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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	A STUDY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF BI SOLUTIONS AT SELECTED BRANCHES OF BANKS IN RAJASTHAN <i>DR. AZIMUDDIN KHAN</i>	1
2.	ROLE OF WOMEN IN IT: TODAY & TOMORROW <i>DR. KIRAN ARORA</i>	5
3.	POWERS LANGUAGES AND TEACHERS FORGETFULNESS <i>DR. MIGUEL ALBERTO GONZÁLEZ GONZÁLEZ</i>	7
4.	AN ANALYSIS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MNREGA IN DISTRICT MANDI OF HIMACHAL PRADESH <i>SANJAY KUMAR & DR. SHYAM LAL KAUSHAL</i>	11
5.	A DETAILED STUDY ON INDIAN CHILD LABOUR PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS <i>DR. ALLA.JAGADEESH BABU</i>	16
6.	OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG SOFTWARE EMPLOYEES: ROLE OF CORPORATE COMPANIES <i>NAGARAJ NAIK. M & DR. KODANDARAMA.</i>	22
7.	PERFORMANCE OF REGIONAL RURAL BANKS: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ANDHRA PRADESH GRAMEENA VIKAS BANK, ANDHRA PRAGATHI GRAMEENA BANK AND DENA GUJARAT GRAMIN BANK <i>DR. S. SELVAKUMAR & S. PAVITHRA</i>	26
8.	AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF HEALTHCARE SPENDING IN INDIA: EVIDENCES FROM MAHARASHTRA AND BIHAR <i>UPANANDA PANI & PRAVIN GANGADHAR JADHAV</i>	31
9.	CUSTOMER PERCEPTION IN INDIAN RETAIL INDUSTRY <i>MANOJ KUMAR SINGH</i>	42
10.	CONSUMER AWARENESS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT: A CASE STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO EAST DISTRICT OF SIKKIM <i>SANJAYA KUMAR SUBBA</i>	45
11.	A STUDY ON JOB SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYEES OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN JAGDALPUR <i>DR. ARUNA PILLAY</i>	49
12.	IMPACT OF BRAND IMAGE ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS <i>S. KALPANA & HEMAVATHY RAMASUBBIAN</i>	53
13.	BPO INDUSTRY IN INDIA: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES <i>DR. SHRUTI GUPTA</i>	56
14.	DECODING THE 'STARBUCKS' FRENZY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH CAFÉ COFFEE DAY <i>KHUSHBOO GUPTA</i>	59
15.	A STUDY ON HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE MEASURES IN SIMPSON & CO. LTD, CHENNAI <i>RAJANI KUMARI & DR.R.ALAMELU</i>	63
16.	IMPACT OF SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS <i>BHOOMI PATEL</i>	66
17.	EMPOWERING WOMEN AT PANCHAYAT LEVELS THROUGH RESERVATION & EDUCATION: A SPECIAL STUDY IN THE SAMASTIPUR DISTRICT OF BIHAR, INDIA <i>DR. SWETA</i>	77
18.	EFFECTIVENESS OF FORENSIC ACCOUNTING IN THE DETECTION AND PREVENTION OF FRAUD IN NIGERIA <i>ABU SEINI ODUDU & YUSUF MOHAMMED ALIYU</i>	80
19.	APPLICATION OF TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM) TOOLS TO SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF MOMBASA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL <i>RIUNGU, IRENE KARIMI</i>	86
20.	STUDY ON TURMERIC PRODUCTION AND GROWTH IN ERODE DISTRICT <i>M.ANAND SHANKAR RAJA & SHENBAGAM KANNAPPAN</i>	94
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER	98

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CUSTOMER PERCEPTION IN INDIAN RETAIL INDUSTRY**MANOJ KUMAR SINGH****ASST. PROFESSOR****L.N.MISHRA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT****MUZAFFARPUR****ABSTRACT**

Perception is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of the environment by organizing and interpreting sensory information. The same stimulus (A stimulus is any unit of input to any of the senses) may be perceived differently by different set of customers based on their unique personal and situational context. Hence, the indifferent service offered at any retail stores may be perceived positively by a certain set of customers due to the opportunity it provides them to look up the product at leisure. However, another set of customers may perceive it negatively. In India traditionally, the retail industry comprised of large, medium and small grocery stores and drug stores which could be categorized as unorganized retailing. India's large youth population is driving the consumerism trend in country. Organized retail business in India has entered in 1990s but become more popular after 2002 onwards and organized retail stores become the part of middle class family from 2006 onwards. The customers perceive these two retail sectors in different manners. The given research paper studies factors affecting the customer perception in retail industry and the customer perception in organized and unorganized retail sector. The paper also tries to compare the customer perception in organized and unorganized retail sector.

KEYWORDS

Customer perception, Organized Retail industry, Unorganized Retail Industry.

MEANING OF PERCEPTION

 Perception (from the Latin perceptio, percipio) is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of the environment by organizing and interpreting sensory information. All perception involves signals in the nervous system, which in turn result from physical stimulation of the sense organs. For example, vision involves light striking the retinas of the eyes, smell is mediated by odor molecules and hearing involves pressure waves. Perception is not the passive receipt of these signals, but can be shaped by learning, memory and expectation. Perception involves these "top-down" effects as well as the "bottom-up" process of processing sensory input. The process of perception begins with an object in the real world, termed the distal stimulus or distal object. Stimuli are not necessarily translated into a percept and rarely does a single stimulus translate into a percept. An ambiguous stimulus may be translated into multiple percepts, experienced randomly, one at a time, in what is called "multistable perception". And the same stimuli, or absence of them, may result in different percepts depending on subject's culture and previous experiences. Ambiguous figures demonstrate that a single stimulus can result in more than one percept.

MEANING OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTION

As Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting information inputs to produce meaning. Recognition, selection, organization, and interpretation of particular stimulus are a highly individual process subject to individual needs, values, and expectations. A stimulus is any unit of input to any of the senses. The same stimulus may be perceived differently by different set of customers based on their unique personal and situational context. Hence, the indifferent service offered at any retail stores may be perceived positively by a certain set of customers due to the opportunity it provides them to look up the product at leisure. However, another set of customers may perceive it negatively, assuming it to be a reflection of the lack of interest of the store management in the needs of the customer. Customers usually seek out the favourable information on the products which are compatible with their needs, values and expectation and try to avoid unpleasant information. For example: Indian consumer initially perceived Mc Donald's outlets as costly and were not well aware of its product offerings. To overcome this perception among prospective consumers, Mc Donald's management introduced low cost deserts, products likewise ice-cream for ten rupees, their some special products for rupees twenty only. Demographic variables also affect the customer view about the retailer by classifying the customers into groups whose purchasing behaviour are similar. It is very important to consider the image of the retailer in customer view as an individual and in context to its competitor. Customers make these images based on their experiences gathered over the time, and based on advertising sources and visits to the store. Retailers try to position themselves in the marketplace; by tailoring their offering to the customers they wish to target. Retailers can make strong position of theirs into the market through:

- The type of product sold
- the store format
- the marketing system adopted

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

S.P. Thenmozhi Raja, Dr. D. Dhanapal & Dr. P. Sathyapriya(2011) explained that the most critical challenge for a business is the improvement of service and product quality. They also explained that perception of retail service quality varies across different cities, the retailers can meet the customer expectations based on the factors drive them.

Sharif Menon(2011) explained that brand identities were designed to reassure a public anxious about the whole concept of factory produced goods. Brands have transformed the process of marketing into one of perception building, so, image is now everything. Consumers make buying decisions based around the perception of the brand, rather than the reality of the product. Perception is a fragile thing. India is lucky to have international brands, but the Indian consumer is very choosy in selecting the brands and especially in the consumable sector. The research brings out that importance of taste is one the important factor for the success of a brand.

Dr. Joshi Sandhya (2011) explained that the surest path to a strong business bottom line is assuring that customers receive the highest appropriate quality of service across multiple applications and delivery mechanisms. Isolating and resolving technical problems across a complex telecom infrastructure, and evaluating them in the context of the customer experience is a difficult task. Customers make their purchasing and defection decisions on the basis of the perceived value of the service package being offered, rather than simply their current levels of satisfaction. The researcher inferred that customer's perception of service quality and customer satisfaction differs across service providers. Researcher also found that customers want personalized customer care services, so the organization should give emphasis on personalized customer care services.

Fulbag Singh and Davinder Kaur (2011), explained that an organization can not survive in the long run if its customers are not satisfied. Therefore, it is the utmost duty of an organization to safeguard his interest and meet his expectations with the product/service offered. Customer perception of service quality is concerned with the judgment and attitude of the customer towards quality of the service after availing the same and in turn this perception decides whether the service has provided more than what he expected then he will be satisfied and if he perceives it to be less than his expectation then he will be dissatisfied. Therefore, customer satisfaction is the summation of customer's all expressions of service quality and depends upon his own perception and expectations. In their research, they tried to analyze and compare the customer perception of banking services in rural and urban branches. They found that employees'

behavior and skills, service time, availability of diversified products & skilled personnel, tangibles, cost & return and technology & promotion are the various factors which influence the customer perception of service quality in banks.

Rebecca W. Hamilton, Rebecca K. Ratner and Debora V. Thompson (2010), explains how do consumers decide whether to buy a durable good, and how much they are willing to pay for it? They conclude that relative usage frequency is an important determinant of consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. They also conclude that typical frequency for a product is high may actually reduce consumers' interest in acquiring the product. They suggested that consumers' perceptions of a product's value are, therefore, a function not only of how often they will use the product themselves but also of whether they believe this is relatively high or low compared to other people.

K.C. Mittal and Anupama Parashar (2010) explained that irrespective of area, people prefer grocery stores to be nearby, product assortment is important for grocery. Ambience of the grocery stores has been perceived differently by people of different areas and prices are equally important for all grocery. Perception and preference towards importance of service was also different across different areas. In the given study, no special is given to the customer perception towards retail stores.

Dr. Chandan A. Chavadi and Shilpa S. Koktanur (2010), tried to find out the various factors driving customers towards shopping malls and consumer buying response for promotional tools. The researcher has found four major factors that drive the customers towards the shopping malls. Those major factors are product mix, ambience, services and promotional strategies. Customers consider fast billing, parking facility and long hours of operations as prime services.

Vij Sanket and Roy H.J. Ghosh (2009) explained that industries as a whole deal with the consumer demand and expectation with regard to quality of service, and quality of goods being sold. As customer is more knowledgeable, so companies must be faster, more agile, and more creative than a few years ago. To keep customers in today's competitive environment, insurance companies are increasing the depth of relationship through implementation of customer relationship management programs. The concept of CRM, when seen in the context of eBusiness, it translates into eCRM. He found that life insurance companies of India were providing the quality eCRM services to their policyholders and all expectation of the policyholders regarding the eCRM were met by the selected life insurance companies of India. He concluded that for enhanced customer satisfaction and better services quality, the customer-centric delivery mechanism of insurance services supported by eCRM technologies played a significant role in the customer delight movement. He also added that employee's positive frame of mind and respect of their customers would delight the customers and assist the service providers in customer value creation in life insurance sector of India.

Hazra Sandip Ghosh & Srivastava Dr. Kailash B.L. (2010), service quality has become vital for service firms to pay attention due to increased competition. Therefore, firms are using service enhancement and are developing a range of techniques to measure service quality improvement. The competition between private and public sector has resulted in an increased need for service providers to identify the gaps in the market in order to improve service provisions to retain customers. Satisfactory service quality is an indispensable competitive strategy. Thus, it is important to explore the perception of service quality and its relationship with customer satisfaction, loyalty and commitment. The researcher concluded that customer value for four dimensions of perceived service quality i.e. assurance-empathy, tangibles, security and reliability. All the dimensions of service quality tend to have a strong impact on customer satisfaction depending on the quality performance.

RETAILING

Retail comes from the French word *retailier* which refers to "cutting off, clip and divide" in terms of tailoring (1365). It first was recorded as a noun with the meaning of a "sale in small quantities" in 1433 (French). Its literal meaning for retail was to "cut off, shred, paring". Like the French, the word retail in both Dutch and German (*detailhandel* and *Einzelhandel* respectively) also refer to sale of small quantities or items. Retailing consists of the sale of goods or merchandise, from a fixed location such as a department store or kiosk, in small or individual lots for direct consumption by the purchaser. It has been started from religious fairs which used to be held at some religious places and on some religious occasion, but with the emergence of high profits in selling the overproduced production, then it become a business to earn a livelihood. Earlier, people use to wander here and there for their but when they find difficulty in it they started the business as shops known as retail shops. As an when transportation and communication become faster and reliable i.e. up to the end of 19th century, those retail chains became much bigger and more widespread. Many of these businesses become more structured and formalized, leading to the retail chains as we see today. Archaeological findings reveal that shops in ancient Rome were much like small shops as today the retail shops are. But the modern organized retailing has been started in America in the 20th century. Many American retailing institutions originated after 1850. After 1850, department stores became important. For example, Richs was established in Atlanta in 1867 by four Hungarian immigrants.

INDIAN RETAIL INDUSTRY

Traditionally, the retail industry in India comprised of large, medium and small grocery stores and drug stores which could be categorized as unorganized retailing. Most of the organized retailing in India had recently started and was mainly concentrated in metropolitan cities. India is called a nation of shop-keepers but in the recent past time organized retail business has entered into Indian retail market. India's large youth population is driving the consumerism trend in country. Organized retail business in India has entered in 1990s but become more popular after 2002 onwards and organized retail stores become the part of middle class family from 2006 onwards. According to India retail report, 2009, in India, organized retail business has a share of 5.6% of the total retailing in India.

TABLE 1: SHARE OF ORGANIZED RETAIL BUSINESS IN INDIA

Year	% of organized retail share
1999	0.7
2002	1.8%
2005	3.5%
2007	5%
2009	5.6%

Source: KSA Technopak research surveys

The trend of the report is after every three year The A.T. Kearney Global Retail Development Index (GRDI)[™] ranks the top 30 emerging countries for retail development and identifies windows of opportunity for global retailers to invest in developing markets. The GRDI is unique because it doesn't just identify which markets are bigger or richer, but rather which markets are hotter and bursting with opportunity. The GRDI helps retailers prioritize their global development strategies by ranking the retail expansion attractiveness of emerging countries based on a set of 25 variables including economic and political risk, retail market attractiveness, retail saturation levels, and modern retailing sales area and sales growth. The GRDI focuses on opportunities for mass merchant and food retailers, which are typically the bellwether for modern retailing concepts in a country.

TABLE 2: A.T. KEARNEY GLOBAL RETAIL DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Country	2011 Rank	2010 Rank	Rank 2009
Brazil	1	5	8
Uruguay	2	8	---
Chile	3	6	7
India	4	3	1
Kuwait	5	2	---
China	6	1	3
Saudi Arab	7	4	5
Peru	8	9	18
U.A.E.	9	7	4
Turkey	10	18	20

Source: A T Kerney

CONCLUSION

Perception is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of the environment by organizing and interpreting sensory information. The same stimulus (A stimulus is any unit of input to any of the senses) may be perceived differently by different set of customers based on their unique personal and situational context. Hence, the indifferent service offered at any retail stores may be perceived positively by a certain set of customers due to the opportunity it provides them to look up the product at leisure. However, another set of customers may perceive it negatively. In India traditionally, the retail industry comprised of large, medium and small grocery stores and drug stores which could be categorized as unorganized retailing. India's large youth population is driving the consumerism trend in country. Organized retail business in India has entered in 1990s but become more popular after 2002 onwards and organized retail stores become the part of middle class family from 2006 onwards. The customers perceive these two retail sectors in different manners.

SUGGESTION

It is suggested to organised retail sector to reach to the customer home place for their daily and perishable products with the availability of goods demanded by them so as to be more successful. As customer perceive the organised retail sector as the better option but these drawbacks are not letting the organised retail sector to be catering the maximum share of unorganised retail stores in India.

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