

Study on Changing Attitude towards Leisure in Hubli-Dharwad – A Service Providers' Perspective

*Ms. Sushma Maligi**

Abstract

The Leisure industry has seen the greatest strides of changes in the recent decade. The urban set ups have been enthralling the hosts and the guests by its augmented development as a destination of interest. Leisure activities are no more just an affair of the metropolitan cities and the tier I cities, it has gracefully captured the minds of the next level of cities which were initially not industry oriented. One such case is with the twin city of Hubli-Dharwad. The recent developments in this region has opened the avenues for the more of niche products who strive to give the consumers a quality experience or the quality time rather than the mere services of food and beverage.

Once known for the Agro activities and as an educational hub the Region of Hubli Dharwad, also proposed to be a smart city in the Northern region of Karnataka has been an important Commercial hub attracting the major players of the leisure and hospitality industry in terms of Shopping malls and cafes. The studies have backed that the major portion of the pie of the leisure industry has always been consumed by the young lot. What made the service providers to tap this market off late?

This development has initiated the interest for the research and thus a descriptive study was conducted to understand the service provider's perspective on the present and future scenario of the leisure industry with special reference to shopping malls and cafes as part of an academic requirement of tourism and hospitality studies. The survey attempts to unveil the very purpose of operations, the nature of the consumer market, the growth rate of the business apropos the marketing strategies and the commitment towards the Corporate Social Responsibility.

Keywords: Leisure Industry, Urban Tourism, City-based tourism, Shopping Malls & Cafes

INTRODUCTION

Post industrialization era, leisure has played a significant role in the evolution of the society adding for the quality of life. It has

* Research Scholar, IGNOU (SOTHSM) "SANSKRUTI" Old Taluk Office Lane Dharwad-580001, Karnataka;
sushmamaligi89@gmail.com

attracted significant attention by the practitioners as well as the academicians. Leisure studies have made notable advancements in terms of the discipline and as well as area of study. The etymology of 'Leisure' is derived from the Latin word *licere*, which means to be permitted. From the Latin word it took its shape of a French word *loisir* meaning Free Time. Pre industrialization era have experienced and understood the concept of leisure in a distinctive way as referred by Lynch and Veal (1996). The concept and constructs certainly differ from one self to other and also in regard with the location and time. One may not share a similar idea of indulging in a leisure activity as other.

One of the definitions by Stockdale (1985) states leisure as "a period of time, activity or state of mind in which choice is the dominant feature; in this sense leisure is a form of 'free time' for an individual". The traditional approaches to leisure studies by the researchers gave an objective view, where leisure was termed as collective activities. Soon the arguments paved the way to give the concept of leisure a more holistic way. The concept of leisure was put forth as a subjective matter where it was defined in an experiential way taking into account the people and their lifestyle which inarguably differed across the continents and hence no one definition could be penned down. It can only lead a way to dwell further into the subject matter.

Hence in the much contemporary writing leisure is viewed as an activity, or as a state of a mind or as an amount of time and sometimes all three in combination for personal or community betterment. (The concept of leisure has been further termed to be as Casual leisure which may be coupled with work related activities and serious leisure where there is a break down from work and involved in their hobbies and interests (Stebbins 1982). It is therefore complex to understand the importance of leisure in the society as one may spend time reading a favorite magazine at home in leisure or one may move out of the home to be able to spend the time in discretion. Here come the concepts of tourism and recreation in the play which are considered to be subsets of leisure. The present study is inclined towards studying the changing attitude towards outdoor leisure rather than the indoor one especially in the urban setups.

Literature review

The work by Dallen J. Timothy (2005) titled Shopping Tourism, Retailing, and Leisure draws one's attention on how the traditional practices of consumption altered during the various stages of development from leisure being a banned idea to the time being accepted in the world of capitalism where the consumerism prevails, where the consumption is more of a desire than that of a need. The change in the pattern is marked by the advent of Supermarkets and the malls at the initial level, the importance it gained from the scholars to be worth talking of and leading to further research. Subsequently how the mass consumer societies developed accompanied by retail growth and finally characterizing the place and the space concepts and its influence in consumption patterns. Shopping which was once a laborious activity for survival is now can be seen as an activity of leisure. This directs for varied shopping venues. Malls are one such which appeared in late 1800s as multistoried buildings with a idea of providing one stop shopping place which later got upgraded by recreational, themed and tourist facilities.

A work titled *Entrepreneurship in the Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Industries* by Alison Morrison, Mike Rimmington and Claire Williams (1999) illustrates the relevance of the academic and theoretical concepts in relation to the real business environment while the authors suggests practical which would help the start ups to understand and appreciate the challenges and sensitivity towards certain issues in specific societies in leisure industry. The environment in which the process takes place is well illustrated.

There have been significant studies on leisure patterns of the urban population. The studies have mostly been consumer centric which has addressed the shopping behavior, consumption pattern and the leisure needs of the consumers or it has been on the initial levels of entrepreneurship. Quite a few studies shed light on the service provider's perspective of what makes the business take its shape that too on multitude of specific dimensions. This study attempts to contribute to the understanding of the entrepreneurs and the service providers' view of being in the business and to sustain the same in the urban setups which are scantily affected by the fast trending leisure needs in the metropolis

Research Methodology

Scope of the study: The study was carried out in the twin city of Hubli Dharwad to assess the market trends of Leisure in view of the service providers. The population for the study was the new ventures in the leisure and recreation industry with special reference to Malls with Multiplexes and Themed Cafes. The reference period of the study is 2013-14. The service providers of 02 shopping malls with multiplexes and 04 cafes were interviewed administering a structured questionnaire which included the basic information of the firms and the operational details in the form of open ended questions. The study being descriptive in nature, the quantitative data

required were analyzed using a spreadsheet due to the minimal number of respondents. The qualitative information collected was later transcribed for detailed analysis and reporting.

The soon to be smart city has been enthralled with diverse options of leisure and recreation outlets off late. Though the city has been an important commercial hub it had not attracted the desired attention by the service providers as the consumers had not opened up for the outdoor leisure activity. Though few of the big fast food chains made an early presence the consumer market was not very receptive as they desired for. This paved a way to early exit and ultimately the cafes and the food joints of repute had to wrap up their business calling it off. Post these happenings there comes a stride of change in the leisure segment. Since 2010 there is no saying no for an offbeat creative café or a well appointed shopping arcade. Realizing this, service providers ventured in and it all started with self conceptualized and locally acceptable café culture making it a route map into the future.

The consumers turned their interest to themed cafes where conversations and quality time were a priority alongside trending food. Inclination towards lifestyle and habitat shopping grew opening up avenues. The study thus entails and attempts to capture this change and how the service providers had to get over the hang of the same. The study would benefit the startups and the hospitality enthusiasts to appreciate and comprehend the consumer expectations away from the metropolis limited to the study of shopping malls with multiplexes and the themed cafes.

Study objectives

- To analyze the leisure market trends in the urban counterparts
- To understand the purpose of setting up a leisure business by the service providers

To study the sustainability and prospects of the leisure industry

Data Analysis

The start : The dynamic market systems present can be assessed by the data related to the year of establishment. The location of the organization denotes the target market. The first entry in this segment was only in 2010 decades after the leisure industry sprung and the latest in the list was in 2013. The time since they are in the operations marks the change in the nature of leisure business organizations in the twin city of Hubli-Dhawad. Most of them centered in the Commercial hub of Hubli few have made themselves operational at Dharwad.

The Business Type: The Business may be a result of a sole proprietorship, the partnership or it may be a result of capital investments in the form of a company. The ownership type denotes how the market has opened for all the segments. The presence of SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) in large number suggests that the level of operation and management is very minimal when compared the large scale business. The operation of the Public or private limited companies in the market of study forecasts a wider scope of development at any level of investment and the prospects of the leisure business. The study indicated that 31% of the organizations operated on proprietorship basis, a welcoming sign for any of the business to prosper and exemplifies the presence of the contemporary minds further setting a benchmark provision of services. The other 31% on Partnership basis and the fast food and take away service providers were of reputed chains which operated globally.

Human Resource Management

Man power forms an important asset as well as challenge for any of the business to operate. Getting the right personnel at the right time is a challenge. The Nature of recruitment differs from the type of business. The Malls and the Multiplex need more number of personnel right from the Project initiation till the Operations are started along with the need for maintenance of the same. The study showed that a range of 55 to 80 personnel are on the job on full time basis with some additional Ad-Hoc staff to assist the operations at the Malls with Multiplexes.

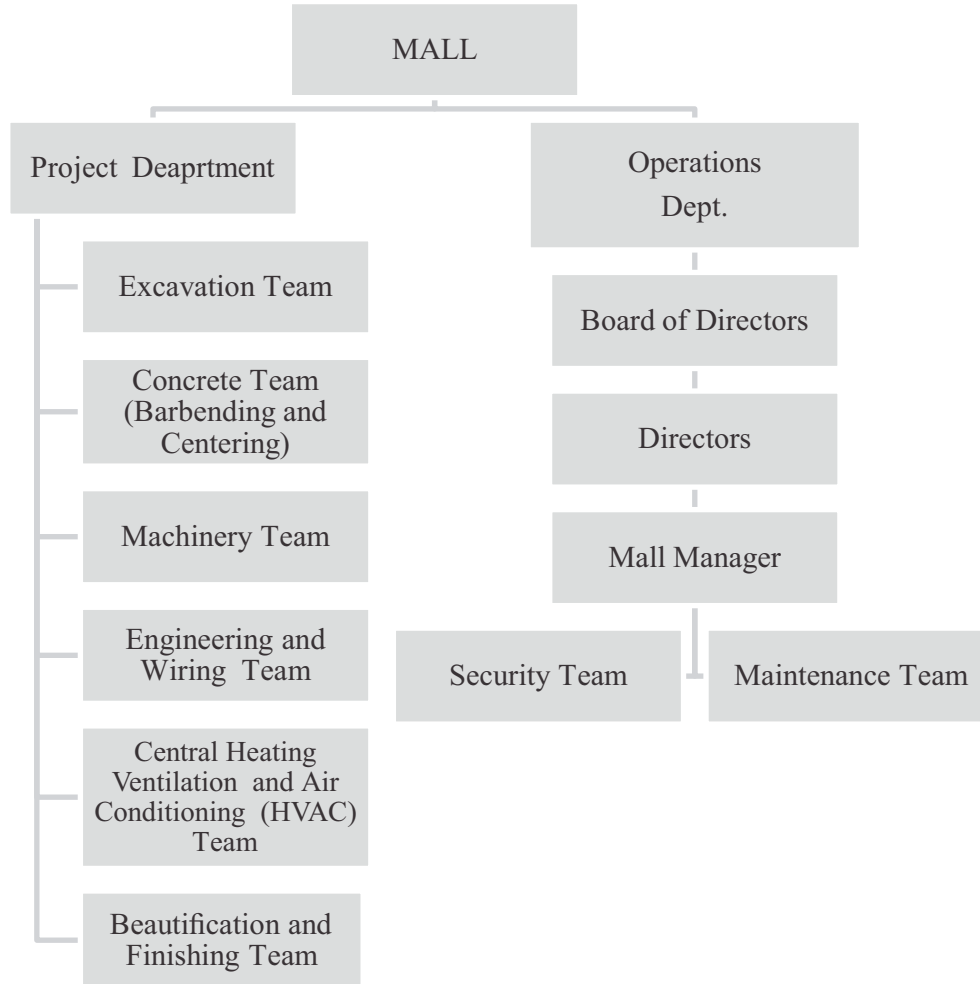
The Coffee Shop and the other fast food chains require comparatively less number of staff as the nature of business is as such due to the simplicity in the procedures and mostly being the Help themselves organizations who incorporate consumer co-production. The number of employees will suggest the range of operations and also the capacity of the organization to employ or to outsource the work. Thus the study also gave the count of people on job from as less as 09 personnel to 40 personnel in these cafes and the food joints.

Organization Hierarchy

The hierarchy of the organization is proportional with the ownership type and the number of employees. The range of business activities decide the structuring of the personnel. The operational structure may be latitudinal or longitudinal. As the activities scatter, it calls for the wide arena of operational and managerial workforce.

As the café and the small hospitality business hierarchy is well accounted, the study illustrates the structure of operations at the Malls with Multiplexes in particular. Project team is operational only during the initial phase of the establishment as the infrastructure is pooled. Once the building is raised at par with the plan the operational team takes over the job.

Figure 1 : Departmentalization at a Mall



Purpose of Establishment

As Peter Drucker opined that “The very purpose of business is to create and keep a customer” this indeed sets up a laying stone. Leisure industry doesn’t survive clinging to the sole purpose of profit maximization. Every organization has a purpose behind its establishment. The industry relies on creating experience rather than mere commoditization of services. The objectives of the organization shape the entire process for its product formulation. The very idea of the starting up a leisure firm will open up the space for the nature of product, putting the same to the practice, creativity and innovation involved in delivering the same.

The study supports the same as the service providers communicated the very purpose of their business was to have a makeover for the people of Hubli-Dharwad in their to-do list during their leisure. The make shift approach is what they followed. Consuming their services adds up to their quality of life. It is basically to bring about a stride in their lifestyle pattern.

Market Research and Location Choice

Making the decision to set up a leisure business involves careful consideration. The first requirement is to conduct a detailed market research. This will assure that you are doing the right thing and that there is market for your new business, which combines to make it work. Setting up a business from the scratch needs great deal of planning and confidence.

Most importantly it has to be accessible, as it is considered that “There is no point in setting up a business in a basement, away from the city or at the top floor if it doesn’t categorize in such way”. Especially in a mall the location of a coffee shop should keep shoppers inside the mall, giving them the chance to relax, and then head off refreshed to hit the shops.

Consumer Profile

It is important to understand and identify the contour of potential consumers. Ideal way for any business before rolling out its services is to first understand and identify the target market. It is crucial to define to whom the services are been offered. How the very idea at its embryonic stage has been processed further to bring to a shape in terms of a business plan. The apt product image propagated by the service provider to the prospective consumers will attract the anticipated crowd. Indulgence in the leisure activities are strictly at consumers’ discretion. The leisure facilities may be preferred by family as well as by an individual or by the group of likeminded at a professional outset. Thus the possibilities of attracting the possible portfolio have to be assessed prior to initiation.

Unlike any other products the tourism products have a set of peculiar characteristics and that makes it unique in terms of operation and the consumption. The consumers have to come to the place of service so as to consume the same and the responses of consumer are weighed in terms of number as well as with their feedbacks.

The study has given the nature of the consumers at the Malls and the Cafes. Malls and Multiplexes have attracted 72.5% of the Families who have spent their time in leisure as compared to 18% youths and the other professionals and 10% of varied clientele. The study indicates that the Cafes are flocked by 50% of the families, 22.5% of the youths, 17.5% by the professional crowd and the 10% of the varied clientele. Though many of the studies suggest that the cafes and malls are customarily befallen by the youths, the realm of business operation does have an impact over the profiling. The urban setups do exhibit the patterns in contradiction with the metropolis.

Marketing Communication

Marketing communication and the channels used to reach out to the prospective customer is what it takes to get that first look at your business. Marketing is one of the basic functions of any business entity apart from Innovation as attributed by Peter Drucker. Hence the marketing managers have to design the strategic move for their firms so as to create a desired image about the services they render. Advertising may not be enough, all the other element of promotion mix such as sales promotions, direct marketing and publicity helps in reaching a larger market. Internet has been a boon for marketing with range of Websites, Social Media and the App technology.

The study suggests the twin city has got into the tempo of apt marketing strategies. In totality the business entities are well presented with a user-friendly website, a dedicated page on the social media- the life blood of identity! The traditional avenues of print advertising and the TVC in the local channels are in the plan. The indirect marketing activities are disseminated through their conjoined events with the local NGOs. The organizations have taken a leap forward by organizing district festivals which creates a forum to vitalize the local talent and to incite the participation of the locals. These activities do sway prospective clientele.

Business Expansion

No business can get on to the expansion activities until one sees a prospective avenue. It certainly demands perseverance, mindful planning and the skills required to spearhead the mass providers. It adds up to the challenge when the region of operation is a late entrant in the consumer market and one is unsure of how the services might be embraced by a prospective consumer. The number of branches and the outlets definitely depend upon the nature of business composition.

The leisure market is very lucrative but it doesn’t happen by chance one has to adhere to continuous upgrade of the services which forces holistic approach. So says the famed baseball player, tony Gwynn that “The minute you are satisfied with where you are, you aren’t there anymore”.

Thus one may choose to be a standalone enterprise, get into the vogue of Chain format of business or may dominate the market by opting to franchise. These patterns indicate the strength of the market and the receptivity of consumers for these new strides of change. The study indicated that 40% of the Malls and the Cafes who were start ups with one outlet went on to expand their operations by having more than one Point of sales unit which indicate a positive trajectory of action. They not only had an additional venue for operations at Hubli-Dharwad but crossed the district borders. The other 40% of the service providers were of reputed chains of coffee shops and Habitat limited and the rest 20% had the plans of expansion.

Operational Challenges

Challenges are combined with the very idea of venturing or starting a new business. To set up a successful leisure business it always calls for a carefully planned mix of elements. Starting with a sound business plan one has to focus on the target market, Financial Management and the Cash flow, the man power planning, Legal and ethical challenges and the technological challenges. The successful management of the challenges will form a great learning and will lay a good start for the business.

The twin city has spurred 31% entrepreneurs and as like with any of the business the leisure startups faced the predicament of skilled manpower, dearth of specific materials which are not aboriginal, inadequate supply of electricity and water at the initial stage was a big blow along with the constant pressure built around by the family as well as the investors. The uncertainty of how well the consumers might embrace the niche concept too expedites the anxiety of the entrepreneurs. The rest 69% of the service providers aloof the stated crunches had to accost social, political, logistical, managerial and technological challenges.

The study hence unveils that the service providers chose a location after consecutive surveys and observation for over several years which thronged by the youths and the families most strategically placed in the shopping arcades in the heart of the city or near the landmark facilities like Intercity road transportation hubs or the airports. The location chosen undeviatingly invite the different profiles of consumers.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The study states that the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has been well apprehended by 90% of the leisure service providers in Hubli-Dharwad. The Malls have associated themselves with the NGOs so as to buttress the need of the underprivileged. The cafes that cling to positivism have gone a step ahead in reaching out and helping the slow learners and the special children. The menu and the tent cards placed on the coffee tables at the café have been meticulous sketched and scribed by the slow learners and the special children and they are ideally supported morally and economically in return as gratitude. The cafes also organize exhibitions to put on sale the habiliments prepared by the house makers and the other women driven SMEs.

Conclusion

The patterns of the city's leisure reveals the ideology of the people, it certainly establishes what the city is. The cities which have clout by the suit of urbanization have fast been transcending the aboriginal culture of leisure. The consumers have started to realize what the market has for them which have an immense ability to influence their quality of life and as well as the quality of the time spent in leisure. The discrete income, the lessened working days and the very change in the consumer buying behavior has initiated this change in their leisure patterns, as it is said "Together with a culture of work, there must be a culture of leisure as gratification". Taking a cue from this the service providers have thus en-cashed the same and the study surges that it is very crucial for any business to operate at the right place and especially at the right time. The surge in the number of malls and cafes leads a cue for its growth and the reception level by the consumers. Conclusion

The patterns of the city's leisure reveals the ideology of the people, it certainly establishes what the city is. The cities which have clout by the suit of urbanization have fast been transcending the aboriginal culture of leisure. The consumers have started to realize what the market has for them which have an immense ability to influence their quality of life and as well as the quality of the time spent in leisure. The discrete income, the lessened working days and the very change in the consumer buying behavior has initiated this change in their leisure patterns, as it is said "Together with a culture of work, there must be a culture of leisure as gratification". Taking a cue from this the service providers have thus en-cashed the same and the study surges that it is very crucial for any business to operate at the right place and especially at the right time. The surge in the number of malls and cafes leads a cue for its growth and the reception level by the consumers.

Bibliography

- Hall, C., & Page, S. (2002). *The geography of tourism and recreation environment, place and space*. London: Routledge.
- Page, S. (1995). *Urban tourism*. London: Routledge.
- Rimmington, M., & Cooper, C. (2011). *Tourism and Entrepreneurship*. Woodeaton: Goodfellow.
- Ross, D., & Lashley, C. (2009). *Entrepreneurship and small business management in the hospitality industry*. Amsterdam: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Timothy, D. (2005). *Shopping tourism, retailing, and leisure*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Torkildsen, G. (1999). *Leisure and recreation management (4th ed.)*. London: Routledge.