A STUDY ON IMPACT OF INFORMATION SEARCH ON THE PURCHASE DECISION OF THE SELECTED FMCGs

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Abstract: This study is to analyze the impact of information search on the purchase decision of FMCG products. A buying decision can either be a planned one which is characterized by deliberate thoughtful search and evaluation, that will result in rational and accurate decisions or it can be an impulse purchase decision, which is spontaneous, unplanned and immediate .whether it is a planned one or an impulse one, from an economic point of view, when marketing a purchase decision a consumer attempts to get the greatest value possible from spending the least possible amount of money. In this study, the researcher tries to analyze the impact of the information sources on the sales promotions of the respondents. The sources are categorized as personal sources (Word of mouth through membership in clubs, Friends and relatives, and Co-workers), Public sources (Industry Analysts and Experts) and Commercial Sources (Radio, TV, Magazine, and Newspapers).The present study analysis the FMCGs products like Toiletries, Soft drinks, Health drinks, Cosmetics, household cleaning products

Key words: consumer behavior, information search purchase decision

Introduction

A consumer's decision to purchase a product is influenced by a number of variables which can be classified into four categories, namely psychological, personal, social and cultural. Consumer differs from one another in terms of their sex, age, education, income, family life – cycle stage, personality and lifestyle and other personal characteristics which influence their buying behavior. To successfully market to consumers with different personal characteristics, the marketer must accordingly modify these marketing strategies.

The sources of information are of great importance in consumer behavior as they create awareness among the target audience in the market. A consumer gathers information about the products and services available in the market through these sources. It is a basic character for any consumer to search and gather information from different sources about the product which he intends to purchase with regard to price, quality, brand, durability, availability and any sales promotional offers. The various information sources include family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances or other public sources like experts' opinion or consumers rating organizations. The most effective sources of information are often the personal source or the public sources that are independent authorities. Each source performs a different function in influencing the buying decision. Commercial source normally performs an informative role, whereas personal source performs a legitimizing or evaluation role.

Objectives of the study

❖ **To analyze the influence of various sources of Information on the purchase decision of the customers**

Review of literature

Charle (2007), has found in London Buy-one get one free Promotions (POGOF) have drawn level with TV advertising as the most effective way to get consumers try product. Research among a representative sample of UK shopping populations found that one in four respondents said they had tried a product on the basis of BOGOF activity.

Sethuraman & Tellis (2002) addressed the controversial issue of whether advertising for a brand stimulate on suppress retail price promotion by using an analytical model and an empirical study. The finding supports the informative role of advertising in the context of retail price promotions.

 Chem L. Narayana and Rom Markin (1975) found that "through gathering information, the consumer learns about competing brands and their features. The individual consumer will come to know only a subset of these brands (awareness set.) Some brands will meet initial buying criteria (consideration set) as the person gathers more information, only a few will remain strong contenders (choice set) the brands in the choice set are all acceptable." Hence sources of information have a very vital role in purchase decision making and brand choice behavior by creating awareness about the promotional campaign.

In a study conducted in U.S.A., it was found that male consumers report using promotional cues like advertisements in television, magazines, radio, store displays and sales persons, more frequently than personal sources **(Tammy L Kinley and Raig A.Conrad 2000).**

Sample and data analysis:

The sample size of the study is 500. Simple random sampling method is adopted in this research. The primary data collected from the consumers are analyzed using SPSS package. The study area of the research is Chennai city**.**

Research findings:

Impact of Information Sources on the Purchase Decision of Cosmetics

The impact of information sources on the purchase decision of Cosmetics was analysed using percentage method. Table 1.1 shows the impact of the personal sources, the public sources and the commercial sources on the three sales promotion clusters.

Table 1.1

The Impact of Information Sources on the Purchase Decision of Cosmetics

Cluster	N	Personal Source		Public Source		Commercial Source	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Need recognition cluster	155	3	1.81	-	-	-	-
Domestic purchase cluster	283	16	5.7	7	1.98	18	6.20
Product satisfaction cluster	62	1	2.3	-	-	-	6.90

Source: Primary data

From the table1.1 it is seen that the sources of information do not have much impact in the purchase of cosmetics. The impact of these sources is highly negligible in case of need recognition and the Product satisfaction clusters. The influence of these sources on the Domestic purchase cluster is also not significant. As cosmetics are the least preferred product at home, the purchase decision is not much influenced by any of the above said sources.

Impact of Information Sources on the Purchase Decision of House Hold   Cleaning Products

The influence of information sources on the purchase decision of house hold cleaning products was analyzed using percentage method. Table 1.2 shows the influence of the personal sources, the public sources and the commercial sources on the three sales promotion clusters.

Table 1.2

The Impact of Information Sources on the Purchase Decision of House Hold Cleaning Products

Cluster	N	Personal Source		Public Source		Commercial Source	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Need recognition cluster	155	95	61	39	25.3	106	69
Domestic purchase cluster	283	280	99	85	30.3	215	76
Product satisfaction cluster	62	58	94	17	28.0	47	75

Source: Primary data

From the table 1.2 it can be inferred that the personal sources (co-workers, friends and relatives and club memberships) have a significant influence on all the three clusters. They are also very much influenced by the commercial sources but least influenced by the public sources.

The influence of the personal and the commercial sources on the purchase decision of the house hold cleaning product is further explained in table 1.2.1

Table 1.2.1

The Impact of Personal and Commercial Sources on the Purchase Decision of House Hold Cleaning Products

Cluster	N	Personal Source			Commercial Source			
		Club members hip	Friends & Relatives	Co-workers	Ads in broadcast media	Retailer	Ads in print media	Company Salesmen
Need recognition cluster	155	-	34 (21.7%)	8 (59.3%)	91 (59.3%)	54 (34.8%)	21 (13.6%)	32 (20.8%)
Domestic purchase cluster	283	10 (3.5%)	69 (24.3%)	27 (9.7%)	185 (65.3%)	105 (37.2%)	38 (13.4%)	63(22.3%)
Product satisfaction cluster	62	3 (4.6%)	16 (26.4%)	8 (12.6%)	34 (55.2%)	24 (39.1%)	11 (18.4%)	8 (12.6%)

Source: Primary data

From Table 1.2.1 it can be inferred that within the personal source friends and relatives have a great influence on the purchase decision of house hold cleaning products. Among the commercial source advertisements are a great source of information followed by retailers. The media of information has got a very wide reach and hence has great influence on the purchase decision.

Impact of Information Sources on the Purchase Decision of Toiletries

The influence of information sources on the purchase decision of toiletries was analyzed using percentage method. Table 1.3 shows the influence of the personal sources, the public sources and the commercial sources on the three sales promotion clusters.

Table 1.3

Cluster	N	Personal Source		Public Source		Commercial Source	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Need recognition cluster	155	107	69.2	46	29.4	106	68.3
Domestic purchase cluster	283	237	83.6	86	30.5	187	66
Product satisfaction cluster	62	38	62	14	23	48	77

Source: Primary data

It can be seen from the table 1.3 that the personal source has a great impact on Domestic purchase cluster and the product satisfaction cluster. The purchase oriented cluster is influenced equally by the personal and the commercial sources. The influence of the personal and the commercial sources on the cluster members is further elaborated in table 1.3.1

The Impact of Personal and Commercial Sources on the Purchase Decision of Toiletries
Table 1.3.1

Cluster	N	Personal Source			Commercial Source			
		Club member ship	Friends & Relatives	Co-workers	Ads in broadcast media	Retailer	Ads in print media	Company Salesmen
Need recognition cluster	155	2 (1.4%)	39 (24.9%)	16 (100%)	53 (34.4%)	53 (4.4%)	25 (16.4%)	24 (15.8%)
Domestic purchase cluster	283	1 (0.2%)	66 (23.3%)	25 (8.9%)	145 (51.4%)	98 (34.7%)	30 (10.7%)	82 (20.3%)
Product satisfaction cluster	62	5 (8.01%)	23 (37.9%)	9 (14.9%)	21 (34.5%)	16 (26.4%)	15 (24.1%)	11 (18.4%)

Source: Primary data

In the need recognition cluster, it is seen that commercial sources play an important role in influencing them in making the purchase decision. As these cluster members are highly interested in information seeking, they look out for ads and discount sales before they make their purchase decisions. The domestic purchase cluster members are highly advertisement centered and they are highly influenced by advertisements and friends influence the product satisfaction cluster members in making the purchase decision of Toiletries.

Impact of Information Sources on the Purchase Decision of Health Drinks
The impact of information search on the purchase decision of Health drinks was analyzed using percentage method. Table 1.4 shows the influence of the personal sources, public sources and the commercial sources on the three sales promotion clusters.

Table 1.4

Cluster	N	Personal Source		Public Source		Commercial Source	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Need recognition cluster	155	104	67	42	27.2	26	81
Domestic purchase cluster	283	235	31.1	78	27.5	265	93.8
Product satisfaction cluster	62	52	83.9	4	6.7	53	85.1

Source: Primary data

From table 1.4 it is seen that personal and commercial source have a significant influence on the purchase decision of Health drinks on all three clusters. The influence of the public source on the Need recognition cluster and Domestic purchase cluster is not very significant whereas the influence of these on the product satisfaction cluster is almost negligible.

The influence of the personal and commercial sources is further elaborated in Table 1.4.1
Table 1.4.1

Cluster	N	Personal Source			Commercial Source			
		Club member ship	Friends & Relatives	Co-workers	Ads in broadcast media	Retailer	Ads in print media	Company Salesmen
Need recognition cluster	155	3 (1.8%)	46 (29.4%)	18 (11.3%)	62 (40.3%)	58 (37.6%)	18 (11.3%)	25 (16.3%)
Domestic purchase cluster	283	17 (5.9%)	85 (30.0%)	29 (10.4%)	151 (53.3%)	104 (36.9%)	44 (15.6%)	69 (24.5%)
Product satisfaction cluster	62	8 (13.7%)	12 (19.5%)	6 (9.2%)	34 (55.1%)	21 (34.4%)	10 (16.0%)	13 (20.6%)

Source: Primary data

The table 1.4.1 shows that advertisement in broadcast media and retailers have a significant influence on the purchase decision of health drink in all the three clusters.

Impact of Information Sources on the Purchase Decision of beverages   and Soft Drinks
The influence of the information sources on the purchase decision of beverages and soft drinks was analyzed sing percentage method.

Table1.5

Cluster	N	Personal Source		Public Source		Commercial Source	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Need recognition cluster	155	74	47.5	29	19	74	47.5
Domestic purchase cluster	283	172	60.8	68	24.1	133	47.1
Product satisfaction cluster	62	36	58.6	16	26.4	42	67.8

Source: Primary data

From the table 1.5 it is seen that the need recognition cluster in equally influenced by the personal and commercial sources of information while making a purchase decision of beverages and soft drinks The domestic purchase cluster members are influenced by the personal sources whereas the product satisfaction cluster member are highly influenced by the commercial sources.

The influence of personal and commercial sources is further elaborated in Table 1.5.1

Table1.5.1

Cluster	N	Personal Source			Commercial Source			
		Club member ship	Friends & Relatives	Co-workers	Ads in broadcast media	Retailer	Ads in print media	Company Salesmen
Need recognition cluster	155	2 (1.4%)	22 (14.5%)	11 (6.8%)	41 (26.2%)	39 (25.3%)	18 (11.8%)	21 (36.6%)
Domestic purchase cluster	283	1 (0.04%)	48 (17.1%)	23 (8.2%)	100 (35.5%)	56 (19.9%)	27 (9.7%)	44 (15.4%)
Product satisfaction cluster	62	8 (12.6%)	17 (27.6%)	4 (5.7%)	16 (23.3%)	22 (32.2%)	9 (14.9%)	12 (19.5%)

It can be seen from the table 1.5.1 that the three cluster members are influenced by personal and commercial sources to the same extent. The personal and the commercial sources have a significant influence on the three cluster members in the purchase of house hold cleaning products, the Toiletries and Health drink, except club membership. The influence of personal and commercial sources on the purchase decision of cosmetics and beverages and soft drinks is not very significant. The public sources have a very negligible influence on the purchase decision of the selected FMCGs.

Opinion of consumers relating to the role played by sources of Information on purchase decision:
The consumers are requested to rank the role played by the various sources of information through which they came to know about the sales promotions offered by a company regarding FMCG products. They are able to rank the role on a scale of one to five, with rank being the top and tank 5 being the least. It is found that through offers are made by the marketers, unless they are communicated well to the consumers, they cannot take advantage of the offers. Therefore their opinion is sought and interpreted in the following manner.

Role played by Information Sources (Mean Value)

Table 2.1

INFORMATION SOURCE	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Advertisements in print media	500	3.880	.85611	.03829
Personal Selling	500	3.6620	.97656	.04367
Membership in clubs	500	3.5360	.95841	.04286
Relatives &Friends	500	3.6400	.93603	.04186
Co-workers	500	3.1820	.90028	.04026
Advertisements in Broadcast media	500	4.2240	.67434	.03016
Retailer	500	4.0760	.72164	.03272

From the above table it is found that the mean values are information received through the retailer (mean=4.070, personal salesmen (mean=3.66), friends and relative (mean=3.645), advertisement in Broadcast media (mean=4.22), Advertisements in print media (mean=3.88), and membership of social clubs (mean= 3.53) and co-workers (mean= 3.18), which is significant with respect to test value3.

Role played by Information Sources ('t' Value)

Table 2.2

INFORMATION SOURCE	Test value=3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-taileed)	Mean difference	95% confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
SE1	23.194	499	.000	.88800	.8128	.9632
SE2	15.158	499	.000	.66200	.5762	.7478
SE3	12.505	499	.000	.53600	.4518	.6202
SE4	15.289	499	.000	.64000	.5548	.7222
SE5	40.587	499	.000	1.22400	1.1647	1.2833
SE6	32.885	499	.000	1.07600	1.0117	1.1403

Table 2.2 shows that 't' test values are 23.194, 15.158, 12.505, 15.289, 40.587, 32.885 which are positive and significant at 5%level therefore it can be concluded that the FMCG consumers in Chennai city have ranked advertisements in broadcast media first, retailers as second, advertisement in print media as third sales persons as fourth, friends and relatives as fifth and lastly, membership in social clubs the sixth rank. So it can be inferred that advertisement in different media and retailers play a strong role in creating awareness among consumers.

Findings of the study:
- Advertisement, company salesmen and Retailers, have a significant influence on the purchase decision of selected consumer goods. The extent of influence varies with the type of goods and the consumer segment. There does not seem to be a significant impact on friends and relatives on the purchase decision of consumers.
- The Household cleaning product is perceived to be the most needed product followed by toiletries and health drinks. Beverages and soft drinks are felt needed, though not much. Cosmetics are the least required FMCG product by the consumers.

- Offers (which include free gifts, coupons, buy one –get one free, free samples) are considered the most preferred sales promotional tools for household cleaning products, toiletries, and health drinks. Discounts are preferred by a majority of consumers of cosmetics. Consumers of beverages and soft drinks prefer discounts, and banded pack offers.
- Personal sources and commercial sources significantly influence the consumer in the purchase decision of household cleaning products, toiletries, and health drinks. These sources, though they do have an influence on the purchase decision of cosmetics, beverages and soft drinks, the influence is not very significant. The public sources have a very negligible influence on the purchase decision of the selected FMCGs.

Suggestions:

As the study reveals that the personal and commercial sources have a significant influence on the three cluster members in the purchase of FMCGs, the marketers should concentrate on aspects which do not attract the consumers in sales promotion campaign.

The marketers can identify from the analysis of sales promotion strategies that of all the information sources, advertisement in different media and retailers, play a major role in creating and enhancing awareness about the products which are offered on promotion. So, marketers need to concentrate more on these sources.

Conclusion

This study completely enumerated the consumer's perception towards sales promotional strategies in the light of demographic variables of selected consumer belonging to the different clusters.

From the study, it is concluded that the advertisement has a significant influence on the purchase decision of the FMCGs among the domestic purchase cluster members. The personal selling and retailers significantly influence the product satisfaction cluster. The need recognition cluster is moderately influenced by all the three factors namely the Advertisements, the personal selling, and the Retailers. The friends and relatives have a very low influence on the purchase decision of the selected FMCGs.

On analyzing the perception of the consumers regarding the need for the products at home, it was found that hold cleaning products is perceived to be the most needed product, followed by the Toiletries and Health drinks. Beverages and soft drinks are the required product, and cosmetics are the least required product.

On analyzing the opinion of the consumers on the most preferred sales promotional strategy for FMCG products, among the cluster members, it was found that there is not much differences in the opinion among the three clusters. It is seen that the respondents among all the three clusters are preferred on offers. Cosmetic on discounts, beverages and soft drinks is preferred as a discounts product by the need recognition and the domestic purchase cluster but it is preferred as Banded-pack product by the product satisfaction cluster members.

From the analysis of the impact of the information sources on the purchase decision the FMCGs it can be concluded that the personal sources and commercial sources have a significant influence on the purchase decision of the FMCGs. The public sources have a negligible influence on the purchase decision. But in the personal sources, membership in clubs dose not play a significant role, which may be because the sample respondents, expect a few do not belong to any social clubs.

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