

Impact of Malls and Organized Retail on Traditional *Kirana* Stores in Kolkata

Rajib Dasgupta

Associate Professor
Department of Commerce
University of Calcutta
Email: rdcom@caluniv.ac.in

Mohua Banerjee

Assistant Professor
International Management Institute, Kolkata
Email: mohuabanerjee@hotmail.com

Abstract : The mall phenomenon as a single-point destination for shopping, food and entertainment, has revolutionized retailing. Along with the air-conditioned shopping ambience, quality products, service, convenience and comfort, consumers are offered in-house parking, entertainment in multiplexes, gaming facilities, play areas for children and food courts in the malls. Retail giants have transformed the activity of shopping, movie-watching or dining, to an experiential, lifestyle activity. Consumers' gradual preference for shopping in malls, as a mark of acceptance of this change, has significantly affected the stand-alone retailers in those parts of the city marked by the presence of malls. However in areas not in the vicinity of malls, such as North Kolkata, stand-alone stores have not felt such adverse effect. But the large organized retailers are expanding on a massive scale to get the early-mover advantage; so it is a matter of time before they pan out in virgin-catchment areas of North Kolkata and Howrah. *India's retailing landscape has more than 12 million "mom-and-pop" stores that are not likely to idly watch their businesses erode as large retailers encroach on their territory.* They are therefore revising sales strategies and focusing on concepts like improving customer service and offering discounts, etc to sustain themselves.

Key-words : Organized retail; shopping malls; stand-alone (*Kirana*) stores; consumer behaviour; impact of change.

Introduction

As the shopping malls currently gaining ground wean a large section of the consumers away from the mundane shopping experience, they introduce them to the pleasures of exploring these malls. Food, grocery and apparel account for a substantial part of the Indian consumer's spending, and the supermarkets are inadvertently taking on the local kirana stores with their aggressive plans for expanding and establishing organized retail formats ranging from large supermarkets to small convenience stores. With supermarkets having provision for meeting both monthly and top-up needs of consumers like milk and bread, which so long was chiefly catered to by the *kirana* stores, the extent of impact on the mom and pop stores remains to be seen. The change in consumption patterns has been witnessed by the stand-alone retailers in renowned

shopping zones in Kolkata. It has predictably taken a toll on their sales, but more importantly, it has forced them to revise their strategies and focus on hitherto unknown concepts such as customer service and discount. India's retailing landscape has more than 12 million mom-and-pop stores that are not likely to idly watch their businesses erode as large retailers encroach on their territory. The question also being asked is, whether they should feel threatened about their existence in this changing scenario and are they equipping themselves with survival strategies. This is the issue we are addressing through this study.

Literature Review

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce, in its report submitted on June 8, 2009 on Foreign and Domestic Investments in the Retail Sector has stated that, "a blanket ban should be imposed on domestic corporate heavyweights and foreign retailers from entering into retail trade in grocery, fruits, vegetables and restrictions should be entered for opening large malls by them for selling consumer products." It recommended that the government should protect small and medium retailers by adopting a reservation policy, similar to the small scale industry policy. Currently FDI policy for the retail sector is governed by Press Note 3 (2006). It liberalized FDI in the retail trade sector and permitted FDI upto 51% in single-brand retail. In wholesale/cash and carry trading, currently 100% FDI is permitted under the automatic route. There is a consensus amongst the trade associations and industry that the retail sector should be opened in a staggered manner and adequate protection be provided to ensure that large corporations do not oust small retailers through unfair means. Though the recommendations of the Committee are non-binding, it has recommended the need for setting up a Retail Regulatory Authority to look into anti-competitive behavior leading to abuse of dominance of the large retailers; and also the establishment of a National Commission, to study the problems of the retail sector and to evolve policies that will enable it to cope with FDI (Satvik Varma).

Mr. S. Ramesh Kumar, [Professor of marketing at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIMB)], who has recently done a study on the retailing sector, said "*Kirana* shops, which number around 15 million to 20 million, are part of Indian shopping culture. They are spread throughout the length and breadth of the country and cannot be completely displaced by modern retail formats in the foreseeable future." Another survey conducted by consulting firm McKinsey, said that by 2015 India was likely to be a US\$450 billion retail market. Organized retail would grow from 5% to 14%-18% by 2015, and that "mom-and-pop stores will continue to remain relevant across large and small towns." A study by Technopak Advisors suggests that *kiranas* will not be beaten down by supermarkets just yet. As Indians are becoming addicted to shopping and the retail environment, both traditional and modern outlets will benefit and are expected to grow by 42% in the next five years. Modern retail outlets will account for 15% of that growth and grow by 75% by 2011. While highlighting that local stores located close to hypermarkets and supermarkets will be more affected than others, Mr. Arvind Singhal, Chairman of KSA Technopak, says "In India, the *kiranas* will coexist with modern retail for many decades

to come." He also suggests that there are several options for them to convert their stores into, before going out of business. "Telecom retailing outlets can be put in mom and pop stores and some current retailers could become food service retailers and others could become cyber cafe owners." It is reported that even though organized retail sector is picking up speed, sales in the unorganized sector in India added up to Rs. 5,83,000 crore, while the organized sector was only Rs. 5,000 crore (Economic Times, 2006). These figures suggest that consumers still shop more at local stores. Even though malls, supermarkets and hypermarkets are the preferred formats by shoppers, manufacturers are keen on increasing their time and resources on local kirana stores, such as chemists and pan-beedi stores (Economic Times, 2006). Smaller trade channels are being noticed by companies who feel that modern retail cannot grow at the cost of the old and traditional retail stores. Several companies like Hindustan lever Limited through their Super Value Stores, are forming specialized and dedicated teams for trade marketing to build relationships, manage space and teach these small traders how to increase visibility and signage. At the symposium 'Insight 06' Mr. Rajan Chhibba, Managing Director, Intrim, said, "Though emerging modern retail is inevitable, it will not eat into the share of *kirana* stores. Mom-and-pop stores will also upgrade themselves and co-exist. Modern retail is like an express highway. "Just because we have express highways, we cannot do away with other roads. They (*kiranas*) are also equally important for the economy. Our traditional *pani puri* stalls outside McDonald's outlets are still doing brisk business." At the same event, Mr. A. Mahendran, Managing Director of Godrej Sara Lee said, though modern retail is all set to change consumerism in the country with Reliance, Tatas, Pantaloons investing heavily in the industry, local *kiranas* will retaliate by improving customer service and relationship. "For example, those shops will upgrade services by offering door deliveries and extending interest-free credit to their customers and so on". Traditional mom-and-pop stores will survive by converting themselves into self-service formats. Assocham's President Mr. Anil K. Aggarwal feels that permitting multi-brand retailers to enter India will not affect kirana shops adversely and will instead benefit the average consumer by increasing competition.

The average Indian shopper unlike his/her Western counterpart has not been noted as an impulsive buyer. The list and budget is drawn out at the beginning of the month and allegiance to the local grocer still survives. Content analysis from various printed articles also illustrate that consumers still prefer to continue their purchases from traditional retailers within their locality, "I need lots of clothes to wear to college and it is unwise to spend too much money buying exorbitantly-priced outfits. The malls have everything under a single roof and the quality is indeed good. But my priority is to ensure the best bargain for my money. Thus, I prefer Sreeram Arcade and New Market (Ms. Lahori Chowdhury, first-year student Kolkata)." "There is absolutely no justification in running to these malls to buy household articles. There is a wide variety on offer at New Market and Gariahat and it is wiser to spend money buying things from there. I don't care much for ambience as long as I get what I am looking for and it is within my budget (Mrs. Sujata Guha, housewife, shopping at Gariahat)"

An interesting perspective is noted in an online discussion by singling out the consumers (Yazad, 2004). "It's a common misconception that big organized retail players like Wal-Mart push out mom and pop stores. It doesn't. Consumers do, by preferring Wal-Mart to smaller stores. There is an essential difference. Wal-Mart cannot prevent you or me from buying from other stores (like for example a government regulation can). I have found grocery shopping easier in large malls. All the fruits/vegetables are there (some of them pre-cut), and everything I require like masalas, grain etc. Also, it's easier to browse and select brands in a supermarket compared to a grocer (bania) who might give you very little choice. Once margins are lower, the 'sale season' will be a thing of the past. Ex. Big Bazaar—every time I've been there something or the other is marked down for a sale." The cost factor too predominates in the choice exhibited by consumers, "I'd look at the cost of transport (home to mall and back) and compare it with the savings made while shopping at the mall. If cost is less than savings, we'd see a retail boom." The logistical problem in India as an impediment to supermarkets has also been noted (CK, 2004). "The superstores will be a logistical problem in India because of the following reasons :

1. People will only go to the super store to stock up on supplies.
2. Indians have got a fetish for 'fresh' food.
3. They only work in USA because everybody has cars. You cannot stock up on a month's worth of groceries and take public transport - you just would not be able to carry it all.

From an economic point of view the mom and pop stores should compete or go out of business, but from a logistical point of view and knowing the infrastructure problems and the attitudes of people in India, I doubt large malls will be a success." Whether the malls can target all sections of the society, is also a factor that measures the impact on kirana stores. "It would be interesting to see how retail giant companies target the large base of smaller town customers who thrive on small purchases and use credit facilities offered by the kiranawallahs. How would they tackle the disposable income issue especially for people who survive on weekly wages and those that earn just enough to meet their needs? (Prashant, 2006)".

According to Mr. Ajay Dua, Secretary, DIPP (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion), whether or not the sector is fully open to foreign retailers, domestic retailers will face stiff competition from home-grown organized retail chains (2006). The State's research economists at the Jawaharlal Nehru University are studying the models followed by the European countries to regulate big retail outlets. In UK, permission to shops that exceed 1,000 square metres is given after evaluating impact on corner shops and employment. In Germany, retail centers are not allowed to exceed 1,200 square metres to avoid negative environmental and commercial impact. Guidelines from the European models will be adapted to match the Indian context. The results together with some suggestions could form a loose model for future investments. The corporate retail outlets are to be kept outside city centers and also the size of the plots that can be acquired by them is to be capped. "This will prevent large-scale retail

operations and will allow smaller entities to come up." Need to protect corner shops from being squeezed out by retail giants is guided by various cited reasons such as the stagnation in manufacturing, the overcrowding in agriculture and the low wages in both sectors. "It becomes almost a natural decision for an individual to set up a small shop or a store depending on his or her means and capital." It is expected that any suggestion proposed to the Centre would most likely be implemented in Bengal. The present study thus finds its relevance in the above-mentioned backdrop of Kolkata.

Retailing in India

The word retail is derived from the French word 'retailer' meaning to break bulk or breaking bulk quantities into smaller saleable units. Usually a retailer buys goods or products in large quantities from manufacturers, or importers, whether directly or through a wholesaler, and then sells individual items in small quantities to the general public or the end-user. In simpler term, it implies a first-hand transaction with the consumer. Retailing involves a direct interface with the consumer and the co-ordination of business activities from end to end – right from the concept of design stage of a product or offering, to its delivery and post-delivery service to the consumer.

Retail in India is classified broadly into two sectors, organized retail and unorganized retail. The *unorganized sector* which presently represents more than 95 percent of the total retail market is characterized by typically small retailers, more prone to tax evasion and lack of labour law supervision. India is one of the largest unorganized retail markets in the world and more than 96 percent of the retailers work in less than 500 sq.ft. area. They are mostly small individually owned businesses, average size of outlets equal 50 sq.ft. In grocery shops, boys perch precariously on ladders to fetch jars from remote crannies. In the bookshops, browsers brush against each other as they squeeze past each other in crowded aisles. Some of the famous clothes shops are reached up narrow, twisting staircases. Most Indian shops belong to the unorganized sector; small, family-owned shops surviving on unpaid labour and often, free land for a small stall. The *organized sector* is not just about stocking and selling, but robust supply chain management, developing vendor relationships, quality customer service, efficient merchandising and timely promotional campaigns. It is characterized by typically large number of retailers, greater enforcement of taxation mechanisms and better labour law monitoring systems.

Since 2001, A.T. Kearney has published the Global Retail Development Index (GRDI), a survey to help retailers prioritize their global development strategies. The index ranks 30 emerging countries based on more than 25 macroeconomic and retail-specific variables. Each year, the world map of opportunities changes for retailers. India has steadily risen on the GRDI and has claimed the top position for three consecutive years from 2005 to 2007. In 2008, India ranked second having lost the top position to Vietnam (Table 1).

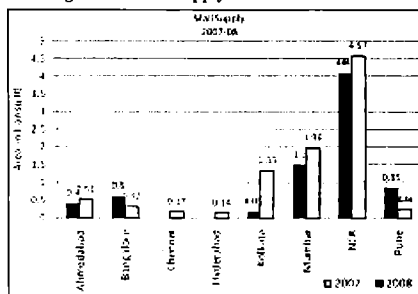
Table-1 : GRDI 2008

2008 rank	Country	Region	Country risk	Market attractiveness	Market saturation	Time pressure	GRDI score	Change in rank compared to 2007
1.	Vietnam	Asia	57	34	67	99	88	+3
2.	India	Asia	29	39	78	93	80	-1
3.	Russia	Eastern Europe	31	52	50	90	72	-1
4.	China	Asia	36	50	45	82	67	-1
5.	Egypt	MENA	22	34	50	64	66	+9
6.	Morocco	MENA	26	36	60	68	66	+9
7.	Saudi Arabia	MENA	49	40	63	50	62	+3
8.	Chile	Latin America	44	52	45	58	60	-2
9.	Brazil	Latin America	23	60	60	54	60	+11
10.	Turkey	MENA	20	53	59	64	58	+3
11.	Mexico	Latin America	38	59	40	56	57	-2
12.	Algeria	MENA	15	34	50	50	55	+13
13.	Malaysia	Asia	40	44	43	61	55	-5
14.	Peru	Latin America	17	34	52	54	55	+5
15.	Indonesia	Asia	13	41	71	61	53	+9
16.	Bulgaria	Eastern Europe	28	32	42	79	51	-4
17.	Ukraine	Eastern Europe	42	40	38	60	51	-12
18.	Tunisia	MENA	29	34	76	41	51	-7
19.	Colombia	Latin America	17	49	56	57	50	+11
20.	U.A.E.	MENA	61	37	32	45	48	-2
21.	Latvia	Eastern Europe	36	32	27	73	45	-14
22.	Romania	Eastern Europe	27	30	21	85	43	+5
23.	Slovenia	Eastern Europe	65	26	12	58	43	-5
24.	Thailand	Asia	30	39	33	61	42	-5
25.	Macedonia	Eastern Europe	13	20	74	53	41	NA
26.	Philippines	Asia	14	46	76	24	41	-3
27.	Guatemala	Latin America	13	15	87	41	40	NA
28.	Argentina	Latin America	3	51	42	59	39	+1
29.	Honduras	Latin America	4	13	91	45	38	NA
30.	Lithuania	Eastern Europe	37	34	17	64	37	-2

Sources: Euromoney, World Bank, Global Competitiveness Report 06-07, A.T.Kearney Analysis

Organized retail presently constitutes a very little share of around 4.6 percent of the total retail market. Of that, 96 percent is in the ten biggest cities, and 86 percent in the biggest six. Through the 1990s organized retail in India added just 1million sq.ft. of space a year. From 2001 onwards, the pace quickened dramatically. In 2003 alone, 10 million sq.ft. was added by this fledgling industry (The Marketing Whitebook 2005). The Indian retail market is estimated at US\$ 280 billion. But organized retail is estimated at only US\$ 14 billion. However by 2010, organized retail is expected to grow to US\$ 30 billion—the opportunity of growth is huge (The Marketing Whitebook 2009-2010). India's overall retail sector is expected to rise to \$833 billion by 2013 and to \$1.3 trillion by 2018, at a CAGR of 10 percent (India Retail Report 2009).

Figure 1: Mall Supply in India 2007-2008



Source: Cushman & Wakefield

Table 2 : Number of Formats of Indian Retailers

Retail Chain	Founded	Number	Number	Hypermarket of formats	Fashion of stores	Food	Home	Other
Future Group	1997	20	>1085	101	135	323	96	450
RPG	1996	4	>900	13	-	>400	-	486
Tata Group	1998	9	443	4	397	6	-	40
ITC	2000	3	323	-	300	23	-	-
Reliance Retail	2006	13	>700	9	15	646	3	25
Bharti Retail	2007	1	7	-	-	7	-	-
K Raheja	1991	13	137	2	47	23	3	62
Landmark	1998	10	>112	2	50	1	10	49
Aditya Birla Retail	2007	2	>602	2	-	>600	-	-
Vishal Retail	1986	3	>151	137	-	14	-	-
Subhiksha	1997	4	>1500	-	-	1000	-	500

Source: India Retail Report 2009, Images Multimedia

The sector accounts for over 10% of the country's GDP and 8% of total employment of the nation's workforce. The growth in the retail sector has driven a mall building boom across the country, with the total number of malls expected to increase to 600 by 2010 from an estimated 300 by end of 2007. Several retailers, including Indian corporates, have been foraying into the retail sector through several formats, unlike foreign retailers who usually maintain three to four formats (Table 2).

The retailing formats in India can be categorized as:

Hypermarkets—huge stores between 50,000-1,20,000 sq.ft. area, that offer products ranging from grocery, fresh and processed food, beauty and household products, clothing, books and appliances etc. Ex. Big Bazaar, Spencer's Hypermarket.

Supermarkets—large self service outlets, offering not only household products but also food as integral part of their services. The family is the typical target customer and located in or near residential high streets, these stores contribute to 30% of all food & grocery organized retail sales. Supermarkets can further be classified as mini supermarkets typically 1,000 sq.ft. to 2,000 sq.ft. and large supermarkets ranging from of 3,500 sq.ft. to 5,000 sq.ft. Ex: Food Bazaar.

Department Stores—generally large layout ranging from 20,000-50,000 sq. ft and further classified into localized departments with a wide range of merchandise mix, usually in cohesive categories like garments, fashion accessories, gifts, toys and home furnishings. Ex. Shoppers Stop, Piramyd, Lifestyle, Pantaloons, Westside.

Convenience Stores—relatively small stores with 400 sq.ft. to 2,000 sq.ft. area located near residential areas. They stock a limited range of high-turnover convenience products and usually open for extended periods during the day, seven days a week. Prices may be slightly higher due to the convenience premium. Ex. Fresh n' Nice, Spencer's Fresh.

Specialty Stores—single-category focused and have individuals, group clusters of same class with high loyalty prone categories of products. Ex. Bangalore based Kids Kemp, Crossword, the music chains Music World and Planet M.

Discount Stores or factory outlets—offer discounts on the MRP through selling in bulk thus achieving economies of scale or through selling excess stock left over at the season. The product category can range through a variety of perishable/ non perishable goods. Ex. Subhiksha.

MBOs (Multi Brand outlets) also known as **Category Killers**—focus on a particular segment and offer several brands across a single product category, usually at affordable prices due to the scale they achieve. These usually do well in busy market places and Metros.

Shop-in-Shop—Many retail brands are devising strategies to scale their store size in order to gain presence within the large format department or supermarket within these malls. They have limited space and have to rely on a very efficiently managed supply chain system. Ex. Infinity, a retail brand selling crystal ware and jewellery from Kolkata's Magma Group has already established presence in over 36 department chains and exclusive brand stores (ex; Starmark in Kolkata) in less than five years.

While the economy was growing at a robust rate of nearly 8 percent, the retail sector witnessed notable growth due to an unprecedented consumption boom. The multiple factors driving this boom are favourable demography with roughly 60 per cent of the total population below 30 years of age group, higher disposable incomes of young middle class consumers due to employment in IT, management and increasing number of working women and change in consumption pattern with high aspiration levels (The AC Nielsen Online Omnibus Survey 2005 has rated India in the highest category of Aspiration Index, especially in consumer durables segment, in Asia along with China, Indonesia and Thailand), easier consumer credit with low interest rates and aggressive marketing by companies.

But at this juncture we should keep in mind that the present general slowdown in the economy due to the global crisis marked with credit crisis and industrial slowdown is expected to affect the growth of organized retail in the country. So the assumed GDP growth of 8% to 10% during 2007-12, leading to 45% - 50% growth in organized retail (ICRIER report to the Union Commerce Ministry, 2008) would have to be revised for 2008 to 2010 presently. However, the downturn phase can be assumed to be a temporary, passing one, and with the return of the boom phase, growth of organized retailing and consumption by the Indian consumers is going to take a higher trajectory. From the period April 2009 to July 2009, the Sensex has registered a growth of 35% in 3 months. Subsequently, the present phase can be favourably construed as an opportunity for the retail industry to correct its operational structure and build consumer-centric strategies.

When a new mall commences operations in a locality, there is an immediate impact on the neighbourhood which includes the employees, suppliers and consumers of that mall. Even in a latent manner, the malls re-shape the nature of our physical and psychological environment. On a broader platform, it thus contributes to the collective identities of our societies. One of the principal objectives of this study is to chronicle such change that has encompassed Kolkata ever since the focus on organized retail has steadily gained ground. An honest attempt is made to highlight the impact if any, on stand-alone stores because of this change and how they are gearing up and equipping themselves to ride on the wave of socio-economic change that is gradually sweeping through.

Objective of the Study

The mall phenomenon has transformed the way people shop, are entertained and have significantly increased consumer spending. The broad research questions that formed the basis of this explorative research are:

1. Have the stand-alone retailers measured a decrease in the quantity of their sales, given the phenomenon of organized retail gaining momentum?
2. Does the measured effect on sales differ for standalone retailers in areas not in the vicinity of malls?
3. What do the standalone retailers perceive as possible reasons for the change in consumers' gradual shifting shopping preference to malls?

4. What are the steps standalone retailers believe they ought to take to maintain their sustainability in this changing scenario?

Sample Selection

In order to establish the association between the burst of new retail malls across Kolkata and its significant effect on sales that has been witnessed by the stand-alone retailers in renowned shopping zones in the city, a sample of 100 stand-alone shops (garment and provision stores); 50 stores in South Kolkata from Gariahat Market, Lake Market, New Market and New Alipore area and 50 stores in North Kolkata from Shyambazar – Hatibagan, Burrabazar area have been selected according to convenience, as the subject of the explorative study. Shops with space of 500 sq.ft. and above has been the basis for such selection. An important pre-requisite to the study has been the preparation of a questionnaire with close-ended and open-ended questions. The close-ended questions would enable to keep the study within well-defined parameters to assess the extent to which their customer base has been diverted to the malls, while the open-ended questions would simultaneously reflect the diverse opinion of the stand-alone shops regarding their strategies implemented to survive and compete vis-à-vis the shopping malls. The main criteria behind selection of Gariahat Market, Lake Market, New Market, New Alipore, Shyambazar, Hatibagan market as constituents of the market survey, has been the availability of data from traditional established markets, where the impact could be well-substantiated. *Appendix A provides names of the stand-alone stores visited for the purpose.*

Research Methodology

a) Consideration of Time Period

In order to put forward the market study for the purpose of establishing the relation between the establishment of shopping malls and the extent of impact sustained by the stand-alone retailers, a period of four financial years 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 have been considered. The relevant data used for this purpose are figures that have been specified by the respective store-owners/managers in the course of their interaction through the questionnaire.

b) Collection of Data

Data for the market study has been collected primarily from primary sources, by personally visiting the 100 stand-alone stores and after the necessary introduction specifying the purpose of the visit, requesting them to furnish necessary details in the questionnaire-sheet specifically prepared for this purpose.

c) Application of Methods

The analysis and interpretation of data is done both graphically and mathematically. The primary data provided through the questionnaire is studied and analyzed with the aim of preparing and presenting a comprehensive chart. It has then been entered in Microsoft Excel. Using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) the data from MS-Excel has been converted and datasheet tables and charts derived.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The analysis and interpretation of the available data of the sample collected from the stand-

alone stores are presented below through tables, charts and graphs. The observations derived from the analyzed data depict the following trends –

Observations: While 55% of the stand-alone retailers under the market-study have been in the business for more than 50 years, 30% of the stores have been retailing for a time period of 26-50 years, 10% have been in the business for 10-25 years, while the remaining 5% are in retailing for less than 10 years (Figure 2). Thus majority of the shops that have been surveyed are traditional, matured shops, doing business for more than 50 years. Only 10% of the total shops under review claim to have branches.

Figure 2: Number of Years in the Business

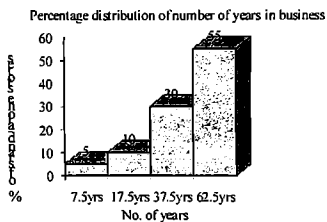
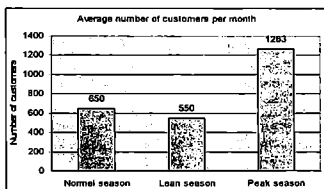


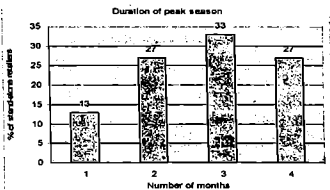
Figure 3 : Average Number of Customers



Observations: For the 80% of the total stand-alone retail shops that have higher sales on specific months compared to other months, 33% have noted the increase in sales for 3 months every year, 27% have higher sales for 2 months every year, while another 27% have noticed such change for 4 months annually. The remaining 13% have felt the increase in their sales for 1 month every year (Figure 4).

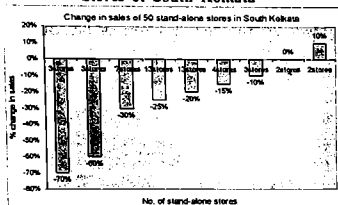
Observations: 80% of the total shops have higher sales on specific months compared to other months. 20% of the stores however, have not noted any change in their sales during any specific month. For the retail stores that have higher sales on specific months, the average number of customers per month during peak season reaches 1263, during lean season the average number of customers per month drops to 550, while the figure during normal season stays at 650 (Figure 3).

Figure 4 : Duration of Peak Season



Thus it can be mentioned that, on an average, peak sales are limited for 3 months every year, usually from October to December when the major festivals like Durga Puja, Diwali, Dussera, Christmas and New Year are celebrated and also several marriage *muhurats* (astrologically determined date and time for happy marriages) fall in that period.

Figure 5 : Change in Sales of Stand-alone Stores of South Kolkata



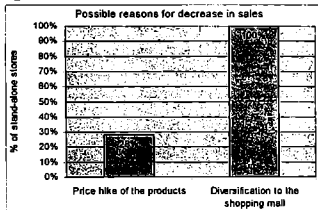
Observations : In South Kolkata, of the 50 surveyed stand-alone shops:

- ◆ 4% have suggested that there has been no change in sales in the last 3-4 years (Fig.5).
- ◆ Another 4% have said that their sales have increased by 10% during that period. Reasons stated for such increase were increase in the population of people and the ensuing ever-increasing demand.
- ◆ The following 92% admitted that their sales have decreased gradually over last 3-4 years. For 14% stores, the sales have plummeted by 10%-15%. For 52% stores, the drop in sales is by 20%-25%. For 14% stores, the sales have decreased by 30%. For 12% stores, the sales have dropped by 60%-70%. On an average, we can thus cite majority of the stand-alone retailers at 52% and say that drop in sales is by 20% to 25%, as depicted in the graph.

Observations: Reasons suggested by the stand-alone retailers for such decrease in sales are:

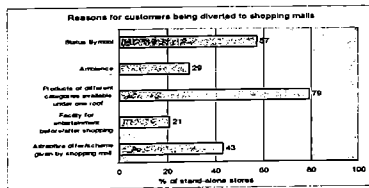
- ◆ 28% have mentioned the rise in prices of the products. As the prices of the products have increased over the period, people have cut down on their consumption of the products and goods.
- ◆ 100% have agreed unanimously to the diversification of the customer base to the shopping malls (Fig-6). With the diffusion of lifestyle, as consumers have gradually

Figure 6: Possible Reasons for Decrease in Sales



(Figures indicate % among those who have noticed change and sales have decreased)

Figure-7 : Reasons for Customers Being Diverted to Shopping Malls



(% among those who have noticed change and sales have decreased)

increased their shopping at the malls, there has been a commensurate decrease in the percentage of the purchases made from stand-alone stores. This phenomenon has further been substantiated in the survey of consumers at the malls.

Observations : Reasons believed by stand-alone retailers as to why the consumers have shifted their preference to shopping malls (Fig-7) :

- ◆ 79% indicate that *products of various categories are available under one roof*. In the malls, where a typical format would have a supermarket, departmental store as anchor tenants which would serve as the footfall drivers, and a lot of other brands that would ride piggy-back on the popularity of the anchor tenants to bring in the footfalls, consumers can get a variety of product-mix and can pick up an assortment of products from branded garments, household items, groceries, floor cleaners, linen, stationery, music CDs, to vegetables and cold-cuts at the same time. Thus all the shopping requirements of the household are taken care of, in a single visit to the mall.
- ◆ 57% suggest the *status symbol associated with visiting malls*. For example: A consumer may pick up a pair of Levi's jeans at the branded outlet of a mall. He goes back to his friends and mentions that he has made his purchase from the outlet at Forum mall. It proves to be a mark of distinction for him. He is now a part of the elite group of clientele who frequent such places for their shopping. It fills him with a sense of satisfaction. It reinforces the "been-there, done-that" motto, and proves to be a matter of enhancement of status and prestige for him. People come to malls for such status-related issues.
- ◆ 43% agree that the *attractive offers/schemes given by the shopping malls* are the drawing factor. Apart from the 'end-of-season' sales, there are several attractive offers given by the giant retailers, such as the week-long carnival of Westside during Christmas and New Year, when each day of the week is dedicated to various age-groups, like kids' day for drawing, fancy dress competitions, ladies' day for hair braiding, tattoos and makeovers, men's day for games such as tie-fixing, hoopla, guessing prices of displayed-products for prizes, etc. For the occasion of its 50th store opening, Big Bazaar offered every 50th customer purchases worth Rs 5000 free. The customer would be automatically informed when his bill was being generated that he was the lucky 50th customer and he would not have to pay the bill. Such varied offers attract customers to the malls.
- ◆ 29% believe that people prefer the *ambiance of malls*. The air conditioning, interior designing, brands, anchor tenants comfort and the overall environment of malls draw the consumers.
- ◆ 21% attribute it to the *entertainment before/after shopping* available in the malls. Consumers can watch a movie at the multiplexes and spend time at the video game parlours apart from shopping at the malls. Recently Avani Galleria, the mall that was to come up at Park Street, has been converted to an office block due to doubts of its sustainability. Lack of a footfall driver like a multiplex and a food anchor among other reasons have been identified out as the major reasons. A retail address can't survive anymore on shopping alone and allied entertainment such as food and movies play an important role for its success. Mr. Sumit Dabriwala, developer of The Metropolis mall on Hiland Park, has gone a step further when he emphasizes that now-a-days it is not even possible to sell residential property without bundling it with retail and entertainment.

Observations: Other factors also mentioned were:

- ◆ *Outlook of the people has changed*. The new Indian consumer is young, aware, with greater

money and credit power and a desire to acquire the latest and the best. Their motto is “have money—will spend”. Attitudes towards money are also changing. If for most families some years ago, it was to save, today young Indians would rather spend. They now favour consumption over denial. They are also open to taking on credit-card debt. They also indulge in retail as a form of therapy. As the people succumb to the pressures of modern life, they turn to spending for relief. The act of buying takes some thought and involves an investment of time. All this makes one feel important and worthwhile. But most importantly, it distracts the person out of his pressure for that moment, which is why he feels relieved and happy doing it.

- ◆ *People have become more brand-conscious and trendy.* They have developed a discerning eye and can't be easily fooled into acquiring products whose quality or label does not match one's expectations. People prefer brands as it helps them to upgrade their lifestyle. People are even willing to pay a premium for using the brand. Even at the sales offered by the departmental stores, quality is the key and the big brands on sale are more popular than the basics and draw a steady footfall.
- ◆ *Benefits of air-conditioning system and car parking facility.* Given the climate of Kolkata, where it is humid and hot for around nine months every year, people prefer to shop in malls where there is air-conditioning. Also getting a place to park a car proves to be a great problem in the city and malls have addressed that problem by providing car-parks for a fee. Many of the big stores in the malls issue paid-parking coupons to the consumers at the time of billing, so that the consumers don't have to pay the parking fees. The coupons are usually valid for a period of two hours from the time of parking.
- ◆ *Consumers are attracted by advertisements in newspapers, televisions and billboards* that lure them to the malls. The advertisements glorify the experiences that can be had at the malls and such proclamations induce the consumers to the malls.

Other Observations: Certain steps that have been suggested by stand-alone retailers that may be taken by them as *remedial measures*, so that they can survive in this scenario and also compete with shopping malls:

- ◆ *Give facility to the customers like air conditioning, car parking and entertainment etc.* Since these facilities lure customers to malls, stand-alone retailers may provide them to consumers in an effort to retain existing customers and add new customers to their customer base.
- ◆ *Different product categories (like milk, vegetables, fruits, fish and meat) to be made available from a single outlet.* For example: A local provision store in Ballygunge, South Kolkata has come up with an innovative idea and pulled up a cart in front of the store. The cart is laden with crates containing a small assortment of vegetables like potatoes, tomatoes, onion, ginger and a couple of seasonal vegetables. So people who will come to the store for spices, rice and oil, can pick up his choice of vegetables before leaving. It is his innovative way of adding a few more items to increase his product-mix.
- ◆ *Store interiors are to be upgraded.* The local store must look pleasant and attractive with

clutter free formats so that they appeal to the customers who are already exposed to the glitzy and well formatted malls.

- ◆ *Products should be in conformity with the demand of the local people.* It is an important point to be noted by the stand-alone retailers. The local store-owners should be able to identify the needs of the local people, be aware of what they use; their consumption habits, the provisions and other household items that they use, and cater to it accordingly. Since the corner stores already have the advantage of location; if they can provide as per the individual tastes and choices of the local population, the customers who could then get their requirements met by the local store, would not travel to far-located malls.
- ◆ *Good quality products to be displayed.* Products should be displayed in cabinets and should be of good quality. It has been noticed that people pay a lot of importance to quality and are willing to fork out that extra amount to avail of quality products. So apart from appealing to the visual senses of the customers products should conform to a certain standard quality.
- ◆ *Attractive schemes and offers to be made available to customers.* To enhance customer loyalty, seasonal offers, free gifts and discounts, for ex. Buy two, get one free etc, may be provided to the customers.

Other observations: However, there are still some stand-alone retailers who feel they have no suggestions to offer regarding their survival strategies, given the preference consumers show towards shopping malls:

- ◆ There is no way out but to accept the reality (Proprietor, Select Stores Agencies).
- ◆ It is not possible to change the situation (New Kamala Stores and Rabi Nandy, Sree Gouranga Bhandar, Gariahat Market).
- ◆ There is not much that can be done about it (Manabendra Saha, Director, Traders' Assembly).

Observations: In North Kolkata, of the surveyed 50 stand-alone stores, only 10% have noticed change in sales in the last 3-4 years:

- ◆ 90% of stand-alone stores in North Kolkata have not noticed any such change (Fig. 8).
- ◆ For 4% stores, sales have plummeted by 5% to 10%.
- ◆ For 6% stores, sales have increased by 5% to 10%.

An interesting observation is that there is a dearth of shopping malls in North Kolkata (Figure 9).

Figure-8 : Change in Sales of Stand-alone Stores of North Kolkata

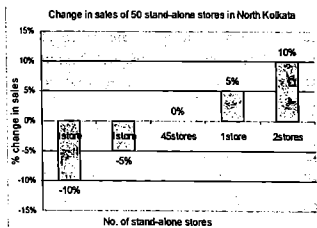
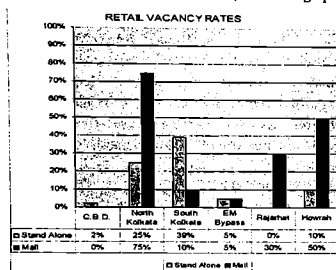


Figure 9 : Retail Vacancy Rates

(Source: Home Sweet Home 2007, The Telegraph)



Sales for stand-alone stores have not been affected in North Kolkata. So it can be well-assumed that proximity of malls to consumer's residence is an important factor to determine whether consumers continue to visit stand-alone stores, or will shift to malls for their shopping requirements. Since there is a dearth of malls in North Kolkata, local people still continue to shop from the stand-alone stores in their locality. They will not usually travel longer distances to South Kolkata just to stock up on their provisions or garments from malls. *It is because of this phenomenon that the surveyed stand-alone*

shops in North Kolkata have not noted any major change in their sales unlike the stores in South Kolkata.

Summary of Findings

As has been represented in the analysis and interpretation of the sample data collected from 100 stand-alone stores from renowned shopping zones of the city; correlating the advent of malls and the effect in their customer base in the last three to four years, a direct relation of the recent growth of shopping-malls and its adverse impact on the stand-alone stores has been established in cases where malls are located in the vicinity of stand-alone stores and a different result has evolved in only those cases of stand-alone stores where malls are not yet established in that locality. So while majority of stand-alone stores in South Kolkata have felt that with the changing scenario in modern retailing their sales have been affected in the last three to four years, a greater percentage of stand-alone retailers in North Kolkata have not detected any change in their sales during that period. It can thus be opined that the market survey report supports the theoretical claim that *the recent growth in shopping malls have made a significant impact on the stand-alone stores, in those areas marked by the presence of such malls. However in those areas not in the vicinity of malls, stand-alone stores have not felt such adverse effect.*

The reason behind justification of the above fact is that the retail market in Kolkata is growing at a hectic pace. Also there has been a radical shift in the mind-set of the Indian consumer who now prefers consumption to saving. Apart from product quality and price, consumers prefer the unique experience that the shopping malls offer in the form of ambience, availability of several product categories under one roof, air conditioning system, car parking, etc, thus transforming shopping into an entertaining experience. It has also forced a few of

the stand-alone shops to revise their strategies and focus on concepts such as customer service and discount. Thus instead of feeling threatened about their existence, they are equipping themselves with strategies to increase their competitive advantage and remain sustainable and co-exist in this changing retail environment. The vital question remains that with retailers aggressively expanding operations and increased customer acceptance of organized retail, how big is the threat to the kirana stores. The analyzed data of the conducted survey has indicated that the stand-alone stores have felt a significant adverse impact in those areas marked by the presence of malls. Yet the present situation does not indicate that the kirana stores or corner grocers are likely to be wiped out from the market as in the West.

Though organized retail sector is not fully open to foreign retailers, stand-alone retailers will face stiff competition from domestic organized retailers. In this scenario kirana stores will be seriously affected unless they can face the competition and promote consumer interest to survive. In many areas, several survival strategies are being implemented by the local kirana store owners. They are improving customer value by repackaging loose grain such as rice, sugar, pulses and other products in different packages of 100gms, 250gms and 500gms. While malls offer home delivery of goods provided the bill exceeds a certain minimum amount, kirana stores offer the same service for any bill size. They build a personal relationship with every regular customer and they know what a regular customer wants even before he/she enters the store. Also for people on the peripheries of the consumption cycle who survive on weekly wages and those who earn just enough to meet their needs, the traditional kirana stores who offer credit are the only answer. *Kirana* stores have improved their customer interface, their product mix and offer credit to their regular customers so that they can do more business than they did before. In an innovative manner, Hindustan Lever Limited (HLL) has tied up with neighbourhood grocery stores to convert them into "Super Value Stores" (SVS). Apart from drawing consumers away from kirana stores, organized retail gives the large retailers margin negotiating capacity with the FMCG majors. This arrangement serves the two-fold interest of kirana stores as well as HLL. Kirana stores that opt to rebrand themselves as SVSs get an additional 3% commission on monthly sales. There are promotional offers that are available nowhere else. HLL has installed special cabinets in SVS stores for dispensing its products. HLL has created common branding for these stores, with boards painted in green colour. The shopkeeper gains when customers start associating bargains with such stores. The company also pays shopkeepers extra (around Rs 200-Rs 300 a month) for display counters.

In many cases retailers and the small grocers also develop a symbiotic relationship instead of competing with each other. When Tesco was set up in Thailand and didn't do well, they asked the local vegetable-stalls to set up outside Tesco. The local population would come to Tesco, buy their groceries at the stalls, and then come into Tesco and buy their FMCGs. In India too, it can be expected that kirana shops will continue to prosper and co-exist with modern retail. As discussed, traditional shops still provide a lot of advantages like credit facilities, home delivery for any bill amount, etc, to the consumer which organized retailers would not be able

to match soon. It has been generally observed that for their monthly shopping, consumers go to a hypermarket but for their daily purchases they still use kirana stores. It has also been found that customers continue to visit kirana stores irrespective of whether there is a modern retail outlet in the vicinity or not. So the present situation does not indicate that kirana stores will be wiped out in the immediate future, though they will feel a significant adverse affect as organized retail gains more acceptance among the masses.

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