BUYERS' EXPECTATIONS ABOUT AMENITIESOFFERED BY BUILDERS IN KERALA

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Abstract
The acceptance for Apartment/ Villa concept is increasing in Kerala. National and International builders compete with attractive projects using most modern technologies in world class architectural style. But there exist a gap between buyers' expectations and the actual amenities they get. In this backdrop, a study was conducted to understand the buyers' expectations about the amenities (support services) of villas and apartments provided by builders in Kerala. From the literature review 25 factors were identified for the purpose of the study. The purpose of this paper is to throw light on expectations of buyers about the amenities in villas and apartments in Kerala. A structured questionnaire was administered among one hundred buyers of villas and apartments across Kerala. Respondents were selected by judgment sampling from a randomly selected list of builders in Kerala. Hypothesis were formulated and tested. From the analysis, it is found that there is a significant relation between expectations about the amenities and select demographic factors of buyers such as gender, employment status etc. Literature review revealed that not many studies were undertaken earlier to research about the consumer behavior in the real estate sector in Kerala. The findings of the study would help builders in Kerala to get a better insight about buyers' expectations and fine-tune their projects accordingly. This will have an impact on formulation of marketing strategies by builders in Kerala.

Key Words: *Buyers Expectations, Amenities, Villas and Apartments.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Density of population in Kerala is comparatively high. Availability of residential plots are limited. Hence Real Estate and Construction sector in Kerala is showing high growth in recent times. Contrary to the traditional view, average Keralite is showing interest in buying Villas and Apartments. There is stiff competition in this sector. There is a need for builders to have a better understanding of their target market. Consumer behavior is a concept that marketers uses to better understand consumer and to know how their behavior influence the buying decisions. In today's globalizing economy, competition is getting fierce. That means it becomes more difficult for products and services such as villas and apartments to differentiate themselves from other services than ever before. On one hand, customers are increasingly price sensitive. On the other hand they enjoy branded and luxury villas and apartments. In this situation the development of a strong relationship between customers and builders could provide a significant opportunity for competitive advantage. The perceived experience a customer receives in his various interactions with a company can make or break the relationship.

Expectation is a consumer's belief with respect to the various product attributes and the overall performance level of the product. When that expectation is realized, the expectation comes to fruition (Schiffman, 1999). Customer expectations are beliefs about service delivery that function as standards or reference point against which performance is judged (Zeithaml, and Bitner, 1996). Failure to understand the levels of service customers expects can mean losing a customer to competitors who are able to meet customers' expectations and therefore be at a risk of losing business (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003). Different customers have different levels of service tolerance. Some customers have narrow zones of tolerance and expect a narrow range of service from providers; whereas on the other hand some customers have higher levels of service expectations that if not met cause dissatisfaction. Customers' service tolerance also varies for different service features or dimensions. (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2009).

Residential satisfaction, defined as the feeling of contentment when one has or achieves what one needs or desires in a house, is an important indicator and planners, architects, developers, and policymakers use it in a number of ways (Djebuarni& Al-Abed, 2000). Ukoha and Beamish (1997) observed that while the residents of public housing in Abuja, Nigeria, were satisfied with neighbourhood facilities, they were dissatisfied with structure types, building features, housing conditions and management. Husna and Nurijan (1987) found thatwhile the residents of public low-cost housing in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, were satisfied with the services rendered by the city hall workers and with the neighbourhood factors, a big proportion of them felt dissatisfied with dwelling unit characteristics. Nurizan (1993) reported that the residents of low-cost housing in Johor Bahru were only satisfied with public transport and distance of housing from the city but they were not satisfied with the size, rental and crowding in the house. Djebuarni and Al-Abed (2000) observed that the residents of public

low income housing in Sana'a,Yemen, attach great importance to the level of satisfaction with their neighbourhoods, particularly, with privacy which reflects the cultural background of Yemeni society. Lane and Kinsey (1980) reported that housing characteristics were more crucial determinants than demographic characteristics of housing occupants. Oh (2000) in her study on housing satisfaction of middle income households in Bandar BaruBangi, Malaysia, revealed that while the residents were highly satisfied with the space and price of the house owned, but they were not satisfied with the size of kitchen, plumbing, and public facilities such as recreational areas, playground, taxi and bus services in the housing area. Alison, Kearns, and Atkinson (2002), by analysing English Housing data, concluded that although socio-demographic factors were much less important than residential perceptions in helping to predict dissatisfaction, the type of neighbourhood remained a significant independent predictor of dissatisfaction even when residents' views were taken into account. Carp and Christensen (1986) categorized characteristics of the people's housing environment based on basic human needs, which included resources for food, sleep/rest, personal hygiene, resources for harm avoidance, maintaining order, affiliation and aesthetics. Residents are also concerned about exterior features such as the conditions of the street, congestion in car-parking areas, road-works, building location and the availability and adequacy of nearby natural elements (Kaplan, 1985).

Most residential satisfaction studies have integrated both objective and subjective attributes for the assessment of residential satisfaction. Francescato, Weidemann, and Anderson (1987) contend that satisfaction depends on three elements – the design which includes its space organisation, layout and facilities provided, the management practices (in public housing), and the surrounding social aspects. Nurizan and Hashim (2001) reported that besides facilities in the house, basic facilities such as shops, markets, schools, clinic, mailing system, community hall, playground, and others are important to support the daily life of the dwellers, and enhance residents' quality of life. According to Mohammad Abdul Mohit and Mansor Ibrahim (2010) Residential satisfaction index have high positive correlations with amenities of villas and apartments. The variables included are corridors, staircase, balconies, electricity supply, water supply, sewerage, drainage, telecommunication, lifts and firefighting system.

Based upon the review of literature, amenities can be defined as the external space or support space outside the dwelling unit but within the house block. The present study considers the variables such as Cleanliness of drain, Garbage collection, Total environment Cleanliness, Prayer hall, Multi – purpose hall, Home insurance, Perimeter road, Pedestrian walkways, Banking/ ATM facility, Play area, Car/ Motorcycle parking, Space for drivers and servants in the buildings, Wifi, Gymnasium, Swimming pool, Library, Common party area, Common visitors room, Periodical medical check-up/ Immunisationprogramme within the premises, Landscaping, Local shops, Food stalls, Installation of solar energy panel, Rain water harvesting and Installation of CC TV.

2. METHODOLOGY
The study to understand the buyers' expectation about amenities while purchasing villas and apartments was done by collecting data from buyers located in different parts of Kerala. A structured questionnaire was administered among one hundred buyers of villas and apartments across Kerala. Respondents were selected by judgment sampling from a randomly selected list of builders in Kerala. Hypothesis were formulated and tested. From the literature review, it was found that not many studies have been done in this domain. This justifies the study.

2.1 Objectives
Following are the objectives set for the study
1. To understand the important amenities of villas and apartments expected by the buyers.
2. To know the preferences of buyers regarding amenities of villas and apartments.
3. To identify the demographic factors that influences the expectation of amenities of villas and apartments.

2.2 Variables used for the study
Amenities of villas and apartments: The sub variables included in this component are Cleanliness of drain, Garbage collection, Total environment Cleanliness, Prayer hall, Multi – purpose hall, Home insurance, Perimeter road, Pedestrian walkways, Banking/ ATM facility, Play area, Car/ Motorcycle parking, Space for drivers and servants in the buildings, Wifi, Gymnasium, Swimming pool, Library, Common party area, Common visitors room, Periodical medical check-up/ Immunisationprogramme within the premises, Landscaping, Local shops, Food stalls, Installation of solar energy panel, Rain water harvesting and Installation of CC TV

2.3 Hypotheses
Following are the Hypothesis formulated for the study

H_1: There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Locality of Villas/Apartment.

H_2: There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and age group of the respondents.

H_3: There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gender of the respondents.

H_4: There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Educational qualification of the respondents.

H_5: There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Employment status of the respondents.

H_6: There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gross income of the respondents.

H_7: There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Family Status of the respondents.

2.4. Sampling
For the purpose of the study, three regions of Kerala state were considered: North, Central and south. A total of 142 buyers of Villa/ Apartment across Kerala were approached. Data obtained from 100 completed questionnaires were used for the study, out of which, 40 were from South, another 40 from central and 20 from Northern region. Judgmental sampling method was used for identifying respondents.

2.5. Data Collection and Analysis
Secondary data were collected from magazines, journals and websites. To collect the primary data, a survey was conducted. Five point Likert Scale was used in the questionnaire. Structured questionnaire was administered among 142 respondents, out of which 100 completed questionnaires were used for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed by using statistical tools such as Mean and One - way ANOVA.

3. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
Mean was calculated for each of the factor considered for the study. Hypotheses formulated were tested using One way ANOVA. These are included in the following section.

3.1. Characteristics of the Sample

Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample

S.No		Factors	Frequency	percent
1.	**Place of Residence**	South	40	40
		Central	40	40
		North	20	20
		Total	**100**	**100**
2.	**Age of the Respondents**	21 – 30	38	38
		31 – 40	28	28
		41 – 50	21	21
		Above 51	13	13
		Total	**100**	**100**
3.	**Gender**	Male	62	62
		Female	38	38
		Total	**100**	**100**
4.	**Locality**	Panchayat	12	12
		Municipality	60	60
		Corporation	28	28
		Total	**100**	**100**
5.	**Education**	Below graduation	2	2
		Graduation	69	69
		Post-graduation	26	26
		Others	3	3
		Total	**100**	**100**
		Government service	6	6
		Private sector (MNC with foreign holdings)	18	18

6.	**Employment status**	Business	17	17
		Private sector (Indian companies)	35	35
		Student	6	6
		Agriculture	2	2
		Retired	4	4
		House wife	5	5
		NRI	7	7
		Total	**100**	**100**
7.	**Gross income (per month)**	Below Rs. 25,000	17	17
		Rs. 25,001 – 50,000	41	41
		Rs. 50,001 – 1, 00,000	24	24
		Rs. 1, 00,001 – 5, 00,000	12	12
		Above 5, 00,000	6	6
		Total	**100**	**100**
8.	**Family Status**	Young Singles	29	29
		Newly Married Couples (Young, no children)	6	6
		Married (youngest child under six years of age)	26	26
		Married (Youngest child six or above)	27	27
		Older married couples with dependent children	8	8
		Married, No Kids	4	4
		Total	**100**	**100**

(Source: Survey Data)

3.2. Ranking of Amenities of Villas and Apartments

Table 2. Respondents' preference for Amenities of Villas and Apartments

Amenities	Mean	Rank
Garbage collection	4.78	1
Total environment Cleanliness	4.69	2
Perimeter road	4.65	3
Cleanliness of drain	4.64	4
Car/ Motorcycle parking	4.36	5
Rain water harvesting	4.14	6
Installation of CC TV	4.05	7
Home insurance	4.04	8
Play area	3.94	9
Pedestrian walkways	3.89	10
Space for drivers and servants in the buildings	3.82	11
Multi – purpose hall	3.80	12
Installation of solar energy panel	3.80	12
Landscaping	3.72	13
Prayer hall	3.67	14
Local shops	3.67	14
Common party area	3.65	15
Food stalls	3.64	16
Wifi	3.53	17
Common visitors room	3.50	18
Library	3.48	19
Gymnasium	3.38	20
Banking/ ATM facility	3.38	20

Swimming pool	3.26	21
Periodical medical check-up/ Immunisationprogramme with in the premises	3.11	22

(Source: Survey Data)

From the table 2, the data reveals that the most important amenity was Garbage collection (Rank I) with a mean score of 4.78, followed by Total environment cleanliness with a score of 4.69. The last rank was given to Periodical medical check-up / Immunisation programme within the premises with a score of 3.11.

3.3. Relationship between Expectation about amenities and Locality of Villas/Apartments

Hypotheses were formulated to establish the relationship between Expectation about amenities and Locality of Villas/Apartment.

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Locality of Villas/Apartment.

H_1 : There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Locality of Villas/Apartment.

Table 3.Summary of one way ANOVA test statistics - Expectation about amenities and   Locality of Villas/Apartment

	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between group	20.273	33	.614	2.362	.002
Within group	17.167	66	.260		
Total	37.440	99			

(Source : SPSS output)

In the ANOVA test, the asymmetric significance is found to be .002, which is smaller than the cut off value of .05. This indicates that at a confidence level of 95%, the ANOVA test proves that the hypothesis is significant. So the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence there is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Locality of Villas/Apartment.

3.4. Relationship between Expectation about amenities and Age group of the respondents

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Age group of the respondents.

H_1 : There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Age group of the respondents.

Table 4.Summary of one way ANOVA test statistics - Expectation about amenities and Age group of the respondents

	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between group	5405.101	33	167.791	1.688	.036
Within group	6404.539	66	97.038		
Total	11809.640	99			

(Source: SPSS output)

In the output table of ANOVA test in the last column titled the asymmetric significance is found to be .036, which is smaller than the cut off value of .05. This indicates that at a confidence level of 95%, the ANOVA test proves that the hypothesis is significant. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So there is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Age group of the respondents.

3.5. Relationship between Expectation of Expectation about amenities and Gender of the respondents

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gender of the respondents

H_1: There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gender of the respondents

Table 5.Summary of one way ANOVA test statistics - Expectation about amenities and Gender of the respondents

	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between group	13.288	33	.403	2.587	.001
Within group	10.272	66	.156		
Total	23.560	99			

(Source: SPSS output)

In the output table of ANOVA test in the last column titled the asymmetric significance is found to be .036, which is smaller than the cut off value of .05. This indicates that at a confidence level of 95%, the ANOVA test proves that the hypothesis is

significant. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So there is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gender of the respondents.

3.6. Relationship between Expectation about amenities and Educational qualification of the respondents
H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Educational qualification of the respondents
H_1: There is a significant relationship between Expectation of Expectation about amenities and Educational qualification of the respondents

Table 6. Summary of one way ANOVA test statistics - Expectation about amenities and Educational qualification of the respondents

	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between group	14.867	33	.451	1.843	.018
Within group	16.133	66	.244		
Total	31.000	99			

(*Source: SPSS output*)

In the output table of ANOVA test in the last column titled the asymmetric significance is found to be .018, which is smaller than the cut off value of .05. This indicates that at a confidence level of 95%, the ANOVA test proves that the hypothesis is significant. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So there is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Educational qualification of the respondents.

3.7. Relationship between Expectation about amenities and Employment status of the respondents
H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Employment status of the respondents
H_1: There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Employment status of the respondents

Table 7. Summary of one way ANOVA test statistics - Expectation about amenities and Employment Status of the respondents

	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between group	275.918	33	8.361	3.214	.000
Within group	171.722	66	2.602		
Total	447.640	99			

(*Source: SPSS output*)

In the output table of ANOVA test in the last column titled the asymmetric significance is found to be .000, which is smaller than the cut off value of .05. This indicates that at a confidence level of 95%, the ANOVA test proves that the hypothesis is significant. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So there is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Employment status of the respondents.

3.8. Relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gross income of the respondents
H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gross income of the respondents
H_1: There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gross income of the respondents

Table 8.Summary of one way ANOVA test statistics - Expectation about amenities and Gross Income of the respondents

	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between group	85.471	33	2.590	2.520	.001
Within group	67.839	66	1.028		
Total	153.310	99			

(*Source: SPSS output*)

In the output table of ANOVA test in the last column titled the asymmetric significance is found to be .001, which is smaller than the cut off value of .05. This indicates that at a confidence level of 95%, the ANOVA test proves that the hypothesis is

significant. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So there is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gross income of the respondents.

3.9. Relationship between Expectation about amenities and Family Status of the respondents

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Family Status of the respondents

H_1: There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Family Status of the respondents

Table 9. Summary of one way ANOVA test statistics - Expectation about amenities and Family Status of the respondents

	Sum of Squares	d.f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between group	12.54	33	.380	1.338	.255
Within group	18.744	66	.284		
Total	31.284	99			

(*Source: SPSS output*)

In the output table of ANOVA test in the last column titled the asymmetric significance is found to be .255, which is greater than the cut off value of .05. This indicates that at a confidence level of 95%, the ANOVA test proves that the hypothesis is not significant. So the null hypothesis is accepted. The Family Status of the respondents does not affect the Expectation about amenities.

4. DISCUSSION

The results are based on primary data collected 100 respondents of the rural and urban residential background. The means and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used for bringing out the results. Various demographic variables have been considered while selecting the sample like Age, Gender, Residential background, educational qualifications, Employment status, Economic background and family status etc. Major findings of the study are as follows. Most important buyer's expectation about amenities was garbage collection, followed by total environment cleanliness. There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Age group of the respondents. There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Gender of the respondents. There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Educational qualification of the respondents. There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and Employment status of the respondents. There is a significant relationship between Expectation about amenities and gross income of the respondents. The Family Status of the respondents does not affect the Expectation about amenities.

4.1. Implications of the study

This study focused on expectations of buyers of villas and apartments in Kerala about amenities of Villas and Apartments. There are a number of other factors which would influence their buying decisions. It is desirable for builders to know about the preferences of buyers of villas and apartments and the factors influencing their buying decisions. This would help them to design and develop projects so as to satisfy the needs and expectations of buyers and to devise effective marketing plans. These insights can be used for planning effective marketing strategies also.

5. CONCLUSION

This study contributes to a better understanding of the expectations of buyers of Villas and Apartments in Kerala. It is seen that buyers have a higher level of expectations on factors such as Garbage collection, Total environment Cleanliness, Perimeter road, Cleanliness of drain, Car/ Motorcycle parking etc. Builders in Kerala can take into consideration the findings of this study, while deciding the location and design of villas and apartments. This understanding will lead to better predictions in the real estate market and hence builders can devise marketing strategies with a better insight about the buyer needs and expectations.

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