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# RETAIL STORE SELECTION CRITERIA USED BY CUSTOMERS IN DELHI-NCR: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RETAILERS

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to identify factors that affect store choice behavior of customers for high involvement electronic durable goods and the possible implications for organized Indian retailers. An exploratory (empirical) research, based on questionnaire survey research design, was conducted for identification of factors. Questionnaire design was done through exploratory (secondary) research. Based on attitude of customers towards study variables, factor analysis suggested that customers consider the factors of price & related information, convenience of location & drivability to the store, in-store service & product availability, information sources for product and store, exclusive stores of international brands, information of credit facility in newspapers, information of product features, benefits & price, purchase occasion, and e-commerce, as important. The analysis also suggests that budget shoppers prefer national brands and rely on word-of-mouth communication.*

## KEYWORDS

Retail store selection criteria, CDP in high involvement purchase, store design factors, store choice behavior, format choice.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of organized retailing is new to Indian retail market, barely 7% of the retail being organized (AT Kearney, 2011). Therefore the organized retail is in infancy stage in India. Research in the area of store choice behavior for high involvement goods (costly electronic items) is limited. An empirical study carried out by Sinha and Banerjee (2004) identified factors that influenced store choice of consumers. Although convenience and merchandise were the two most important reasons for choosing a store, the choice criteria varied across product categories. Convenience was indicated by consumers as the most important reason in the choice of groceries and fruit outlets, chemists and lifestyle items while merchandise was indicated as the most important in durables, books and apparel.

It is nobody's guess that convenience is the most important factor of store selection for FMCG products i.e. low Involvement purchase (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). People generally do top-up purchases for their daily needs based on convenience, but for a durable electronic good like a high end LED television set, a laptop or a high end mobile phone, the purchase is high involvement one. The customer is willing to go extra mile for purchasing the item. As perceived risk is high, this type of purchase falls in high involvement purchase (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). The consumer should undergo the process depicted by the Consumer Decision Process (CDP) Model of Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995). As per Henry Assael's model this kind of purchase is complex buying or Dissonance reducing buying decision (Assael, 1989).

As the concept of organized retail is new in India, the knowledge base for consumer orientation is limited. Few organized retailers are venturing in retailing of high-tech consumer durables like Next (Videocon Group), E-Zone & Electronics Bazaar (Future Group), Reliance Digital, Viveks Ltd & Tata Croma. Croma receives technical and strategic sourcing support from Woolworths India, a subsidiary of Woolworths, an Australian retail giant. But the Australian partner cannot give consumer insight for Indian consumer. That knowledge has to be acquired by the retailer itself. This research is an attempt to fill the knowledge gap in this field. The empirical study focuses on identification of the factors that are important to Indian customers while making store choice for high involvement purchase of electronic items and suggesting managerial implications to the organized retailer.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Consumer Decision Process

A rational approach to consumer decision-making refers to the careful weighing and evaluation of utilization or functional product attributes to arrive at a satisfactory decision (Solomon, 1996; Engel et al, 1995). Rational goals are based on economic or objective criteria such as price, size and/or capacity (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). Howard developed the first consumer decision-model in 1963 (Du Plessis, Rousseau, & Blem, 1991). Others include the Nicosia model (1966), Howard and Sheth model (1969), Engel, Kollat and Blackwell models (1968). A concern was that consumer behavior research did not grow from a pure theoretical basis and it is within this context that several theoretical models of consumer decision-making were developed (Du Plessis et al, 1991). These models, labeled the grand models of consumer decision-making (Kassarjian, 1982), tend to portray the process of proceeding through a major purchase decision as a logical problem solving approach (Cherian & Harris, 1990). Furthermore, consumer decision-making is depicted as multi-staged and complex with several factors triggering problem recognition before initiating a sequence of actions to reach an outcome of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Harrel, 1990). Most of the consumer behavior textbooks used as sources of consumer behavior models for study and research purposes, refer to the elements (Harrel, 1990) of the CDP in terms of the traditional five step classification, i.e. the cognitive decision sequence of problem recognition / pre-search stage, information search, alternative evaluation, choice, outcome evaluation (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994; Solomon, 1996; Du Plessis et al, 1991). Some prefer to add one or more additional stages to place importance on certain phenomena/activities such as the inclusion of blocking mechanisms, the disposal of the unconsumed product or its remains (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 1999; Engel et al, 1995; Du Plessis et al, 1991). The classification in terms of various stages of consumer decision-making is typical of the rational approach to consumer decision-making (Punj & Srinivasan, 1992).

### 2.2. Store Choice

Store choice has been a subject of wide research and has been studied from various perspectives. The store choice behavior of shoppers has been found to be quite similar to the brand choice behavior of the consumers, with a difference being the incorporation of the spatial dimension in store choice (Sinha & Banerjee, 2004). Therefore, while brand choice is independent of the location aspect, and is not affected by it, the store choice is very much influenced by location (Fotheringham, 1988). One view, in the store choice literature gives primacy to the store location and believes that the consumers are influenced by the travel costs of shopping (Brown, 1989; Craig, Ghosh & McLafferty 1984) and store location therefore plays an important role in the store choice. A number of studies, have considered, and pointed out the primacy of store location (Arnold, Oum & Tigert, 1983; Freymann, 2002) in store choice. Another view in store choice literature focuses on the store attributes. Price is one of the easily noticeable attributes and considerable work exists (Bell, Ho & Tang, 2001; Freymann, 2002; Arnold, Oum & Tigert, 1983), on how, the price of store offerings, affects the store choice. The role of store atmospherics, store ambience and store environment has also been studied as a part of store attributes. A number of studies (Kotler, 1973; Baker, Grewal & Levy, 1992) have studied these and found important relation with consumer store choice. Then there are studies which look at how store environment cues influence consumers' store choice decision criteria, such as perceived merchandise value and shopping experience (Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002). Store choice, has also been studied, taking the store image (Martineau, 1958) into account and has been found to affect store choice.

Yet another view of store choice, gives more importance to the consumer side, and has looked at the consumer attributes, as well as the situational and tasks associated with shopping. So the store choice has been seen in the context of the risk reduction strategies of the shoppers (Mitchell & Harris, 2005). It has also been found to be dependent on the timing of shopping trips, with consumers visiting smaller local store for short "fill-in" trips and larger store for regular shopping trips (Kahn & Schmittlein, 1989). It has also been shown by Bell and Lattin (1998) that there exists a logical relationship between a household's shopping behavior and store preference.

### 2.3. Format Choice

The literature on format choice is limited in nature and is of more recent origin. The recent interest in store formats is mainly attributed to innovations in the mix that the retailers are coming up with, owing to the competition. A store format has been defined as the mix of variables that retailers use to develop their business strategies and constitute the mix as assortment, price, and transactional convenience and experience (Messinger & Narsimhan, 1997). It has also been defined as a type of retail mix used by a set of retailers (Levy & Weitz, 2002). Different store formats are derived from various combinations of price and service output (Solgaard & Hansen, 2003). Studies have also been conducted on shopper behavior and format choice. In a study of store choice behavior among audio equipment shoppers (Dash et al., 1976) found shoppers having higher levels of pre-purchase information shopped at specialty store, while those with low pre-purchase information purchased at departmental stores. In another study, Bell and Lattin (1998) demonstrated that large basket shoppers preferred EDLP formats, while, small basket shoppers, preferred HiLo stores, similar results were arrived at by Bell, Ho and Tang (2001).

## 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The literature review reveals that very limited research has been carried out of Indian consumer behavior with special reference to purchase of high involvement electronic goods in the purview of organized retailing. In order to fill this gap, this study is designed to identify the factors important for Indian consumers while selecting a retail store for a high involvement electronic good and the relative importance of the factors in making the decision. The results of the empirical analysis would be able to provide a ranking among various identified factors.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Questionnaire Design

Based on literature review, the variables such as information search of item, retail store, price, promotional schemes, information sources, price and promotion offers (Engel, Kollat & Blackwell, 1968), type of retail store (exclusive or multi-brand), preference for brands, store attributes (Kotler, 1973; Baker, Grewal & Levy, 1992; Bell, Ho & Tang, 2001; Freymann, 2002; Arnold, Oum & Tigert, 1983), credit facility, purchase occasion, convenience of shopping, store location, store reach-ability (Fotheringham, 1988; Brown 1989; Craig, Ghosh, & McLafferty 1984), were identified and converted into questions using Likert scale. Before the questionnaire was finalized it was proofread by three marketing academics and five professionals from the retail sector. Thus, the questionnaire was pre-tested and, based on the debriefing of the pre-test respondents; minor changes were made to improve the clarity and visual layout of the questionnaire. Table 1 lists the variables used for building questionnaire.

TABLE 1: VARIABLES USED FOR BUILDING QUESTIONNAIRE

VAR 1	Information gathering about features and benefits of the item and available alternatives
VAR 2	Information gathering about a retail store
VAR 3	Information gathering about the prices of the item
VAR 4	Information gathering about the sales promotions schemes on the item
VAR 5	Use of electronics and appliance magazines as information source
VAR 6	Use of newspaper as information source
VAR 7	Visiting World Wide Web (internet) for accessing various types of information
VAR 8	Reliance on social circle for gathering information
VAR 9	Preference for exclusive brand stores
VAR 10	Market survey for gathering information regarding the item (shopping)
VAR 12	Preference for International Brands (e.g. Sony, Whirlpool or Nokia)
VAR 13	Preference for branded items
VAR 14	Convenience in terms of parking facility
VAR 15	Convenience in terms of retail store proximity to home or office
VAR 16	Importance of retail store location in the market of similar items
VAR 17	Importance of drivability to the store (Traffic condition on way to the store)
VAR 18	Importance of availability of Public transport, for the retail store
VAR 19	Importance of item availability in the store (Touch & Feel)
VAR 20	Preference to online purchase for low risk purchases
VAR 21	Importance of shopping experience in terms of store ambience
VAR 22	Importance of shopping experience in terms of salesperson mannerisms
VAR 23	Importance of shopping experience in terms of assistance in choosing an item
VAR 24	Importance of item demonstration
VAR 25	Importance of salesperson knowledge regarding the item and alternatives
VAR 26	Importance of offer Price
VAR 27	Importance of discount on list price
VAR 28	Importance of exchange Price of the item
VAR 29	Importance of credit facility provided by the retail store
VAR 30	Importance of festivals in deciding purchase timings
VAR 31	Purchasing Occasion. Importance of need in purchase timing

Complete questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix 1.

### 4.2. Data Collection

The questionnaire was then administered to customers having income in the range of Rs 2.4 Lac to Rs 6.0 Lac per annum. To be more specific, the sample included faculty from an education institute, a school, a software firm and office of a power distribution company. Data was collected using a judgment sampling method. The questionnaire was administered through personal contact. Respondents were asked to focus on the purchase process they adopt for purchasing an electronic gadget of substantial price (whatever may be the price range but it had to be substantial according to the perception of the respondent). Total 200 responses were obtained. Out of those 177 were found valid for the purpose of data analysis. The sample size met with the requirements suggested by Naresh Malhotra (2007) that a sample size of 5 to 6 times of number of variables is appropriate for drawing accurate conclusions through factor analysis.



## 5. DATA ANALYSIS

After a sequential and iterative process of factors extractions, checking reliabilities of extracted factors, removing the cross loading items and then factor extraction and rechecking reliabilities, the final solution with 31 variables spread across ten factors was accepted. The value of KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.667 (greater than 0.5). The value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is very large with significance of 0.000 hence the hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix is rejected and therefore the data is suitably correlated for factor analysis (Naresh Malhotra, 2009).

## 6. RESULTS

The final solution with 31 variables spread across ten factors was accepted that explained 63.473% of variance in the data. Extraction Method used in factor analysis is Principal Component Analysis and Rotation Method used is Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Factor analysis result, along with extracted factors is depicted in Table 2. Output of factor analysis can be viewed in Appendix 2.

TABLE 2: FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULT

Factor	Factor Interpretation (% Variance Explained)	Loading	Variable	Variables included in the factor	Extracted Factor
F1	14.147	0.844	VAR27	Importance of discount on list price	Importance of Price & Related Information
		0.814	VAR26	Importance of offer Price	
		0.648	VAR28	Importance of exchange Price of the item	
		0.435	VAR04	Information gathering about the sales promotions schemes on the item	
F2	9.173	0.812	VAR17	Importance of drivability to the store (Traffic condition on way to the store)	Convenience of Location & Drivability to the Store
		0.79	VAR15	Convenience in terms of retail store proximity to home or office	
		0.731	VAR14	Convenience in terms of parking facility	
		0.588	VAR16	Importance of retail store location in the market of similar items	
F3	7.357	0.783	VAR25	Importance of salesperson knowledge regarding the item and alternatives	In-Store Service & Item Availability
		0.728	VAR24	Importance of item demonstration	
		0.633	VAR23	Importance of shopping experience in terms of assistance in choosing an item	
		0.473	VAR22	Importance of shopping experience in terms of salesperson mannerisms	
		0.446	VAR19	Importance of item availability in the store (Touch & Feel)	
F4	7.033	0.719	VAR02	Gathering information regarding a retail store	Information Sources for Item & Store
		0.699	VAR05	Referring electronics and appliance magazines as information source	
		0.546	VAR10	Market survey for gathering information regarding the item (shopping)	
F5	5.237	0.795	VAR11	Preference for International Brands (e.g. Sony, Whirlpool or Nokia)	Exclusive Stores of International Brands
		-0.791	VAR13	Preference for branded items	
		0.565	VAR09	Preference to exclusive brand stores	
F6	4.81	0.679	VAR06	Referring newspaper as information source	Information of Credit Facility in Newspapers
		0.516	VAR29	Importance of credit facility provided by the retail store	
F7	4.343	0.758	VAR01	Gathering information regarding features and benefits of the item and available alternatives	Information Search for Item features, benefits & Price
		0.615	VAR03	Gathering information regarding the prices of the item	
F8	4.198	-0.833	VAR31	Purchasing according to need. Purchases when-ever required	Purchase Occasion
		0.56	VAR30	Importance of festivals in deciding purchase timings	
F9	3.649	-0.621	VAR21	Importance of shopping experience in terms of store ambiance	Budget shoppers prefer National brands and rely on Word-of-Mouth communication
		0.517	VAR12	Preference for National Brands (e.g. Onida, Spice or Weston)	
		0.482	VAR08	Reliance on social circle for gathering information	
		0.415	VAR18	Importance of availability of Public transport, for the retail store	
F10	3.527	0.799	VAR07	Visiting World Wide Web (internet) for accessing various types of information	Option of e-Commerce
		0.535	VAR20	Preference to online purchase for low risk purchases	

## 7. DISCUSSION

The factor which explains largest variance in the data is the most important factor and the importance is accorded in that order. The extracted factors, in order of their importance are listed as follows:

7.1. Importance of Price & Related Information.

- 7.2. Convenience of Location & Drivability to the Store.
- 7.3. In-Store Service & Item Availability.
- 7.4. Information Sources for Item & Store.
- 7.5. Exclusive Stores of International Brands.
- 7.6. Information of Credit Facility in newspapers.
- 7.7. Information Search for Item features, benefits & Price.
- 7.8. Purchase Occasion.
- 7.9. Budget shoppers prefer National brands and rely on word-of-mouth communication.
- 7.10. E-commerce.

## 8. POSSIBLE MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

The possible implications for the retailers either involved in electronics retailing or intending to enter the field are:

### 8.1. Importance of Price & Related Information:

Pricing and related promotional schemes are the most important factor to the consumers.

Price is lesser the better. The customer looks at net financial cost by taking into consideration all promotional schemes, be it price discounts or loyalty bonus or exchange scheme.

### 8.2. Convenience of Location & Drivability to the Store:

Second most important factor is convenience in terms of the following:

8.2.1. Drivability to the store. The store should be located in area that is easily approachable by car and two-wheeler. The location should not be known for traffic jams, a well-known problem in metros.

8.2.2. Store proximity to office or home. The store catchment area is to be decided on this dimension of the factor.

8.2.3. Parking facility should be built in the store design. Be it valet parking or availability of parking space in the compound itself.

8.2.4. Store should be preferably located in market of similar items so that the store gets enquiry flow as it happens to be located in the market and people shopping around visits the store.

### 8.3. In-Store Service & Item Availability

8.3.1. Store - personnel training is very important for imparting proper in-store service. The training should envelope both technical and human skills.

8.3.2. Only those items can be sold which are physically available therefore inventory management is very important. Proper store keeping units should be maintained. Also items cannot be sold merely by talking about it or showing the brochure of the item. It has to be touched and felt by the consumer.

### 8.4. Information Sources for Item & Store

8.4.1. Consumers do look for information of item and store. They refer to electronic magazines and advertisement insertions by the retailer in such magazines would be helpful.

8.4.2. Consumers also conduct market survey for gathering information, so if the store is located in the popular electronics market, comes under scanner of such consumers and hence chances of selection improves.

### 8.5. Exclusive Stores of International Brands

8.5.1. Consumers who prefer international brands prefer exclusive brand stores.

8.5.2. So it would be better to club merchandise according to manufacturer's e.g. Sony World stores can be opened or L.G. Stores. This leads to offering of different items by the manufacturer under one roof rather clubbing similar items together like T.V. of different manufacturers.

### 8.6. Information of Credit Facility in newspapers

Consumers look for information related to credit facility in newspapers so related information should be provided in the newspaper insertions.

### 8.7. Information Search for Item features, benefits & Price

8.7.1. Information about items and their features, advantages and benefits is important to the consumer. It is the activity of the manufacturer to provide the information about the product and create pull for the item. Retailer should keep items of known brands and possibly look for advertising assistance from the manufacturer in terms of allowances and incentives.

8.7.2. Price information along with information of the item features can be advertised in local newspapers and distributing hand-outs in the catchment area of the store is also an option.

### 8.8. Purchase Occasion

Some consumers purchase according to need and some postpone or propone the purchase for festive seasons. It would be therefore suitable to offer promotional schemes, around festive seasons, in the catchment area of the store.

### 8.9. Budget shoppers prefer National brands and rely on Word-of-Mouth communication

Retailer should have separate stores for merchandise of National brands and International brands. It is evident from the analysis that seekers for National brands have:

8.9.1. Preference for availability of Public Transport to the store.

8.9.2. They don't mind no-frill store environment and would be glad if resulting cost cutting is passed over to them, in terms of low rates for the items.

8.9.3. The stores with merchandise of national brands can be shifted to locations where real-estate prices are low and are connected with public transport system. This would result in substantial savings on operational costs and would further result in low prices for ultimate consumer.

8.9.4. They rely on social circle for information gathering so the retailer:

8.9.4.1. Should promote word-of-mouth (WOM) communication for the stores carrying national brand merchandise. In U.S, retailers such as Wal-Mart and Victoria's Secret have demonstrated that advertising can be sharply reduced when word-of-mouth is strong.

8.9.4.2. Negative WOM is usually given high priority and weighs heavily in decision making. So the retailer has to keep customers in good humor otherwise as the clientele gives more weight to WOM, the grievances of dissatisfied customers can prove too costly to handle. The dissatisfied buyers are more motivated to share information than satisfied ones.

8.9.4.3. The retailer should focus on post sale customer satisfaction so that the customer becomes advocate for the retailer.

### 8.10. E-Commerce

8.10.1. People who browse through world- wide-web for information gathering also purchase on-line occasionally.

8.10.2. Retailers who maintain web sites for providing information to the shoppers should also include option of on-line sale in the website.

## 9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

9.1. The survey was conducted for respondents based on judgment sampling. The sample may not be truly representative and the findings may apply to a specific segment of the consumer class i.e. upper middle and middle class segment, though we may say that it constitutes the largest share of the big ticket electronic consumer items.

9.2. The Organized Retailer of consumer electronic goods would certainly like to tap the largest market segment but a retailer might like to tap in niche high-end segment and the factors identified in the study would not apply to them. The high-end customer may not give highest priority to the price and might be looking for other attributes.

9.3. Similarly the study do not apply to lower class of the market, though certain factors like price might still dominate the mindset but it requires a fresh probe.

**10. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

10.1. A similar study for the upper, upper-middle, and lower income segment of the market may be conducted.

10.2. As independent variables (factors) have been identified from the research. Multiple Regression analysis may be conducted to study the effect of independent variables (identified factors) on the predictor variable (Store Sales).

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