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A Study on Customer Perception towards Retail Mix Strategies of Hyderabad Retail Market

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of study: *Retail mix refers to the various features of retail strategy planning. Also often called "the 7 Ps" retailing mix details a retail business' approach to its products, price, place, promotion, process, personnel and physical evidence. The aim of study is to know various retail mix strategies that are practiced in the retail sector along with customer perceptions towards those practices and find out the retail mix elements which are not performing well according to the customer perception and offer recommendations for better performance.*
Design/methodology/approach: *A structured questionnaire consisting of 64 questions was prepared, distributed to 180 customers by using convenience sampling method.*
Major Results: *Out of the total sample respondents, from the analysis on overall retail mix strategy, 10% of the customers perceived that the overall people strategy is excellent, 10% customers perceived as good, 20% are having average perception, 31% perceived as the people strategy is not good and 29% perceived overall people strategy as poor.*
Managerial Implications: *The merchandise in the store should be updated regularly along with kids' wear and kids' foot wear in the store in order to improve the product strategy. The concept of EDLP (Every Day Low Pricing) should be implemented effectively and the low prices on certain merchandise should be communicated to the customers well in advance.*

INTRODUCTION

A retailer or retail store is any business enterprise whose sales volume comes primarily from retailing. Retail organization exhibits great variety and new forms keep emerging. These are store retailers, and retail organizations. Consumers today can shop for goods and services in a wide variety of stores. The best known type of retailer is the department store. A retailer is at

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the end of the distributive channel. Retailer provides goods and services to the ultimate consumers. This Retailer does through his small organization, with the help of a few personnel. In an individual retail store there is not much scope for organization except in the sense that the shopkeeper has to organize apportions his time and resources. The need for organization becomes essential as soon as retailer hires people to enter into partnership or takes the help of members of his family in running his store. A retailer deals in an assortment of goods to cater to the needs of consumers. The objective is to make maximum profit out of his enterprise. With that end in view retailer has to pursue a policy to achieve his objective. This policy is called retailing mix. A retailing mix is the package of goods and services that store offers to the customers for sale. It is the combination of all efforts planned by the retailer and embodies the adjustment of the retail store to the market environment. The maximum satisfaction to the customers is achieved by a proper blend of all three. The success of the retail stores, therefore, depends on customers' reaction to the retailing mix which influences the profits of the store, its volume of turnover, its share of the market, its image and status and finally its survival.

Retailing is the set of business activities that adds value to the products and services sold to the consumer for their personal or family use. A retailer buys goods or products in large quantities from manufacturers or importers, either directly or through a wholesaler, and then sells smaller quantities to the end user. Retail establishment are often called shops or stores. Retailers are at the end of the supply chain. Manufacturing marketers see the process of retailing as a necessary part of their overall distribution strategy. The term "retailer" is also applied where services the needs of a large number of individuals, such as a public utility, like electric power.

Retail mix is the combination of factors retail used to satisfied customer needs and influence their purchase decision .Its include the type of merchandise and services offered, advertising, merchandise display ,promotional programs ,store design ,merchandising pricing assistance to customer provided by sales people and convenience of the store location.

- Retail mix is the term used to describe the various elements and methods required to formulate and execute retail marketing strategy.
- Retail managers must determine the optimum mix of retailing activities and co-ordinate the elements of the mix.

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Composition of Retail Mix: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process and Physical appearance. Key elements in each P are:

- **Product:** Product development, Product quality, Product features and benefits, Branding and Packaging.
- **Price:** Costs, Profitability, Value for money, Incentives and Status.
- **Place:** Target market, Retail distribution, Retailer image, Retail logistics and Channel management.
- **Promotion:** Developing promotional mixes, Advertising management, Sales promotion, Public relations and Direct marketing.
- **People:** Staff capability, Efficiency, Availability, Effectiveness, Customer interaction and Internal marketing.
- **Process:** Order processing, Service delivery, Database management, Queuing system and Standardization.
- **Physical evidence:** Ambience, Environment, Layout design, Facilities and other infrastructure.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Retail mix refers to the various features of retail strategy planning. Also often called "the 7 Ps" retailing mix details a retail business' approach to its products, price, place, promotion, process, personnel and physical evidence. Retail mix helps a business define its strategy and carry out operations according to its goals.

A retail business deals with identifying and meeting the needs of end consumers of products or services. As such, the business has to plan its strategy based on the needs of its target market. In developing the retailing mix, the business has to define its customers and find out how to anticipate and satisfy their needs. In this way, the retailing mix approach forces a business to place its customers in the center of its strategy development.

When developing a strategy based on the retailing mix approach, business managers have to consider all the significant factors that define the business, including products, personnel, promotion, presentation, place and price. Retailing mix provides a structure that retail business managers can use in planning business strategy, so they don't overlook any of the seven features the retailing mix approach helps business managers consider how to use each of these factors in meeting the needs and desires of customers.

By developing the retailing mix before carrying out business operations, business managers provide a plan for all employees to follow. This way, the different parts of the business don't work haphazardly without following a definite plan. The retailing mix helps coordinate the efforts in all departments and at all levels of the business, so every person works toward the same goal, targeting their products and services at the same market segment.

When developing the retailing mix, a business may consider other companies working in the same industry and targeting the same market segment. The business may analyze how its competitors address each factor of the retailing mix and compare its strategy to the competitors. This way, the business can fashion its retailing mix in response to the strategies of its competitors. For example, if a competitor reduces its price points for certain products, the business may consider providing discounts to compete with the other company.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON RETAIL MIX

The famous 4P's of Marketing namely, Product, Price, Place & Promotion, were devised by Gerome McCarthy[1] (1960) while The concept of Marketing Mix was first pioneered by Prof. Neil H Borden in the Late 1940s. Borden[2] (1964) original marketing mix had a set of 12 elements namely, product planning, pricing, branding, channels of distribution, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, physical handling and fact finding and analysis. Berekoven[3] (1995) proposes ten retail marketing elements, namely, Assortment, Commercial Brands, Quality and Quality Assurance, Service, Price, Advertising, Sales Promotion, Store Layout and Merchandising, Sales Force and Location. Hansen[4] (2003) proposed nine elements of the marketing mix, namely, Location, Assortment, Product, especially Private Labels, Store Layout; Price, Sales Financing, Sales Promotion, Customer Service and Customers' Complaints Management. Müller-Hagedorn[5] (2005) considers only six attributes in retail mix namely, Location, Assortment, Price, Promotion Planning, Sales Force and In-Store-Management). Apart from 4Ps, 3Ps more namely, Personnel, Physical

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evidence & Process are factors contributing to unique customer experience as basis of differentiation and retention (Constantinides[6], 2006).

In-store management may either be included in the communication policy or presented individually. It represents the equivalent of physical evidences from service marketing. Physical evidences in retail include the interior space of the store, the layout of shelves and gondolas, product merchandising and opening hours (Oehme[7], 2001). In retail, price occupies a central place, serving the development and application of general business strategy, the achievement of very important goals (Bruhn[8], 2007). The assortment allows the retailer to differentiate from its competitors and to accurately position itself within a certain retail format. From customer's perspective, assortment represents the opportunity to attract new consumers and to loyalise them (Liebmann et al.9, 2008).

Ambiance policy contributes, definitely, through emotions conveyed, to retailer's strategic differentiation (Levy M., Weitz[10], 2003). The policy of customers' loyalization, deducted from the integration of the external factor into the service delivered, reveals the present loyalization methods of stores (Foscht & Swoboda[11], 2007). Azeem and Sharma[12] (2015) identified most important retail mix elements that influence the retail format are Quality, Length of Assortment, In store Services, Price Competition, Location, Big Floor Space, Product Promotion, Loyalty Programs, Personnel Management, Ambience/Display and Operational Excellence.

Based on the review of literature, the variables/attributes used for the study are:

Retail Mix elements	**Attributes used in each Retail Mix elements**
Product Elements	Availability of Product Categories

[6] Constantinides, E. (2006). The Marketing Mix Revisited: Towards the 21st Century Marketing. Journal of Marketing Management, 407-438.
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	Availability of Range of Brands Quality Products Availability of Required Products.
Price Elements	Products are sold at MRP Discount prices Everyday low pricing Acceptance of plastic money Credit facilities
Place Elements	Location of outlet Access to main road Parking facilities.
Promotion Elements	Advertisement about the store Publicity about the store Telemarketing practices Mail order practices Internet marketing practices Selling on shop floor Customer relationship management Loyalty programs Offers and discounts Point of sale/ sale communication.
Process Elements	Shopping process Instant billing without waiting Delivery of shopping goods Security check Convince of transaction Convenience shopping hours Return and exchange policy.
People Elements	Availability of customer friendly staff Immediate response to customers Service by retail sales person Courteous communication Availability of sales person on the floor Kindliness of staff.
Physical Evidence	Provision of trail and fitting rooms Safety measures Provision of rest rooms Easy internal mobility Cleanliness of store Air conditioning Scent/ aroma Provision of drinking water facilities Provision of lift facility/ escalator Provision of baggage counter.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

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The aim of study is to know various retail mix strategies that are practiced in the retail sector along with customer perceptions towards those practices. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To study the concept of retail mix and list out the retail mix elements implemented in Hyderabad retail market.
2. To study the demographic profile of the customers and their shoppers' behavior.
3. To record the customer perception towards the identified retail mix elements implemented in the outlet.
4. To find out the retail mix elements which are not performing well according to the customer perception and offer recommendations for better performance.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Business research methods include many ways of gathering information about an industry, its competition or the opportunities available that are relevant to conducting research. Business research is a process of acquiring detailed information of all the areas of business and using such information in maximizing the sales and profit of the business. Such a study helps companies determine which product/service is most profitable or in demand. In simple words, it can be stated as acquisition of information or knowledge for professional or commercial purpose to determine opportunities and goals for a business. Business research can be done for anything and everything. In general, when people speak about business research it means asking research questions to know where the money can be spent to increase sales, profits or market share. Such a research is critical to make wise and informed decisions. The data is collected from both primary and secondary sources:

Primary data: A structured questionnaire consisting of 64 questions was prepared, distributed to 180 retailer customers in Hyderabad city. Their perceptions have been collected, tabulated and analyzed.

Secondary Data: Secondary data has been collected from various sources such as official website of various retail outlets, previous studies on retail mix, web sources, and academic books.

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Study Design:

Sampling technique	:	Convenience Sampling
Sample size	:	180
Study area	:	Hyderabad
Data Collection Instrument	:	Questionnaire
Study Period	:	8 weeks

The questionnaire was administrated in such a way that it carefully records the customer perceptions towards various retail mix elements. The customers were asked to provide their perceptions on a five-point likert scale (Excellent [5], Good [4], Average [3], Not Good [2], Poor [1]) regarding factors influencing online shopping. The Questionnaire also concentrates on demographic profile of retail customers and also attempts to study shopping behavior of customers. The customer perception on the rating scale is presented in the table 1 (Annexure-1).

ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

- **From the analysis on demographic profile of the customers**, out of the total sample, from the analysis of respondents' age and gender it is found that 70% are male respondents and 30% are female respondents, whereas the age group is identified as, 5% of respondents are 13-19 years of age, 29.4% are 20-30 years of age, 41.6% respondents are 31- 40 years of age, 17.2% are 4-50 years of age, 6.66% are above 50 years, so it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents visiting the store are of 31-40 years of age.
- In the total sample, from the analysis of respondents' occupation, 23.3% respondents are unemployed and/or students, 60.5% of respondents are salaried employees and 16.11% respondents are business people, so it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents visiting the store are salaried employees.
- Out of 180 respondents, from the analysis of respondents' education levels, 3.33% are having primary education, 10% are having secondary education, 17.7% completed higher secondary, 51.1% are graduates, 11.6% are post graduates remaining 6.11%

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are the higher than PG, so that it can be concluded that most of the respondents visiting the outlet are graduates.

- In the sample size, from the analysis of respondents' income levels, 12.7% respondents' income level is less than Rs.15,000/-, 52.2% respondents' income is in between Rs.15,000/- to Rs.30,000/-, 26.1% respondents' income level is between Rs.30,000/- to Rs.50,000/-, 13.3%% respondents' income level is above Rs.50,000/-, so that it can be concluded that most of the respondents visiting retail outlets are having the income between Rs.15,000/- to Rs.30,000/- per month.

- **From the analysis on shopping behaviour of the customers**, out of 180 respondents, from the analysis of respondents' family size, 12.77% of respondents are having 2 members in family and 19.4% of respondents are having 3 members in family, 62.2% of respondents are having 4 members in a family, 5.5% of respondents are having 5 members in a family; so that it can be concluded that the majority number of customers visiting the store are having the family size of four.
- Out of 180 respondents, from the analysis of respondents' shopping frequency, no customers shops daily, 32.7% customers shop weekly, 12.7% shop biweekly, 10% shop monthly, 5.55% shops bimonthly and 38.8% shops as per their requirement; it can be concluded that majority of the customers visiting the store as per their requirement.
- In the sample size, from the analysis of respondents' shopping time schedule, 48.3% do shopping in first week of month, 34.4% do shopping in 2nd week of month, 8.33% do shopping in last week of month, 48.3% are as per requirement; it can be concluded that that majority of the customers visiting the store as per their requirement.
- Out of 180 respondents, from the analysis of respondents' shopping expenditure, no respondent spent less than Rs.1000/- per month, 35.5% spent Rs.1000/- to Rs.5000/- per month, 29.4% spent between Rs. 5000/- to Rs.10000/- per month, 35% spent more than Rs.10000/- per month; it can be concluded that that majority of the customers visiting the store are spending an amount between Rs.1000/- to Rs.5000/- per month towards shopping.
- Out of the sample of 180 respondents, from the analysis of respondents' distance from customer location, 29.4% customers are coming to the outlet from the distance less than 1 km radius, 6.6% customers are coming to the outlet from distance between

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1km to 3 km, 21.1% customers are coming to the outlet from distance between 3km to 5 km, 7.77% customers are coming to the outlet from distance between 5 km to 10 km and 5% customers are coming to the outlet from the distance more than 10 km; it can be concluded that most of the customers visiting the outlet are coming from the distance less than 1 km radius.

- Out of 180 respondents, from the analysis of family life cycle stage of the customers, 11.6% customers are young couples with no children, 35.5% are couples with children, 31.6% are couples with working children, 15% customers are old couple with working children and 6.11% are old couples staying away from children; it can be concluded that family life cycle stage of most of the customers are couples with children.
- **From the analysis on customer perception towards retail mix strategies**, Out of the total sample respondents, 12% of the customers perceived that the overall product strategy is Excellent, 14% customers perceived as good, 22% are having average perception, 27% perceived as the product strategy is not good and 25% perceived overall product strategy as poor.
- In the total sample respondents, from the analysis on price strategies, 13% of the customers perceived that the overall pricing strategy is excellent, 14% customers perceived as good, 19% are having average perception, 30% perceived as the price strategy is not good and 23% perceived overall price strategy as poor.
- Out of the sample respondents, from the analysis on place strategy, 18% of the customers perceived that the overall place strategy is excellent, 13% customers perceived as good, 21% are having average perception, 23% perceived as the place strategy is not good and 26% perceived overall place strategy as poor.
- In the total sample respondents, from the analysis on promotion strategy, 6% of the customers perceived that the overall promotion strategy is excellent, 8% customers perceived as good, 13% are having average perception, 38% perceived as the promotion strategy is not good and 34% perceived overall promotion strategy as poor.
- In the total sample respondents, from the analysis on process strategy, 9% of the customers perceived that the overall process strategy is excellent, 9% customers perceived as good, 23% are having average perception, 27% perceived as the process strategy is not good and 31% perceived overall process strategy as poor.

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- Out of the total sample respondents, from the analysis on people strategy, 6% of the customers perceived that the overall people strategy is excellent, 9% customers perceived as good, 23% are having average perception, 27% perceived as the people strategy is not good and 31% perceived overall people strategy as poor.
- In the total sample respondents, from the analysis on physical evidence strategy, 9% of the customers perceived that the overall physical evidence strategy is excellent, 9% customers perceived as good, 18% are having average perception, 33% perceived as the physical evidence strategy is not good and 33% perceived overall physical evidence strategy as poor.
- Out of the total sample respondents, from the analysis on overall retail mix strategy, 10% of the customers perceived that the overall people strategy is excellent, 10% customers perceived as good, 20% are having average perception, 31% perceived as the people strategy is not good and 29% perceived overall people strategy as poor.

Suggestions:

1. The merchandise in the store should be updated regularly along with kids' wear and kids' foot wear in the store in order to improve the product strategy.
2. The concept of EDLP (Every Day Low Pricing) should be implemented effectively and the low prices on certain merchandise should be communicated to the customers well in advance.
3. Initiate internet based marketing activities towards the target customers to promote the products as well as offers in the store.
4. Make sure that the availability sales person on the floor and the salesmen should have good product knowledge and selling skills.
5. It is suggested to renovate the store with good floor plans and with attractive layout in order to make the loyal customers feel fresh.

LIMITATIONS

- A small sample was taken for the study to represent the whole universe.
- Accuracy of the study is based on the information given by the respondents.
- Some customers refuse to respond properly at the time of survey because they were busy in shopping and some other in process of billing.

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SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- The study of the retail mix strategies is limited to Hyderabad only; the findings cannot be generalized for all outlets in Hyderabad.
- The study is all about to know the 7Ps and how effective they are in influencing the customer perception while shopping.
- The study also intended to determine the competition among the various industries and also between within industry in manufacturing of products but the study has limited in geographic of Hyderabad city.

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ANNEXURE 1:

Table 1: Customer Perception Towards Retail Mix Strategies

Product Strategy					
Attributes	Excellent	Good	Average	Not Good	Poor
Availability of Product Categories	9%	12%	18%	32%	29%
Availability of Range of Brands	10%	13%	16%	30%	31%
Quality Products	12%	11%	22%	25%	30%
Availability of Required Products	8%	13%	19%	31%	29%
Overall Product Strategy	12%	14%	22%	27%	25%
Price Strategy					
Products are sold at MRP	15%	11%	20%	31%	24%
Discount prices	13%	12%	19%	28%	28%
Everyday low pricing	16%	17%	17%	25%	25%
Acceptance of plastic money	7%	9%	19%	32%	33%
Credit facilities	7%	10%	19%	31%	33%

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Overall price strategy	13%	14%	19%	30%	23%
Place Strategy					
Location of outlet	17%	16%	21%	27%	20%
Access to main road	13%	11%	16%	34%	27%
Parking facilities	13%	14%	19%	30%	23%
Overall place strategy	18%	13%	21%	23%	26%
Promotion Strategy					
Advertisement about the store	17%	14%	17%	25%	27%
Publicity about the store	12%	13%	18%	27%	29%
Telemarketing practices	13%	13%	28%	24%	22%
Mail order practices	11%	9%	23%	30%	27%
Internet marketing practices	7%	8%	20%	32%	33%
Selling on shop floor	11%	13%	20%	28%	28%
Customer relationship management	6%	8%	22%	34%	29%
Loyalty programs	10%	9%	19%	33%	29%
Offers and discounts	8%	10%	24%	29%	29%
Point of sale/ sale communication	7%	11%	22%	27%	34%
Over all promotion strategy	6%	8%	13%	38%	34%
Process Strategy					
Shopping process	7%	6%	23%	29%	34%
Instant billing without waiting	11%	10%	25%	29%	25%
Delivery of shopping goods	7%	11%	20%	33%	29%
Security check	10%	10%	22%	31%	28%
Convince of transaction	6%	7%	20%	33%	33%
Convenience shopping hours	5%	7%	16%	34%	38%
Return and exchange policy	6%	7%	16%	34%	37%
Overall process strategy	9%	9%	23%	27%	31%
People Strategy					
Availability of customer friendly staff	8%	10%	19%	32%	31%
Immediate response to customers	7%	9%	22%	36%	26%
Service by retail sales person	5%	7%	20%	35%	33%
Courteous communication	9%	8%	22%	36%	24%
Availability of sales person on the floor	6%	7%	29%	31%	27%
Kindliness of staff	7%	7%	20%	36%	31%
Overall people strategy	6%	8%	16%	34%	36%
Physical Evidence					
Provision of trail and fitting rooms	12%	11%	22%	29%	26%
Safety measures	13%	12%	20%	30%	25%
Provision of rest rooms	6%	7%	29%	31%	27%
Easy internal mobility	10%	8%	20%	31%	31%
Cleanliness of store	7%	7%	20%	29%	38%

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Air conditioning	8%	7%	22%	29%	34%
Scent/ aroma	11%	6%	26%	31%	27%
Provision of drinking water facilities	7%	7%	16%	34%	35%
Provision of lift facility/ escalator	8%	11%	19%	33%	29%
Provision of baggage counter	7%	9%	20%	33%	32%
Overall physical evidence strategy	9%	7%	18%	33%	33%

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