



AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS ON FLOATING MALLS IN KERALA

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Abstract

Kerala State Cooperative Consumer Federation (Consumer fed) launched Floating Triveni Stores/Floating Malls in 2009. The total number of Floating Triveni Super Stores (FTSS) functioning in the southern and central parts of Kerala is seven. These buoyant big shops are called fluid shopping malls. It sell all the necessity goods a home needs under one roof at subsidized rate. Its subsidized sales of essential commodities rescue consumers from the huge price hike. Those villagers who cannot access the mainland except through boats are more benefitted through these floating malls of Consumer fed. Floating Triveni Stores provide better shopping facilities to the public living in backwaters region with low travelling cost and at a moderate price. In the present study an attempt is made to identify how far the floating malls of Consumer fed succeeded in providing the essential commodities to the public in backwaters region.

Key words: - Backwater region, Consumer fed, Floating Malls, Fluid Shopping Malls Subsidy.

Introduction

Kerala is better known as God's own country. Here the land is blessed abundantly with backwaters paving the way for the tourist attraction. But the unique landscape of Kerala backwaters divided the land and people in two compartments. People living in back water region have limited access to the essential commodities. There are more than a lakh people residing in the back waters region in Kerala and most of the places have no road accessibility with poor infrastructure. These rural water logged areas are denied of many facilities. People in these back water regions have to travel long way to town to procure their daily requirements of essential commodities. In this context the Kerala State cooperative consumers' federation or Consumer fed, the apex body of the consumer cooperatives in the state of Kerala introduced Floating Triveni Super Stores/floating malls in June 2009 with the prime intention of making available the daily requirements at the door steps of poor people living in backwater regions. This is the first floating mall of its kind in this world and is reaching consumers living in the far reaching areas around the backwaters. This is a specially designed super store floating over water, a big boom too many of the people in the state. Floating mall is a store arranged in boats from where goods are sold out. It is built up on a mechanized moving, platform on the surface water, providing all daily requirements of households at their door steps. At present consumers of backwater area who are fragmented by water have no better choice for their shopping expect the floating mall. The prime objective of floating mall is to make available the essential commodities at controlled price to common man and to generate the fair trade practice especially to those in back water region. It is an attraction to the public and also attracts the tourists in backwater area of Kerala.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are-

1. To assess the perception and satisfaction of customers with regard to the floating malls in Kerala.
2. To offer suggestions for improving the performance of floating malls.

Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature based on both Primary and Secondary data. For collecting primary data, an interview schedule was developed for the customers of Floating Triveni Stores. Alappuzha District was selected as sample of floating malls based on purposive sampling method, as the district with the highest number of malls. There are 3 floating malls operating in Alappuzha. For ensuring large sample size of customers, 63 sample respondents, were selected randomly on the basis of convenience. Secondary data was obtained from published and unpublished sources of consumer fed, journals, websites and newspapers.

Review of Literature

Brief sketches of the relevant studies are presented in chronological order.

Kamat (1970) studied about the purchasing–controlling costs and improving productivity in consumer co-operatives. The study concluded that cost reduction attempts are valuable but over encouragement and over publicity to these can be risky. Too much insistence on “price” might result in less value for money through unsatisfactory service, disgruntled suppliers and inadequate quality.

Patvardhan (1969) tries to study the distribution of consumer goods by co-operatives in rural areas. In his study he reveals that co-operative society’s activities have been dominated by distribution of fair price food grains from Government stocks. They also had no support of higher level marketing co-operatives and have had very weak links with whole sale consumer stores.

Rao (1970) has undertaken a study of the consumer’s co-operative societies which incurred losses in 1968-78. The objectives of the study was that of identifying the factors which could be said to be generally responsible for causing losses in the consumers co-operative societies and to find out whether any general guidelines could be drawn out of the experience of the societies so that other societies could avoid committing the same mistakes. He collected some preliminary information from the societies which incurred losses on their operations in 1967-68.

Vijumon (2013) has conducted a study about the co-operative retailing interference of Consumer fed in essential goods market in Kerala. The main objectives of the study are to understand the scenario of essential goods retailing in Kerala state and to examine the quality of consumer goods supplied by the federation from consumer’s perspective. The major findings of the study makes it clear that there is a big agreement to the notion that Triveni supermarket supplies goods at cheaper price than the price prevailing in the general market and the study clearly discloses that the price level in Triveni stores is very low for food grains and convenience goods.

Customers Perception and Satisfaction towards Floating Malls

In order to survive in this competitive world, each and every business organization should consider the customer perception and satisfy their needs. Customer perception is how consumers see the world around them because different persons think differently about a particular situation, product, service or event. To keep customers satisfied, performance should be better than expectation and it should be stable. The level of satisfaction depends up on sales. That is expectation created by the organization must be fulfilled by actual performance, otherwise it will lead to customer dissatisfaction. The study on perception and satisfaction of customers with regard to the floating malls is very valuable as far as consumer fed is concerned.

Table- 1, Socio-economic status of the respondents of Floating Triveni Stores

Category	Status	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	34	54.0
	Female	29	46.0
Age Group	20-30	9	14.3
	30-40	19	30.2
	40-50	19	30.2
	50-60	10	15.9
	>60	6	9.5
Income Group	<5000	12	19.0
	5000-10000	32	50.8
	15000-20000	3	4.8
	>20000	16	25.4
Occupation	Agriculturalist	41	65.1
	Labourer	10	15.9
	Government Employee	6	9.5
	Self Employed	3	4.8
	Pensioner	3	4.8

Source: Survey Data

From the above table it is clear that out of 63 respondents surveyed, the number of male is 54% and the female is 46%. It is found that 60.4% respondents were belongs to the age groups of 30-40 and 40-50 years respectively. With reference to the income level (Monthly), majority of the respondents 50.8% are ranging between Rs. 5000-10000. Occupation is a source of income. It is seen from the above table that 65.1% of the respondents are occupied in the agricultural sector.

Table-2, Jonckheere-Terpstra Test of Awareness Level of Respondents

Category	Advertisements	Sales Representatives	Friends	News Paper	Internet
Number of Levels in Gender	2	2	2	2	2
Number	63	63	63	63	63
Observed J-T Statistic	374.500	728.000	526.500	524.000	276.000
Mean J-T Statistic	493.000	493.000	493.000	493.000	493.000
Std. Deviation of J-T Statistic	49.603	64.096	51.207	55.258	62.420
Std. J-T Statistic	-2.389	3.666	.654	.561	-3.476
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.000	.513	.575	.001

Source: Survey Data

As per the Jonckheere-Terpstra test (J-T test) the mean rank score obtained for the respondents comes to 493.000 and that of the standard deviation is 49.603. Since the obtained CVTS as per J-T test is -2.389 and P value is .017 ($P < 0.05$), H_0 formulated in this regard is rejected that means there is significant difference between male and female with reference to the awareness level for the channel advertisement about the information of Floating Triveni Stores. Since the P value is .513 ($P > 0.05$), H_0 formulated in this regard is accepted that means there is no significant difference between male and female due to the information level for the channel friends. As per the above Table P value is .575 ($P > 0.05$), it indicates that H_0 formulated is accepted that is there is no significant difference between male and female with reference to the awareness level for the channel news paper. The result shows that the P value is .001 ($P < 0.05$), H_0 formulated is rejected that means there is significant difference between male and female with respect to the information level for the channel internet of Floating Triveni Stores. Hence it is concluded that a large number of male respondents get information of Floating Triveni Stores from internet and female respondents receive information from sales representatives.

Table-3, Pearson Chi- Square Tests of Frequency of Purchase

Variables			Gender	
			Male	Female
Frequency of purchase	Hardly Ever	Number	09	6
		Percentage	0.0%	20.7%
	Occasionally	Number	18	13
		Percentage	52.9%	44.8%
	Regularly	Number	16	10
		Percentage	47.1%	34.5%
Total		Number	34	29
		Percentage	100.0%	100.0%
Pearson Chi-Square			7.844	
P Value			.020	
Result			Significant	

Source: Survey Data

As per the Chi-Square Test, CVTS (Computed Variable Test Statistics) is 7.844 and P value is 0.020 ($P < 0.05$), H_0 is rejected that is there is an association between the opinion about the frequency of purchase from Floating Triveni Stores and Gender. That is frequency of purchase and gender is dependent. So it is concluded that 49.2% are occasionally purchase from Floating Triveni Stores.

Table- 4, KMO and Bartlett's Test of Subsidiaries from Floating Triveni Stores

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.436
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	738.685
	Df	105
	Significant	.000

Source: Survey Data

According to Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy, the accuracy of the data for factors identified was 43.60%, which was found statistically significant. This shows that the data is moderately fit for analyzing the factor analysis and the components identified were individually different.

Table - 5 Factor Analysis of choice to Floating Triveni Stores

Factor	Value
Factor I	
High quality	.864
Variety of service	.909
Less formalities	.350
Availability of products	.558
Factor II	
Discount Sales	.805
Farm fresh products	.869
Factor III	
Better service	.795
Options for choice	.726
Factor IV	
Courtesy	.440
Better ambience	.827
Accuracy in measurement	.445
Better packing and packaging	.966
Factor V	
Door steps service	.596
Customer friendly approach	.937
Factor VI	
Price reduction	.867

Source: Survey Data

From the above table it is clear that there are four components forming part of Factor I. These four components may be clubbed together and termed as “*Enhanced quality oriented price*”. There are two components forming part of Factor II. These two components may be clubbed together and termed as “*Apposite and rational intercession by the Department*”. There are two components forming part of Factor III and they are termed as “*Choice oriented service*”. There are four components forming part of Factor IV and they are termed as “*Spirited physical oriented service*”. Two components forming part of Factor V is termed as “*Customer oriented service*”. Finally there are four components forming part of factor VI and it is “*Sincere price reduction oriented approach*”.

Table - 6, Component Transformation Matrix of Choice to Floating Triveni Stores

Components	1	2	3	4	5	6
Enhanced quality oriented price	.633	.536	.404	.038	-.343	-.175
Apposite and rational intercession by the Department	-.511	-.032	.622	.562	-.130	-.137
Choice oriented service	.554	-.574	-.065	.585	.053	.119
Spirited physical oriented service	.099	.286	.312	.055	.755	.488
Customer oriented service	-.144	.389	-.393	.385	-.389	.611

Source: Survey Data

Hence it is concluded that 63.30% of the total variance after the rotation of the different components forming the factor “Enhanced quality oriented price”, 62.20% of the total variance after the rotation of the different components forming the factor “Apposite and rational intercession by the Department”, 58.50% of the total variance after the rotation of the different components forming the factor “Choice oriented service”, 75.50% of the total variance after the rotation of the different components forming the factors “Spirited physical oriented service”, 61.10% of the total variance after the rotation of the different components forming the factors “Customer oriented service” and finally 43.50% of the total variance after the rotation of the different components forming the factor “Sincere price reduction oriented approach”. These are the identified factors which can point out the reasons for choice to Floating Triveni Stores.

Table - 7, Pearson Chi- Square Test of variety of products in Floating Triveni Stores

Variables		Gender		
		Male	Female	
Variety of products available in Floating Triveni Stores	Too less	Number	3	0
		Percentage	8.8%	0.0%
	Adequate	Number	0	7
		Percentage	0.0%	24.1%
	Many	Number	18	19
		Percentage	52.9%	65.5%
	Too Many	Number	13	3
		Percentage	38.2%	10.3%
Chi-Square Tests				
Pearson Chi-Square Tests		15.981		
P Value		.001		
Result		Significant		

Source: Survey Data

As per the Chi-Square Test, CVTS (Computed Variable Test Statistics) is 15.981 and P value is 0.001 ($P < 0.05$), here the H_0 is rejected. That is there is an association between the variety of products available from Floating Triveni Stores and gender. So it is concluded that 58.7% opinion that many variety of products are available in Floating Triveni Stores.

Table – 8, Descriptive Statistics of Customer oriented price control approach

Gender	Income	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Male	<5000	4.000	.5477	6
	5000-10000	3.531	.7181	16
	15000-20000	2.500	.0000	3
	>20000	3.667	.9014	9
Female	<5000	3.500	.0000	6
	5000-10000	2.844	.6250	16
	>20000	2.714	.2673	7

Source: Survey Data

Highest mean score obtained for the variable customer oriented price control approach for male, whose income less than 5000 is 4.000 ± 0.5477 . Similarly for the female, income less than 5000 is 3.500 ± 0.0000 .

Table - 9, Descriptive Statistics of Customer oriented product approach

Gender	Income	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Male	<5000	3.900	.5477	6
	5000-10000	3.350	.5586	16
	15000-20000	3.600	.0000	3
	>20000	4.133	.2646	9
Female	<5000	4.100	.1095	6
	5000-10000	3.300	.2828	16
	>20000	3.343	.3207	7

Source: Survey Data

In the variable customer oriented product approach, highest mean score obtained for male whose income more than 20000 is 4.133 ± 0.2646 . Likewise for female, income less than 5000 is 4.100 ± 0.1095 .

Table - 10, Descriptive Statistics of Customer Oriented Promotion Approach

Gender	Income	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Male	<5000	3.625	.4107	6
	5000-10000	3.328	.4976	16
	15000-20000	3.750	.0000	3
	>20000	4.250	.2165	9
Female	<5000	3.125	.1369	6
	5000-10000	2.828	.4718	16
	>20000	3.285	.2672	7

Source: Survey Data

In the case of customer oriented promotion approach, male whose income more than 20000 has highest mean score of 4.250 ± 0.2165 . But in the case of female, it is 3.285 ± 0.2676 .

Table - 11, Descriptive Statistics of Customer oriented acceptance approach

Gender	Income	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number
Male	<5000	3.0833	.0912	6
	5000-10000	3.6562	.5977	16
	15000-20000	3.5000	.0000	3
	>20000	3.7777	.4639	9
Female	<5000	3.5833	.2738	6
	5000-10000	3.1354	.4000	16
	>20000	2.5476	.3563	7

Source: Survey Data

Table 11 indicates that in the case of customer oriented acceptance approach highest mean score obtained for male whose income more than 20000 is 3.777 ± 0.4639 . Similarly female whose income less than 5000 is 3.5833 ± 0.2738 .

Table - 12, Pearson Correlations of various Customer Oriented Approaches

Variables		Price control approach	Product approach	Promotion approach	Acceptance approach
Price control approach	Pearson Correlations	1	.501	.422	.268
	Sig. (2-tailed)	---	.000	.001	.034
	Result	---	Significant	Significant	Significant
Product approach	Pearson Correlations	.501	1	.741	.500
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	---	.000	.000
	Result	Significant	---	Significant	Significant
Promotion approach	Pearson Correlations	.422	.741	1	.402
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	---	.001
	Result	Significant	Significant	---	Significant
Acceptance approach	Pearson Correlations	.268	.500	.402	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	.000	.001	---
	Result	Significant	Significant	Significant	---

Source: Survey Data

From the above table there is correlation between price control approach and product approach of respondent which is statistically significant and correlation is 50.1%. Similarly product approach and promotion approach of which is statistically significant and correlation is 74.1%. Likewise promotion approach and acceptance approach is 40.2%.

Recommendations

On the basis of analysis of data, following recommendations are put forward for the improvement of Floating Triveni Super Stores (FTSS)

- The need of the hour is to strengthen and promote the Floating Triveni Stores which are going to sink due to heavy loss. Steps should be taken at Governmental level for its revival on the basis of PPP (Public-Private Partnership).
- With regard to pricing of commodities, maintain price stability for the commodities in the monopolistic market.
- Steps are to be taken by consumer fed to reduce the crisis of shortage of goods, also increase the sales by maintaining regular demand.
- Strengthen the Quality of goods, Variety of goods, and Display of articles at low price in Floating Triveni Super Stores.
- Measures from head office to monitor weight and quality of commodities supplied in Floating Triveni Super Stores are compulsory.
- Consistency in the procurement of commodities has to be ensured to avoid delay in supply.
- Rather than starting new and more Floating Triveni Stores in the future, it is better to rejuvenate the existing Floating Triveni Super Stores.



- It is better to provide credit facilities and incentives to the regular customers to maintain them, particularly at times of festival seasons.
- Introduce new strategies to provide better customer services through CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and a provision for Customer grievance cell.

Conclusion

The floating shopping mall in the backwater is an excitement to the people in Kerala. This is the first one being introduced not only in India but also in the world. The boat displays every essential commodity from customer's perception for satisfying their needs under one roof and seeks the attention of tourists. Floating Triveni Stores on the bank of the lakes in Kerala aimed at distributing the essential commodities at the door steps of lakhs of people who live in isolation and in inaccessible areas surrounded with water and are a boon for consumers. It has noted that few Floating Triveni Stores has sustained loss throughout the period of study. To a large extent government is responsible for the failure of this wonderful shopping facility in water and the authorities are not considering these floating malls as a means to the people who live in the back water region. Therefore urgent measures are to be taken by the governmental authorities for the improvement and operational efficiency of Floating Triveni Super Stores from the perspective trend of customers.

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