



A STUDY ON CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS AIR CONDITIONERS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SIVAGANGAI

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INTRODUCTION

The Marketing scenario in the world today is changing very rapidly. The boundaries of nations are disappearing for exploiting the opportunities of business. Technological changes are taking place at the flash of an eye and standards are undergoing changes in time. Buying habits of the consumers are fast varying and so are the fortunes of various organizations.

An organization with an excellent track record suddenly finds its products obsolete, its unparallel consumer base eroded and its financial resources depleted. In order to sustain in such an environment, an organization needs to anticipate the only a scarce resource, but also a competitive weapon. The marketer must move faster, quicker and swifter to thrive in these turbulent times. Companies have to react with speed to competitive moves of the rivals (Prem C. Purwar: 1991). The marketing of products is becoming a more and more complex process in the context of globalization, liberalization, and privatization and modernization policy of the Government.

The challenge before marketing managers is twofold.

- i) How to fight competition and maintain the market share?
- ii) how to exploit the opportunities, establish customer base and retain the customer loyalty?

In order to face the above challenges there is a need for new methods of approaching the consumers by studying about the consumers buying behaviour in general and their buying patterns and preferences in particular.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The perception of consumers is of great importance for marketers and this knowledge is applied to find out the consumers wants and needs. In India, consumer legislations since 1960 have created special interest in this subject. The main point for developing successful marketing strategy is a clear understanding of the consumers mind before, during and after a purchase. As all consumers are not alike and their shopping patterns and preferences are constantly changing, they prefer varieties of products which reflect their own needs, personalities and life styles. (Alba, Joseph. W. et al: 2000).

After globalization, a wide range of Consumer Household Electronic Products started flooding the market. The products, which were the presence of upper class during the eighties, have suddenly started thronging the middle – income group households. The focus of everyone's attention is shifted towards owning these gadgets and the very social status of the family has come to be assessed by the possession of these assets. A noteworthy development of the nineties is that even the low income groups have started acquiring a wide range of Consumer Household Electronic Products.

The changing concept of retail business into 'retail in detail', emergence of giant sized retail business in the name of malls and the government's policy to allow foreign direct investment in retail business also change the life style and the buying patterns and preferences of the consumers in India. (Herr,P.M. et al: 1991). In this context the consumer is confronted with a complex set of alternatives in many purchase situations. The consumers has to choose the products and product classes from many varieties worth his money and efforts. Again from each product category he has to make selection from different size, colour, model and brands.

The consumer has also to take decision about when and where to buy the products that he needs or wants. How much the consumer wants to spend on it, or how much the consumer can afford to and how the consumer will pay for it. some purchase decisions are routines and may not require these considerations. Other purchase situations may be more complex.

In other cases considerations regarding status and prestige are also important. Many product purchase may require the evaluation of a variety of economic, Social, and psychological factors. To solve the problems of consumers and marketers, there must be continuous studies in the field of consumer buying behaviours. Hence this study is carried out to understand to the perception of Consumer Household Electronic Products and preferences in Sivagangai District.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anisimova Tatiana Anatolevena (2007), has examined the effects of corporate brand creation and it's impact on consumer behaviour for consumer durables. An absolute in-depth analysis with 80 pages questionnaire has been executed with the help of seven point likerts scale. Various variables like corporate activities, corporate associations, corporate activities, corporate association, corporate values, corporate personality, technology, advancement and technology sophistication has been into consideration. An attempt of

establishing co-relation between corporate marketing with consumer perception has been made and to certain extent it has been established. The study clearly reflects that corporate activities and practices play a very vital role in creating corporate brand which ultimately convert into consumer brand loyalty. The result shows that there is direct relationship between corporate activities and corporate image association in the consumer's memory and consumer loyalty. Furthermore, attitudinal and behavioural loyalty can be increased through enhancing consumer personal representation, in the brand communication and consumer experience. Core values which are reflected in the mission and vision of the organisation also having impact in consumer image about the corporate as well as brand. An important implication therefore is that beyond conventional marketing mix consumer durable manufactures should raise consumer awareness of their core values an organizational culture. Lastly, it shows the result in the form of clear cut relationship between brand functionality and consumer evaluation of durable products.

Bhagaban Das, Mohanty Sangeeta, Nikhill (2008) reveals that television brand selection is very complex process, which is highly depending upon word of mouth publicity and additional information available for brand or product. On the basis of survey of 80 respondents it was found that sound quality and brand image are the leading factors taken into account by consumers. Surprisingly, there is no impact of sales promotion to in the form of discount or any other scheme. Durability of the product, in-built stabilizer for protecting television from voltage change and nearby dealer are secondary factors in selecting television brands. The conclusion has been obtained with factor analysis. Good brand image is the ultimate criteria across all the sections. It is suggested by them that offering free direct to home connection might be most effective sales promotion tool.

Bijapurkar Rama (2007) has nicely explained the concept of bottom of pyramid with reference to Indian consumers. The size of bottom of pyramid market in India is very large and one can't afford to ignore them in any cases it makes one third of the total consumption expenses and one fifth of the savings. The purchasing power of the rural consumer of India is low but its size makes it. Still in India a dollar per day is to be considered as sufficient amount for the average family of India. The affordability of the chief wage earner of the family may be extended to second hand mobile and television set and small dwelling in short time of six months. Hence the affordability is not the prime issue for rural consumers. Marketers are required to go for sensible investment in the appropriate brand building and in creation of brand loyalty by finding right business models for urban and rural poor or bottom of the pyramid customers. The rural consumers are showing very positive and favourable changes in their attitude after liberalization which responsible due to enhancement of educational level. The rural consumers are poor but not backward. As the rural consumers are becoming struggling and aspiring for better life and stretch themselves for better environment. The most important and disturbing fact has been brought in as well as to the marketer adversely in development of marketing infrastructure. More than two lacks villages are without shops and seventeen percentages of villages covering more than half of rural population which indicates the inability of the marketers to serve the consumers of hinterland. Creating perceived value advantage for consumers and customers who have modest incomes but are not backward in their thinking and their aspirations, especially in an environment where innovative direct competition exist and offers low costs and high benefits offering.

Broadbridge Adelina and Marshall Julie (1995), conducted a study of consumer complaint behaviour with 124 respondents reveals that just 4 % respondents are satisfied with the complaint resolution system of consumer durable companies. Nearly 1/3rd are satisfied with the efforts made by marketers, but 44% are of the opinion that marketers are not taking appropriate action for resolving complaints of consumer. Consumer complaint behaviour having direct impact on store patronage and affects store's loyalty.

Krishnamurthy (2011) had suggested that one should keep brand name of product which are easy to pronounce, easy to recognise amongst other brands and easy to remember (colour combination) for success in the rural market one should resembles the brand name with numbers or famous animal or famous animal or symbol to make brand awareness amongst less literate people of hinterland which in turn into Brand Loyalty in long run.

Krishnan (2002) presents details about the panel discussion organized by strategic marketing where the issues like the changing profile of the rural consumer, reach and effectiveness of media and distribution problems were discussed. It was stated that according to one study, if the rural income in India goes up by 1 %, there would be a corresponding increase of about Rs. 10,000 cr in the buying power. On the other hand, the urban sector has shown little signs of growth in the last 12 months. It is a fact that unlike a few years ago, the rural youth today is playing a far more significant role in influencing the purchase of radios, television sets (black and white as well as color). Penetration level of consumer durables in the rural woman is coming out of the closet. The youth have certainly begun to play a role in selecting a brand in certain product categories. Studies suggest that the rural youth is playing an important role in purchase decisions. They are the real drivers of the rural market. The B & W television industry is shrinking. If color television is termed as a luxury item, rural people are migrating towards color televisions. But when other high-end electronic goods such as the CD player market are considered, these really have not yet found entry into the rural market. It is still an analogue industry. Amazing quantity of radios are sold in the rural market.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study aims at analysing consumer perception and preferences towards Household Electronic Consumer Products. The products selected for the study are Electronic Consumer Products which include Refrigerator, washing Machine, Television, Air-Conditioner and Microwave oven. The scope of the study has been limited to certain buying behavioural aspects of purchase decision process, namely- Information search, product awareness, interest, product evaluation process, brand preference, factors of motivation, price and quality consciousness, purchase and post purchase behaviour. The study broadly aims at examining perception of the consumers mainly in terms of the information gathered, sources of information, location where the purchase is made and the ultimate purchase decision.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the factors motivating the consumers to buy household Air conditioners.

2. To study the factor influencing the purchase decision process of consumers for household Air conditioners.
3. To analyse the level of satisfaction and factors contributed in the purchase and utilization of Air conditioners.
4. To find out the problem faced by the consumers in the purchase and utilization of the household electronic products and offer suitable suggestions there in.
5. To recapitulate the key findings of the study and to offer suitable suggestions to the consumers, product manufactures and respective Governments.

PERIOD OF THE STUDY

The primary data were collected for a period of two years from the respondents covering all the six taluks of Sivagangai District of Tamil Nadu. Web Resources were also referred to collect the latest information about the performance of consumers. The review of literature took six months period. The analysis and interpretation of the data were taken another six months. The last six months period was used for rough drafting and final form of the thesis.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study into account certain factors influencing the purchase decision process.

1. The Universe for the study is Sivagangai District; therefore findings are applicable for the district. However, some of the findings may be applicable to other areas, with care to take into account the local condition. The methodology is replicable.

2. The sample is small but it is selected by random sampling method and it is sufficient to meet the requirements of statistical analysis. Therefore, results are valid in terms of precision of estimates and allowed their generalization to the universe for the study.

3. The study is based on primary data collected from a sample of consumers who are experienced in utilizing the household electronic products. The data included also qualitative information i.e., satisfaction of the respondents. Personal interview technique of data collection helped to minimize response errors. The limitations of tools analysis were kept in mind while evaluating the estimated parameters and their implications.

4. Individual products are not selected for the study. Individual products are not the study. Individual name of the brands are not taken for study. The study focuses mainly on the factors influencing the buying behaviour of consumers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The validity of any research depends on the systematic method of collecting the data and analyzing the same in a logical and sequential order. The study is descriptive and analytical in nature.

DATA COLLECTION

i) Primary Data

In order to fulfil the objectives set, a sample study was undertaken by using a well framed questionnaire that was duly filled in by the respondents. The respondents with varying backgrounds were selected based on the important aspects of their living area, age, gender, educational status, marital status, present status, income of the respondents filled the questionnaire with much zeal. This was due to the significant level of literacy among the respondents and the researcher's rapport established with them.

ii) Secondary Data

The primary data were supplemented by a spate of secondary sources of data. The secondary data pertaining to the study was gathered from the records published by National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER). Latest information was gathered from well equipped libraries in sivagangai district and from Internet web resources. Further, the secondary data were also collected from various leading journals inclusive and exclusive of household electronic products. A number of standard text books were to obtain pertinent literature on household electronic industry.

AREA OF THE STUDY

The present study is confined to the Brand preference of Air conditioner in Sivagangai Town.

TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

The data collected have been organized and presented in the form of tables, figures and diagrams. Various statistical technique like chi-square test, have been adopted for the analysis.

In order to identify the factor buying Air conditioner chi-square test was applied.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of studying the level of satisfaction in utilizing the Air conditioners, the following null hypothesis has been framed:

There is no significant relationship between socio-economic factors and conceptual factors and their level of satisfaction in utilizing the Air conditioner.

REFERENCE

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