

Introduction

Retail plazas have become key gathering spaces in fast-growing suburban communities, combining shopping, dining, and entertainment in one location. In Pearland and the surrounding Fort Bend County, these centers often function as social hubs, not just retail spaces [1]. However, as new developments emerge, a major challenge is identifying what consumers actually want, especially as preferences shift toward dining, entertainment, and convenience.

This challenge is especially relevant for The Orchard at Lower Kirby, a planned mixed-use development by Planned Community Developers. As the area continues to grow, understanding which businesses and amenities residents prefer is essential to ensuring the project's long-term success [2].

Methodology

This study uses a quantitative, survey-based design to identify which retail categories and brand names are most appealing to residents in Pearland, with the goal of informing development decisions for The Orchard at Lower Kirby. A convenience sample of local residents from Fort Bend County will be recruited through social media and informal outreach. Data will be collected over 7–10 days using an online survey.

The survey includes two sections: (1) respondents rank six retail categories—quick-service restaurants, full-service dining, grocery, entertainment, retail stores, and service-based businesses—and (2) rate twelve specific brands on a 5-point Likert scale. Independent variables are category and brand name; the dependent variable is consumer preference. Data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean rankings and ratings) and compared across age groups.

Reliability is supported through standardized questions, though limitations include sampling bias, self-reported data, and a short collection period.

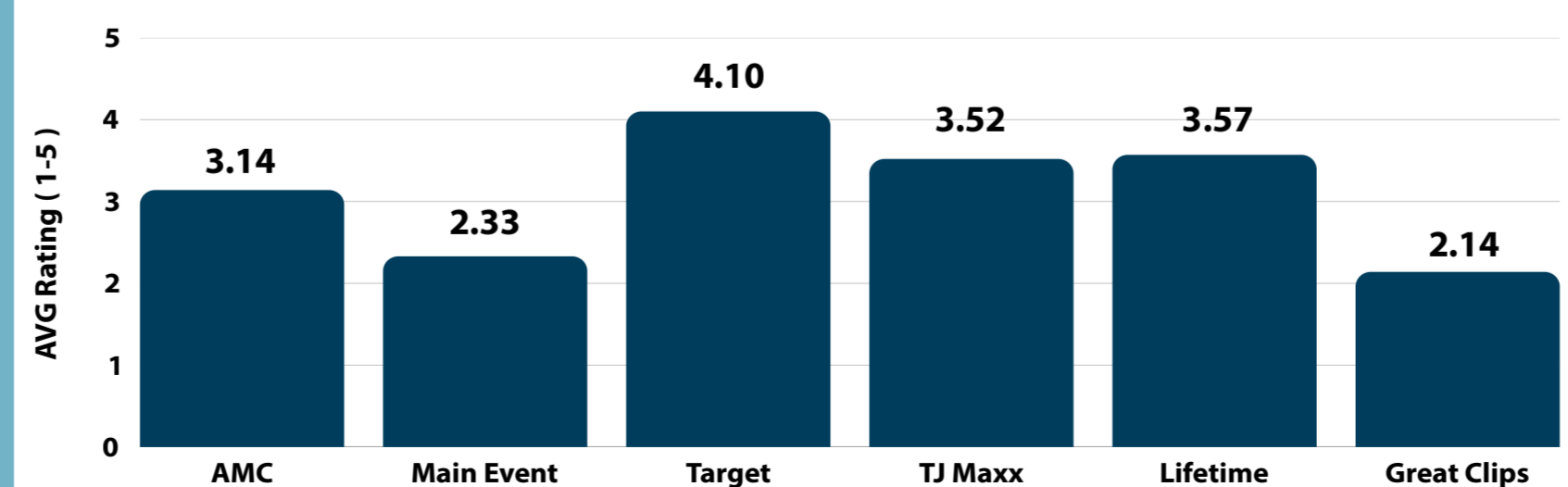
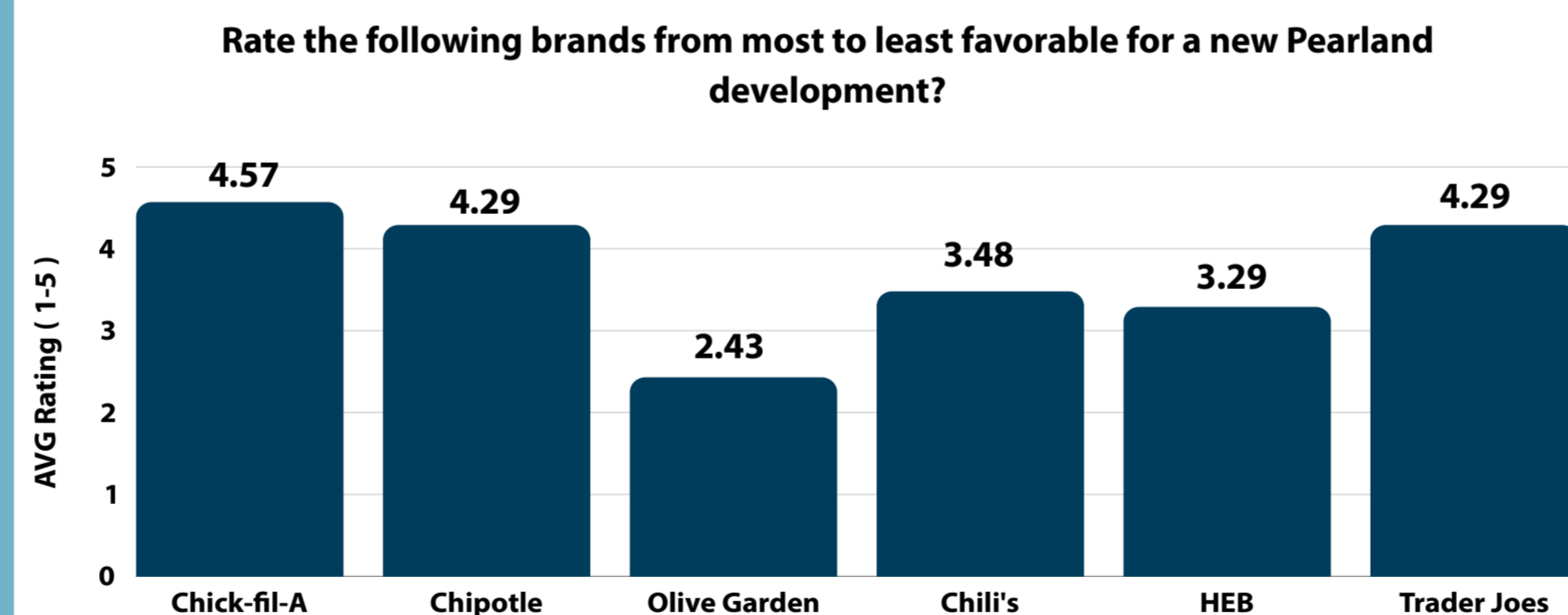
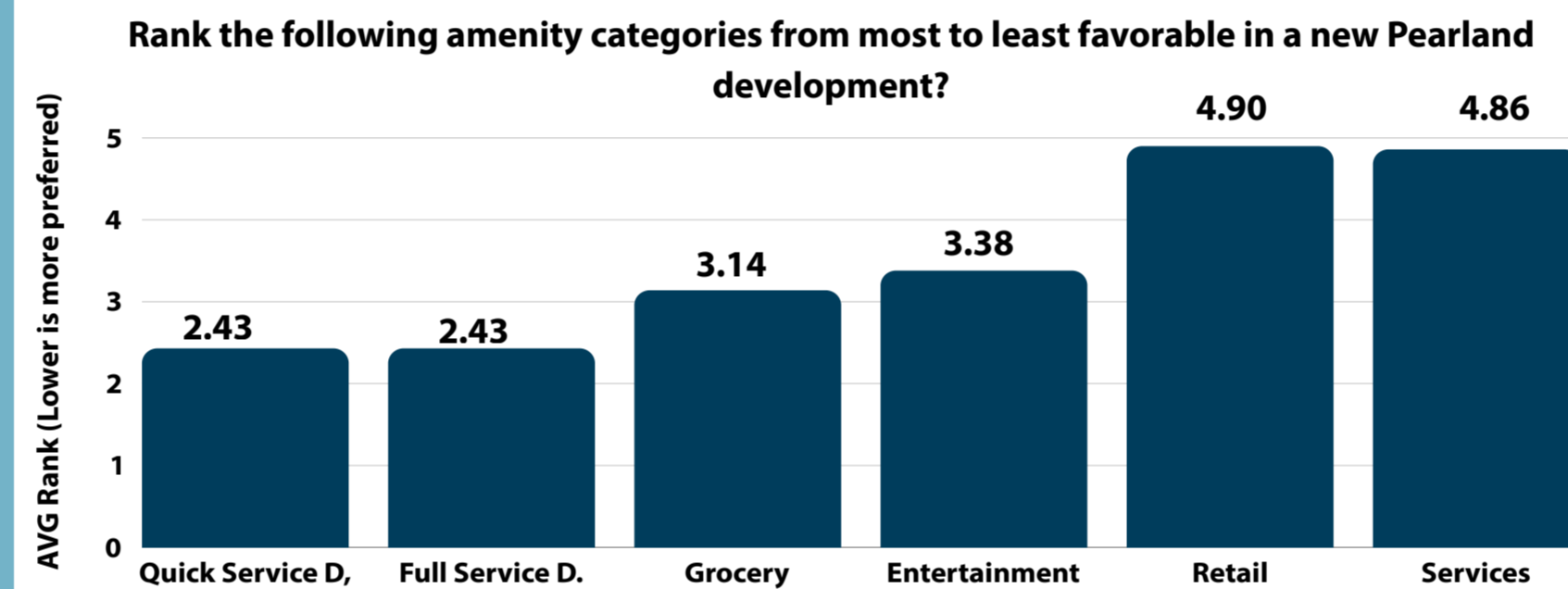
References

1. Baghaee, S., Nosratabadi, S., Aram, F., & Mosavi, A. (2021, April 6). Driving factors behind the social role of retail centers on recreational activities. arXiv.org. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2104.02544>
2. Portal, C. (2025, November 18). Developer presents 122-acre "Orchard at Lower Kirby" plan; Pearland leaders praise design, flag multifamily and hotel risks. Citizen Portal. <https://citizenportal.ai/articles/7387409>

¹Dulles High School, Sugar Land, TX
²Planned Community Developers, Sugar Land, TX
³Gifted & Talented Mentorship Program, Fort Bend ISD

This study examines consumer preferences for retail developments in Pearland to inform planning decisions for The Orchard at Lower Kirby. Using a survey of local residents (n = 21), participants ranked retail categories and rated specific brands on a 5-point Likert scale. Results show that consumer demand is driven more by specific brand appeal than by general category preference. Chick-fil-A, Trader Joe's, and Chipotle received the highest ratings, indicating concentrated interest in a small number of recognizable brands. These findings suggest that successful retail developments should prioritize specific high-demand brands to maximize consumer interest.

Results



Findings

Survey results revealed clear patterns in consumer preferences among residents in Pearland, with demand strongly centered around a few high-performing brands. Chick-fil-A received the highest mean rating (M = 4.57), followed by Trader Joe's (M = 4.33) and Chipotle (M = 4.29). These brands stand out as clear consumer favorites, suggesting they would likely generate consistent traffic and engagement if included in a new development.

Other brands showed more moderate or limited appeal. Chili's (M = 3.48) performed at a mid-range level, while Olive Garden (M = 2.43), Main Event (M = 2.33), and Great Clips (M = 2.14) received lower ratings, indicating weaker consumer interest.

Overall, the findings show that consumer demand is concentrated among a select group of recognizable brands rather than evenly distributed, highlighting the importance of choosing specific high-interest brands to maximize foot traffic and long-term success.

Discussion

The results of this study show that consumer preferences in retail developments are driven primarily by specific brand appeal, with amenity type playing a secondary role. While residents indicated strong interest in food-related amenities, the most meaningful insight comes from which brands they are most likely to visit. At the brand level, preferences were highly concentrated. Chick-fil-A (M = 4.57), Trader Joe's (M = 4.33), and Chipotle (M = 4.29) received the highest ratings, indicating strong consumer demand. In contrast, Great Clips (M = 2.14), Main Event (M = 2.33), and Olive Garden (M = 2.43) performed significantly lower, suggesting limited appeal.

Differences within the same category further emphasize the importance of brand selection. For example, Trader Joe's outperformed H-E-B (M = 3.29), and Chili's (M = 3.48) exceeded Olive Garden, showing that not all brands within a popular category generate equal interest.

Although the study is limited by a small sample size (n = 21) and reliance on self-reported data, the findings provide meaningful insight into local consumer behavior. Overall, the results suggest that selecting specific high-demand brands is critical to maximizing foot traffic and long-term success in retail developments, particularly in rapidly growing suburban markets where competition for consumer attention is high.