

Globalisation and New Retail Economy on Changing Urban Space: A Geographical Perspective

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Abstract: Retail trade, an important component of urban economic activity reflects the level of development of an urban area. Retail trade activities are essentially consumer oriented and hence, their location, structure and spatial pattern in relation to the fast changing customer behaviour of an urban society merit a detailed study. Retail consumption takes place in a variety of settings such as home, informal markets, stores, shopping streets and especially the shopping malls. The changing urban space is essentially related to the new mode of retail economy, which is an impact of 'globalization'. 'Globalization' and 'Shopping mall culture' are essentially the character of the post-modern urbanisation. Thus, the process of globalization through which the resources are accumulated under the grip of few MNCs, widen the gap between rich and poor in the societies of developing countries like India. The urban space is changing day by day along with the urbanism of city-dwellers of Asansol in West Bengal due to advent of new retail economy. Changing consumer behaviour replaces the 'traditional bazaar economy' with the 'new retail trade economy' of 'mall culture'. Present paper is an effort to find out the effects of this rising trend of trade and commerce on other retailers and to identify the impacts of shopping mall culture on urban way of life. The emerging issue of retail economy is gradually changing the socio-cultural behaviour of the urban natives of the area under review.

Key Words: Globalization, Post Modernism, Urbanism, Shopping mall, Retail trade.

Prologue

Globalisation literally means the amalgamation of the national economy with that of the global scale. It is a multidimensional aspect and outcome of this globalisation is compilation of various strategies in the existing urban retail economy directed transformation towards a new trend of greater interdependence and integration. Cross country culture is one of the significant impacts of globalisation on Indian economy as well as livelihood. It has considerably changed different features of urban way of living including cultural, social and economical also.

Retail trade, an important component of urban economic activity reflects the level of development of any urban area. Retail trade activities are essentially consumer oriented and hence, their location, structure and spatial pattern in relation to the fast changing customer habits of an urban society merit a detailed study. Retail consumption takes place in a variety of settings, including the home, informal markets, stores, shopping streets and malls.

Hence 'shopping mall' is essentially related to the new mode of economy of 'globalization'. 'Globalizing' and 'Shopping mall culture' are essentially the character of this post-modern era. The MNCs (Multi National Companies) under a single roof sale all daily needs in these malls, in which the resources are accumulated under the grip of few multinationals. Consequently it widens the gap between rich and poor in the class structure of our third world countries.

Post modern Urbanism

An accelerating pace of urbanization is resulting since 1950s, in a mismatch with the space economy at various levels and several forms, especially in the developing and under developed countries (Bose, 1970). The urbanization, which is paced by industrialisation and modernisation in third world is characterized by low level of economic as well as social development, growth of slum areas, high population density and declining space per person and finally the case of 'pseudo urbanization' or 'over urbanization'. (Paccione, 2001)

Postmodernism has a radical and dominant impact on urbanism. It has its direct effect in every sphere of way of urban living including art, culture, music, clothing etc. Postmodernism is more than an architectural style; it is an ideology that has affected almost every aspect of the urban landscape (Relph, 1987). In essence post-modernism not only unfolds two perspectives differ in their relationship i.e. modernism and beyond modernism, but also comprises the capacity to alter the urban landscape (Stem 1980; Jencks 1992).

Modernism developed mainly through the broad cultural and philosophical movement that emerged with the 'Renaissance', coming to full fruition in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Above all, it was characterized by the belief that the application of the rational thought and scientific analysis could lead to universal progress and this rationale

should be guided by historical events. Thus, modernism ultimately turns into historicism, neglecting spatialism. But, in geography post-modernism is “the openness in social and geographic enquiry, and artistic experimentation and political empowerment” (Husain, 1994).

With a marked shift towards postmodern architectural styles that provide a connection with the past and the adjacent structures and in building, for the smaller buildings and granite for the high rises. There has also been a substantial change in commercial land uses. The core now serves an affluent middle to upper-income group. It exists in the pens of some architects, writers, and artists, but their idealistic impression of post-modernism rarely manifests itself on the urban landscape.

City is a unit of social structure and the city dwellers as unit of society also influenced by the post-modern culture. Another feature of post-modern city life in third world countries like India is the fascination of signs and icons. The ‘brand’ culture and ‘mall’ culture are two main products of post-modern urbanism now in all developing countries also. The brand attracts people not only by purchasing those branded products differentiated from others but also find a means of self status in social structure. Shopping malls are growing day by day as a result of post-modernism and affect traditional bazaar economy a lot.

Urban Shopping Malls and Mall Culture

A shopping mall or shopping centre is a building or a set of buildings that contain a variety of retail units, with inter connecting walkways enabling visitors to easily walk from unit to unit. The history of shopping malls dates back to some 10th century when first Grand Bazaar of Tehran was 10 km long covered market. The Grand Bazaar of Istanbul was built in 15th century and is still one of the largest covered markets with more than 58 streets and 4000 shops. The Oxford cover market in Oxford in England was opened officially on 1st November in 1774 and still runs today. The Burlington Arcade was opened in 1819. The Arcade in Providence, Rhode Island introduced the concept to the United States in 1828. The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, Italy followed in the 1860s and is closer to large modern malls in spaciousness (Hower, 1938).

The Indian consumer market has seen a significant growth in the number of modern-day shopping centres, popularly known as ‘malls’. There is an increased demand for quality of retail space in urban area from a varied segment of large-format retailers and brands, which include food and apparel chains, consumer durables and multiplex operators. Shopping-centre development has attracted real-estate developers and corporate houses across cities in India. As a result, from just 3 malls in 2000, India is all set to have over 220 malls by 2005 (Anonymous, 2007).

Factors such as availability of physical space, population densities, city planning, and socio-economic parameters have driven the Indian market to evolve, to a certain extent, its own definition of a ‘mall’. For example, while a mall in USA is 4 lakh to 1 million square feet in size, an Indian version can be anywhere between 80,000 square feet to 500,000 square feet. By 2005, total mall space in the 6 cities of Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata, and National Capital Region (Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon) is expected to increase to over 21.1 million square feet. Compared to other big cities, Kolkata and Hyderabad are relatively new entrants in the mall segment, but are witnessing quick growth. Smaller cities are also expected to see a formidable growth in the malls in the near future. But malls in India need to have a clear positioning through the development of differential product assortment and differential pricing. Segmentation in malls, like up-market malls, mid-market malls, etc. , proper planning, correct identification of needs, quality products at lower prices, the right store mix, and the right timing, would ensure the success of the ‘mall revolution’ in India (Anonymous, 2009).

Materialized city culture has developed in an urban-industrial city like Asansol in the present days. In a dynamic framework, the locational patterns of retail trade establishments by types and the consumer travel patterns tend to be irregular and inefficient, largely due to unplanned and haphazard growth of the city.

Objectives and Methods

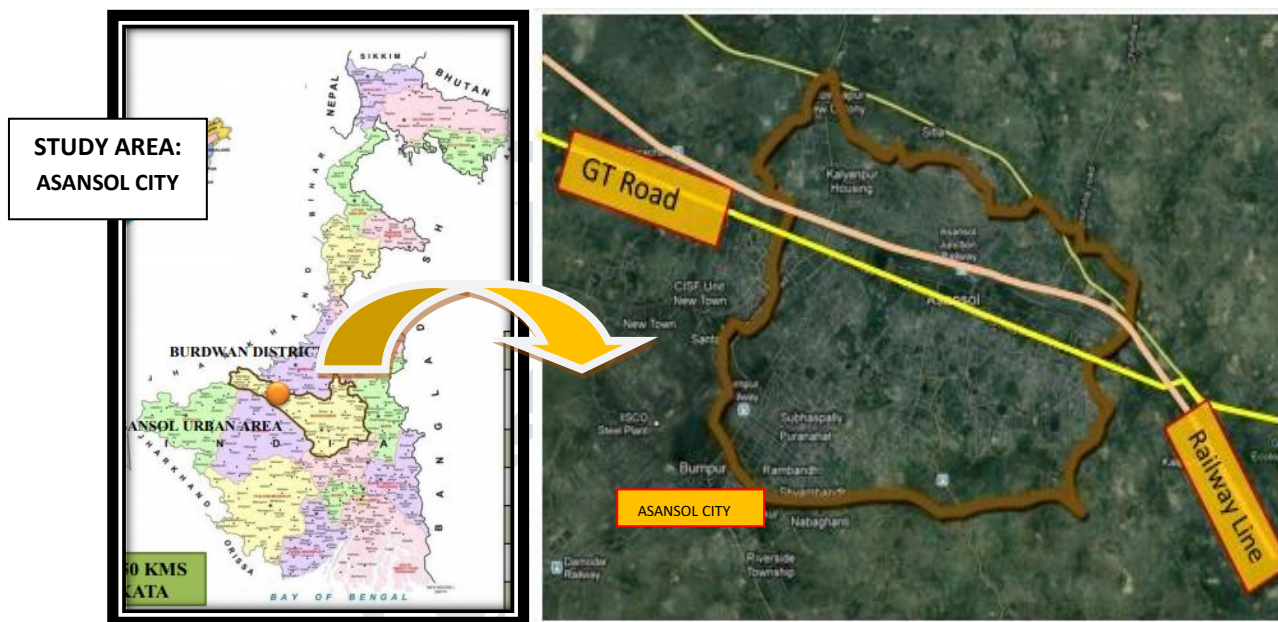
The paper is an effort to identify the emergence of new trend of trading, to find out the effect of this rising trend of trade and commerce on other retailers and analyses impacts of shopping mall culture on the on urban way of life of city dwellers in Asansol. The study also entails the emerging issues of changing socio-cultural behaviour of the urban natives of the area with the emergence of shopping mall. Appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to

identify the levels of such changes in material and social space of the city. Finally, problems and also future prospects are recognized as a whole.

Brief Profile of Study Area

The increasing rush of people towards urban area for better health, education and employment are responsible for the rapid growth of urban areas and urban centres. They continuously accustomed with urban way of living which relates to booming urban retailing, a clear outcome of globalization (Cox, 1964). The scenario is same for the study area and other urban hubs in West Bengal, including Asansol city.

Asansol, known as “The city of Brotherhood” (23.6889° N, 86.9661° E), is located in the western part of Bardhaman District surrounded by Kulti Municipality in the west, Barabani block in the north, Raniganj Municipality in the east and the Damodar river in the southern part. The total areal extension is 127.237 km² and total numbers of wards are 50 with population of 11.6 lakh (Census, 2011).



Source: Google Earth and AMC, 2017

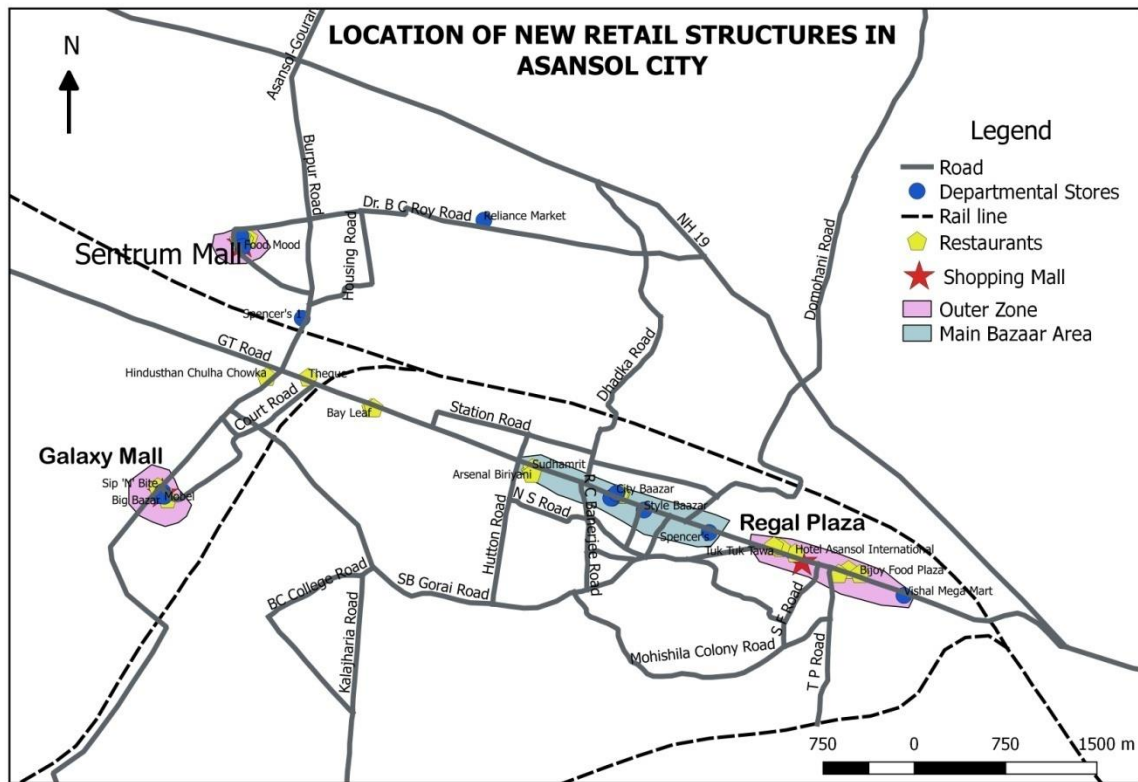
The city's economy was primarily based on the coal and steel industries. Being the central city for the coal belt, Asansol is heavily industrialized though many of the industries have fallen on hard times in recent years, leading to the transformation of Asansol into a trading town that utilizes its position as the transport centre of both agriculture and mines. Asansol is essentially a linear city stretching from Kalipahari more to Gopalpur along the old G.T. Road. The city has very good road and railway connectivity with Kolkata, and is a divisional headquarters of the Eastern Railways. It is directly connected to Jamshedpur via Adra and Puruliya to the south of Asansol. It lies near the border of the State of Jharkhand.

Emergence of New Retail Economy in Asansol

Asansol has a good potentiality to emerge as an organized retail destination. The main market place (Main Bazaar) in Asansol stretches from Central Bus stand area to Ashram More on the both sides of G. T. Road where retailing is almost traditional. Brands like Reid & Tailor, Turtle, Monte Carlo, Pan America, American Tourister, P.C. Chandra, Senco Gold, Shree Leathers, Himalayan Optical etc. have already opened up showrooms which is the good sign for the flourish of organized retailing. Majority of the customers come from the City and its surroundings i.e. Kulti, Chittaranjan, Raniganj, Barakar, Dhanbad, Barabani, Jamuria, Andal, Pandabeswar, Suri, Purulia and Adra to Asansol markets (Field Survey, 2017).

At present, Asansol has numerous departmental stores also, such as Mohan Family Shop, Bazar Kolkata, Geeta Fashions, City Style, Style Bazar, Big Bazar, Brand Factory, Mohan Men's World, B.N. Ghanty, Balaji Fashions, Relience Trends, Vishal Mega Mart etc. The city also experiences mall culture in three nuclei namely Galaxi at Chitra More, Sentrum at Sristi Nagar Township and Regal Plaza at Ushagram, G.T. Road. Current rental values in Asansol ranges between Rs. 500 to Rs.800 per square feet per month. Rent is very high near Central Bus stand area market (Rs. 700 - Rs.1000 per square

feet per month). Due to higher rental value it is observed that shifting of new retail economies from city center towards peripheral locations. There is an ample scope for the development of shopping mall in Asansol in near future at these urban fringe areas such as Srishti Nagar Township, Chitra- New Town area etc. The Srishti Nagar Township is an emerging satellite township in Asansol city and day by day there are numerous flourishing retail nuclei in fringe areas of Asansol city. These nuclei are generating plenty opportunities of development of new retail structures such as malls, departmental stores and restaurants etc. The scope is towards the peripheral area because there are newly developed residential complexes like Bastu Villa, Genex, Sugam Park Housing Complex and other ongoing projects. The location of Galaxy Mall, Sentrum Mall and Regal Plaza are example of such nuclei of new retail structural developments in the outskirts of the city.



Source: Prepared by Surveyor using Google Earth, Dec 2017

Restaurant market at Asansol is not a steady market. Restaurants situated in the main market area are largely dependent on the outside floating customers who normally come from nearby locations like Pandabeswar, Raniganj, Chittaranjan, Barakar, etc. Sales in those restaurants don't remain the same throughout the week. Eating out culture has not fully developed here. People prefer to take food from the roadside cheap eateries irrespective of their economic status, which offers from Chinese dish Chowmin to Indian dish Biryani.

Locational advantage and development of Shopping malls

Asansol city is a cosmopolitan city with mixing of multiple cultures. Cultural heterogeneity offers a wide variety of taste regarding retail commodities and products. The locational advantage promotes the city to grow as a major trading center as the city centre is located in the *Ghanty-Gally Bazaar* area which is located just beside NH2 and 1 km away from Asansol railway station. The location by the side of Raha lane and very nearer to the Station more offers very easy access to the people living in Raniganj, Durgapur, Burnpur and Kulti and so on. Apart from the location other factors facilitating the development of new trading are diverse cultural mixing of different sub-groups, situating in Jharkhand-West Bengal border and also the growing raw economy in a Mining-Industrial sector.

The set up of some famous shopping malls in Asansol are namely the Bazaar Kolkata has established in 2003 after which City Bazaar and Mega Bazaar have been set up in 2004, Galaxy Mall in 2011, Sentrum in 2016. The most popular among these are Galaxy Mall near Chitra Cinema Hall, Burnpur Road and Sentrum at Srishti Nagar Township. The building of Galaxy Mall is five storied with 42 sections like food, garments, toys, bags, ornaments, educational, music, electronics, furniture etc. Other shopping centers like Sentrum Mall and Ragal Plaza are also five storied with specially garment and accessories section. These malls are mainly situated in the outer part of the city with huge areal extension and with

multiple brands in five storied shopping complexes and entertainments like Carnival Cinemas, Eylex and various indoor games and sports.

Location is an important factor for any kind of development like core area or central place of the city provides best location for all the shopping malls in Asansol. But with the change in urban retail structure in post-modern era widespread suburbanization has been taken place. This has given impetus for the overall decentralization of metropolitan population despite of the growth in some inner city areas of the study area. In general, the younger, richer and more mobile people migrate to the suburbs creating new and large sources of demand. These changes are also clear in Asansol city as we can see the newly construction of *shoppertainments* at suburban areas in urban fringe or satellite township like Srishti Nagar Township area (Field Survey, 2017).

Table: 1.1: The Distance covered by the customers (%) in shopping malls in Asansol City

| Shopping Malls | Distance travelled in Kilometres | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|-----|
| | 0 to 5 | 5 to 10 | 10 to 15 | 15 to 20 | >20 |
| Galaxy Mall | 43.2 | 26.7 | 19.8 | 6.5 | 3.8 |
| Sentrum | 51.6 | 24.2 | 15.6 | 6.1 | 2.5 |
| Regal Plaza | 39.5 | 34.6 | 14.4 | 5.2 | 6.3 |

Changing Behaviour of Customers

Popularity of any shopping mall reflects the quality of customer care and services. Customer expectations, accessibility and mobility, security, parking facility, lift facility, entertainment like soft music or air conditioner, fully computerized bill, accessing credit and debit card, ATM etc all these services are available in shopping centers in Asansol. From survey it is revealed that about 90% workers that they are providing good security. Apart from security customers also enjoy mobility as growth of car ownership and car borne shopping is increasing with less trips and bulk-buying.

The customers visit the shopping malls to purchase variety of goods and commodities. They also visit the entertainment shows and game zones available in these malls. As per field survey, around 40% of the total visitors are for entertainment purpose. The customers are widely scattered in Asansol city and the outskirts. The choices or purpose of the customers vary from time to time. A recent field survey in August 2017 reveals the percentage distribution of customers purchased types of products from these malls.

Table: 1.2: Commodities purchased by the customers (%) in shopping malls in Asansol City

| Shopping Malls | Daily Needs | Accessories | Garments | Gift Items/Toys | Others (Entertainments) |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Galaxy Mall | 12.7 | 12.3 | 25.2 | 13.1 | 36.7 |
| Sentrum | 14.3 | 14.9 | 22.2 | 18.6 | 30 |
| Regal Plaza | 13.5 | 16.3 | 34.4 | 15.5 | 20.3 |

The table depicts the changing behaviour of customers regarding introduction of the new trade economy as the percentage of entertainment in the malls is very much significant, which emphasises the *shoppertainment* behaviour. Instead of only shopping in the traditional bazaar shops, the customers nowadays prefers to shop in a shopping centre in an pleasant environment with numerous choices with offers and in addition to that, they also visit food courts, entertainment facilities in movie plaza and game zone attached to these malls. It has become an essential behavioural change in the way of shopping in the urbanites of Asansol city.

Social Status of the Customers

To attend shopping malls by private cars is a kind of status symbol as well as urban extravagancy. But one tenth of the total customer use private car and average 40% people communicate through public buses. Most of them prefer to travel by public buses and motorbikes which comprise more above 60% in three malls, while the private mode of transport reported in these malls are below 40% on an average (Field Survey, 2017).

Table: 1.3: Mode of Transport used by the customers (%) in shopping malls in Asansol City

| Shopping Malls | Mode of Transport by Customers | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|----------|------------|------|
| | Public | | Private | |
| | Bus | Auto/Car | Motor Bike | Cars |
| Galaxy Mall | 36.4 | 24.5 | 23.0 | 16.1 |
| Sentrum | 40.2 | 27.4 | 22.5 | 9.9 |
| Regal Plaza | 35.3 | 25.4 | 21.2 | 18.1 |

Emergence of employment

A techno-centric culture is popular among the younger generation. So, the apprehension was that the younger generation will move to this new trend of this retail shopping. The opinion survey confirms to the idea and more than 30% workers belong to the student category. The next dominant group is the non govt. private employees who are nothing but the industrial workers of different industrial organizations (Field Survey, 2017).

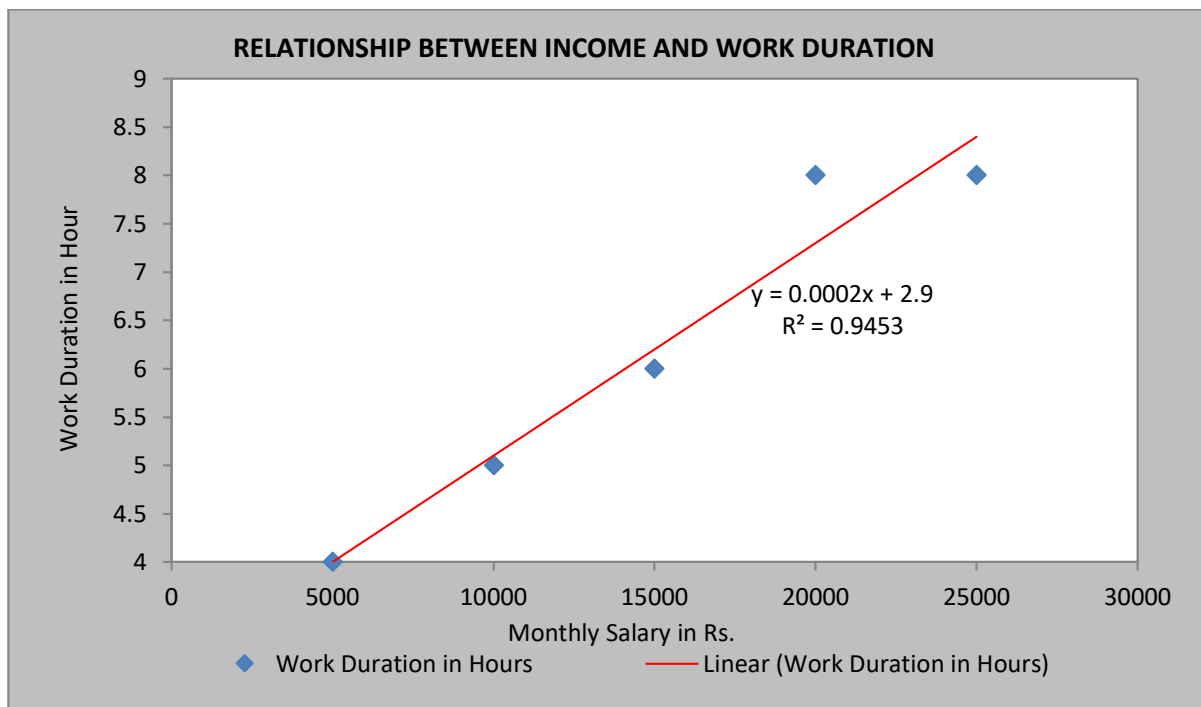
Table: 1.4: Occupational engagement of the Mall workers (%) in Asansol City

| Shopping Malls | Occupation of Mall Workers | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|------------|---------------|---------|----------|
| | Student | House Wife | Govt. Service | Private | Business |
| Galaxy Mall | 42.5 | 22.9 | 0.3 | 21.6 | 12.7 |
| Sentrum | 43.1 | 29.4 | 1.2 | 13 | 13.3 |
| Regal Plaza | 48.5 | 32.8 | 0 | 11.4 | 7.3 |

The retail sector in India employs nearly 21 million people, accounting for roughly 6.7% of the total employment. However, employment in organised retailing is still very low, because of the small share of organised retail business in the total. The fact that young unemployed people constitutes a higher proportion of workforce in the shopping malls in Asansol. Newly developed malls provide large number of openings in the job market. As the sample survey shows that the monthly salary of the mall workers is growing day by day with their time investment in the particular sector i.e. their duration of work in hours (Field Survey, 2017).

Table: 1.5: Monthly Salary Structure with Duration of Work of the Mall workers (%) in Asansol City

| Sl. No. | Monthly salary (in Rs) | % of Mall Workers | Work Duration in Hours |
|---------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | <5000 | 37.5 | 4 |
| 2 | 5000-10000 | 25 | 5 |
| 3 | 10000-15000 | 17.5 | 6 |
| 4 | 15000-20000 | 12 | 8 |
| 5 | >25000 | 8 | 8 |



Changing levels of purchasing power

The purchasing behaviour of the customers also have been changed with the upcoming trend of new retail trade. Now consumers are more aware of the market economy and prefer to shop in the malls for enjoying periodic offers and sales. In different seasons the malls offer various types of discount schemes which attract people of every social class. As the perception survey reveals in Galaxy Mall that maximum people go for 'buy one get one' offer about 48%, 33% go for 'discounts' and 13% go for 'above Rs. 1000/- get free gift'. The customers now purchase not only their daily needs in those shopping malls but they take their food in the adjacent restaurants. All these things signify their changing attitude towards shopping.

Profit making- Pareto optimality

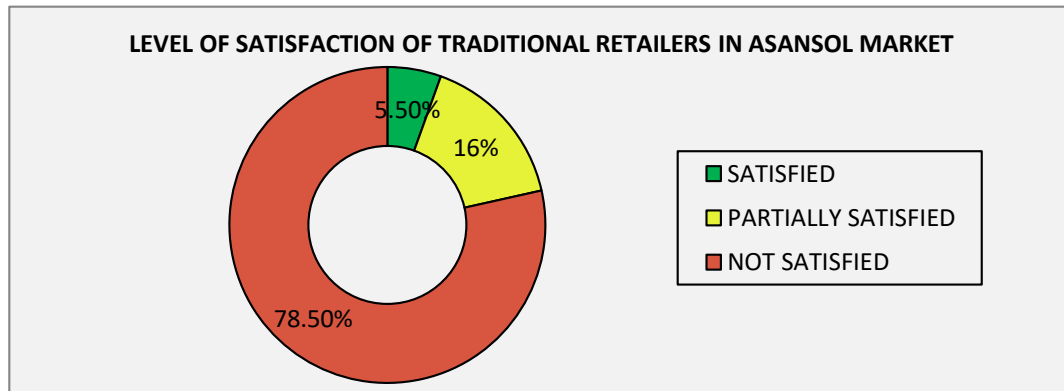
A situation in which it is impossible to make some people better off without making other worse off. This criterion of 'economic efficiency' was devised by the economists and sociologists V.F.D. Pareto. It is an important element in 'neo-classical' economics. The Pareto criterion may be applied to the efficiency of resource allocation. Optimality being achieved when it is impossible to relocate resource to produce an outcome that would increase the satisfaction of some people without reducing the satisfaction of distributional issues would be to recognize as Pareto optimal, a distribution of income that cannot be changed in favour of one individual or group.

The Malls in Asansol sale some items very cheap and some items at relatively higher price than that of others. For an example, in Big Bazar at Galaxy Mall, some days ago they were selling 2 packets of Kurkure at Rs. 10/- which costs Rs. 20/- in the open bazaar. At the same time they had raised the cost of some gift items, cosmetics item, jewellery and other products. They often give attractive offers in Big Bazar in the mid-week as Wednesday or so in case of vegetables as in mid of the week vegetables get perished. Sometimes the departmental stores give special offers on special days such as Republic Day, Independence Day or other days. In case of buy 2 get 1 offer customer has to purchase 2 items where the cost of the free one is included. In this way the malls are getting profit under the disguise of 'free offer'.

Reaction of the Retailers of Traditional *Bazaar*

The other traditional retailers outside malls in Asansol *Bazaar* area are suffering the most. They are losing their customers day by day with the popularity of these 'mall culture' among common people. According to the retailers, these malls and departmental stores are affecting their traditional culture as well as economic set up. Customers are attracted by the facilities and luxuries and get trapped by the profit making policies of the new retailers. Other retailers thus are mostly not satisfied. The doughnut diagram reveals that 78.5% of the retailers are not satisfied with this shopping mall culture and only 16% are partially satisfied and only left 5.5% are satisfied. The local shoppers opined that administration did not take

any remodelling program for the traditional market places year after year. So, there is problem of survival of the local retailers.



Findings and Conclusion

Throughout the study, the major findings regarding the new trading trend of shopping malls in the area under investigation are:

- i. In the year 2002, there were no malls but now at present, there are 3 shopping malls, numerous departmental stores and restaurants including some under construction.
- ii. Mall culture with establishment of huge departmental stores shows jump in hierarchy of retailing in a faster rate.
- iii. The economic deprivation is resulting in most of the cases for the small retailers in traditional market area who cannot cope with the upcoming change and run in loss.
- iv. The shopping mall culture provokes the consumerism taking common people in its gulf which is raising the gap between rich and poor and enhancing the marginalisation of a particular section of the society.
- v. Material wealth dominates life in a rapid rate generating cultural disruption and the urban extravagance promoting pathogenic disorder in the society.
- vi. Despite the fact that shopping malls enhances opportunities in employment generation for the youth of the city, but unemployment is prevailing in disguise as the local markets are running in loss and sacking many of their staffs to reduce additional costs.
- vii. Ultimately, the retail culture of the urbanites has transformed to the consumer oriented mall culture promoting materialistic life style coupled with social instability which are growing day by day.

It is expected to see a formidable growth of malls in the near future. But malls in Asansol compete effectively with the local market and create tough condition for hawkers. Segmentation in retailing, like up-market malls, bazaar, hawker market etc. are growing which allow class struggle. Perception of needs, quality products at lower prices, the right store mix, and the right timing, would ensure the success of the 'mall revolution' in the study area. There is ample scope for new mall culture with domination of material wealth to develop in Asansol city in near future. Consequently, this new trading supports an affluent society going to flourish in the city, with luxurious materialistic lifestyle. By the side, middle class society is facing 'struggle for existence' and finally marginalised to get poorer.

Hence, the small retailers have to learn both the art and science of retailing by deeply following how retailers in other parts of the world are organizing, managing, and coping up with new challenges in an ever-changing marketplace. Other local retailers must maintain some retail formats and modernise their shops to compete against the new economy. Both of them have to reduce disparity in society, and try to understand the regional variations in consumer attitudes to retailing.

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