

DYNAMICS OF FEMALE BUYING BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

Consumer market for fashion apparel has become more varied by in surge of designer brands, store brands, personalization, customs and advertisement in the global market place of today. A clear understanding of preferences of consumers will help the marketer to attract and maintain their target consumer group. The purpose of this study is to examine Indian female consumers buying behavior and deeply understand the key factors of their purchase behavior which influence female consumers' involvement towards stylish branded clothing to casual wears. It was found in the study that there is a complete awareness of the branded apparels amongst females and their shopping behavior reflect that they buy these products occasionally. Females have particular perspectives and motives behind their purchases. The most important source of information was found to be family and friends followed by internet and advertisement. It is observed in the study that Price, Fitting, Income Level of consumers are significant factors and some factors which are found to be insignificant are Status, Durability, and celebrity endorsement, hence can be ignored by the apparel retailers in their efforts to tap and capture the market. As a retailer of apparels, all these insights have to be embedded in the policy formulation to make the purchases a real time customer delight.

Keywords: Consumer behavior; attitude, values, motivation, customer loyalty, impulse buying, decision making.

INTRODUCTION

India is a diverse country with different cultures, cast and creed. Therefore, the choice is also differ from person to person. Today, the consumption is no more a process due to the need of consumers but, in accordance with the wishes of consumers has become an

evolving process. Therefore in terms of marketing, consumer behavior in order to define their influence has become necessary to examine the factors that remain. The process of the human consumption which has been presented from the beginning was initially an activity that must be fulfilled for the rest of life, whereas today, it has been the goal of life. In this study, concepts such as influences, preference, and buying behavior are classified and discussed in detail. The preference and buying behavior changes from individual to individual due to various factors such as personal preference, culture, tradition, occasion and other factors like economic, influence of reference group. As a result, the female buying behavior has changed from individual to individual.

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The objective of this paper is to gain insights of female consumer behavior. This information will be imperative in strategy formulation and gain from the situation which is instrumental in increasing the turnover. This segment of society is very important group amongst all the groups in the society because major purchases in the family, is either done for her own use as a consumer and rest of them for the family as a customer. This makes it all the more important to understand her psychology & her mindset.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To satisfy the needs and wants of the target customer is the main objective of marketing. Consumer behavior is a subject that deals with the factors that affect the buying behavior of a consumer. It gives a clear idea that how consumer select, buy, use and dispose of product, service, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.(Kotler, 2003). Kotler and Armstrong (2001) conducted a study to find out the answers to the following queries- what consumers buy, how they buy, what and from where they buy, etc. Consumer purchases are influenced strongly by cultural social, personal and psychological characteristics. For most of the factors, the marketers cannot control them, but they account it to take before making any decision. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001). The consumer decision making process does not occur in vacuum. On the contrary, the underlying cultural, social, individual and psychological factors strongly influence the decision process. (Lamb et al., 2002.). The starting point of understanding buying behavior is the stimulus response model. Marketing and environment stimuli enter the buyer's consciousness. There are several literatures available in favor of these factors as an influential constituent of the buying decision made by the consumers. Sex or gender has been considered as an important cultural component. In every society, we find products that are both exclusively and strongly associated with gender. It is, therefore, worthy enough to fit gender in the category of sub-culture. (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1996). Age has been found to affect the consumption pattern of products and service because of difference in demand. (Hawkins et al., 2001). We have come across the number of studies done in international level on behavioral aspect of consumers in the context of retail marketing. The various factors influencing people's shopping behavior have been observed by Reichheld (1996), Verdisco (1999) and Erika (1999). As customers expectation move continuously upward, it is imperative for the retailers to avoid the complaints which invariably lead to customer dissatisfaction. Berry (1996), Brookman (1998) and Jackson (1999) have identified situations which result consumer's dissatisfaction towards retail brands. Some studies have also found consumer loyalty as an important area. Connors (1996) opined the retailers delivering genuine benefits based

on intimate knowledge of their customers could only reap the ultimate benefit i.e., greater customer loyalty. Thus, consumer's buying behavior has drawn a considerable attention of the earlier researchers. Its impact on designing marketing strategies also became the part of a sizeable number of studies. According to certain research, shopping is a gendered activity and it is women who to the largest extent go shopping. (Dholakia, 1999) To describe shopping as a gendered activity can however be an oversimplification. Despite this fact, there are still some general differences between the female and male shopping behavior. A common stereotype about men and shopping is that men enter one store, buy what they need, and then quickly leave. Shopping has for long been associated with the domestic sphere. According, to gender role attitudes been regarded as a feminine activity. Women see clothes as a mean for self-identity, whereas men focus more on functional benefits. (McGrath & Otnes, 2001). The word shopping obviously contains all sorts of goods but compared to for instance grocery shopping, clothes shopping is considered to be more attractive. It is a break from the normal routine and it is an opportunity for fantasy and self-expression. Shopping for clothes is considered recreational, satisfying and rewarding. For women shopping for clothing is a strictly individualized responsibility. Women claim shopping more than men and see shopping as something important. Since, women see shopping as something recreational, it is important to emphasize the hedonic and experiential attributes of shopping. (Dholakia, 1999) shop as men and the typical window-shopper is a woman. (Kuruvilla, Nidhi & Nishank, 2009). Men and women think differently, and these gender-specific brain differences show a significant effect on how the individual absorb, process and retain information. When women make buying decisions they include many kind of senses and see a bigger picture. Women can easier take in more and different kind of information from the environment than men do. Women are interactive in their shopping style and like to carefully try on, test and sample products before they buy them. Women seldom see things and buy them. Before they make the purchase they are usually engaged in a decision-making process. They may come across the product a few times, think about it, research it, ask their friends and then start the process all over again. Women value unique products and brands that they can use to define their individuality. Females

actively seek new styles and fashion trends to a larger extent than men. Women are more sensitive to clothing needs and possess a greater clothing awareness than men. (Adjei, Griffith & Noble, 2006). Emotion and identity-related dimensions of shopping were reported to be more important for women than men (Dittmar, Long and Meek, 2004). Women seemed to have positive attitudes towards browsing, shopping, and social interaction, perceiving the act of buying as a leisure activity (Campbell, 2000). Dittmar and Drury (2000) have also determined that shopping plays a stronger emotional, psychological and symbolic role for women compared with men. The work of O'Guinn and Faber (1989, 1992) found that women tend to score higher as compulsive buyers. d'Astous (1990) and Scherhorn et al. (1990) have stated similar findings indicating women to have higher compulsive buying tendencies. In these studies, women were observed to be more apt to view dysfunctional purchasing behaviors as normal. In contrast, Block and Morwitz (1999) argued that females will exhibit lower levels of compulsive buying tendencies. Indian male consumers' apparel selection is significantly influenced by brand-related criteria; Indian female consumers demonstrate an equal degree of disinterest in brands (Mohan and Gupta, 2007). As previously mentioned, women in India continue to prefer traditional dress for most usage contexts including work and social/familial contexts. Due to the slow shift in consumer adoption of Western apparel, gaining market share in the women's wear segment has posed a challenge for international apparel brands and retailers (Batra and Niehm, 2009). Indian ethnic garments and garments mixing ethnic and western styling dominate the ready-to-wear market for Indian women. International retail firms in this sector face competition from numerous local designers, and to be successful they need to offer a culturally relevant product that is connected with Indian tradition. A recent survey of Indian women employed in the IT sector revealed that although a majority of women preferred to wear a mix of traditional Indian, Indian-inspired, and Western apparel to work, Western apparel was the main preference at home or during casual gatherings with friends (Halepete and Chattaraman, 2008). However, according to the same study, during social and family gatherings a majority of the women preferred traditional Indian apparel.

Researchers are hence proposing that international retailers who address the needs of professional women in India will demonstrate greater profitability (Batra and Niehm, 2009). However, this proposition needs to be verified through market data. With respect to factors influencing apparel selection, Indian female consumers are best categorized as style-design seekers represented through three clusters (Mohan and Gupta, 2007). These consumers' frequent designer boutiques and are willing to buy from small and less well known boutiques owing to their quality assessment consciousness. With respect to shopping behavior, these consumers often shop alone and for extended durations (Mohan and Gupta, 2007). While disposable incomes have been growing among middle-class Indian consumers, disposable time has been on a decline, or as one author put it, Indian consumers are "money-rich" and "time-poor" (Sengupta, 2008). As a result, consumers prefer different retail formats than they did a few years ago. In a research conducted by Cobb and Hoyer (1986), impulse buying was defined as an unplanned purchase and this definition can also be found in the research of Kollat and Willett (1967). Shopping lifestyle is defined as the behavior exhibited by purchaser with regard to the series of personal responses and opinions about purchase of the products as reported by Cobb and Hoyer (1986). When a field is not completely covered, the study will be of an exploratory character. The purpose with this type of study is to gather as much information as possible about a certain problem area. (Patel & Davidson, 2003) This type of study is very useful in order to find out which questions are of relevance for the examination, and which type of information that is possible to obtain. (Lekvall & Wahlbin, 2001). A descriptive study is a study that seeks information about specific situations. The term mapping is often used in this context. An example of a descriptive study is to describe a market in terms of its size, structure, existing products etc. The aim is often to describe the way things are without trying to explain why. (Lekvall & Wahlbin, 2001).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Various aspects of consumer's buying behavior is an important area of study for researchers around the world. In addition to the existing literature, the present study tries

to focus on the aspect from a different angle, where the buying behavior of employed and unemployed women in urban India has been captured.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Buying behavior of the consumer has been shown through their price consciousness, understanding about the quality of the product, fashion consciousness, brand loyalty, liking of particular store and the convenience. Both primary and secondary data have been used to conduct the study. Various government reports and proceedings were consulted to collect the published data. The marketers must carefully monitor the socio-economic environment in order to market and existing product many factors are likely to produce cultural changes within a given society (new technology, population shift, resource shortages, changing values, customs borrowed from other cultures). The research was restricted with women and the study was focusing on their purchasing behavior and the demand raised accordingly. Being a woman, I have kept some questions by keeping in mind that what can be the problems faced by women in selecting the best among the variety of clothes. My objective of the study was achieved by getting the results through questionnaire. The answers reflected the women's psychology of buying clothes and how they deal with the purchasing behavior, I have found that the purchasing decision was made by keeping the fact in mind that what kind of apparel a person wants.

FINDINGS

A survey has been conducted with the help of a structured questionnaire through direct interview method. The buying behavior of working and non-working women have been measured through certain indicators, measured in categorical scale. The probable socio-economic variables are measured in both nominal and categorical scale. The questionnaire reflected the result in the same way in which I have taken the survey, the questions selected for the survey has shown the real impact of the study. I have found that, women tend to spend more money nowadays compare to previous era. As of because, nowadays women are working in multi-national companies, schools, political parties, etc. and they require apparels according to their working field. According to the

survey and the data analysis, it is clear that; purchasing behavior of a women also depends upon their age groups, as it is been shown in the report that women of different age groups purchase clothes according to their needs. Also, the study shows that what kind of clothes being chosen by them. In total, women buying behavior is also based on the age, profession, preferences, quality, etc. these are the factors upon which they make decisions. Mostly working women like to use branded western and Indo-western mix design garment. It is also related to the growing purchasing power of middle-class families. Most of the women prefer to purchase light shades of the cloth. Most of the women given preference to purchase ready-made garment but middle age women always prefer to stitch the garment according to their comfort. Young generation is more conscious about fashion trends as compare to other categories

In whole study, I have learned that it also depends that how much your pocket allows to spend money on clothes. Also if we see, today's women keeping a command on their professional lives as well as their family and keeping in mind that they have to dress accordingly, so they have to be choosy while purchasing anything and specially their apparels. So, they study showed that dynamics of women buying behavior her reflects that it is totally depends upon the women's profession, their preferences and age group does matter and all factors involves into the buying decision.

CONCLUSION

Globally, women have been found to be great spenders. They are not only buyers or consumers but they are influencers too. They have a great influence on all the other segments as well and thus they cannot be ignored by marketers. A great transformation has been seen among women globally and particularly in India. Indian women are slowly and gradually moving up the ladder in the higher bureaucracies of many businesses. They are excelling academically and they hold positions of power across various industries. Their earnings have risen and they have found a new sense of freedom and independence. In order to be able to handle their personal and professional responsibilities well, they need to feel confident. Women derive a lot of confidence by grooming themselves and for that, they rely on an array of products and services which help them achieve their goal

of enhancing their appearance and personality. Apparels, footwear, accessories, jewelry etc. are the products that help women to look and feel good. Beauty parlors, spas and gymnasiums deals with their need of grooming, good health (wellness) and fitness. This study is in continuation to research studies in the area of women consumers buying behavior with respect to apparels, footwear and beauty services. In this particular paper, we had tried to find out aspects of general shopping behavior of women and if there is an association of age with certain variables of general shopping behavior. We could conclude that urban working women are not influenced by advertisements. It was also found out that credit card usage has not penetrated enough among the women populace as expected. Promotional efforts by banks in this direction could help increase usage by promoting benefits of using credit cards. It was also found that a great majority of women like to spend on personality enhancing products which suggests that there is a great need among women to look good and feel confident as these products helps increase their self-image and self-esteem levels. Another aspect which we tried to explore was association of age with certain variables of shopping behavior such as influence of advertisements, credit card usage and preference to spend on personality enhancing products. It was found that there is significant association between age and the mentioned variables. It was found through thorough literature review that there are few qualities of women that women consumers possess that would prove to be very beneficial for marketers. Firstly, they are great shoppers and spenders. Secondly, the right marketing communication and promotional messages targeting them can work wonders for any business as women attach a lot of importance to communication. Thirdly, women consumers possess the 'multiplier effect' meaning they pass on positive word of mouth to all they are in touch with, if they are satisfied with any product/ service. It is therefore imperative for marketers to focus their marketing efforts on women consumers in order to reap rich harvests for their businesses. The study on customer buying behavior of women's in purchasing garment. Many factor are involved in female buying behavior and show the real imp act on the customers in this particular geographical area. Women's generally purchase apparels during festivals and special occasions. Women's have the tendency to buy clothes on festivals and special occasions as they feel. It is the time that they can look

the best on festive seasons because of availability of latest styles and able to get festival's special offers and discounts also. Consumer market for fashion apparel has become more varied by in surge of designer brands, store brands, personalization, customs and advertisement in the global market place of today. From the above analysis it is clear that females have particular perspectives and motives behind their purchases. The present study conducted an investigation of attributes of shopping designer apparel among consumers in India mainly centric to urban females with a sample of about 150 females across diverse groups. It was found in the study that there is a complete awareness of the branded apparels amongst females and their shopping behavior reflect that they buy these products occasionally. The most important source of information was found to be family and friends followed by internet and advertisement. It is observed in the study that Price, Fitting, Income Level of consumers are significant factors and females have distinctive appeal for these factors in distinctive apparel shopping behavior and should be considered seriously by apparel retailers in strategy formulation while giving critical importance to these factors. There are some factors which are found to be insignificant like Status, Durability, and celebrity endorsement, hence can be ignored by the apparel retailers in their efforts to tap and capture the market.

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