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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

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A STUDY ON CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEPARTMENTAL STORES IN COIMBATORE CITY, TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to find out consumer attitude towards Departmental stores a form of organized retail outlet in Coimbatore city. A total of 200 consumers of departmental stores were personally surveyed with a structured questionnaire. These consumers are spread out throughout Coimbatore city. Statistical analysis such as descriptive analysis, Chi square and average percentage score were carried out. The preferences of the consumers clearly indicate their importance of advertisement in influencing their purchase, the additional facilities expected, improvement expected in handling defective goods and many. This paper analyses the attitude of the consumer towards departmental stores. The study was restricted only to Coimbatore city. So the results cannot be generalized. The results may help the management of departmental stores to understand about the factors that influence the attitude of consumers towards departmental stores, so that they can implement the requirement of the consumers and be successful in the emerging retailing environment. The topic is relatively less researched in emerging markets especially where organized retail is still in its early stages.

KEYWORDS

Consumer attitude, factors influencing retailing, formats of Retailing.

INTRODUCTION

Retailing as an occupation came into existence when farmers started producing more food than they required. Trading was an important part of daily life in ancient world. The new retail formats that are now seen in India have their genesis in Europe. Departmental stores started gaining prominence after 1850. As a next phase, the time between 1950- 1970 witnessed the emergence of major players and formats. In the next decade (1970- 1980) the retail Industry witness the emergence of category killers and wholesale club. The 1990's can be termed as times of the Internet. This period also witnessed major internationalization efforts by large retailers. The current decade is witnessing a lot of turbulence in the American retail Industry. The focus has shifted to the emerging economies and retailers are searching for a different business model to succeed in these markets ruled by small retailers. Retailing is one of the fastest growing fields today in India with 40% contribution to GDP. After the IT, India is growing in the field of Retail. According to India Retail Report 2007, organized retail in India has the potential to generate some 2.5 million direct jobs through retail operation. Consumerism is increasing in India moving it to fourth largest economy in respect to the purchasing power with USA, Japan and China leading in order. As per KSA tecnopak's Consumer Outlook 2004 report estimates that the average Indian spend 40% of his monthly salary on food and grocery one of the highest in the world. Food retails sales accounts for close to 63% of total retail sales.

FACTORS FUELING THE GROWTH OF RETAILING IN INDIA ARE

1. Rapid economic growth and urbanization
2. Rising per capita income
3. Younger age group demographics
4. Intensifying demand both in volume as well as variety in urban centers
5. Consumerism on the rise, proliferation of electronic and other means of communication
6. Liberalized trade regimes allowing- free inflow of agro products amongst other consumer goods, besides easier norms for FDI ingress into domestic markets
7. Long history of exploitative practices on part of intermediaries in the agro food supply chain
8. Producers becoming increasingly aware of their importance in the supply chain and getting organized

FORMATS OF RETAILING

1. On the basis of location

The various formats are Chain store format, High-street format, Destination format and Convenience store format.

2. On the basis of ownership

The formats are franchise format, Independent store format, Family store, specialty store, Department store, Supermarket and Emporium.

3. On the basis of size

Superstore, Shopping mall, Shopping centre and Hypermarket

4. On the basis of Price

Discount format, every – day – low price format, Category killer format, Factory outlet format, Warehouse format and Single-price denomination format

5. On the basis of concession

Stop over store format and Kiosk

CONSUMER ATTITUDE

Consumers are individuals with likes and dislikes. When the preponderance of people in a particular group feel one way or another about a product, service, entity, person, place or thing, it is said to be a generalized consumer attitude that could affect the marketing of that person, product or entity in positive or negative ways. Marketers strive to influence consumer attitudes, and understanding the prevailing attitude is the first step to changing it if needed. Attitudes are "mental states used by individuals to structure the way they perceive their environment and guide the way they respond to it" (Aaker, Kumar and Day, 1995; p. 254).

In the present study we are concerned with consumer attitude towards departmental store in Coimbatore city. As attitude is one of the bases for consumer satisfaction the present study is conducted.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Noor Firdoos Jahan¹ et al., discusses responsible trends namely changing consumer groups, changing retail formats, technology and developments, FDI trends, private brands trends and e- tailing trends favorable to the emergence of food and grocery retailing. They have identified large geographic area, real estate infrastructure constraint, supply chain, manpower availability, technology, foreign direct investment, traditional formats as important challenges to be accepted by operators in this sector. They have suggested that the initiative needed to improve food and grocery retailing in India are encouraging FDI, wide range of customer service, new technology adoption and developing skilled staff.

Dabholkar et al² developed Retail Service Quality Model (RSQS). Based on SERVPERF, RSQS included 28-item scale, of which 17 items are from SERVPERF and 11 items are developed by qualitative research. It composes of 5 dimensions, namely (1) Physical Aspects- Retail store appearance and store layout; (2) Reliability- Retailers keep their promises and do the right things; (3) Personal interaction- Retail store personnel are courteous, helpful and inspire confidence in customers; (4) Problem Solving- Retail store personnel are capable to handle returns and exchanges, customers' problems and complaints and (5) Policy- Retail store's policy on merchandise quality, parking, operation hours and credit cards.

Manju Rani Malik³ aimed to explore the components of retail customer satisfaction and also investigate the relationship between each of the retail customer satisfaction components and customers satisfaction level. Product characteristics, Price factor, Physical Aspects, Promotional Schemes and Personal interaction of retail customer satisfaction were studied. The study have identified that location, variety of products and reasonable price are the major motivating factors that influence the customers to visit the retail outlets and emphasis on facilities such as parking, physical aspects, availability of variety of branded and non branded products at reasonable price by the retailer will increase the revenue.

There were numerous studies in the area of consumer satisfaction, Consumer expectations on services, comparative study on consumer satisfaction towards organized retailing and many. So this study analysis the consumer attitude that is the basis for consumer satisfaction, towards one of the existing and growing format among the organized retailing that is departmental stores in Coimbatore city.

Binta Abubakar Val Clulow⁴ investigates the customer rating of importance of several attributes associated with supermarket shopping. The results suggested that since retail format had become very standardized, corporate reputation was rated high and might be a source of sustainable competitive advantage. Accessibility was considered important, as was quality of service, especially the friendliness and efficiency of checkout personnel.

Subhashini Kaul⁵ concluded that consumers satisfied with the store's service quality are most likely to remain loyal. Service quality is being increasingly perceived as a tool to increase value for the consumer; as a means of positioning in a competitive environment to ensure consumer satisfaction, retention and patronage. Despite its strategic importance, Indian retailers did not have an appropriate instrument to measure service quality. This study strategic importance, Indian retailers did not have an appropriate instrument to measure service quality. This study examined the Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) developed in the U.S. for applicability to Indian retail. This scale had been found appropriate in a variety of settings across different countries such as South Africa and Singapore and across a variety of store types such as supermarkets, department stores and hyper stores.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Organized retailing is having its growth phase and FDI might be relaxed in future days. In such a scenario to obtaining maximum market share in this huge competition is possible only by providing product and service according to consumer's expectations. Consumer expectations are based on the attitude he has towards the product or service. Departmental stores are the format of food and groceries organized retail outlet that are existing in Coimbatore from the past till present. So at this point of time to grow further it becomes important to study the consumer attitude towards departmental stores in Coimbatore city.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the awareness of consumers about departmental stores.
2. To study Consumer attitude in terms of ideas, opinion and preference towards departmental stores.
3. To study the Consumer satisfaction towards making purchase at departmental stores.
4. To offer suggestions to the management based on the results of the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature. Total population is consumers of departmental stores in Coimbatore city. Sample size is 200 consumers. Individual respondents, the consumers of kannan departmental stores, selvasing departmental store, Malligai Departmental stores and Kamala stores were the sampling element. These are the four top departmental stores of similar size in Coimbatore city. Simple random sampling technique was used. Since the study includes the primary data, a self designed questionnaire was used for collecting the responses of consumers. In order to find out validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was undertaken before proceeding with the actual survey. Appropriate modifications in content and format of the questionnaire were then incorporated and the questionnaire was finalized. The questionnaire contained questions on the related aspects regarding their demographic and socio- economic background, influencing factors and other related aspects. The questionnaire used is of closed ended type.

TOOLS USED FOR DATA ANALYSIS

a. Descriptive analysis is made for all 43 questions to find out the majority of the favorable response.

b. Chi Square :10 personal factors age, gender, education level, occupational status marital status, monthly income size of the family, frequency of purchase, experience and proximity influence on source of awareness, reason for selection of departmental stores, requirement in changes in the system and attractiveness of sales promotion were studied.

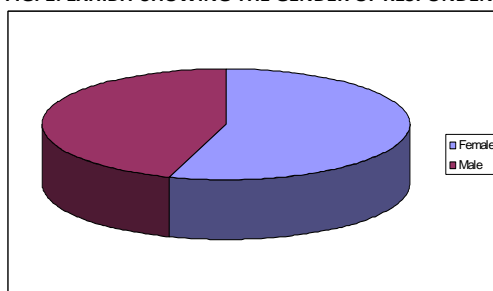
HYPOTHESIS

1. Hypothesis 1: Personal factors have no significant influence on source of awareness of departmental store
2. Hypothesis 2: Personal factors have no significant influence on reason for selection of departmental store
3. Hypothesis 3: Personal factors have no significant influence on requirement of changes in the system.
4. Hypothesis 4: Personal factors have no significant influence on attractiveness of sales promotion used in departmental stores.

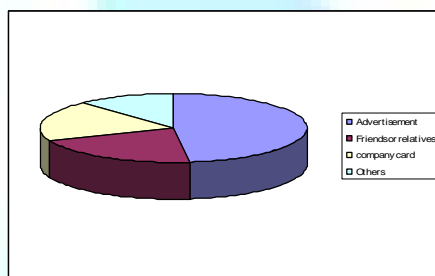
c. Average percentage score analysis was applied to determine the level of opinion or satisfaction or agreeability of different categories of respondents on 15 factors advertisement, extent to influence, level of satisfaction regarding responsiveness of sales calls. Opinion about meeting the expectation, opinion about Consumer care, opinion about responding enquiries, arrangement of products, delivery of products, level of satisfaction about availability of variety, feeling about the shopping environment, satisfaction with sales promotion, level of satisfaction on overall performance, opinion about door delivery, opinion about price and level of satisfaction of service about departmental stores.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**FINDINGS FROM DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS**

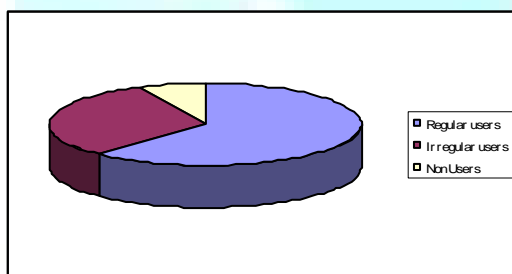
- 55% of the respondent are female and 45% of them are male

FIG. 1: EXHIBIT SHOWING THE GENDER OF RESPONDENT

- 45% of the respondents have professional qualification, 31% college level, 22% school level and 2% of them have no formal education
- 44% of the respondent belong to Salaried, 21% are independent professionals, 20% Agriculturist and 15% business people.
- 73% of respondent are married and 27% are unmarried.
- 30% of respondents have income in the range of Rs25,001 to Rs 30,000, 28% are in the income group Rs 15,001 to Rs 25,000, 27% of respondents are of income less than Rs 15000, 13 % are of the income group Rs. 30,001 to Rs 35, 000 and 2% are of the income group above Rs 35,001.
- 48% of the respondents came to know about the departmental stores through advertisements, 21% are aware through friends and relatives, 19% are aware through other source like company cards, 12 % are aware through others

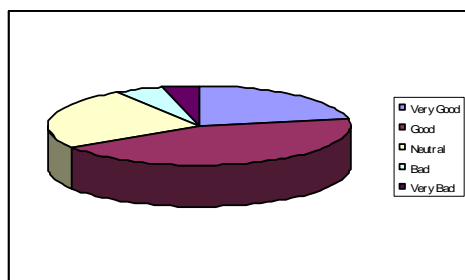
FIG. 2: EXHIBIT SHOWING SOURCE OF AWARENESS OF RESPONDENTS ABOUT THE DEPARTMENTAL STORES

- 47% of respondents family size is 4, 27% of respondents family size is 3, 20% of them are of family size above 4 and 6% up to 2 members.
- 62% of respondents are regular users of e-mails ,31% are irregular users of emails and 7% are non users of emails.

FIG. 3: EXHIBIT SHOWING RESPONDENTS USAGE RATE TO EMAIL FACILITIES

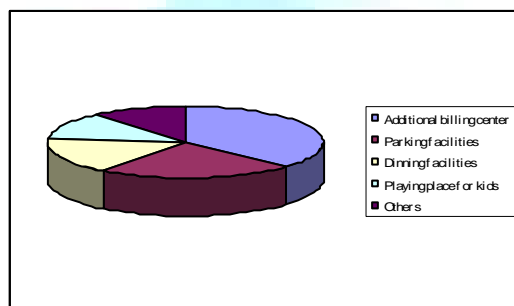
- 64% of them purchase goods on monthly basis, 18% on weekly basis, 12% on fortnightly basis, 5% belong to other category like festival time and 1% purchase on daily basis.
- Out of various selection criteria namely shopping convenience, availability advantage, varieties and gift coupon, majority of respondent's i.e 45% of respondents elected departmental stores on the basis of varieties of product available.
- 89% of respondents feel that advertisements of departmental stores influence the Consumer, while 11% of them feel that the advertisement does not influence the Consumers.
- Majority of respondents are fairly satisfied regarding the responsiveness of departmental stores to their sales calls.
- 80% of the respondents feel that the departmental store meets their expectations, 7% of them feel that the departmental stores do better than their expectation, 7% of them feel that the departmental store are not up to the expectation and 6% of them feel that departmental stores are less than their expectation
- Majority of the respondents feel that the Consumer care of departmental stores is good among the four point scale of very good, good, normal and bad.
- Majority of respondents feel that the sales man response is good among the four point scale of very good, good, normal and bad.
- Majority of the respondents feel that the advertisement of departmental store is good.

FIG. 4: EXHIBIT SHOWING RESPONDENTS' OPINION ABOUT ADVERTISEMENTS OF DEPARTMENTAL STORES



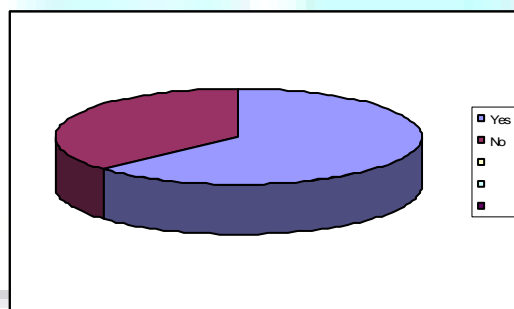
- Majority of respondents feel that the arrangements of goods in departmental store are convenient among the four point scale of very convenient, convenient, inconvenient and not at all convenient.
- 48% of the respondents feel that the delivery of products in departmental store is prompt, 43% feel that the delivery is normal, 6% of them feel that the delivery is very prompt and 3% of respondent feel that the delivery aspect is poor.
- Majority of respondents feel that there is a need for change in existing system
- Majority of respondents expect extra billing facilities during peak days and hours out of the other factors like parking facilities, playing place for kids and dinning facilities.

FIG. 5: EXHIBIT SHOWING CHANGES REQUIRED BY RESPONDENTS



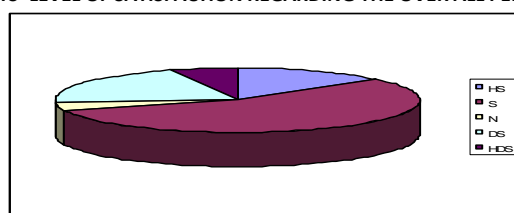
- Majority of respondents feel that the shopping environment in departmental stores is convenient.
- Majority of respondents are satisfied with the packaging of products.
- 52% of respondents are satisfied with sales promotion schemes of departmental stores, 31% are dis-satisfied, 9% of the respondents are highly satisfied and 8% of them are highly dis-satisfied.
- Majority of respondents are attracted towards price offers given by departmental stores
- 63% of respondents have the experience of purchasing defective goods from departmental stores.

FIG. 6: EXHIBIT SHOWING RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF BUYING DEFECTIVE GOODS FROM DEPARTMENTAL STORES



- Majority of respondents are dissatisfied with the procedure of handling defective goods.
- Majority of respondents have used suggestion box for providing their suggestions.
- Majority of respondents are satisfied towards overall performance of departmental stores among the four point scale of Highly satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied and highly Dissatisfied
- Majority of respondents feel that the door delivery system is Satisfactory.
- 36% of respondents are staying at a distance of more than 10Kms from departmental stores, 35% of them are staying at distance of 5 to 10Kms and 29% of them are staying at a distance less than 5Kms.
- Majority of respondents feels the price to be very high out of the four options very high, high, low and very low.
- 56% of the respondents are satisfied, 20% of respondents are dissatisfied, 14% are highly satisfied and 6% are highly dissatisfied and 4% are Neutral with overall performance of departmental stores.

FIG. 7: EXHIBIT SHOWING RESPONDENTS' LEVEL OF SATISFACTION REGARDING THE OVER ALL PERFORMANCE OF DEPARTMENTAL STORES



FINDINGS FROM CHI- SQUARE ANALYSIS

- Out of 10 personal factors considered for study age, gender, education level, monthly income, size of the family, frequency of purchase, experience and proximity alone has significant influence on the source of awareness of departmental store
- Out of 10 personal factors considered for study gender, education level, occupational status, monthly income, frequency of purchase and experience have significant influence on reason for selection of departmental store
- Out of 10 personal factors considered for study age, gender, occupational status, marital status, monthly income, size of the family, frequency of purchase, experience and proximity alone have significant influence on requirement of changes in the system.
- Out of 10 personal factors considered for study age, gender, education level, occupational status, marital status, size of the family experience and proximity alone has significant influence on attractiveness of sales promotion used in departmental stores.

FINDINGS FROM AVERAGE PERCENTAGE SCORE

- Both the young and old age group people have given importance to price first and middle aged respondents have given importance to door delivery system among the fifteen study factors
- Both the male and female respondents have given importance to opinion about price first among the 15 study factors
- Both the just literate and professional educated respondents have given importance to opinion about price first, college level educated people have given importance to opinion about advertisement first among the fifteen study factors
- Both business and professional have given first importance to feeling about shopping environment, agriculturists have given first importance to opinion about door delivery and employed people have given importance first to opinion about respondents enquiry among the fifteen study factors.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Organized retailing in India is surely on the edge for a take off and will provide many opportunities both for existing players as well as new entrants. Major spending on food and increasing usage of out of home food consumption represent a significant opportunity for food retailers and food service companies. To be successful, retail managements must be well informed about the extent to which shop's activities contribute towards the overall as well as different dimensions of service quality and attributes. This requires continual measurement and identification of areas that acts as cues for consumer expectation and satisfaction. For departmental stores a format of organized retailing to succeed there are certain suggestions provided out of the study.

- **ADVERTISEMENT:** The management of departmental stores should select appropriate media for advertisement. If planned e-mail, SMS, social networking sites, Blue tooth technology can be utilized for advertisement. According to the study advertisement influence consumer to great extent so effective advertisement should be designed, developed and implemented in such a way that it is more attractive and also informative.
- **ADDITIONAL FACILITIES:** During peak hours and season time many consumers make their purchase kirana shops due to the inconvenience caused in waiting in cue for billing. So, Additional billing counters need to be provided at week end, season time and peak time. Separate billing counters can be provide for consumers purchasing less than 5 products during the peak time so that it will reduce the length of the cue in the billing centre and also save consumers time.
- **HANDLING COMPLAINTS REGARDING DEFECTIVE GOODS:** Consumer need to be provided with zero defective goods. In exceptional cases the product need to be replaced or cost of the product should be returned as per the request of the consumer. There should be clear procedure for handling defective goods and it must be transparent to the consumers. This will give a positive enforcement on consumer by reducing the risk of defective goods.
- **DATA BANK OF CONSUMERS:** Internet has become a part of many consumers so data bank of consumer can be maintained by collecting the email address. Consumer mobile numbers also can be obtained and group SMS service can be utilized to inform them about the offers. This data bank can be used for getting feedbacks and for inducing CRM activities. If e-mail applications are well planned it will be an effective tool of promotion.

Due to certain limitation the study was conducted to Coimbatore city with sample size of 200 consumers. The study can be conducted for different parts of the state or country with larger sample size will give a larger perspective.

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