CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter, the findings of the study are summarized, conclusions are drawn and Suggestions are made to the two retail chains to improve their performance.

BACKGROUND

The present study is undertaken in the context of retail evolution taking place in India and the growth in retail chains. A study on consumer shopping habits and preferences is viewed important from the view point of industry analysts and policy makers.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to analyze performance of two hypermarkets retail chains i.e. Big Bazaar and TOTAL based on the information collected from customers. To nderstand customers shopping habits of customers are inquired.

To examine the performance of the two retail chains from the point of view of customers, 14 attributes of stores are selected based on previous research((McGoldrick and Ho, 1992).

Cronbach's alpha is calculated for 14 items designed for the study. The Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 is obtained. Cronbach's alphas larger than 0.7 (a level considered "acceptable" in social science research, TOTAL correlation for each attributes is more than 0.5, the acceptable threshold value is >.3. Hence it is clearly indicating the items are consistent with others. The overall goodness of data is 0.86.

Fourteen hypotheses are postulated to examine the perceptions on the 14 attributes:

H1:The perceived merchandise quality of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H2: The perceived merchandise Range of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H3: The perceived merchandise Fashion of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H4: The perceived merchandise display of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H5: The perceived service quality of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H6: The perceived store layout of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H7: The perceived store atmosphere of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H8: The perceived store facilities of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H9: The perceived convenience of store location of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H10: The perceived advertising of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H11: The perceived general reputation of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H12: The perceived reliability of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H13: The perceived image of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL
H14: The perceived price of Big Bazaar is the same as TOTAL

The study is made with reference to two hyper market chains- Big Bazaar and Total. Customer perceptions and attitude towards these stores are obtained from customers through questionnaire method. The respondents are those who have finished their shopping. They are requested to spare some time to provide answers to the study. As such the sampling technique used in the study is purposive- aimed at capturing opinions based on recent and former experiences. About 205 respondents from each of the Big Bazaar and Total are interviewed. One way ANOVA, t-test and chi-square tests are used for analysis of the data.

OPERATIONS OF BIG BAZAAR AND TOTAL

Table VI-1 to VI-4 compare Big Bazaar and TOTAL and their operations.

Table VI-1 Ownership, format and lay out: Big Bazaar vs TOTAL

Parameters	Big Bazaar	Total
Ownership	Owned by future group, it has 120 outlets across the country.	Owned by Jubilant Group; it has 5 hyper markets in India (All in Bangalore
Location strategy	Stand alone	Part of a Mall
Format	Only store formats	Store formats, Catalogues (Home delivery)
Size	40,000+ sq feet	70,000 sq feet
Store layout	Store has 3 floors	2nd floor of the mall-Store layout

Table VI-2 Stock keeping, Merchandise and sales : Big Bazaar vs TOTAL

Aspect	Big Bazaar	Total
Stock keeping	Variety:80,000 units, assortment is average and check out line is deep.	Variety:80,000 units, assortment is average and checkout line is average.
Merchandise	Decisions made by respective stores on the basis of the kind of goods that are sold most. The stores are connected to a central warehouse from	Centralized purchasing, but modifications are done to meet various store needs. Tender is sent to Domlur head office and they have to approve it.

	where as per the order the requirement is met.Certain purchases are made centrally while others are made locally	
Sales from food	50+%	30%

Table VI-3 Pricing and promotion: Big Bazaar vs TOTAL

Parameters	**Big Bazaar**	**Total**
Pricing	Low margin-high volume, Price bundling, Loss leaders	Low margin-high volume, Below MRP, Price bundling.
Communication	Communication through TV, Newspaper inserts (Association with ToI), Palm lets, Banners and Hoardings, In store announcements.	Communication through Newspaper inserts, Palm lets, Banners and Hoardings, In store announcements
Sales promotion	Yearly savings bazaar during January, Monthly savings bazaar, Wednesday savings bazaar.	Special days and Occasions, Gift cards and vouchers.

Table VI-4 HR management aspects : Big Bazaar vs TOTAL

Aspect	**Big Bazaar**	**Total**
Recruitment	Three types of staff :Managerial candidates, Sales executives and employees	One In -store manager, 50 sales personnel and employees.
Problems faced	Attrition and integrity	Theft, absenteeism and social loafing issues

CUSTOMER SURVEY FINDINGS

The findings of the study based on customer perceptions are given below:

Profile of respondents

The demographic characteristics of respondents are as given under.

Age- Most of the respondents belong to the age group of 26-35years in both cases. They constituted to 79% and 86% of the samples of Big Bazaar and TOTAL respectively.

Gender- In case of Big Bazaar, the percentage distribution of female respondents was slightly higher than male respondents being 56% females and 44% males. In case of TOTAL Store, the male respondents (51%) constituted slightly higher than female respondents (49%).

Income - In Big Bazaar, about 53 % of respondents fall in the income ranges in between 15 K-- 35K/pm. In case of TOTAL Store, a much bigger size of respondents are found in this range.

Occupation- Income earners (including retired) form the major chunk of respondents being 73% and 75% in respect of Big Bazaar and Total. The remaining are housewives and students.

Shopping habits

The shopping habits of respondent customers of Big Bazaar and Total are found through questionnaire based interviews.

Sources of awareness- About 40 % of Big Bazaar respondents and 33% of the TOTAL respondents mentioned friends as the source of awareness. News papers are the next major source being mentioned by 22-23% of the respondents of the two retail chains. The role of TV is marginal.

Retail outlets patronized in the past - Majority of respondent customers (54%) of both Big Bazaar and TOTAL were customers of local kirana's shops. The other retail outlets used were: Food world (17%) and other hyper markets(17%) and Nilgiris(6%).

Other preferred stores - in case of Big Bazaar customers, TOTAL (26.3%) , Star Bazaar (21.5%) and Spar(13.2%) are the top three among the other retail outlets. In case of respondents of the TOTAL retail chain, the top preferred three retail outlets are Big Bazaar (28.8%), Star Bazaar and Spar (14.6% each).

Frequency of visits - About 24% of the respondents of Big Bazaar visit four times or more in a month, another 24% of the respondents visit twice in a month and 28% once in a month.

Compared to respondents from Big Bazaar, those from TOTAL exhibited frequent shopping behavior. About 36% of respondents from TOTAL said they visit four times or more in a month compared to 18% in case of Big Bazaar.

Products purchased -Consumer electronics and Furniture and Furnishings are least preferred product categories in the hyper markets. Only 20% of the respondent customers buy all products ranging from food and grocery to consumer electronics. About 93% in case of Big bazaar and 94% in respect of TOTAL, customers are buyers of Food and grocery items.

Shopping expenditure- Except in two categories of shopping expenditure – (i) below Rs.1000 (32% in case of Big Bazaar and 18% in TOTAL spend around less than Rs.1000) and (ii) between 3K- 4K(-12% of Big bazaar and 9% of total spend in between 3K -4K) in all other categories, the number of customers of TOTAL dominated those of Big Bazaar.

Period of patronage **-** About 39% of the customers of Big Bazaar are patronizing the retail outlet since four or more years. Such patrons are only 21% in case of TOTAL. The number of recent additions is more in case of TOTAL. About 38% of the customers of TOTAL are patronizing the store for less than one year. Such customers are 25% in case of Big Bazaar.

Reasons for patronage- The dominant factor in case of Big Bazaar is Reasonable price (16%). It is convenient location in case of TOTAL (22%).

Gap analysis of Store attributes

The findings of store attribute analysis relate to gap (ideal and actual store attributes) and comparison between the two retail chains.

Gaps analysis ideal vs actual

The gap analysis gave the results shown in Table VI-5 are reproduced here.

Table VI-5 –Ideal vs actual Gap analysis : Big Bazaar vs Total

Gap*	Big Bazaar	Total
No significant gap	Merchandise fashion and facilities	Merchandise fashion
Below 0.5- common to both	Merchandise quality (0.41), Merchandise range (0.45), Layout (0.32), and Advertising (0.27)	Merchandise quality(0.49), Merchandise range(0.25), Layout (0.21), and Advertising (0.24),
Below 0.5 different to both	Good will (0.46).	Reliability (0.24) and Image (0.44) Quality of display(0.42), Atmosphere (0.37),and Location (0.44).
0.5 or more but less than 1	Quality of display (0.69),Image (0.80) and Reliability(0.54)	Level of service (0.51) and Facilities (0.53)

More than one-common to both	Prices (1.50)	Prices (1.27)
More than one-different to both	Level of service (1.06), and Atmosphere (1.27)	None

*****Mean scores on 5 point scale

Prices appear to be a common serious concern to both the retail chains. Individually Big Bazaar is in better position in terms of merchandise fashion and facilities. Its serious concerns include: atmosphere and level of service and concerns of importance include: Quality of display, Image and Reliability. TOTAL appears to be better placed with no serious gaps, other than prices compared to Big Bazaar. Both have minor gaps to bridge on many fronts.

Comparison of Store attributes

The fourteen hypotheses set up for examining differences in attributes are tested using ANOVA.

Three hypotheses are not rejected . They pertain to Facilities, Location, and Advertising. It means that Big bazaar and Total are similar in respect of the three attributes.

In case of 11 attributes differences are significant, with Total scoring higher than Big Bazaar.

1. merchandise quality ,
2. merchandise Range
3. merchandise display
4. service quality
5. store layout
6. store atmosphere
7. store facilities
8. reputation
9. reliability
10. image
11. price

DISCUSSION

How do the sample and findings compare with those of earlier studies?

Sample comparisons- Fifty-two percent of the respondents were female. These figures are similar to those of previous research in the country from Western contexts. In the studies of Carpenter and Moore, 2006 and Nicholls *et al.*, 1996 most of the respondents were females. On the contrary in the studies of Choo, Chung and Pysarchik, 2004 and Sinha and Banerjee, 2004, most of the respondents were males. In the study domination of female respondents is observed due to the fact that shopping in India is undertaken by the family as a group and female are lead respondents in the shopping issues.

Location- The earlier studies (Mendes and Themido, 2004) found that location plays an important role in the success or failure of an outlet. Hawkins *et al*, (2004), found that if all other things are approximately equal, a consumer will generally select the closest store. McGoldrick (2002) found that, public transportation in terms of accessibility and free parking are factors that come under location. The decision to locate at a strategic point in the city was taken by the two retail chains after a thorough study was done. The study indicated that location advantage is there for both the retail outlets. The gap between ideal mean score and actual mean score is less than 0.5 for Total and nil for Big Bazaar.

Shift to hyper markets - Simonson (1999) found that unless the customer is particularly interested in fast service or convenience, he/she would prefer large outlets over small ones. The present study has similar findings, wherein most (54**%)** of the customers shifted from kirana's shop and to hypermarkets.

Frequency of visits - The earlier studies (Piyali Ghosh, Vibhuti Tripathi and Anil Kumar, 2009) found that 22% of respondents visits retail store once in a month, similarly in this study also majority of respondents (28%) visits stores once in a month.

Buy pattern - In respect of products shopped at the stores , Bawa and Ghosh,(1999) found a good number of Consumers will shop for multiple items, rather than a single item, on a single trip. In the present study about 20% of the respondents showed similar behavior. Shoppers who purchase a large number of items at one time prefer stores with Every Day Low Prices (EDLP) (Bell and Lattin, 1998). The present study also confirms this as the stores managers of both the selected stores agreed that they follow Every Day Low Prices in their stores and shoppers come for buying multiple items.

Store atmosphere - The present study reported that customers have rated negatively both the stores. Total has a gap of 0.37 mean score (ideal - actual) whereas Big Bazaar has a mean score gap of 1.27. The importance of taking care of atmosphere was discussed by earlier studies. Atmospherics is the process managers use to manipulate the physical retail or service environment in order to create specific mood responses in shoppers Kotler, 1973 and Store atmosphere may influence people's shopping enjoyment and likelihood of patronage (Donovan *et al*, 1994).

Earlier research has established that a retailer's image depends largely on its 'atmosphere', which is the psychological feeling a customer gets when visiting that retailer (Berman and Evans, 2007).People shop longer and spend more if they are not pushed while walking or looking at merchandise (Berman and Evans, 2007). As found in the present study earlier studies such as Berman and Evans, 2007 have found Store image can be influenced by central AC, unit AC, fans or open windows etc. The importance of *Lighting, music and odor* is highlighted by several studies (Herrington and Capella, 1994; Hui *et al*, 1997; Berman and Evans, 2007;Mattila and Wirtz, 2001). Earlier studies found that Choice of colors for the walls should be in consonance with the target audience. Sometimes when colors are changed customers may not be comfortable initially, till they adjust to the new color scheme (Berman and Evans, 2007).

The present study has found that stores managers in both the selected hypermarkets good understanding of the importance of atmosphere. They reported that the choice of colors is made on the basis of target audience, who in their view comprise different income categories. Lower and middle income categories should not feel it is luxurious and threatening and on the other hand they should feel comfortable to enter the stores.

Customer space and facilities - (Berman and Evans, 2007) observed that customer space can contribute to the shopping mood and may include a lounge, benches, dressing rooms, rest rooms, restaurant, parking and so on. The present study found that both the selected hypermarkets in Bangalore are also providing these facilities to the customers.

Merchandise range- According to Engel *et al*, 1995, apart from location of merchandise in the store, the range of merchandise is another crucial dimension both variety (number of different merchandise categories) and assortment (number of different items in a merchandise category) are crucial. It is also found that explicit visibility of offerings (tonnage merchandizing) is expected to influence a consumer's store choice (Levy and Weitz, 1998). The present study also finds and customers found a gap of 0.45 and 0.25 between ideal and actual score indicating near ideal situation.

From the above analysis, it can be said that the findings of the present study compare well with the earlier studies.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn.

1. Word of mouth communication (friends) along with news papers is the powerful tool for creating awareness.
2. Customers are switching from convenience stores to hyper markets and this trend continues if advantages outweigh the inconvenience of reaching the stores in dense traffic.
3. The preference to a store is limited; customers visit more than one store. As such competition is a major threat.

4. Customers prefer frequent shopping and it merits attention in formulating marketing strategy.

   Big Bazaar has to focus attention on improving it to become ideal store to customers. Improvements in Level of service, atmosphere and prices are to be the first priority. Next priority attributes are: Quality of display, Image, Reliability and Merchandise range and quality.

   Competitively, with reference to TOTAL, Big Bazaar needs attention on the following:

- Slight improvements –Merchandise range, quality of display, layout, advertising, reliability, image and prices.

- Significant improvements- Level of service and atmosphere
  Level of service, atmosphere and prices are to be the first priority. Next priority attributes are: Quality of display, Image, Reliability and Merchandise range and quality.

5. Total has to focus attention on prices, level of service and facilities to become ideal stores. Competitively with reference to Big Bazaar, it has to improve in the following areas:

- Slight improvements –Merchandise quality, facilities, location and good will

RECOMMENDATIONS

Both hypermarkets have certain areas where they have been consistently performing well. These are essentially the strengths of the store, and Big Bazaar & TOTAL need to capitalize on these strengths to increase their market share and brand loyalty.

Strategies for becoming ideal and competitive for Big Bazaar

The recommendations to big bazaar are based on the conclusions drawn above. The areas of improvement are as given under

- Prices
- Merchandise range
- Merchandise quality
- Quality of display
- Layout
- Atmosphere
- Level of service
- Reliability
- Image
- Advertising,

(i) Price attractiveness

Big Bazaar needs to evaluate its pricing strategies. In the current situation of rising inflation input costs also go up. As such cutting prices cannot be a viable option. Price reduction as a promotion strategy can be an appropriate option. Meanwhile, they may look for cost cutting options in supply chain management and store operations.

(ii) Improve merchandise range and quality

Big Bazaar has to add more range of products to ensure that their customers have wide choice. Along with the range the store also need to take care of quality of merchandize at the store. The quality of furniture, food items like biscuits, toys and electronic products offered at Big Bazaar requires a lot of quality improvement.

(iii) Quality of display

Big Bazaar needs to work on this and improve quality of display in the store. The display should reduce crowded look, and employ strategies of visual enhancement and pleasantness by employing different arrangements like circle and pyramid, and systems of display that use rotation and hanging types.

(iv) Layout

According to customers the size and location of each department in Big Bazaar is not decided properly. For example as soon as customers enter the store the home appliances department will welcome them and is not giving a good look for the stores. By reworking on the store layout it can be made convenient for customers and helps reduce congestion and crowding.

(v). Enrich atmosphere

Big Bazaar may consider the following

- Clean environment with good fragrance.
- Good music.
- Large areas focused on entertaining consumers.
- Play space for children
- Eateries that is nutritious especially for children.

(vi). Improve service level:

Big Bazaar may take up the following steps to improve service levels.

- Train employees on customer service aspects like business oriented interpersonal relationships with customers that include courtesy, support, information, advice and smile.

- Sales personnel should be educated about offers to communicate same to the customers. Such information will stimulate in visiting different sections and sometimes motivate them to buying products, which are not on their shopping list.

- Billing quick without any errors (including items not purchased) is very important as this is one service which improperly rendered can destroy trust. Big

Bazaar should open more number of billing counters to save time of customers. Presently, they stand in long Queues to make payments.

(vii) Reliability

Improvements in delivery times, and products sold are important. Sales is not limited to store, it goes beyond and happens at the home of customers. The home delivery personnel should be punctual and courteous. The service personnel in case of durables, like refrigerator, and washing machine should be helpful, assuring and problem solving. Customer complaints on defective products are to be redressed with zeal with a spirit of zero defect system.

(viii). Image development

Being a modern format, Big Bazaar has to be trendy. It is expected to work hard on this aspect, especially for apparels and home appliances section and try to provide modern merchandise for the customers.

(ix) Advertising

To make advertisement more communicative and impressive, Big Bazaar has to work with an ad agency. The important areas that need stress in ads are: merchandise, offers and service. . Hence Big Bazaar should improve on the content of the advertisement and also use intelligently a media mix that include FM radio, local television channels, and social media like Facebook, Twitter etc.

Recommendation to TOTAL

Total is better placed than Big Bazaar based on consumer views. However, it has certain weak spots which deserve attention for taking actions.

Strategies to become idea store

To become an ideal store**,** Total has to focus attention on prices, level of service and facilities:

(i) Price improvements

TOTAL, is to carry out a strategy to reduce prices of the merchandise. The recommendation given to Big Bazaar is applicable to Total in this regard.

(ii) Level of service improvements

TOTAL has to pay attention towards the services provided to customers, especially with reference to billing counters, delivery, after sales service etc.

(iii) Improvements in facilities

TOTAL needs to focus on establishing a good maintenance department to ensure that all the facilities are in good working condition.

Competitive advantage strategies

In competition with Big Bazaar it has to improve in Merchandise quality, location and good will.

(i) Improvements in merchandising quality:

Improvements in quality of furniture, clothes and electronic items sold at the mall should be an immediate concern. TOTAL needs to take this matter very seriously and should come out with a strategy to stock items that ate good in quality.

(ii) **Reducing location disadvantage**

TOTAL is having only 5 stores in Bangalore as compared to Big Bazaar, which is having 10 stores. Hence TOTAL should expand by setting up more retail outlets to ensure customers with proximity and convenience in shopping.

(iii) Enhancing good will:

TOTAL needs to work on reputation of TOTAL stores. As per this study finding, most of the customers prefer to call TOTAL as Food & Grocery store rather than a hypermarket as they feel the quality of all other products sold at TOTAL is very bad and hence having a very low good will among its customers. TOTAL needs to improve the quality of its products and services to build good will for the store

CONTRIBUITON OF THE STUDY

This study adds a piece of knowledge about the understanding of the functioning of the hypermarkets retail chains i.e. Big Bazaar and TOTAL in Bangalore. This study deals with retail chains, one of the most emerging area in retailing.

Any decision-making process for retail outlets becomes complex due to the inseparability of goods and multiplicity of services. A customer now appreciates shopping in a pleasant environment at one-stop location with a wider product-portfolio in a speedy manner. The study reveals that customers in Bangalore evaluate a store based on Convenience and Merchandise Mix, Store Atmospherics and Services; it helps in decision making process of hypermarket management.

Limitations of the study The findings of the study cannot be generalized due to the following features of the study.

- Many respondents have cooperated and provided responses. However, a general limitation in social science research –bias – might be there in responses.

- It was confined to Bangalore. The population in the other parts of the country may be different in terms of household/buyer characteristics and shopping attitudes.

- The study was confined to only one format of retailing hypermarket. The attitude and behavior of the customers towards other format may be different.

The study has limited focus and coverage. It can be a pointer to policy makers but not a reliable guide in assisting decision making. In fact, case research is important in case of hyper markets, as customers vary from one retail chain to another. Further research is needed that covers diverse towns and regions in India.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The work presented in this study makes a departure from the previous studies in examining the functioning and performance of retail outlets. Inevitably, it remains an introductory piece of work on the understanding of functioning of two hypermarkets in Bangalore, as previous studies focused on a certain other aspects of store attributes.

Sample themes:

An extension of this work might involve the following topics.

1. Studies comparing customers using various retail formats with reference to service quality, loyalty and customer relationship.
2. Positioning strategy - The positioning strategies of the two stores can be compared.
3. A longitudinal research by conducting such investigation at the interval of five or ten years, for individual stores.
4. Studies on retail preferences, shopping habits and satisfaction among different age groups- children, youth, and old.
5. Studies based on women – career women vs housewives

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