



Entrants' Expectations and Experiential Dimensions of Shopping Malls: An Empirical Investigation in Coimbatore City, India

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Abstract

The proliferation of organized retail infrastructure in tier-II Indian cities has catalyzed a fundamental transformation in consumer shopping behavior, necessitating a granular understanding of entrant expectations within shopping mall environments. This empirical study investigates the multifaceted expectations of shopping mall entrants in Coimbatore City, a prominent industrial and commercial hub in Tamil Nadu, India. Employing a convenience sampling technique, primary data were collected from 124 respondents across multiple shopping malls in Coimbatore, including Brookfield's Mall, Fun Republic Mall, Prozone Mall, and Fun City Mall, during the period December 2025 to March 2026. The research framework integrates demographic profiling, motivational analysis, facility assessment, ambiance evaluation, technological amenity appraisal, and behavioral intention measurement through structured questionnaire instruments. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Chi-Square tests. The findings reveal that the majority of entrants are young adults aged 20–25 years (46.8%), predominantly female (52.4%), from nuclear family structures (68.5%), and belonging to the middle-income bracket (₹15,000–₹30,000 per month, 33.9%). Clothing and accessories emerged as the primary visitation motivation (28.5%), while variety of stores constituted the most influential choice determinant (23.9%). Parking facilities (54.8%) and restroom cleanliness (51.6%) were ranked highest in facility importance, whereas cleanliness (61.2%) and lighting and décor (46.7%) dominated ambiance expectations. Digital directories received the highest technological satisfaction rating (52.4% at rank 5), and overall customer service was perceived as good by 62% of respondents. The Chi-Square test established a statistically significant association between monthly family income and shopping mall visitation frequency ($\chi^2 = 71.047$, $df = 12$, $p < 0.001$). The ANOVA results indicated no significant differences in satisfaction levels across motivational dimensions based on age groups. The study contributes to the limited body of localized retail research in South Indian contexts and offers actionable strategic recommendations for mall operators, retail tenants, and urban planners seeking to enhance competitive positioning in an increasingly digitized and experience-driven retail landscape.



Keywords: Shopping mall expectations, consumer behavior, Coimbatore retail, mall ambiance, facility satisfaction, ANOVA, Chi-Square, organized retail India

1. Introduction

The shopping mall, as an architectural and commercial typology, has undergone a profound metamorphosis since its post-World War II genesis in suburban America. From Victor Gruen's pioneering Southdale Centre (1956) to the contemporary mixed-use experiential complexes of Asia, malls have evolved from mere transactional spaces into multifunctional ecosystems integrating retail, entertainment, gastronomy, and social interaction (Too, Souchon, & Thirkell, 2001). In the Indian context, this evolution has been particularly accelerated by rapid urbanization, rising disposable incomes, and the expansion of organized retail formats into tier-II and tier-III cities (Naidu & Naidu, 2016).

Coimbatore, often designated the "Manchester of South India," represents a compelling case study in this retail transformation. With a population exceeding 1.6 million and a robust industrial base spanning textiles, engineering, and information technology, the city has witnessed substantial investment in organized retail infrastructure over the past two decades. The emergence of Brookfield's Mall, Prozone Mall, Fun Republic Mall, and Fun City Mall has fundamentally altered the city's consumption geography, creating new nodes of social and commercial activity (Das & Varshneya, 2017).

However, the competitive intensity of this landscape—exacerbated by the rapid growth of e-commerce platforms and quick commerce services—demands that mall operators cultivate a sophisticated understanding of entrant expectations to sustain footfall, enhance dwell time, and foster loyalty (Yan, 2018). The Indian e-retail market reached approximately \$65–66 billion in 2025, with Gen Z accounting for 40–45% of e-retail shoppers, underscoring the imperative for physical retail to differentiate through experiential superiority (Bain & Company, 2026). Despite this urgency, localized empirical research on shopping mall consumer expectations remains sparse, particularly in South Indian urban contexts beyond metropolitan centers like Chennai and Bengaluru.

This research addresses this lacuna by conducting a systematic empirical investigation into the expectations, perceptions, and behavioral intentions of shopping mall entrants in Coimbatore City. The study is guided by the recognition that sustainable competitive advantage in contemporary retail is contingent not merely on product assortment and pricing, but on the holistic orchestration of physical environment, service quality, technological integration, and emotional resonance (Moorhouse, tom Dieck, & Jung, 2018).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Mall Consumer Behavior

The academic discourse on shopping mall consumer behavior has evolved through several theoretical lenses. The stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm, originally developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), provides a foundational framework for understanding how



environmental stimuli within mall settings influence internal consumer states and subsequent behavioral responses. Das and Varshneya (2017) extended this framework by demonstrating that perceived crowding, promotional events, and co-visitors significantly impact pleasure and arousal dimensions, which in turn drive repatronage intentions and positive word-of-mouth.

Martínez-Ruiz, Jiménez-Zarco, and Izquierdo-Yusta (2012) examined store factors influencing customer satisfaction across different shopping frequency groups, finding that proximity to home and customer attention are consistently crucial, though the economic crisis moderated the relationship between shopping frequency and satisfaction determinants. Sharma (2015), in an Indian context, identified location, parking availability, product variety, and crowd management as primary factors influencing consumer behavior toward shopping malls.

2.2 Technology, Experience, and the Modern Mall

The integration of technology into retail environments has emerged as a critical dimension of consumer expectation. Moorhouse, tom Dieck, and Jung (2018) argued that augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies are reshaping consumer experience, necessitating strategic adaptation by brick-and-mortar retailers to connect with digital-native consumers. Pookulangara (2011) demonstrated that social media and technology acceptance are mediated by cultural dimensions, suggesting that technological integration in Indian malls must be calibrated to local cultural contexts.

Contemporary research indicates that 25% of consumers globally have already used generative AI shopping tools, while 74% value in-person assistance during in-store service, highlighting the dual imperative of technological sophistication and human touch (Capgemini Research Institute, 2026). In India, the e-retail landscape is characterized by distinct regional variations, with southern consumers viewing brands as markers of quality rather than status, a nuance critical for mall positioning strategies (Bain & Company, 2025).

2.3 Facility, Ambiance, and Service Quality Dimensions

The physical and atmospheric attributes of shopping malls constitute a well-established determinant of consumer satisfaction. Gassler, von Meyer-Höfer, and Spiller (2016) explored cross-cultural sustainability expectations, finding that health and quality of life emerge as universal concerns, though nuanced by cultural backgrounds. In the Indian organized retail sector, Mittal and Prashar (2011) documented the challenges facing organized retailers in the tri-city region, including competition from unorganized sectors and internal logistical issues.

Security and safety remain paramount concerns, with Mahambane (2017) emphasizing that compromised security can irreparably damage retail reputation and consumer trust. The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified expectations around hygiene, contactless service, and spatial distancing, though these concerns have evolved into sustained preferences for cleanliness and health-conscious design.

2.4 Research Gap



Despite the richness of global literature on mall consumer behavior, significant gaps persist in the Indian context. First, most empirical studies have concentrated on metropolitan cities (Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru), leaving tier-II cities like Coimbatore underrepresented. Second, the integration of demographic profiling, motivational analysis, facility assessment, and technological expectation within a single localized framework remains uncommon. Third, the post-pandemic evolution of consumer expectations in South Indian mall contexts has not been adequately documented. This study addresses these gaps through a comprehensive, multi-dimensional empirical investigation.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design with quantitative orientation, aiming to profile respondents, assess expectations, and identify behavioral patterns among shopping mall entrants in Coimbatore City. The research integrates primary data collection through structured questionnaires with secondary data from academic journals, industry reports, and government publications.

3.2 Sampling Design

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select 124 respondents from various shopping malls in Coimbatore, including Brookfield's Mall, Fun Republic Mall, Prozone Mall, and Fun City Mall. The sample was drawn during both peak and off-peak periods to ensure temporal representativeness. While convenience sampling limits generalizability, it provides practical access to mall entrants in natural shopping contexts.

3.3 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising six sections: demographic profiling, visitation patterns and motivations, facility importance ratings (1–5 Likert scale), retail store aspects, ambiance evaluation, technological amenity assessment, and behavioral intention measures (recommendation likelihood and repeat visit drivers). Secondary data were sourced from peer-reviewed journals, RAI-BCG industry reports, and government retail sector publications.

3.4 Analytical Tools

Data were analyzed using:

- **Simple Percentage Analysis:** For demographic profiling and frequency distributions
- **ANOVA (Analysis of Variance):** To examine differences in motivational satisfaction across age groups
- **Chi-Square Test:** To assess association between monthly income and visitation frequency

The ANOVA F-statistic was computed as $F = MSB/MSW$, where MSB represents mean sum of squares between groups and MSW represents mean sum of squares within groups. The Chi-Square statistic was calculated as $\chi^2 = \sum[(O - E)^2/E]$, where O denotes observed frequencies and E denotes expected frequencies.



3.5 Scope and Limitations

The study is confined to Coimbatore City and may not be generalizable to other Indian cities with different demographic and economic profiles. The convenience sampling method introduces potential selection bias, and respondent self-reporting may be subject to social desirability effects. The four-month study period (December 2023–March 2024) captures post-pandemic behavioral patterns but may not fully account for seasonal variations in mall visitation.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic composition of the 124 respondents reveals a young, predominantly female, urban-centric sample. Female respondents constituted 52.4% ($n = 65$) versus 47.6% male ($n = 59$). The age distribution was heavily skewed toward young adulthood: 46.8% ($n = 58$) were aged 20–25 years, 17.7% ($n = 22$) were 25–30 years, and 15.3% ($n = 19$) were 15–20 years. This concentration aligns with India's demographic dividend and the emergence of Gen Z as a critical retail cohort (Bain & Company, 2025).

Geographically, 44.5% ($n = 55$) resided in urban areas, 32.2% ($n = 40$) in semi-urban areas, and 23.3% ($n = 29$) in rural areas, reflecting Coimbatore's expanding suburban catchment. The monthly family income distribution showed 33.9% ($n = 42$) in the ₹15,000–₹30,000 bracket, followed by 26.6% each in the below ₹15,000 and ₹30,000–₹50,000 brackets. Nuclear families dominated at 68.5% ($n = 85$), consistent with India's ongoing family structure transition.

4.2 Visitation Patterns and Temporal Preferences

Shopping mall visitation exhibited a "rarely" dominant pattern: 46% ($n = 57$) visited rarely, 28.2% ($n = 35$) monthly, 12% ($n = 15$) weekly, 8.8% ($n = 11$) were first-time visitors, and only 5% ($n = 6$) visited daily. Temporal preferences were strongly weekend-oriented: 51.6% ($n = 64$) preferred weekends, 25.8% ($n = 32$) were motivated by special events/offers, 15.3% ($n = 19$) preferred evenings, and merely 7.3% ($n = 9$) chose weekdays.

4.3 Motivational Drivers

Multiple-response analysis of visitation motivations (Table 1) revealed that clothing and accessories shopping was the primary driver (28.5% of responses, 100% of cases), followed by dining and food court experience (16.6%, 58.1% of cases), grocery shopping (16.3%, 57.3% of cases), socializing with friends and family (12.6%, 44.4% of cases), entertainment options (11.3%, 39.5% of cases), special promotions and discounts (9.7%, 33.9% of cases), and events and exhibitions (5.1%, 17.7% of cases). This hierarchy underscores the mall's evolution from a purely transactional space to a social and gastronomic destination.

Table 1: Motivations for Visiting Shopping Malls (Multiple Response)

Table			
Motivation	Responses (N)	Response %	Cases %
Clothing and Accessories	124	28.5%	100.0%
Dining and Food Court Experience	72	16.6%	58.1%
Grocery Shopping	71	16.3%	57.3%
Socializing with Friends and Family	55	12.6%	44.4%
Entertainment Options	49	11.3%	39.5%
Special Promotions and Discounts	42	9.7%	33.9%
Events and Exhibitions	22	5.1%	17.7%
Total	435	100.0%	350.8%

4.4 Choice Determinants

Factors influencing mall choice (Table 2) were similarly analyzed through multiple responses. Variety of stores emerged as the dominant determinant (23.9% of responses, 64.2% of cases), followed by proximity to home (15.5%, 41.5% of cases), parking facilities (14.8%, 39.8% of cases), entertainment options (14.2%, 38.2% of cases), ambiance and décor (12.7%, 34.1% of cases), discounts and promotions (12.7%, 34.1% of cases), and recommendations from family and friends (6.1%, 16.3% of cases). The primacy of store variety corroborates Sharma's (2015) findings on Indian mall consumer priorities.

Table 2: Factors Influencing Mall Choice (Multiple Response)

Table			
Factor	Responses (N)	Response %	Cases %
Variety of Stores	79	23.9%	64.2%
Proximity to Home	51	15.5%	41.5%



Factor	Responses (N)	Response %	Cases %
Parking Facilities	49	14.8%	39.8%
Entertainment Options	47	14.2%	38.2%
Ambiance and Décor	42	12.7%	34.1%
Discounts and Promotions	42	12.7%	34.1%
Recommendations from Family/Friends	20	6.1%	16.3%
Total	330	100.0%	268.3%

4.5 Facility Importance Ratings

Respondents ranked seven mall facilities on a 1–5 scale (Table 3). Parking facilities received the highest rank-1 concentration (54.8%), followed by restroom cleanliness (51.6% at rank 1), security and safety (47.8% at rank 1), and entertainment facilities (46.1% at rank 1). Children's play areas were predominantly ranked second (41.0%), while event spaces also skewed toward rank 2 (46.7%). Wi-Fi availability showed a more distributed pattern, with the highest concentration at rank 2 (30.6%). These results indicate that functional hygiene and security infrastructure constitute non-negotiable baseline expectations, while experiential amenities serve as differentiators.

Table 3: Facility Importance Rankings (% Distribution)

Table					
Facility	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
Parking Facilities	54.8%	36.2%	5.6%	1.7%	1.7%
Restroom Cleanliness	51.6%	34.8%	12.0%	1.6%	0.0%
Children's Play Area	35.4%	41.0%	19.3%	2.4%	1.6%
Security and Safety	47.8%	39.5%	11.2%	1.6%	0.0%

Facility	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
Entertainment Facilities	46.1%	39.5%	11.2%	1.6%	1.6%
Wi-Fi Availability	29.0%	30.6%	29.8%	8.2%	2.4%
Event Spaces	29.8%	46.7%	17.7%	3.4%	2.4%

4.6 Retail Store Aspect Ratings

Five dimensions of retail store experience were evaluated on a 1–5 importance scale (Table 4). Importance of variety received the highest rank-5 rating (51.6%), followed by convenience (47.8% at rank 5), overall importance rating (43.5% at rank 5), shopping experience (48.5% at rank 4), and personal preference (45.1% at rank 4). The strong emphasis on variety and convenience reflects the functional orientation of Coimbatore mall entrants, who prioritize efficiency and breadth of choice over hedonic dimensions.

Table 4: Retail Store Aspect Ratings (% Distribution)

Table					
Aspect	Rank 5	Rank 4	Rank 3	Rank 2	Rank 1
Importance of Variety	51.6%	38.7%	8.0%	1.7%	0.0%
Personal Preference	38.7%	45.1%	16.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Shopping Experience	38.7%	48.5%	10.4%	2.4%	0.0%
Convenience	47.8%	36.2%	16.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Overall Importance Rating	43.5%	39.5%	15.4%	1.6%	0.0%

4.7 Store Category Visitation

Multiple-response analysis of store types visited (Table 5) revealed clothing and fashion as the dominant category (27.1% of responses, 69.4% of cases), followed by beauty and personal care (20.8%, 53.2% of cases), grocery shopping (20.5%, 52.4% of cases), electronics and gadgets (13.2%, 33.9% of cases), home and furniture (10.7%, 27.4% of cases), and sports and fitness



(7.6%, 19.4% of cases). This distribution aligns with the motivational hierarchy and underscores the mall's role as a comprehensive lifestyle destination.

Table 5: Types of Stores Visited (Multiple Response)

Table			
Store Type	Responses (N)	Response %	Cases %
Clothing and Fashion	86	27.1%	69.4%
Beauty and Personal Care	66	20.8%	53.2%
Grocery Shopping	65	20.5%	52.4%
Electronics and Gadgets	42	13.2%	33.9%
Home and Furniture	34	10.7%	27.4%
Sports and Fitness	24	7.6%	19.4%
Total	317	100.0%	255.6%

4.8 Purchase Decision Influencers

Multiple-response analysis of purchase decision factors (Table 6) identified price as the primary influencer (20.7% of responses, 72.6% of cases), followed by brand reputation (19.1%, 66.9% of cases), product quality (18.0%, 62.9% of cases), customer reviews (16.6%, 58.1% of cases), discounts and offers (16.1%, 56.5% of cases), and availability of sizes/options (9.4%, 33.1% of cases). The co-dominance of price and brand reputation reflects the tension between economic rationality and aspirational consumption characteristic of India's emerging middle class.

Table 6: Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions (Multiple Response)

Table			
Factor	Responses (N)	Response %	Cases %
Price	90	20.7%	72.6%



Factor	Responses (N)	Response %	Cases %
Brand Reputation	83	19.1%	66.9%
Product Quality	78	18.0%	62.9%
Customer Reviews	72	16.6%	58.1%
Discounts and Offers	70	16.1%	56.5%
Availability of Sizes/Options	41	9.4%	33.1%
Total	434	100.0%	350.0%

4.9 Ambiance Evaluation

Five ambiance dimensions were rated on a 1–5 scale (Table 7). Cleanliness received overwhelming top-tier ratings (61.2% at rank 5), followed by lighting and décor (46.7% at rank 5), layout and navigation (46.7% at rank 5), comfortable seating areas (45.1% at rank 5), and temperature control (41.1% at rank 5). The near-universal high rating for cleanliness (91.8% at ranks 4–5) reflects heightened post-pandemic hygiene consciousness and its establishment as a fundamental hygiene factor in service quality parlance.

Table 7: Ambiance Dimension Ratings (% Distribution)

Table					
Dimension	Rank 5	Rank 4	Rank 3	Rank 2	Rank 1
Cleanliness	61.2%	30.6%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lighting and Décor	46.7%	41.9%	10.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Comfortable Seating Areas	45.1%	41.9%	12.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Temperature Control	41.1%	39.5%	15.3%	4.0%	0.0%
Layout and Navigation	46.7%	35.4%	15.3%	2.4%	0.0%

4.10 Technological Amenity Assessment

Seven technological facilities were evaluated (Table 8). Digital directories received the highest satisfaction rating (52.4% at rank 5), followed by smart parking systems (30.8% at rank 5), Wi-Fi connectivity (35.4% at rank 5), and mobile apps (35.4% at rank 5). Interactive kiosks, charging stations, and virtual reality experiences were predominantly rated at rank 4 (58.2%, 50.0%, and 49.2% respectively). The relatively lower top-tier ratings for VR experiences suggest that immersive technologies remain nascent in Coimbatore's mall ecosystem, representing an untapped differentiation opportunity.

Table 8: Technological Facility Ratings (% Distribution)

Facility	Rank 5	Rank 4	Rank 3	Rank 2	Rank 1
Wi-Fi Connectivity	35.4%	38.7%	20.3%	5.6%	0.0%
Interactive Kiosks	24.1%	58.2%	17.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Mobile Apps	35.4%	40.5%	22.5%	1.6%	0.0%
Digital Directories	25.8%	52.4%	16.2%	5.6%	0.0%
Charging Stations	24.2%	50.0%	21.0%	4.8%	0.0%
Virtual Reality Experience	25.8%	49.2%	21.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Smart Parking System	30.8%	46.7%	22.5%	0.0%	0.0%

4.11 Service Quality and Behavioral Intentions

Overall customer service was perceived as good by 62% of respondents and excellent by 34%, with only 4% rating it as fair and none as poor. Recommendation likelihood was predominantly positive: 46% likely, 19.4% very likely, 33% neutral, and merely 1.6% unlikely. Repeat visit drivers were led by quality of products (33.2%), followed by variety of stores (27.4%), entertainment options (25.8%), dining options (8.8%), and promotions and discounts (4.8%). Notably, product quality superseded variety as a loyalty driver, suggesting that while variety attracts initial visitation, quality sustains patronage.

4.12 Inferential Statistical Analysis

4.12.1 ANOVA: Age and Motivational Satisfaction

One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether satisfaction levels across seven motivational dimensions differed significantly by age group (Table 9). The results revealed no statistically significant differences: Shopping Clothing and Accessories (F undefined due to zero variance), Grocery Shopping ($F = 1.008$, $p = 0.416$), Entertainment Options ($F = 2.001$, $p = 0.083$), Dining and Food Court Experience ($F = 1.289$, $p = 0.273$), Socializing with Friends and Family ($F = 1.965$, $p = 0.089$), Special Promotions and Discounts ($F = 0.843$, $p = 0.522$), and Events and Exhibitions ($F = 0.239$, $p = 0.945$). All p -values exceeded the 0.05 significance threshold, indicating that age does not significantly moderate motivational satisfaction in this sample.

Table 9: ANOVA Results — Age vs. Motivational Dimensions

Table			
Motivation Dimension	F-Value	Significance (p)	Interpretation
Shopping Clothing and Accessories	—	—	No variance between groups
Grocery Shopping	1.008	0.416	Not significant
Entertainment Options	2.001	0.083	Not significant
Dining and Food Court Experience	1.289	0.273	Not significant
Socializing with Friends and Family	1.965	0.089	Not significant
Special Promotions and Discounts	0.843	0.522	Not significant
Events and Exhibitions	0.239	0.945	Not significant

4.12.2 Chi-Square: Monthly Income and Visitation Frequency

A Chi-Square test of independence was performed to assess the relationship between monthly family income and shopping mall visitation frequency (Table 10). The Pearson Chi-Square value was 71.047 with 12 degrees of freedom, yielding a p -value of < 0.001 . This result is

statistically significant at the 0.05 level, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis of independence. The association suggests that income level significantly structures visitation patterns, with higher-income respondents (above ₹50,000) showing disproportionate representation in daily and weekly visitation categories, while lower-income groups concentrated in monthly and rare visitation.

Table 10: Chi-Square Test — Monthly Income vs. Visitation Frequency

Table			
Test Statistic	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	71.047	12	< 0.001
N of Valid Cases	124	—	—

5. Discussion

5.1 Synthesis of Findings

The empirical findings from this Coimbatore-based study reveal several patterns with theoretical and managerial implications. First, the demographic profile—young, female-skewed, middle-income, nuclear family-based—aligns with India's emerging consumer archetype, particularly in tier-II cities where organized retail is penetrating beyond traditional elite segments. The 46.8% concentration in the 20–25 age bracket mirrors national trends where Gen Z constitutes the fastest-growing retail cohort, characterized by digital nativity, social media-influenced discovery, and experience-seeking behavior (Bain & Company, 2025).

Second, the motivational hierarchy—clothing and accessories > dining > grocery > socializing > entertainment—challenges the conventional "experiential mall" narrative that prioritizes entertainment and leisure over transactional functions. In Coimbatore's context, the mall remains fundamentally a retail destination, with gastronomy and socialization serving as complementary rather than primary attractions. This finding suggests that mall positioning strategies in tier-II Indian cities should anchor on retail excellence before layering experiential elements.

Third, the facility importance rankings illuminate a hierarchy of consumer needs that aligns with Maslow's framework applied to retail contexts: parking and security represent physiological and safety needs (foundational), restroom cleanliness and entertainment represent social needs, while Wi-Fi and event spaces represent self-actualization or esteem needs. The concentration of top-tier ratings for parking (54.8%) and security (47.8%) underscores that functional infrastructure failures are disproportionately damaging to satisfaction, consistent with the service quality literature on "basic factors" versus "excitement factors" (Kano model).



Fourth, the technological amenity assessment reveals a maturity gap. While digital directories and smart parking systems receive favorable ratings, virtual reality experiences and interactive kiosks remain underutilized. This presents a strategic opportunity: as Capgemini Research Institute (2026) notes, 25% of consumers globally have already used generative AI shopping tools, and Indian malls that pioneer immersive technologies may capture disproportionate attention from young, tech-savvy entrants.

Fifth, the behavioral intention data—96% likelihood to recommend (likely + very likely) and quality-driven repeat visit motivation—suggest strong latent loyalty potential. However, the 46% "rare" visitation rate indicates that this loyalty is not yet translating into habitual patronage, possibly due to competition from e-commerce, quick commerce, and traditional markets.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the retail consumer behavior literature in three ways. First, it extends the S-O-R paradigm to a tier-II Indian city context, demonstrating that environmental stimuli (facility quality, ambiance, technology) operate through culturally mediated response pathways. Second, it provides empirical validation for the Kano model's applicability to mall service quality, confirming that parking, security, and cleanliness function as basic (must-be) factors while technology and entertainment serve as excitement (attractive) factors. Third, it enriches the limited body of quantitative research on South Indian mall consumer expectations, complementing existing studies on metropolitan markets.

5.3 Managerial Implications

For mall operators in Coimbatore and analogous tier-II Indian cities, the findings yield actionable strategic directives:

1. **Infrastructure Excellence as Foundation:** Prioritize parking capacity expansion, security personnel deployment, and restroom maintenance protocols. These represent non-negotiable baseline expectations whose failure cannot be compensated by superior experiential offerings.
2. **Retail Mix Optimization:** Given the primacy of clothing and accessories (69.4% visitation) and the importance of variety (64.2% choice influence), mall operators should curate diverse fashion portfolios spanning fast fashion, ethnic wear, sportswear, and premium brands. Anchor tenants should include strong fashion retailers.
3. **Gastronomy as Dwell Time Extender:** The 58.1% food court visitation rate suggests that dining options serve as critical dwell time extenders. Introducing regional cuisine alongside international formats can cater to Coimbatore's culturally rooted palate while attracting younger demographics seeking novelty.
4. **Technology-Enabled Differentiation:** Invest in smart parking systems, digital wayfinding, and mobile apps with real-time inventory visibility. Pilot AR/VR experiences in high-traffic zones to gauge adoption before scaled deployment.



5. **Weekend-Centric Programming:** With 51.6% of visits concentrated on weekends, malls should intensify event programming, promotional campaigns, and entertainment scheduling during Friday–Sunday periods.
6. **Income-Segmented Engagement:** The significant income-visitation association ($\chi^2 = 71.047$, $p < 0.001$) implies that loyalty programs, payment flexibility options, and targeted promotions should be calibrated to income segments. Higher-income entrants may respond to premium experiences and exclusive access, while middle-income groups prioritize value and affordability.
7. **Cleanliness as Competitive Weapon:** The 91.8% top-tier rating for cleanliness indicates that hygiene standards have become table stakes. Malls should invest in visible cleaning protocols, touchless fixtures, and air quality monitoring to sustain this perception.

6. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive empirical portrait of shopping mall entrants' expectations in Coimbatore City, a representative tier-II Indian urban market. The findings demonstrate that while Indian mall consumers increasingly value experiential dimensions—technology, ambiance, entertainment—their expectations remain anchored in functional fundamentals: parking, security, cleanliness, variety, and price. The young, digitally native demographic profile suggests that technological integration will become progressively important, yet the current satisfaction gap around immersive technologies indicates that adoption will be gradual rather than immediate.

The statistically significant association between income and visitation frequency, combined with the non-significant age-moderation of motivational satisfaction, implies that economic stratification rather than generational differentiation drives behavioral segmentation in this market. Mall operators must therefore adopt nuanced, income-calibrated strategies rather than age-centric approaches.

As India's organized retail sector projects the addition of 25 million square feet of mall space over the next four to five years (Retailers Association of India, 2026), the competitive intensity in tier-II cities like Coimbatore will intensify. Success will accrue to operators who master the dual imperative of functional excellence and experiential innovation—delivering reliable infrastructure while pioneering immersive, technology-enabled, and culturally resonant environments that transform transactional visits into memorable experiences.

Future research should employ larger, probability-based samples to enhance generalizability, incorporate longitudinal designs to track expectation evolution, and integrate qualitative methods to capture the nuanced meanings consumers attach to mall experiences. Comparative studies across multiple tier-II cities would further illuminate regional variations in mall consumer behavior within India's heterogeneous retail landscape.



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