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VEBLENIAN SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY**DR. K. ABRAHAM****ASST. PROFESSOR****SREE VIDYANIKETHAN ENGINEERING COLLEGE (AUTANOMOUS)****TIRUPATI****DR. M. RAJASEKHAR****ASST. PROFESSOR****S. V. UNIVERSITY****DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE****TIRUPATI****ABSTRACT**

India is a country with huge population. There are various groups of people based on castes, sub-castes, religions, tribes etc., with different cultures. Hence, it has become very tough to the producers and marketers to produce and sell the goods and services according to the ever changing requirements of such groups. The 'An ethnographic study of low-income consumer behaviour' is a new term used in the present study where sociology, anthropology and marketing subjects are integrated. Because of so many influencing factors there, the Veblenian socio-cultural factors (like culture, sub-culture, social class, reference group, family and its supporting elements) were taken for the study. Multi-stage stratified disproportionate random sampling technique was employed in the sample selection. We found that most of the low-income consumers were being influenced by social class and family among the above said factors.

KEYWORDS

low-income consumer behavior, Ethnographic study, Marketing, Veblenian factors.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnography is a branch of Anthropology concerned with the description of ethnic group. Ethnic group is a group which shares socio-cultural characteristics in the society. An ethnic group may be defined as a group of individuals "with a shared sense of people-hood" based on presumed socio-cultural experiences and/or similar physical characteristics. Such groups may be viewed by their members and/or outsiders as religious, racial, national, linguistic, and/or geographical (A.V. Athelsten 1979). Thus, what ethnic group members have in common is their ethnicity or sense of people-hood, which represents a part of their collective experience.

ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD

Ethnographic method starts with the selection of a culture, review of the literature pertaining to the culture, and identification of variables of interest – typically variables perceived as significant by members of the culture. The ethnographer then goes about gaining entrance, which in turn sets the stage for cultural immersion of the ethnographer in the culture. It is not unusual for ethnographers to live in the culture of months or even years. The middle stages of the ethnographic method involve gaining informants, using them to gain yet more informants in a chaining process, and gathering of data in the form of observational transcripts and interview recordings. Data analysis and theory development come at the end, though theories may emerge from cultural immersion and theory articulation by members of the culture. However, the ethnographic researcher strives to avoid theoretical preconceptions and instead to induce theory from the perspectives of the members of the culture and from observation. The researcher may seek validation of induced theories by going back to members of the culture for their reaction. Ethnographic methodologies vary and some ethnographers advocate use of structured observation schedules by which one code may be observed behaviours or cultural artifacts for the purpose of later statistical analysis, for instance of consumer behaviour

VEBLENIAN SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL (IN BRIEF)

Thorstein Veblen saw man as primarily a social animal conforming to the general forms and norms of his larger culture and to the more specific standards of the sub cultures and face to face group to which his life is bound. His wants and behaviour are largely moulded by his present group memberships and the group memberships to which he aspires. The basic theme is that man's attitudes and behaviour are influenced by several levels of society, culture, sub-culture, social classes, reference groups, face to face groups and family. The challenge to the marketer is to determine which of these social levels is most important in influencing the demand for his product.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research studies conducted, so far, were either related to Sociology or neither Anthropology nor consumer behavior in relation to particular product or services. There were no research studies integrating these exclusive subjects. Hence, the present study has assumed greater importance in the present India. The present study looked at low income consumer behavior of scheduled castes in cultural perspective. The study includes how individuals of scheduled castes make decisions in spending their available meager resources (time, money, efforts) on consumption related items.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the motivational factors (Especially V.B factors) influencing the shopping and consumption behavior of low income people from scheduled castes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following is the methodology followed in accomplishing the stipulated objectives of the study:

RESEARCH APPROACH

The ethnographic method is applied to the present study of research in marketing. The research approach consists of the following steps to meet the objectives of the present study:

- Establishment of residents in the proposed study area for a period of approximately 9 to 12 Months.
- Selection of approximately 10 families of the resident population for closer observation and study.
- Development of social relationship and friendship with residents of the study area.
- Informal discussions on shopping and consumption behaviour of the residents.

- Investigation of the market place facilities in the study area.
- Interviewing owners, managers of local retail and service shops.
- Interviewing of elites, communities, organization workers, social workers and other community residents and officials in the study area.
- Accompanying local residents during shopping trips.
- Selection of the samples from the selected area.

SAMPLE SELECTION

Both primary and secondary data were used in the present study. Convenience sampling and multi-stage disproportionate stratified random sampling techniques were adopted in sample selection. Accordingly Kadapa district was selected as sample district, based on convenience sampling technique. The Kadapa district is one of the 4 districts in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh, other divisions being coastal Andhra and Telengana region with 9 and 10 districts respectively. The multi-stage stratified disproportionate sampling procedure comprised the selection of mandals at its first stage, selection of villages in the second stage, and finally the selection of families in the third stage. Accordingly 5 villages at random were selected from each mandal of 51 mandals in Kadapa district, and then 5 families from each village were selected to elicit responses to the questionnaire administered. Thus the total sample consists of 255 families. Besides this sample, 10 families from Putlam Palli panchayat in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh State as well was selected for the purpose of staying with them for 9-12 Months with a view to gain close observation and to attain the stipulated objectives of the present study.

TOOLS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Both primary and secondary data were collected, classified, calculated, tabulated and analyzed systematically as per the required order by using percentage analysis, chi-square analysis.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

In the following table when we aggregate all the respondents as per the reference groups mentioned in the table, majority of the respondents(31.73%) opined that 'family' was their influencing group while 21.3% felt 'friends', 15.6% felt 'co-workers', 11.3% each cited both 'religious groups' and 'trade unions', the remaining 8.69% of total respondents felt 'others' as their reference group.

TABLE 1: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN INCOME AND REFERENCE GROUPS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No.	Income	Number of respondents	No. of respondents influenced by					
			Family	Friends	Co-workers	Religious groups	Trade union	Others
1.	Rs.15000-30000	27	08	03	05	04	02	05
2.	Rs.30000-45000	72	27	14	11	06	09	05
3.	Rs.45000-60000	89	30	21	14	12	07	05
4.	Rs.60000-75000	36	9	12	04	07	01	03
5.	Rs.75000-90000	19	04	02	02	02	06	03
6.	Rs.90000-120000	12	03	04	02	01	01	01
	Total	255 (100%)	81 (31.76)	56 (21.96)	38 (14.90)	32 (12.54)	26 (10.19)	22 (8.62)

Source: Field data

($\chi^2 = 22.24$ P= 0.327)

- Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total. (Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, it is found that there is no association between their income and influencing reference groups while making a purchasing decision, and hence, the hypothesis 4 'there is no association between income level of the respondents and reference group' is accepted).

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR OCCUPATION AND INFLUENCING CULTURAL FACTORS WHILE MAKING A PURCHASE DECISION

Sl. No.	Occupation	Number of respondents	No. of respondents influenced by			
			Values	Beliefs	Customs and practices	Others
1.	Govt. employees	12	03	05	02	02
2.	Pvt. employees	65	08	18	12	27
3.	Agricultural labour	112	14	25	17	56
4.	Cultivators	16	03	05	05	03
5.	Business men	20	03	08	03	06
6.	Others	30	06	04	09	11
	Total	255 (100%)	37 (14.50)	65 (25.49)	46 (18.03)	107 (41.96)

Source: Field data

($\chi^2 = 15.08$ P= 0.2369)

*Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total.

(There is no association between occupation and their influencing cultural factors while making a purchasing decision, and hence, the hypothesis 11 'there is no association between the occupation of the respondents and cultural factors while making purchase decision' is accepted)

It may be deduced that, most of the respondents i.e., 107 respondents (41.96%) irrespective of their profession gave priority to 'others', 65 respondents (25.49%) to 'beliefs', 46 respondents to (18.03%) 'customs and practices', and lastly 37 respondents to (14.50%) 'values' as their influencing cultural factors.

TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS AS PER THEIR AGE AND INFLUENCING SUB-CULTURAL FACTORS WHILE MAKING A PURCHASE DECISION

Sl. No.	Age	Number of respondents	No. of respondents influenced by				
			Religious factors	Racial factors	Geographical factors	National factors	Other factors
1.	15-25 years	33	06	09	02	04	12
2.	25-35 years	102	31	23	10	03	36
3.	35-45 years	74	29	15	06	02	22
4.	45-55 years	32	12	09	04	01	06
5.	55 years and above	14	04	03	02	02	03
	Total	255 (100%)	82 (32.15)	59 (23.13)	24 (9.41)	12 (4.70)	78 (30.58)

Source: Field data

($\chi^2 = 8.354$ P = 0.498)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total.

(Since the χ^2 value is greater than the table value it found that there is no significant association between the two variables, and hence, the hypothesis 23 'there is no association between age and sub-cultural factors' is accepted)

It is clear from the analysis that the preference was given to 'religion', 78 respondents (30.58%) to 'others', 59 respondents (23.13%) to 'racial factors' 24 respondents (9.41%) to 'geographical factors' and the remaining 12 respondents (4.70%) to 'national' factors.

Table: 4 shows, on the whole, 91 respondents (35.68%) gave priority to 'father', 57 respondents (22.35%) cited 'mother', 48 respondents (18.82%) 'both' (father and mother), 34 respondents (13.33%) 'children', 18 respondents (7.05%) 'all' and the rest 06 respondents (2.35%) referred 'others' (i.e., relatives, strangers, neighbors, etc.,) as their reference groups.

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR FAMILY SIZE AND INFLUENCING MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY WHILE MAKING A PURCHASE DECISION

Sl. No.	Family size	Number of respondents	No. of respondents influenced by					
			Father	Mother	Both	Children	Others	All
1.	Two	18	10	06	02	-	-	-
2.	Three	27	09	08	06	03	-	01
3.	Four	46	14	11	09	07	01	03
4.	Five	73	28	18	12	08	-	07
5.	Six	48	19	08	10	07	01	03
6.	Seven	25	06	03	04	06	02	04
7.	Eight	10	03	02	02	02	01	-
8.	Nine and above	08	02	01	03	01	01	-
	Total	255 (100%)	91 (35.68)	57 (22.35)	48 (18.82)	34 (13.33)	06 (2.35)	18 (7.05)

Source: Field data

($\chi^2 = 9.959$ P = 0.8222)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total.

(There is no association between family size and their influencing family members during purchase decision, and hence, the hypothesis 24 'there is no association between the family size and influencing family members during the purchase decision' is accepted)

TABLE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR FAMILY CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE PER ANNUM AND INFLUENCING SOCIAL CLASS FACTORS WHILE MAKING A PURCHASE DECISION

Sl. No.	Family consumption expenditure (p.a)	Number of respondents	No. of respondents influenced by				
			Income	Occupation	Asset value	Literacy level	Others
1.	Below Rs.20000	15	06	01	03	02	03
2.	Rs.20000-30000	74	22	12	18	06	16
3.	Rs.30000-40000	72	25	13	10	05	19
4.	Rs.40000-50000	50	13	05	15	07	10
5.	Rs.50000-60000	26	05	03	08	04	06
6.	Rs.60000 and above	18	06	03	04	02	03
	Total	255 (100%)	77 (30.19)	37 (14.50)	58 (22.74)	26 (10.19)	57 (22.37)

Source: Field data

($\chi^2 = 11.108$ P = 0.802)

1) Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to total.(There is no association between family expenditure and their influencing social class factors during the purchase decision, and hence, the hypothesis 35 'there is no association between the family's consumption expenditure and social class factors is accepted)

It may be seen that the most of the respondents took sides in favor of 'income' as their influencing factor covering 30.19%, while 58 respondents (22.74%) preferred 'asset value', 57 respondents (22.37%) 'others', 37 respondents (14.50%) 'occupation' and only 26 respondents (10.19%) 'literacy level'.

TABLE 6: VEBLENIAN SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS AND THEIR ASSOCIATION WHILE MAKING A PURCHASE DECISION

Sl. No	Veblenian factors	Initials	Communalities
1	Reference group	1.000	0.894
2	Culture	1.000	0.906
3.	Sub-culture	1.000	0.936
4.	Family	1.000	0.903
5	Social class	1.000	0.943

Sources: Field data

Extraction method: Principal component analysis.

The five Veblenian socio-cultural factors include 'reference group', 'culture', 'sub-culture', 'family', and 'social class', with high communalities of 0.894, 0.906, 0.936, 0.903, and 0.943 respectively. This indicates that the factors have high degree of association among themselves. It may be concluded that the consumers who were influenced by any of these factors were also influenced more or less by the remaining factors.

TABLE 7: VEBLENIAN SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS AND THEIR RELATIVE IMPORTANCE IN THE PURCHASE DECISION

Sl. No	Veblenian factors	Total	% of explained variance	% of Cumulative variance
1.	Income level	5.341	79.296	76.296
2.	Reference group	1.046	14.942	91.238
3.	Culture	0.276	3.943	95.180
4.	Sub-culture	0.122	1.399	98.329
5.	Family	9.795E-02	1.399	98.329
6.	Social class	6.623E-02	0.946	99.276
7.	V.B. factors	5.071E-02	0.724	100.00

Sources: Field data

Extraction method: Principal component analysis.

From the table it is clear that 'income level' has high relative importance of 79.296% variance out of 7 variables of the underlying factors. It is the most influencing factor while making a purchase decision, followed by culture, sub-culture, family, social class and V.B. factors with 14.94%, 3.94%, 1.40%, 1.40%, 0.946% and

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Association between income and reference groups of the respondents

FINDING

Based on the income, the influencing reference groups of low-income consumers kept on changing. But the overall observation shows that 'family' (31.76%), 'friends' (21.96%) and 'co-workers' (14.9%) were the main influencing factors while making a purchase decision.

REASON

Irrespective of their income level, the low-income consumers of scheduled castes gave priority to the suggestions of the 'family members' and 'others' in making a purchasing decision.

SUGGESTION

There are different levels of income among low-income consumers from scheduled castes. So, the marketers should take into consideration the opinion of 'family', and 'friends' for selling the goods and services.

2. Distribution of respondents according to their occupation and influencing cultural factors while making a purchase decision

FINDING

There was difference in the type of influencing cultural factors of agricultural labourers and private employees when compared to that of cultivators and business people. The agricultural laborers 56, 25, 17, 14 preferred 'others', 'beliefs', 'customs and practices' and 'values' consecutively. while the cultivators 5, 5, 3, 3 preferred 'customs and practices', 'beliefs', 'values' and 'other factors' in that order. With that, it is clear that based on their occupation their influencing factor is also changing.

REASON

Low-income people of agricultural laborers and private employees preferred 'others' like the family, food, dress, and health. So it affected the overall response of the total respondents.

SUGGESTION

People who were good by their profession preferred 'customs and practices', 'beliefs' and 'values'. But those who were low by their profession mostly preferred 'others' like their necessities that were related to their better lively-hood. So, it is suggested the producers and marketers concentrate on the low profession respondents as they influence the remaining people's responses of the scheduled castes category.

3. Distribution of respondents as per their age and influencing sub-cultural factors while making a purchase decision

FINDING

In the distribution of respondents as per their age table, most of the respondents chose 'religious factors' (32.15%), followed by 'other factors' (3.58%), 'racial factors' (23.13%), 'geographical factors' (9.41%), and 'national factors' (4.70%) as the most influencing factors during the purchase decision. In the 25-35 years age group, respondents mostly preferred 'others', 'religious' and 'racial' factors. While the respondents of 45 years age gave priority to 'religious', 'racial' and 'other' factors.

REASON

Since the youth and adults have preference to local and regional changes, and the elders had faith in religious and racial factors, they responded accordingly.

SUGGESTION

Marketers should keep in view the responses of the people especially of the age group of 25-35 years since they influence the remaining age group.

4. Distribution of respondents according to their family size and influencing members of the family while making a purchase decision.

FINDING

It is found, irrespective of the family size, the 'father' (35.68%) in the family were the main influencing factors followed by 'mother' (22.35%) while making a purchase decision. But according to their family size their order of priority in respect of influencing factors while making a decision in the family was changing. However, both wife and husband, and all had the joint decision making to the tune of 7% and 19% respectively.

REASON

Since, families having five and less than five members were large in number in the scheduled castes category, their behaviour affected the responses of the remaining sample.

SUGGESTION

It is suggested the producers and marketers know the standpoints of male (husband) female (wife) and both together in respective of their needs, tastes and preferences.

5. Distribution of respondents according to their family consumption expenditure per annum and influencing social factors

FINDING

Based on 'asset value' their order of priority was changing. But, most of the respondents gave priority to 'income' (30.19%), 'asset value' (22.74%) and 'other' (22.37%) etc., as their main influencing factors while making a purchase decision.

REASON

As scheduled caste's people are economical, they exhaust based on their income and other sources.

SUGGESTION

It is suggested the producers and marketers take into account the opinions of the people whose consumption expenditure is between Rs. 20000-40000 as they are large in number in the scheduled caste's category.

6. *Veblenian socio-cultural factors and their association while making a purchase decision*

FINDING

It is found that the social class and sub-culture have a very close association among themselves over other factors. However, all the factors had high degree of association among them.

REASON

As most of them belonged to the least income consumers, they did not prefer factors other than 'income' while making a purchase decision.

SUGGESTION

It is suggested the producers and marketers consider the cultural, sub-cultural factors along with the social class of the people while producing and marketing the goods and services.

7. *Veblenian socio-cultural factors and their relative importance in their purchase decision*

FINDING

It is found that the 'income level' of the low-income consumers influenced their purchase decision. But among the Veblenian Socio-cultural factors; 'social class' and 'sub-culture' were the mostly influencing factors when compared to 'reference groups', 'culture' and 'family'. Hence, it is clear that the consumers who were being influenced by any one of the mentioned factors were also influenced more or less by the remaining factors.

REASON

As most of the scheduled caste consumers were low- income people, factors other than income did not influence them considerably.

SUGGESTION

In order to capture the new markets it is suggested the producers and marketers produce and market the goods and services to them based on their preference for 'income level'.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is successful to the extent of some limitations like it is limited to consumer behavior of scheduled castes in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh only. Hence, it may not be generalized for other castes existing in other areas of Andhra Pradesh and other states in India. The present study could cover only on ten families of Putlampalli Harijanawada of Kadapa district for staying with them for 9 to 12 months to observe closely their culture and consumer behavior. The scope of the present study is structured around integrated model, combining the components of Veblenian's socio-psychological model and ethnographic method and is extended to the study of the cultural, social, psychological and economic factors that influence the consumer behavior of selected low-income buyers from scheduled castes in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The same ethnographic research method can be utilized for conducting the study about the consumer behavior of various income groups from various races, religions, races, and tribes by treating them as distinctive ethnic groups existing in Indian market for various products and services offered by marketers.

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