STUDY ON PURCHASE BEHAVIOR OF THE CUSTOMER IN RETAIL

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Abstract

Objective – One of the central considerations to any marketing strategy is the specific patterns displayed by consumers, also known as their 'Customer behavior'. The importance of Customer behavior has scarcely been researched in the context of India consumers.

Methodology/Technique – This study seeks to understand the effect of Customer behavior as a market segment on the perception of marketing practices in the modern retail industry. The study is an exploratory survey study using 900 samples of India shoppers in the modern market.

Findings & Novelty– This study concludes that the majority of consumers in India exhibit an economical and promotional sensitive style of shopping. They are also identified as brand-oriented shoppers and moderate perfectionists. It also verifies two segments of the India consumer market: recreational shopper and utilitarian.

Type of Paper: Empirical.

Keywords: Market Segmentation; Recreational Shopper; Customer behavior; Utilitarian Shopper.

1. Introduction

One of the central considerations to any marketing strategy is the specific patterns displayed by consumers, also known as their 'Customer behavior'. The most pervasive and influential assumption in consumer behavior research is that purchases are preceded by a decision process (Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979). Identifying basic characteristics of decision-making styles is central to consumer-interest studies however conceptualizing and measuring consumer styles has not been a focus of the field. A comprehensive instrument to measure consumer decision-making style is known as the Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) (Sproles & Kendal, 1986). There is evidence that consumer decision-making style can vary across cultures (Hafstrom, Chae & Chung, 1992; Fan & Xiau, 1998). Although the decision-making styles of consumers in developing countries has not yet been studied in a scholarly context, literature on decision-making styles using the US, Greece, Korea, New Zealand, and China does exist.

The study of marketing aims to identify and understand the consumer decision-making process. Some researchers in the field of consumer economics conclude that the consumer has a different style or rules to make decisions when they are faced with choices in the market (Canabal, 2002).

Research on the segmentation of the retail market based on consumer decision-making styles has been conducted in Germany (Walsh, Mitchell, Hennig-Thurau & Wiedmann, 2001), the US (Wesley, LeHew & Woodside, 2006), and China (Yu & Zhou, 2009). However scholarly research on effective ways for identifying segments of retail shoppers using

the concept of consumer decision-making styles in the face of increased competition, market diversity, and modern retailing in developing countries remains relatively limited (Makgosa & Sangodoyin, 2017).

The retail industry is always growing in developing markets and those markets have become the driving force behind global growth in the retail space (Forbes Jun 17, 2011), and as the retail marketplace transforms owing to the inflow of large retail formats, the decision-making process of consumers in developing countries is also becoming increasingly complex (Lysonski & Durvasula, 2013). Understanding the shopping patterns of consumers has managerial implications, who are the people responsible for determining market segmentation and retail marketing strategies (Wagner & Rudolph, 2010). The analysis of consumers' characteristics leads to the development of an effective retail image and retail strategy (Williams & Salma, 1985). One of the challenges facing retail management is not to lose touch with and remain responsive to consumers (Dawson, 2000).

To deal with this knowledge gap, scholars to be actively involved in the validation of segmentation approaches that could give practitioners confidence in their decision to employ consumer characteristics for retail mix development and positioning strategies within developing countries (Makgosa & Sangodoyin, 2017). Further research is needed on the generalizability of Sproles and Kendall's consumer styles inventory (CSI) in different countries. Hence, this study aims to identify the decision-making styles of India shoppers and its use in segmenting consumers.

2. Literature Review

In this review paper, we address topics from five areas namely, criteria for selection of store location, visual merchandising, technological advancements, role of big data and consumer engagement.

2.1. Visual Merchandising In present era consumer is exposed to uncountable variety of goods and different offers on them. It is a challenge in front of the retailers to provide best offers to its customers and at the same time stand out in current competitive environment. Therefore, deciding on how to design these offers is a tricky task faced by the retailers. This will assist the retailers to decide how, when and where to showcase their merchandise and related offers, keeping in mind the type of channel format (within the store or on their websites). This holds true in case of manufacturers as well as they have also realized the importance of customer attention towards their merchandise and offers.

Kahn (2017) suggested strategies for making assortments easier for consumers to process. They include reduction in assortments and information intensity, making sure each item relates to the assortment context and carefully thinking through the spatial positioning of merchandise. Also, importance of spatial positioning of merchandise was earlier studied by Nordfalt et al. (2014) in their work in which the authors investigated the significance of different types of orientation of merchandise. They found that vertical orientation of merchandise tends to increase the purchase frequency by the customers as compared to when merchandise is displayed horizontally.

They further added that more than 90 percent product purchase increased in case of towels when they are vertically displayed as compared to when they are diagonally displayed. Apart from the display of products on the shelf or on the website, packaging of the product also plays a significant role in the visual merchandising of the store. Packaging generally involves the design or shape of the of the product package (Kahn, 2017). This view was further elaborated by Krishna et al. (2017) in which they tried to analyse the effect of packaging on the consumer engagement with the product. Every layer of packaging (inner, middle and outer layer) affects consumers' sensory experience and assists them to examine the functional and physical dimension of the product. It is important for retailers to consider the spatial location of their merchandise and its sales promotion while deciding for visual merchandising in the store as well on the websites. This will have a great impact on the overall profitability of the store. In case of low involvement products the sale is likely to increase when the sale price of the product is displayed on right side of package instead of left side (Suri et al., 2017).

2.2   Technological   Advancements
Technological advancements in the field of retailing is beneficial to retailers and consumers. It becomes easy for retailers to reach its target audience at low cost (eg. Through internet) and at the same time consumer can take more informed decisions, beneficial offers and relatively faster services than before. Recent research done by Inman & Nikolova (2017) highlighted the benefits of technology for retailers as well as consumers which in turn will increase the profitability of the firm. They talked about the mobile apps, self-check outs, scan and go technologies, Que Vision and smart shelf technology. For instance, with the help of self-checkout technology, customer can browse, take and pay for his selected merchandise without the need of the sales personnel or the cashier.

This will give customer the opportunity to totally control the transaction process and at the same time retailers can save on the labour costs as minimum number of cashier or the sales personnel will be required. Smartphones act as a blessing in disguise for the retailers. They have revolutionised the entire shopping experience in present time. Easy internet access, mobile apps and other advancements in this domain has changed the consumer expectations. This has also made easier for retailers to connect to its targeted audience. Like for example scan-and-go technologies enable customers to browse the products offered by the retailers, select them as per their needs and pay through the retailers apps.

Amazon Go took this innovation to another level by shrinking the time to scan the products online. What all customer need to do is to scan their smartphones while entering the store, take the product and leave the store. The technology keep track of the products bought or returned and automatically process the transaction. As soon as the customer leaves the store, amount is deducted from his account and a receipt is generated and sent to the customer. For this entire process to successfully complete, a smartphone, amazon account and amazon go app is required by the customer (Amazon, 2016). Considering the above review of literature on technological advancements following observations can be used for further studies in future Will these technological advancement be beneficial for all types of retailers and consumers? Probably retailers'

apps are apt for those customers who look for different deals for shopping. Will these aps be adopted by the small retailers or small retailers will have to serve as pickup and delivery points for online retailers to survive?

2.3 Customer Engagement Several studies on consumer experience and engagement levels have been done in past (Grewal, levy & Kumar, 2009; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Accenture, 2015; marketing science institute, 2016) but no study have investigated the ways to increase customer sense of engagement. Customer engagement can be enhanced by including consciousness (Grewal et al., 2017). Hierarchal model of consumer engagement was developed by Grewal et al. (2017) based on the principle of conscious capitalism (Mackey & Sisodia, 2017). The model suggested three level approach for enhancing customer engagement i.e. customer experience, emotional connection and shared identity.

Therefore, by influencing the purpose and values of the customers, conscious retailers can develop emotional connections with them. Another study by Wansink (2017) identified three key components in the field of food retailing viz. role of signage, store design and employee service. These components assist in deciding which product is most convenient to buy and is seen as standardized product. The author further recommended innovative tools and techniques signage and service component. Likewise retailers should also take into consideration visual ideas which are contained into their visual merchandising in order to engage customers in physical as well as online stores. This will create emotional connection towards the store resulting into decrease in price sensitivity and increase in consumption (Roggeveen et al. 2015). Since a lot of research has been done on customer experience (Grewal, Levy & Kumar, 2009; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Accenture, 2015; marketing science institute, 2016) therefore future research should target on employee engagement as for retailer employee engagement would result into customer engagement.

2.4 Role of Big Data Retail organizations have always been flooded with the data but due to lack of proper management of data they could not use it in an efficient manner. Recently, due

to technological upgradation retailers have started taking assistance of the options for organizing data, computational and analytical systems for the enterprise. Big data along with analytical systems helped retailers to manage their issues. Bradlow et al. (2017) illustrated measures of big data in terms of customer, product, location, time and channel and suggested ways to strategically use these data in order to optimize sale and maximise price.

They have also organized the data obtained from different sources like loyalty cards, websites, mobile apps, enterprise system. Thus, big data is not only helping the retailers but also researchers to better understand the customers. Introduction of big data have prompted researchers to undertake field researches and experiments that provide assessment of basis between independent (price, display, assortment etc.) and dependent variables (sales volume, profitability etc.).

2.5 Criteria for store selection Store performance, demographics, store features and competition are the main categories that are considered for location analysis. In the following section literature review for each category has been done with the intention to help the future researchers to conduct the study based on store performance.

2.5.1. Store Performance Performance is one of the most important criteria while deciding the location of the store. It is equally important to consider the elements that affects the performance of the store. Quality of criteria for choosing the model for store location depends on the potential to estimate the performance goals. These goals are often created in the form of profits of the store (Walter & McKenzie, 1988), market share (Igene &Lusch, 1980; Durvasula et al., 1992), demand (Igene & Lusch, 1980; Berman & Evans, 2010; Li & Liu, 2012)) and elasticity of price (Hoch et al., 1995). Therefore, the above mentioned measures for choosing the store location are important for stores entering the area in order to get the largest utility.

2.5.2. Demographics Population characteristics are very important while deciding the location of the store. Demographics assists the retailers in deciding whether the population living in

that particular location is in consonance with the target market (Hasty & Reardon, 1997; Berman & Evan, 2010). In some cases it is very difficult to alter the consumption pattern of the customers because of their financial situations or their long-established habits (Redinbaugh, 1987). Therefore, it is observed that while choosing the location for store, consideration for purchasing habits of the people living there is very important for retailers while describing their customers. Hence, for retail managers demographic structure of the market is the most important element while deciding the potential store location (Hasty & Reardon, 1997).

2.5.3. Store features Competitiveness of the retail store is closely related to the characteristics of the store. Retailers should focus on these characteristics to build an edge in the market. Store location selection decision depends upon accessibility (finding a store easily), store image variables (merchandise assortments, atmospherics etc.) and costs associated with it. Lot of studies have discussed about the accessibility while deciding the store locations. As many customers commute with their own vehicles, it is essential to pay attention towards roads and parking facilities so that customers can easily access the store for shopping. The sales potential of the store is affected by the ease of access to the store, positively or negatively (Redinbaugh, 1987). Also, before incorporating any change for improving the image of the store, retailers should analyse its impact on store profits. Improvement in merchandise assortments or store atmospherics with the help of new and improved layout and allocation techniques does not only affect the flow of revenues but also affects the expenses (Igene & Lusch, 1980). In the end the retailers should also consider the effect of costs on the store performance while selecting the store location. Cost associated with the building, rent, renovation of the store etc. is included in the cost that is considered in decision making (Irwingh, 1986).

2.5.4. Competition It is important for retailers to build the understanding of their competitive environment while searching for an appropriate locations for the potential store (Reinartz &

Kumar, 1999). It is observed that disparity in price elasticity across stores is due to the competitive factors (Hoch et. al., 1995). Competition could be direct or indirect. In case of direct competition, new store will try to compete with the available stores offering the same products for increasing their market share (Durvasula et al., 1992) whereas those with indirect competition (stores offering dissimilar products), every retailer will try to compete against each other in order to gain the bigger portion in customers' expenditure (Redinbaugh, 1987).

Therefore, while choosing the store location evaluation of the competition is essential. Also, distance from the competitor's store, number of available competitors, competitive strength etc. should also be considered in store location selection. Above factors gives an insight to retailers about the success of a store at a particular location. Therefore, mangers should be aware of factors that are related to the location of the store while evaluating the store performance. But preferences for retail store locations changes over time. The location which seems profitable initially might become unattractive because of future competitive encroachment. Adding to this Ingene & Lusch (1980) opined that changes in demographics will encourage uncertainty in meeting customer needs and wants. It is important for retailers to consider the changing competitive landscape and for this, awareness about factors that influence the store performance is required (Ghosh & Craig, 1983).

Thus, in order to position the retail stores in changing consumption environment, retailers are advised to carry out timely research on factors influencing the retail store performance.

3.   Future Trends in Retailing

Retail is progressing at a faster rate because of advancement in technology and changes in consumer behaviour. Now-a-days the concept of Omni channel retailing and big data are very essential to handle the competitiveness. Future of retailing depends on even the newer technologies like Smart devices, mediated or virtual reality, artificial intelligence (Deloitte, 2016). Further research in future needs to address the concept of "internet of things" in

order to build clarity on how shopping behaviour will get influenced and also to understand the role of frontline managers. For example smart homes or smart cars are being designed to get relevant information or data as to when should we reorder the basic products kept in refrigerators (or any other appliance) or when should the car be serviced next? Therefore, it is important to explore whether it will increase customer engagement with the store owners or retailers or it will decrease the customer engagement and a new phase of machine to machine interaction will start?

Artificial intelligence (AI) based applications are also on high demand and can have a favourable impact on consumer shopping from both virtual as well as physical stores. AI based responses will be helpful in getting the information regarding the products, their location in the store, their features and will also suggests other items that would go well with the purchased items. As a result customer will be better informed and more engaged than before but the job of service employees have to be reorganized in order to facilitate them with the high level of information than stored in AI application. Companies are trying their hand on driverless vehicles controlled by AI based technology. Many retailers and manufacturers are trying to reap the opportunities of advancement in technology for robotics and drones (Van Doorn et al., 2016). Recently, Amazon have come up with its plan to incorporate drone delivery option in order to strengthen its current delivery system. Such applications open doors for researches in this field to find out the advantages and aftereffects of these delivery options.

4.   Research Methodology

To investigate the Customer behavior of India shoppers, an explanatory survey is considered the most appropriate method. This method seeks out data regarding objects by taking a sample from a populationusing questionnaires as the main data collection tool. A close-ended questioned was prepared for use in the survey based on consumer decision-making orientations, using Consumer Style Inventory (CSI), developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986). All scales were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from strongly

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disagree to strongly agree

This study was conducted in 2 major cities in India: Raipur and Bilaspur with a total sample of 900 shoppers. Area sampling was employed based on the location of modern shopping centers where there are supermarkets or hypermarkets in the 2 cities.

Descriptive analysis was first carried out to establish consumer Customer behavior profiles, followed by cluster analysis which is useful for market segmentation. K-means Cluster Analysis was used in grouping and discovering the pattern of Customer behavior who have similar characteristics and dissimilarities between groups, this analysis is similar with Paitoon and Davies (2000) and Gindi, Abdullah and Ismail (2015) who examined market segmentation.

5. Results

When someone goes shopping to get a product to meet their needs or wants, consciously or unconsciously there is a mental orientation that will be reflected in the product to buy, how to buy it, where to buy it, or even for whom he buys. The mental orientation is known as Customer behavior.

Customer behaviors is shown by consumers from various countries to have the potential to be both similar and different among consumers. A survey to reveal India Customer behaviors was conducted with a questionnaire to measure consumers' attitudes toward ten-dimensional Customer behaviors through indicators with a 7-attitude scale

Customer behavior		Mean	Criterion
Hedonic		5,15	High
Economical		5,61	Very High
Innovative		5,12	High
Perfectionist		4,61	Moderate
Brand Oriented		4,75	Moderate
Confused		4,96	Moderate
Spontaneous		4,50	Moderate
	Loyal	5,32	High
Sensitive to Promotion		5,23	High

As mentioned in Table 1, India's shopping style is very hedonistic, sensitive to a promotion,

Table 1. Customer behavior Profile

Innovative, and very economical. They also exhibit spontaneous, perfectionist, brand-oriented, and confusing Customer behaviors at the middle level.

Table 2, Final Cluster Centers

Customer behavior	Cluster			
	1	2	3	4
Hedonic	**,81856**	,15124	-,67770	-,36138
Economical	-,01759	**,63675**	,26639	-,97403
Innovative	**,57637**	**,44373**	-1,05099	-,09489
Perfectionist	**,81086**	-,01879	-,81653	-,02377
Brand Oriented	**,59638**	,22852	-,63266	-,26712
Confused	-,20344	**,63879**	-,41521	-,13361
Spontaneous	-,01529	**,49838**	-,40151	-,17637
Loyal	**,66140**	-,14619	,17640	-,67510
Sensitive to Promotion	**,62734**	,10809	-,11527	-,65511

To be able to design the right marketing program and have a strong influence on

consumers, companies need to establish market segmentation to be able to choose the right

target. Marketing actions in segmenting markets that attempt to classify consumers can also be based on Customer behaviors. This section will show how market segmentation in India is formed based on Customer behavior.

As shown in Table 2, the results of Cluster Analysis using the K-Means method have identified 2 segments of India Customer behavior, namely clusters 1 and 2, which have positive coefficients. This means that those clusters can explain the characteristics of certain Customer behaviors.

Meanwhile, clusters 3 and 4 each have a negative coefficient, so they do not indicate certain characteristics of certain Customer behaviors. Kotler and Keller (2016) state that to ensure the effectiveness of market segmentation, the identified segments must have measurable, substantial, easily accessible, distinguishable, and actionable characteristics. Clusters 3 and 4 do not meet the standard of measurable and differentiable segments.

6. Discussion

Table 1 demonstrates the profile of the India Customer behavior. The first Customer behavior that will be discussed is hedonic shoppers. Hedonic Customer behavior belongs to individuals who like shopping for activities, even they think that shopping is a recreational activity. With a score of 5.15, India shoppers can be categorized as hedonist shoppers. They find that shopping at the supermarket is a fun activity. The enjoyment of shopping is experienced by the attractions of various retail mix designed by supermarkets. As they love shopping they tend to be consumptive.

Indias have a high preference for getting the best value for money, they enjoy comparing prices before buying and hunting at low prices. As seen in Table 1, consumers are indicated as economic shoppers with a score of 5.61. As an economical shopper, low-cost products are their choice.

When shopping at supermarkets, consumers claim that they are accustomed to buying products that were not planned. Display arrangements in supermarkets and "self-serve" which allows consumers to choose and move freely throughout the store allow consumers to be exposed to merchandise in the store. As a result of the stimulus, the occurrence of

unplanned purchases is very high. The survey also shows that consumers agree with the statement that they don't spend a lot of time when they buy a new product. From these 2 indicators for the dimensions of Customer behavior, it can be concluded that India consumers can be categorized as spontaneous shoppers at a moderate level.

India consumers affirm that they have a kind of Customer behavior that is sensitive to promotional programs. This is reflected in 2 ways. First, they have a high interest in advertising promos. Consumers who are interested in promotional programs will pay attention to the information printed on advertisements or brochures. Second, they are enthusiastic to take advantage of the discounted price program. Even for consumers who have favorite brands, because of this program, they will choose brands that have discounted prices over their favorite brands.

In terms of innovative Customer behaviors, some India consumers can also be categorized as consumers who have innovative Customer behaviors at a moderate level. They are interested in newly launched products by asking or testing it by buying it. In India, when a new shopping center or a new supermarket is inaugurated, it is common for people to rush to a shopping center or supermarket to experience a new shopping atmosphere.

India consumers do not have a high preference for famous branded products. This is indicated by the average score for brand-oriented Customer behavior which is 4.75. Their preference for choosing well-known branded products is based on their rational and emotional considerations. They believe that branded products provide security and prestige.

As shown in Table 1, by considering two confused Customer behavior indicators, with an average score of 4.9, it was revealed that India shoppers could be classified as low-confused consumers. India shoppers are not easily confused with various brand choices or any information provided by the manufacturer.

India's have strong loyal Customer behaviors. As mentioned in Table 1, they tend to have the brand of choice they usually buy and consume. They also have a supermarket of choice for shopping.

Understanding India Customer behaviors will be useful for creating market segmentation, by considering Customer behaviors that are by cluster 1 and cluster 2 analysis (Table 2), the modern market shopper in India can be segmented into 2 groups, namely: recreational and utilitarian shoppers.

A recreational shopper segment is a group of consumers who tend to be more emotional than rational. They have a hedonic character, innovative, perfectionist, brand-oriented, and sensitive to promotional, they also tend to be loyal to a particular product brand or store of their choice. The second segment is a shopper who has an economical and confusing Customer behavior. This segment has a character that tends to be opposite to recreational buyers.

Recreational buyers are shoppers who find shopping fun and entertaining. They go shopping not only for reasons of buying goods but also spending time in the shop. As consumers who enjoy shopping activities, this segment shows the character of high innovation consumers who have a high interest in new products offered. This segment also has attention to various shopping center/mall programs, such as discounts or contests. It turns out that this segment is not only happy with shopping activities but also very concerned with the quality of products purchased. They enjoy spending time looking for the highest quality products. This segment has a strong belief that the higher the price the better the quality of the product. Therefore, products with brands that are well known are their preferences.

Shopping at the supermarket is an activity to get daily necessities or household items, and it is commonly a routine activity. The second segment that can be developed from India consumer Customer behaviors is the utilitarian shopper. These buyers tend to be more rational than emotional buyers. They consider shopping as an ordinary ritual. Their rationality in the store is shown by their efforts to get the maximum amount of money they spend. Therefore, before they decide to buy goods, they spend a lot of time comparing prices at the store.

The price factor is a critical consideration by this segment, therefore, for them, branded products are not important. They are satisfied with the products that meet their needs. They are even interested in cheap products. Indeed, supermarkets facilitate this Customer behavior by offering low prices or are considered economical.

Very different from the first segment that enjoys various offers from supermarkets, a utilitarian shopper finds that too many choices of brand products offered tend to confuse them. They assume that the more they learn about product selection information, the harder it is for them to decide. When this segment perceives that shopping is a routine activity, the character of the social buyer is absent in him. The presence of a shopping friend does not help them make product choices.

7. Conclusion

India's Customer behavior profiles tend to be economical and sensitive to promotions. They are price sensitive and make many comparisons before making a purchase decision. They are also identified as hedonic and innovative buyers, who love shopping and react positively to new merchandise being offered or opening new supermarkets. Although not at a high level, India shoppers tend to be brand-oriented and perfectionist shoppers.

Based on the profile of Customer behaviors, the modern market shopper in India can be divided into 2 groups: recreational and utilitarian shoppers. Recreational buyers are consumers who consider shopping for fun and provide entertainment. They shop not only to buy goods that will satisfy their needs or desires but also to spend a good time at the supermarket. Meanwhile, utilitarian shoppers are very rational and find shopping just a routine activity. Their rational style when shopping is shown by their efforts to get the best value for the money they spend.

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