home delivery facility up to 2-3 kms.
4. People get information through telephone and can place order on telephone and can pay with credit/debit cards.
5. People feel secure in shopping mall rather than retail ones especially females.
6. People do not have to order to show different items as in retail shops. They are free to choose products as these are well displayed along with price mentioned on each product.
7. In some malls there are special offers for different items at different times for the regular consumers.
8. For nuclear and busy families the females have to shop and so they prefer those places which are convenient, with maximum availability of goods.
9. At the localities where malls are established there was fear at night before the mall's came. Now, there is crowd until midnight and the fear has decreased.
10. Fresh products and Comfort, Style, Convenience and Cool all these feelings are related to the shopping experience in Shopping Malls.

Stakeholder Analysis

Like other retail stores shopping malls are not running in a simple way. There are more stakeholders in the development of

malls. Shopping malls stakeholders have been identified and their interest, potential strategies and impacts are as following (Table 2):

In malls people are in a controlled environment with a kind of security system and comforting. There is much security and very less fear of wrong billing.

Table 2 Stakeholders Identity

Stakeholder	Interest	Potential strategies	Impact
Primary stakeholder (consumers of Barasat)	Get adequate quality-branded products, at suitable price	Searching good quality products, fixing budget for purchasing goods, spending less time and standard price	More developed and reliable shopping centres getting large portion of consumers
Secondary Stakeholder (Shopping malls of Barasat)	To earn more profit and retaining/attracting more consumers	Improve store layouts, providing coupons with salary on a contractual basis with private companies, good management and advertising through media	Developed store are getting more consumers and backward stores are getting least consumers
Key Stakeholder (Shopping mall organizers – Reliance, Aditya Birla)	To earn more profit and retaining/attracting more consumers	Maintain stores through allocation of fund, contract transaction with producers, management of the stores	Shopping malls are growing and retails stores are suffering.
External Stakeholder (Urban Local Body, Ministry of urban development)	To get tax, increase its fund source and development of the area	Improve infrastructure, proving framework for investment, regulatory management of markets	Increase in revenue collection

Source: Computed by the author

Findings of the Study

In comparison to retail stores shopping malls emerged with a large dimension than retail ones. Since beginning of shopping malls in Barasat it was evident that they were with a just reorganization of retail stores under the same shade with several small stores. Then, malls appeared as they appear today. However, some impacts of malls revealed from the study are as following:

Shopping malls are the place where people can get several foreign products. In this town, malls are supplier of several foreign products along with local products. Therefore, shopping malls may be treated as one unit of globalization.

Due to a cool, comfort, modern and controlled environment consumers do not go to mall wearing as normal as they used to shop from local stores instead there people go wearing good dressings. In retail stores or local market some men go wearing lungi, unwashed and non-formal t-shirts etc. but visitors with such dresses are not found in malls. Visitors with well dressed up is one of the new mall cultures in the market scenario of Barasat town.

Change in local environment an important positive aspect of mall establishment in Barasat town. There is a great change of local environment especially at night. Shopping malls attract crowd even in late night instead of the remote and risky areas and before malls came into being the local people were in fear of going at night even in the evening. At present there is change of environment and crowd who remains up to 8 - 10 pm in night.

In the present electronics age people have not enough time to spend for shopping with reviewing several retail stores. The local people have been benefitted with several ways such as:

- Local people can place their order over phone and there is home delivery system available for free of cost up to 2 -3 kms.
- People can pay their bill through debit cards.
- People can buy their most common household and other requirements in a short time.

In malls the salesmen are always with smiling face and they care visitors in a trained way. Besides, visitors have not to ask them for displaying anything that causes the malls to be good hang outs.

CONCLUSION

Now, Barasat has entered into the realm of greater Kolkata and it is located near to Airport, Barasat being the Headquarter of the district of North 24 Parganas the accessibility is an added advantage. The ongoing metro-railway construction and infrastructural development on account of JNNURM is rejuvenating the town. The development of Barasat is taking place at a rapid pace bringing in cosmopolitan character, a global one to local phenomenon. The malls are judiciously using the space. But, with the setting up of malls customers of retail stores tend to mobilize to malls.

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