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Title

**A STUDY ON THE PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR OF
CONSUMERS WITH REFERENCE TO TOILETRIES AND
PACKAGED FOOD ITEMS**

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Abstract:

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The study has been designed to analyze the factors that are responsible for influencing the purchase decision of customers with respect to selected fast moving consumer goods. A sample of 300 customers at different stores have been selected and studied with reference to various factors of marketing mix. The study attempted to identify factors which are the combination of product, price, place and promotion. Based on the importance given by the respondents on various factors, opinion scores are calculated and relative importance for each of the variables is established. The level of customer satisfaction was divided into low, medium and high. The gender analysis of customer satisfaction with respect to toiletries reveals that both male and female customers are highly satisfied with quality, while the gender analysis of customer satisfaction with respect to packaged food items reveals that that male customers are highly satisfied with free gifts while, the female customers are highly satisfied with cheapest price. The study also focused on whether the customer satisfaction varies across gender. The Chi square test has been employed to analyze the data. The study reveals that there is a significant difference between level of satisfaction and gender.

Keywords: Consumer goods, customer satisfaction, marketing mix, purchase decision, quality.

INTRODUCTION:

Consumer behavior as a subject deals with the factors that affect the buying behavior of consumers (Kotler, 2003). Consumer behavior as a subject gives clear idea that how consumers select, buy, use and dispose the product, service, ideas or experiences to satisfy the needs and desires. In the views of Schiffman and Kanuk(1996), consumer behavior is the study of how individuals spend their available resources on consumption related items. It includes the study of what they buy, why they buy, when they buy, where they buy, how often they buy, and how often they use it. According to Blackwell et al (2007), consumer behavior is the field of study that focuses on consumer activities. It should be the primary focus of every aspect of the firm's marketing program along with a key to understand why consumers buy products.

Another study conducted by Goyal and Agarwal(2008) on the behavior of consumers on purchase of a car identified number of factors like model, capacity and accessories etc. Kaushik and Kaushik (2008) in their study on consumer behavior identified pre purchase and post

purchase aspects as well as the factors influencing the brand preferences. According to Kotler (2003), the starting point of understanding the buying behavior of consumers is the stimulated response model. The stimulus response model is the simplest model of consumer buying behavior. This model says that the marketing stimulus and other major factors as well as cultural, social and personal factors always have a great impact on the buying behavior of consumers. In a particular society, the people are categorized by the power and the prestige on the basis of this criterion, the hierarchy of lower, middle and upper class has been setup (Assael, 1978). The substance of the literature on consumer behavior indicates that buyers are influenced by reference groups, family members etc., further the consumer behavior also depends on the personal factors like age, gender, education, life style, personality and income. Schiffman and Kanuk (1996) found that sex and gender have been considered as important cultural components. They also suggested that gender to be included in the category of sub culture as it is strongly associated with buying behavior. Similarly, Hawkins et al (2001), in their study opined that age is an important factor and affects the consumption pattern of products and services. The other studies made by Capton and Hulbert (2001) and Kotler (2004) found that product choice is greatly influenced the income levels of the consumers. They opined that income is the major factor and it encourages or discourages the customers to buy a product or to use a service. In the words of Soumya Saha et al (2010), the role of marketing mix is also important in making the buying decision of any consumer. The marketing mix consists of everything the firm can do to influence the demand for the product. The many possibilities can be collected into four groups of variables known as four P's .i.e., product, price, place and promotion. Marketing mix which is a combination of product, price, place and promotion, is an important marketing tool in the hands of a firm for the achievement of its objectives in the targeted markets. The marketers and the manufacturers formulate various strategies based on these factors. According to Sarangapani and Mamatha (2008), customer behavior is an important element in the process of evaluating the performance of different markets. They also opined that when the satisfaction level of the consumer is at the lower side, it affects not only abandon the product, but also bad mouth it. A customer who is fairly satisfied may find it easy to switch when a better offer comes along. At the higher levels of satisfaction, customers are likely to purchase again and even speak about the company and its products. Higher levels of satisfaction create an emotional bond between the company and the consumers. Susan and David (1999) stated that the satisfaction of the customer

depends on after sales service in relation to consumers' expectation. In general, satisfaction is a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment, resulting from comparing a products perceived performance in relation to expectation. If the performance falls short of expectation, the customer is dissatisfied. If the performance matches the expectations, the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds expectations, the customer is highly satisfied. The interaction between consumer expectations and actual product performance produces either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. So satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the customers is not an emotion. (Sarangapani and Mamatha, 2008). Some research studies reveal that several determinants which influence satisfaction include demographic variables, personality variables expectations and other factors. The substance of literature is that many studies are focused on consumer behavior and the factors influence the behavior of consumers in making buying decisions. The present paper may be considered as one among the many bricks that bridges the gap between research needs and research efforts made so far.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Profit is the ultimate objective of any organization. For the achievement of profit, manufacturers plan various strategies and implement them in the organizations to attract the customers and to retain them. Every organization has its own policies to achieve the objectives. Continuous updating and monitoring of these policies is very much essential to keep pace with change in time and to avoid the loss of market share as well as to increase the profits of the concern. To study the various factors that influence the buying behavior of the customer's attention is focused on various factors which are directly related to the customer satisfaction. These factors include product, price, place and promotion. The need for the study is to ascertain specific factors and their influence on the attitude of the customers. The present study will helps to develop more appropriate strategies to understand the behavior of customers and it can be incorporated into a well designed set of marketing policies and also help as one of the source for the secondary data for future research on this related area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors influencing the buying behavior of consumers on purchase of selected fast moving consumer goods, namely toiletries and packaged food items. The following are the research objectives formulated to guide the study.

1. To identify the factors responsible for influencing the buying behavior of consumers on toiletries and packaged food items.
2. To study the behavior of consumers with respect to their level of satisfaction on toiletries and packaged food items

HYPOTHESIS:

Null Hypothesis: The satisfaction between male and female customers will be different.

Alternative Hypothesis: The satisfaction will be the same between male and female customers.

METHODOLOGY:

Instrument development:

The instrument used in this study consists of two parts. The first part deals with the demographic profile of the respondents such as gender, age, occupation and annual income etc. Part two deals with the factors which are considered most important by the consumers before making their purchases. These factors have been based on four factors, such as product, place, price and promotion. Each of these factors is again subdivided into number of sub variables that are necessary to represent each factor more clearly. The various sub variables that come under these factors include quality, quantity, size, odor and fragrance, cheapest price, cash discounts, foaming, performance, durability, packing, scientific features, availability, range of products, regularity in supply, convenient location of retail shops, décor of stores, attractiveness of stores, advertising, sales persons, free gifts etc.,. The buying behavior of consumers is measured by a structured questionnaire prepared on the basis of the sub variables mentioned above. It consists of 20 questions, each of which is measured on five point Likert's scale, in which, 1 indicated “

highly dissatisfied”, 2 indicated “dissatisfied”, 3 indicated “satisfied” and 4 indicated “highly satisfied.”

Data collection:

Personal interview method was adopted to collect data from the respondents. Contents and validity of the statements were established by experts consisting of marketing executives and other employees working in marketing field. Each of the experts on the panel was asked to verify the instrument for clarity, wording, overall appearance and meaning in addition to content and validity. The instrument was pilot tested with a group of customers, not included in the sample. The data were collected systematically from the respondents visiting the stores for purchase of fast moving consumer goods during the period between May 2011 and June 2011. A sample of 300 consumer households was selected from Nellore district in Andrapradesh for the study.

Analysis of data:

The primary data collected for the study have been sorted, classified and tabulated in a format and analyzed by using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS16.0). Appropriate statistical procedures like ratios and Chi-square tests have been used for inference. The Chi-square test has been used to test the difference of opinions between the male and female of the consumers.

Results and analysis:

Profile of the respondents:

Of those responding to the questionnaire, it was found that 71.67 percent (215) were male while 28.33 percent (85) were female (Table 1). Out of which 22 percent (66) of the respondents are below 25 years of age, 40 percent (120) are in the age group of 25 to 35 years, 20 percent (60) are in the age group of 35 to 45 years and 18 percent (54) respondents are with above 45 years of age. Similarly 25.34 percent (76) were in the income level of less than Rs.15, 000, 42.33 percent (127) were in the income level of Rs.15, 000 to Rs.30, 000, 32.33 percent (97) were in the income level of Above Rs.30, 000. An analysis of the respondents in terms of their age and

income levels reveal that majority of respondents were belongs to 25-35 years age category and whose income levels are ranging from Rs.15, 000 to Rs.30, 000.

1.Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	185	61.67
Female	115	38.33
Total	300	100
2.Age		
(a) Less than 25 Years	46	15.34
(b) 25-35 Years	120	40.00
(c) 35-45 Years	68	22.66
(d) Above 45 Years.	66	22.00
Total	300	100
3.Occupation		
(a) Less than Rs.15,000	76	25.34
(b) Rs.15,000 to Rs.30,000	127	42.33
(c) Above Rs.30,000	97	32.33
Total	300	100

Customer behavior with regard to Toiletries:

To assess the purchase behavior of sample respondents, some of the important marketing related features of toiletries like quality, quantity, size, odor and fragrance, cheapest price, cash discounts, performance, durability, packing, scientific features, availability, range of products, regularity in supply, convenient location of retail shops, décor of stores, attractiveness of stores, advertising, sales persons, free gifts have been considered. For quantification of the responses of the sample customers weights have been assigned as +2, +1,-1, and -2 for the responses of highly satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied and highly dissatisfied respectively. Final score for each feature has been calculated as multiplying the number of responses by the weights assigned to corresponding responses. Similarly the maximum score is calculated by multiplying the total number of respondents in each category with +2 and then the product is with total number of attributes. The final score along with the maximum score calculated for all the attributes provided by the male respondents and female respondents is shown in table 1 and table 2.

Table 2 Satisfaction of Male Customers with regard to Toiletries (n = 185)

Attributes	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied	Final Scores
Quality	82	95	04	04	247
Quantity	75	94	09	07	221
Size	56	115	09	05	208
Odor and fragrance	73	91	12	09	207
Foaming	77	89	10	09	215
Cheapest price	62	102	10	11	194
Cash discounts	60	103	12	10	191
Performance	84	89	05	07	238
Durability	72	94	10	09	210
Packing	80	91	07	07	230
Scientific features	52	103	16	14	163
Availability	79	92	08	06	230
Range of products	49	112	14	10	176
Regularity in supply	85	77	12	11	213
Convenient location of retail shops	52	105	16	12	169
Décor of stores	55	108	12	10	186
Attractiveness of stores	84	90	06	05	242
Advertising	65	101	09	10	202
Sales persons	72	91	12	10	203
Free gifts	62	104	10	09	200
Total Score					4145
Maximum Score					7400

Table 3 Satisfaction of Female Customers with regard to Toiletries (n = 115)

Attributes	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied	Final Scores
Quality	67	40	5	3	163
Quantity	66	35	9	5	148
Size	70	32	8	5	154
Odor and fragrance	58	45	9	3	146
Foaming	54	42	7	5	147
Cheapest price	79	22	10	4	162
Cash discounts	68	36	5	6	155

Performance	66	36	6	7	148
Durability	65	29	12	9	129
Packing	62	40	7	4	151
Scientific features	66	41	5	3	162
Availability	55	50	8	2	148
Range of products	65	43	4	3	163
Regularity in supply	63	40	6	6	148
Convenient location of retail shops	72	30	8	5	156
Décor of stores	68	35	7	5	154
Attractiveness of stores	52	52	6	5	140
Advertising	62	40	9	4	147
Sales persons	59	44	7	5	145
Free gifts	65	40	4	6	154
Total Score					3020
Maximum Score					4600

It is clear from the above tables that both male and female consumers were positively satisfied with various attributes of toiletries on a modern scale. An analysis of the level of satisfaction of the sample respondents reveal that, male respondents are with total score of 4153 against the maximum score of 7400, while it was 3020 against 4600 for the female respondents. Thus it is clear that the level of satisfaction among the female respondents is more than the male respondents. This indicates that the satisfaction is different for male and female customers. To test the result, individual satisfaction levels of the customers have been calculated and divided them into three categories as low, medium and high, based on the individual score of satisfaction. Those who scored less than zero were identified as having low satisfaction, between zero and 20 were identified as having normal satisfaction and between 21 and 40 were identified as having satisfaction at high level.

Testing of Hypothesis 1:

Null Hypothesis: The satisfaction will not be the same between male and female customers.

Alternative Hypothesis: The satisfaction will be the same between male and female customers.

Level of Satisfaction	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Low	10	07	17
Medium	68	36	104
High	107	72	179
Total	185	115	300

Interpretation 1:

For 2 degrees of freedom, the Chi-square value at 5% level of significance is 5.9915. The calculated value of Chi-square is 1.577, which is less than the table value of Chi-square at 5% level of significance. Therefore, the relation between the level of satisfaction and the male and female customers is not significant. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

Attributes	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied	Final Scores
Quality	67	87	18	13	177
Quantity	69	100	9	7	215
Size	55	111	10	9	193
Taste	82	81	15	7	216
Freshness	71	96	9	9	211
Cheapest price	75	96	9	5	227
Cash discounts	79	85	10	11	211

Nutrition value	70	99	9	7	216
Durability	72	99	7	7	222
Packing	66	101	10	8	207
Flavor	69	97	11	8	208
Availability	72	94	12	7	212
Range of products	66	93	14	12	187
Regularity in supply	73	90	13	9	205
Convenient location of shops	68	100	9	8	211
Décor of stores	70	98	9	8	213
Attractiveness of stores	73	95	10	7	217
Advertising	65	110	11	9	211
Sales persons	62	108	9	6	211
Free gifts	71	104	7	3	233
Total Score					4203
Maximum Score					7400

Table 6 Satisfaction of Female Customers with regard to Packaged food Items (n = 115)

Attributes	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied	Final Scores
Quality	77	22	7	9	150
Quantity	75	23	10	7	149
Size	62	37	9	7	138
Taste	69	32	8	6	150
Freshness	70	34	6	5	158
Cheapest price	72	33	5	5	162

Cash discounts	77	24	7	7	157
Nutrition value	79	21	10	5	159
Durability	80	19	11	5	158
Packing	69	30	9	7	145
Flavor	63	38	7	7	143
Availability	71	26	12	6	144
Range of products	72	25	11	7	144
Regularity in supply	79	19	10	7	152
Convenient location of shops	65	32	12	6	138
Décor of stores	69	32	9	5	151
Attractiveness of stores	62	39	7	7	142
Advertising	52	47	10	6	129
Sales persons	65	31	11	8	134
Free gifts	56	40	12	7	126
Total Score					2929
Maximum Score					4600

It is clear from the above tables that both male and female consumers were positively satisfied with various attributes of packaged food Items on a modern scale. An analysis of the level of satisfaction of the sample respondents reveal that, male respondents are with a total score of 4203 against the maximum score of 7400, while it was 2929 against 4600 for the female respondents. Thus it is clear that the level of satisfaction among the female respondents is more than the male respondents. This indicates that the satisfaction is different for male and female customers. To test the result, individual satisfaction levels of the customers have been calculated and divided them into three categories as low, medium and high, based on the individual score of satisfaction. Those who scored less than zero were identified as having low satisfaction, between zero and 20 were identified as having normal satisfaction and between 21 and 40 were identified as having satisfaction at high level.

Testing of Hypothesis 2:

Null Hypothesis: The satisfaction will not be the same between male and female customers.

Alternative Hypothesis: The satisfaction will be the same between male and female customers.

Level of Satisfaction	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Low	12	09	21
Medium	94	41	135
High	79	65	144
Total	185	115	300

Interpretation 2:

For 2 degrees of freedom, the Chi-square value at 5% level of significance is 5.9915. The calculated value of Chi-square is 5.005, which is less than the table value of Chi-square at 5% level of significance. Therefore, the relation between the level of satisfaction and the male and female customers is not significant. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

CONCLUSION:

The gender analysis of customer satisfaction with respect to both toiletries and packaged food items reveals that female customers were more satisfied in comparison with male customers. The gender analysis of customer satisfaction with respect to toiletries reveals that, the male customers are least satisfied with scientific features followed by convenient location of stores and availability of range of products while, the female customers are least satisfied with durability followed by attractiveness of stores and sales persons. Similarly, the customer

satisfaction with respect to packaged food items reveals that male customers are least satisfied with quality followed by range of products and size while, female customers are least satisfied with free gifts, advertising and sales persons. The gender analysis of customer satisfaction with respect to toiletries also reveals that male customers are highly satisfied with quality, followed by attractiveness of stores and performance, while the female customers are highly satisfied with quality and range of products followed by cheapest price. It indicates that both male and female customers are giving first preference to quality. Hence, the manufacturers of toiletries must consider this factor in view while manufacturing the toiletries in different varieties with cheap prices. Similarly, the gender analysis of customer satisfaction with respect to packaged food items reveals that that male customers are highly satisfied with free gifts followed by cheapest price, durability, attractiveness of stores, taste and nutrition value while, the female customers highly satisfied with cheapest price followed by nutrition value, freshness and durability. It shows that both the customers viewed price as the important factor towards their satisfaction in addition to nutrition value, and durability. Hence, the manufacturers must consider these factors while manufacturing the packaged food items with cheaper prices in order to improve the satisfaction of the customers and to retain them.

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