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ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE RETAIL SECTOR

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HEAD

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ABSTRACT

In the Indian retailing industry, food is the most dominating sector and is growing at a rate of 9% annually. India retail industry is progressing well and for this to continue retailers as well as the Indian government will have to make a combined effort. The branded food industry is trying to enter the India retail industry and convert Indian consumers to branded food. Since at present 60% of the Indian grocery basket consists of non-branded items. India retail industry is expanding itself most aggressively; as a result, a great demand for real estate is being created. Indian retailers preferred means of expansion is to expand to other regions and to increase the number of their outlets in a city. Retailers follow that Customer is the king and customer is always right to please its customers. India is being looked as one of the most attractive host for retail developments. The development of malls in India has given a new meaning to retailing. Indian customer is exposed to completely new kind of shopping experience. The rising standard of living has opened new avenues for shopping. Hence, the present study focusing on the customers' buying behaviour in Retail Outlet and findings were by primary and secondary sources of data collections.

KEYWORDS

Indian retail industry, consumer behaviour, retail store.

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INTRODUCTION

The retail sector in India is witnessing a huge revamping exercise as traditional markets make way for new formats such as departmental stores, hypermarkets, supermarkets and specialty stores. Western-style malls have begun appearing in metros and second-rung cities alike introducing the Indian consumer to a shopping experience like never before. The sector is at an inflexion point where the growth of organized retailing and growth in the consumption by the Indian population is going to take a higher growth trajectory. The Indian population is witnessing a significant change in its demographics. Organized retail is on all time high in India. The growth is boosted by various factors such as availability of professional practices, media proliferation, various brands which are gaining value thereby enhancing industry growth, availability of various funding options, regulations like VAT implementation to make processes simple, sea change in demographics of country and international exposure. The retail sector is one of the fastest growing ones in India, catering to the world's second largest consumer market. Consumer view in India is changing and the retailers need support to formulate their strategies to give added value to the consumers. So, each retailer needs to provide the better retail market place. This mainly involves identifying the key drivers of growth, the consumer profile and expectations. It also means evaluating the nature of competition and challenges in the market 2 place. All these have led the Indian organized retail sector to dedicate more attention to an analysis of the consumer behaviour in order to meet the target market needs more effectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Schiffman and Kanuk (2007)¹ stated that "consumer behaviour is the behaviour that the customers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, disposing of products and services that they expect which will satisfy their needs". According to India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF, 2012)³ report the retail sector accounts for 22% of India's GDP and contributes to 8% of total employment. According to the National Accounts Statistics of India (2006)⁴ "the unorganized sector" includes units whose activity is not regulated by statute or legal provision, and or those which do not maintain regular accounts.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In India the scope of retailing has increased in the last few years, offering ample amount of opportunities to Indian business. Due to large consumer base India provides an opportunity for their retailers all over the world to sell their products in India. In any business, change is the only permanent thing. Consumers prefer modern retail stores over the conventional and traditional stores. This has resulted in a major change in consumer behaviour.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Present retail market environment in India has become increased competition and policy decision to allow foreign direct investors. This requires the retailers to formulate strategies to be competitive to attract and retain customers. This requires the study of consumers' behaviour. Coimbatore region is having largest growth of organized retail stores particularly chain departmental stores. As Coimbatore region comprises of mixed profile consumers who are moving to modern shopping pattern this study has been undertaken to study their shopping behaviour. Hence the researcher has taken a descriptive research with sample survey to understand the consumers' behaviour in departmental stores in Coimbatore region.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know about the similarity between retail mix elements and attained benefits of consumers lead to higher shopper loyalty.
2. To identify the problems faced by the consumers in the retail stores.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Type of the Study Descriptive research study was used based on consumer behaviour, items relating to awareness, factors influencing consumer behaviour etc.

SAMPLE DESIGN

The consumers visiting the organized departmental stores were population for this study which is huge and infinite in nature. The Consumers visiting organized departmental stores in Coimbatore region were taken as the sampling unit of the study. In this study, Multi Stage Sampling design was adopted. In the first stage areas of the study in Coimbatore region were selected based on Random Sampling. In the second stage, the retail stores were selected based Quota Sampling proportionate to number of stores and in the third stage Convenience Sampling technique was used for selecting respondents. The total sample size was 1000. The table 1 provides the distribution of sample size.

PERIOD OF THE STUDY

The period of the research study was two years, starts from February 2012 to February 2014. The researcher took first six months to collect the reviews of related studies and identify the research gap. Another six months was spent to draft the research design, to prepare data collection instrument and conduct the pilot

study. After finalizing the questionnaire, six months have been spent to collect the data from the target respondents. The researcher took six months to analyze and interpret the collected data and six months to prepare the thesis.

DATA COLLECTION

A well-structured questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect the primary data from the organized retail stores. The questionnaire was prepared to know the facts like consumer's profile, consumer awareness, factors which influencing the consumers to utilizing the retail or departmental stores, retail mix elements, marketing strategies etc.

DATA ANALYSIS

Simple Percentage analysis was applied to know and simplify the demographic profile and other information of the consumers.

LIMITATIONS

1. Since the study was focused on Consumer behaviour on organised departmental stores located only in Coimbatore region, the results of the study cannot be generalized to other region.
2. The study did not focus on different types of organized retail formats like discount stores, hypermarkets, shopping malls and supermarkets. This may be a limitation to understand the overall consumers' behaviour on organized retail stores.
3. The study may have the limitation on time and cost factors which limit the sample size.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

It is the process by which individuals search, select, purchase, use and dispose of goods and services in satisfaction of their needs and wants. Management is the youngest of sciences and oldest of arts and consumer behaviour in management is a very young discipline. Various scholars and academicians concentrated on it at a much later stage. It was during the 1950s, that marketing concept developed, and thus the need to study the behaviour of consumers was recognised. Marketing starts with the needs of the customer and ends with his satisfaction. When everything revolves round the customer, then the study of consumer behaviour becomes a necessity. It starts with the buying of goods. Goods can be bought individually, or in groups.

Goods can be bought under stress (to satisfy an immediate need), for comfort and luxury in small quantities or in bulk. For all this, exchange is required. This exchange is usually between the seller and the buyer. It can also be between consumers. In simple words, consumer behavior can be defined as the set of activities and actions of consumer in purchasing and using goods and services. However, it involves a study of buying motives in order to examine the selection criteria of the consumers for the products they choose and what motivates them to behave as they do in the market places. It focuses on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources like time, money and effort on consumption related items.

PATTERN OF CONSUMER EXPENDITURE

After a thorough study of the data collected the different patterns of consumer expenditure were identified. The major portion of the income was spend on the consumption was spend on food and grocery comprising of the basic needs of the consumer (45%). The consumer was highly motivated towards the buying of the apparels and foot wears (the branded ones). The table 2 clearly explains the ideology of the consumer. The consumer wants to look good and eat healthy. This figure clearly analyses that the modern consumer is highly aware of his needs and is ready to dispose his income as he wants. He spends the maximum portion of his income on the items of his daily use i.e. Food and grocery by 45%. Consumer tends to spend on general merchandise by 26%. He spends by 24% on apparels and footwear, so if the disposable income ratio has increased for him, he tends to buy more quality items or the branded items. This leads to the welcome of the malls through the gate of consumerism by young earning population.

PREFER TO GO TO MALLS

The results of the survey table 3 reveal to us that shopping could be the main target of going to a mall but watching a movie could battle for its share too. Many people's find it a good place to spend time, so the numbers of footfalls in a mall are more than the number of 'wallet falls'. Other people who visit a mall comprises of 11% who prefer to eat in a mall.

OBSERVATION OF CONSUMER

Observation of consumer is often a powerful tool. Looking at how consumers select products may yield insights into how they make decisions and what they look for observing consumers tells about:

1. What is he looking in the product?
2. Is he brand loyal?
3. Is he more or less price sensitive?
4. Is he more interested in packaging, manufacturing etc.
5. Whether his taste has shifted?

Observation of consumer may help us determine how much time consumers spend comparing prices, or whether nutritional labels are being consulted.

IMPLICATIONS

Keeping in mind the empirical evidence of the current study following are the implications for the retailers: Apparel retailers have a huge potential for young people. From the data collected through survey it is identified that maximum number of respondents of apparel belongs to the age group of 25-30 years. Therefore, apparel retailers in line with manufacturers should focus on this segment in order to grow their business in future. Consumer buying behavior can be explained on the basis of survey findings. The factors that are observed in the study can be used by the apparel retailers in developing their marketing strategies in a better way. With its help the retailers have an opportunity to convert their potential customers to actual customers.

Apparel retailers needs lot of improvement in their ambience and location, brands offered, prices offered, discounts offered, services provided within the store as well as after sale service in order to boost their demand. There has been transformation in the consumption pattern thus leading to change in overall retailing scenario. Also, a change has been noticed in the demographic profile of customers that can be utilized smartly by the retailers for fulfilling the needs and expectations of the customers.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE BEHAVIOR OF THE CONSUMER

The behaviour of retail consumer is a subject of study across the world. In India retailers and retail formats are evolving on a great extent. Understanding the reasons for consumer's behaviour is very important for retailer. Following are the factors which influence the customer's decision making process.

1. **Convenience of Shopping at a particular outlet:** The element of convenience is a fast gaining promises in the world of organized retail. This is especially true in case of items like grocery/fruits and chemists. For example, while buying medicines, most patients would prefer the buy from the chemist near the doctor clinic or near the hospital.
2. **Range of Merchandise:** The range of merchandise is perhaps the most important reason for customers to patronize a particular outlet. The initial curiosity of the store may draw a consumer to a retail store, but converting him into a buyer and retailing him over a period of time is largely dependent on the quality and the range of merchandise offered by the store. The range of merchandise offered plays an important role in case of categories like devalues, books and music.

3. **Socio economic factors:** Socio economic factors are seen as a fundamental to development. India is a nation which has a large middle class a youth population which is happy spending and a steady rate of growth of G.D.P. The Socio-economic background of the consumer largely determines his lifestyle. Consumer buying behaviour varies from market to market and is largely influenced by the culture of the region. This can be explained with the help of an example. That is a culture of Asia is different than Western Culture, therefore accordingly consumer behaviour also shifts. The retailer needs to understand that the need hierarchy is different for each market.
4. **Time to travel:** The time required to reach a particular retail location is again fast becoming critical. This is very much relevant in cities or metros like Mumbai, where travel time is high. This has resulted in many local areas developing in terms of shopping to facilitate buying.

SUGGESTIONS

Organized retailers have been trying to improve the customer relationship by emulating Mom and Pop Stores. The stores intentionally make the setting of a wholesale market than a sophisticated shop. For instance, the retailers hire people who scream and sell the products like vegetables. They make provisions for customers to get products on credit. The retailers need to give their customers a more personalized shopping experience. This requires a complete study of individual consumer behaviour. The retailers should continue to benefit from the cost advantage and the variety they offer to the customers. The Retail stores are bound to impact some of the Mom and Pop stores in the long run. The extent of effect will be decided by the strategies of the organized retailers and Mom and Pop stores in the coming future. But in the battle between Retail stores and Mom and Pop stores the customers are definitely going to benefit.

CONCLUSION

Retail industry is the largest industry in India, providing employment to around 8 per cent of the total work force and contributing 14 to 15 per cent of the country's GDP. Retail industry in India has experienced significant changes in the last decade. Speciality and discount stores have been edging the department stores turf, with cost conscious and breadth-of-selection strategies. This study provides some insights on factors that would be important in managing consumer satisfaction. Consumers are concerned not only with the merchandise, physical surroundings, promotional schemes and personal interaction but also with after sales services, entertainment and security arrangements. So, organized retail outlets need to enhance product quality and store convenience, and after sales services to improve customer satisfaction. Organized retail outlets must assure quality and availability of new products and attractive promotional schemes, sufficient security arrangements and enhance consumer satisfaction. The findings of the study contribute to the understanding of consumer shopping behaviour and their attitude and intention towards retail stores. A retailer must understand and know in detail, various factors that lead to shopping intention and attitude of the consumers. This will help them to achieve success in the retail market.

Customer's behaviour provides some valuable insights into the process and therefore is useful for retail management decision making. It is important to realize that the purchase of product involves motivational, social, psychological and economic factors. There are also important stages involved in the purchase process and the type of purchase and the users of the purchase that will affect the buying behaviour. And of course the consumers will take the final call.

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APPENDIX

TABLE NO. 1: SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION

S. No.	Area	Number of Stores	No. of Respondents
1	Coimbatore	12	300
2	Salem	8	200
3	Tirupur	4	100
4	Erode	5	125
5	Krishnagiri	3	75
6	Namakkal	4	100
7	Dharmapuri	2	50
8	Nilgiri	2	50
Total			1000

TABLE NO. 2: PATTERN OF CONSUMER EXPENDITURE

S. No.	Category	%
1	Food and Grocery	45%
2	General Merchandise	26%
3	Foot wear	24%
4	Other	5%

TABLE NO. 3: PREFER GO TO MALL

S. No.	Category	%
1	Spend Time	27%
2	Shopping	33%
3	To eat	11%
4	Movie	29%

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