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Gender sensitivity with respect to consumer buying practices in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Majority of Indian consumers are ignorant and do not know the role of consumption viz-a viz economic system. The entire marketing operation is aimed at profit maximization at the expense of consuming people. The present study was conducted in Himachal Pradesh. A multistage random sampling technique with stratification at the household level was adopted to select sample area by the use of proportional allocation method. An equal number of males and females (Total sample 100) were selected as the respondents for the study. The study revealed that female respondents were more particular to make shopping list and plan budget than male respondents. Majority of respondents read labels for expiry, manufacturing date, trade mark and price tag. Instruction for use of product, maintenance, and safety measures were followed by buyers. After buying the product majority of the females took the cash memo (64 %) 'always' and checked it (72 %) before making payments but the males were not so much conscious about the same.

Key words: Consumer, buying practices, goods, purchase.

Introduction

With the urbanization, industrialization and wider access of varieties of goods and changing purchasing power, it has become difficult for the consumers to make a judicious choice. Homemakers are consumers in an economic and marketing system. Whenever the term consumer is mentioned, it is taken for granted that consumer is male though in reality, women play the role of principle decision maker in the process of buying goods and services for the family development. They create demand for a variety of materials needed at home. Thus there is great need for creating awareness amongst the urban as well as rural homemakers with market situation, so that they could make intelligent choice while purchasing. Consumers have been identified as the most important agents for all the techno-economic activities in the society. The consumer has every right to reject any product or services rendered by any manufacturer in the market and can mou'd them to produce goods of their choice (According to the Tribune News service, May 16, 1998). Buying habits have been studied by producers to meet consumer demands. Goods buying practices/habits promote intelligent consumption; economize time, energy, money and effort. The growing demand for consumer goods can have stimulating effect on the whole economy. Thus, there is great need to make aware consumers with the market situation, so that they could make intelligent choice while making purchases. In the light of the above mentioned facts, the current study has been undertaken to know the buying practices followed by consumers in the study area.

Materials and Methods

Descriptive type of research design was considered to achieve the objectives of present investigation. Structured interview schedule was used to record the data. A multistage random sampling technique with stratification at the household level was adopted to select sample commensurate with the set objectives and information available, various analytical tools were employed for the analysis and interpretation of the data. The scoring of buying practices while purchases were carried out for concluding results. The answers to buying practices were sought in three point continuum scale (always, sometimes and never).

Results and Discussion

Personal characteristics of the respondents included age, education level and occupation. Data revealed that majority of the respondents (63%) including both male (70 %) and female (56 %) belonged to the age group of 36 to 50 years. Least number of respondents i.e. 20 per cent males and 4 per cent females belonged to the age group above 50 years. Educational level of respondents showed that majority of respondents

were graduate (63%) followed by higher secondary (19%) and post graduate (17 %). Only meager number of respondents were found to be illiterate. Regarding occupation of the respondents data highlighted that majority of the respondents (45%) were government employee followed by 34 per cent not gainfully employed respondents which included maximum women respondents were in business profession and 10 per cent were in private services.

Buying practices of the respondents

Buying is the just and foremost function of the economy. It involves the practices followed before buying, while buying and after buying.

Table 1. Personal characteristics of the respondents (N-100)

Sr. No.	Particular	Male	Female	Total
1.	Age (year)			
	Below 35	5 (10)	20 (40)	25 (25)
	36-50	35 (70)	28 (56)	63 (63)
	Above 50	10 (20)	2 (4)	12 (12)
2.	Education			
	Illiterate	0	1 (2)	1 (1)
	Higher Sec.	6 (12)	13 (26)	19 (19)
	Graduate	27 (54)	36 (72)	63 (63)
	Post graduate	17 (34)	-	17 (17)
3.	Occupation			
	Government service	38 (76)	7 (14)	45 (45)
	Private service	5 (10)	5 (10)	10 (10)
	Business	7 (14)	4 (8)	11 (11)
	Not gainfully employed	-	34 (68)	34 (34)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages of total sample in each category

Practices followed before buying

Consumer behaviour was highly dependent on demographic, cultural, economic trends as reported by Becker *et al.* (1996). Table 2 depicts that 46 per cent male 'sometimes' and about one - half of females 'always' prepared list before going to the market. Sixty per cent males and 54 per cent females 'sometimes' compared brands of the product. Fifty two per cent males and sixty percent females 'always' preferred to buy from company's retail shop and majority of male (46%) and female (34%) 'never' liked to buy from any shop. Majority of male (90 %) and female (86 %) respondents decided to go to market at least crowded time. A study conducted by Ravichandran (1998) revealed that 70 per cent of customers purchased as and when required which included stationeries, groceries, cereals and vegetables.

Budget of expenditure was made by 80 percent male and 90 per cent female respondents. Thus it can be seen that both male and female buyers make budget in order to fulfill their present needs; to avoid inflation of prices of commodities so as to make living reasonably comfortable and to enjoy the luxuries within the limited means.

Buying practices while purchasing

It can be inferred from Table 3 that while purchasing, 44 per cent male and 50 per cent female respondents 'always' compared shops to get the right product at reasonable price. This finding is supported by Herrmann (1996). Before final selection of product forty six per cent males 'always' and 52 per cent females 'sometimes' looked for ISI mark; (52%) male and (48%) females 'sometimes' looked for ISI mark; 52 percent male and 48 per cent females sometimes looked for 'Ag mark' whereas 48 per cent males 'sometimes and the same percentage of females 'never' looked for sanforized mark. Majority of respondents read labels for expiry and manufacturing date, trade mark and price tag etc. Instruction for use of product; maintenance instructions and safety measures were always read and followed by almost equal number of respondents both male and females. This may be considered for the proper usage of the product.

Practices followed after buying

Table 4 revealed that after buying the product 60 per cent males 'sometimes' and 64 per cent females 'always' took cash memo. Majority of the male (44 %) and female (72 %) responded checked the cash memo before making payments. Guarantee/warranty card was always asked by male and females buyers. Ninety four per cent both male and female respondents returned the purchased product if it was not up to the standard. Results are in line with the results of Aujla *et al.* (1985) who also disclosed that majority of respondents insisted on getting guarantee for the durable goods.

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to their practices followed before buying

Sr. No	Statements	Male			Female		
		Always	Some times	Never	Always	Sometimes	Never
1	Do you make shopping list	15 (30)	23 (46)	12 (24)	25 (50)	20 (40)	5 (10)
2	Do you compare brand quality of the item	19 (38)	30 (60)	1 (2)	22 (44)	27 (54)	1 (2)
3	Do you decide to buy from						
	(a) Company's retail shop	26 (52)	22 (44)	2 (4)	30 (60)	19 (38)	1 (2)
	(b) Any specific shop	29 (58)	20 (40)	1 (2)	26 (52)	13 (26)	1 (2)
	(c) Any shop	8 (16)	19 (38)	23 (46)	4 (8)	17 (34)	19(38)
	(d) Wholesale shop	14 (28)	31 (62)	5 (10)	20 (40)	25 (50)	5 (10)
4	Do you decide the time before going to market						
	(a) At least crowded time	45 (90)	3 (6)	2 (4)	43 (86)	5 (10)	2 (4)
	(b) At heavily crowded time	3 (6)	11 (22)	36 (72)	2 (4)	11 (22)	37(74)
	(c) During discount offers	19 (38)	15 (30)	16 (32)	26 (52)	8 (16)	16(32)
	(d) Specific period like Dushera/ Diwali/Holi, etc.	23 (46)	13 (26)	14 (28)	27 (54)	16 (32)	7 (14)
5	Do you keep sufficient time for purchase	32 (64)	14 (28)	4 (8)	37 (74)	9 (18)	4 (8)
6	Do you make budget or plan of expenditure before making purchases	40 (80)	6 (12)	4 (8)	45 (90)	2 (4)	3 (6)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages of total sample in each category

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to their practices followed while buying

Sr. No.	Statements	Male			Female		
		Always	Sometimes	Never	Always	Sometimes	Never
1	Do you compare shops for buying various goods	22 (44)	17 (34)	11 (22)	25 (50)	14 (28)	11 (22)
2	Do you look for standard mark						
	(a) I.S.I mark	23 (46)	25 (50)	2 (4)	17 (34)	26 (52)	7 (14)
	(b) Ag Mark	18 (36)	26 (52)	6 (12)	15 (30)	24 (48)	11 (22)
	(c) Sanforized mark	13 (26)	24 (48)	13 (26)	9 (18)	17 (34)	24 (48)
3	Buy after reading label for expiry and manufacturing date, trade mark, price tag	44 (88)	6 (12)	-	39 (78)	10 (20)	1(2)
4	Check for proper seal	44 (88)	6 (12)	-	45 (90)	5 (10)	-
5	Read instructions given for						
	(a) Use of product	44 (88)	6 (12)	-	46 (92)	4 (8)	-
	(b)Maintenance instructions	44 (88)	6 (12)	-	44 (88)	5 (10)	1 (2)
	(c) Safety measures	44 (88)	6 (12)	-	44 (88)	4 (8)	2 (4)

Data in Table 5 revealed that only the buying practices after purchase showed the significant difference between male and female respondents as the males were least concerned about the steps which should be followed after buying any product like cash memo, checking bills before making final payments etc.

Consequently the over all buying practices also did not show the significant difference between male and female respondents. Thus it shows that buying is a complex process involving a number of decisions such as what to buy, when and how much to buy and concluded that homemakers are the main purchasers.

Table 4. Distribution of the respondents according to their practices followed after buying

Sr. No.	Statements	Male			Female		
		Always	Some times	Never	Always	Some times	Never
1.	Do you insist on taking cash memo	15 (13)	30 (60)	5 (10)	32 (64)	16 (32)	2(4)
2.	Do you check the cash memo before making payment	22(44)	25(80)	3(6)	36(72)	14(28)	-
3.	Do you ask for guarantee/warranty card after buying equipments	40(80)	7(14)	3(6)	43(86)	6(12)	1(2)
4.	Do you check for items purchased	40(80)	9(18)	1(2)	42(84)	7(14)	1(2)
5.	Do you return the product purchased if it is not upto the standard	47(94)	3(6)	-	47(94)	3(6)	-

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage of total sample in each category

Table 5. Student's 't-test' showing significant difference between the buying practices of the male and female respondents

Variable	Mean value	t-calculated value	t-tabulated value	Degree of freedom	Level of significance
Buying practices					
Male	83.44	0.8460	1.99	98	0.05
Female	84.26				
I Before purchase					
Male	28.50	0.7215	1.99	98	0.05
Female	28.92				
II While purchase					
Male	41.78	0.7413	1.99	98	0.05
Female	41.38				
III After purchase					
Male	13.04	3.5612*	1.99	98	0.05
Female	13.92				

* Significant at 5 per cent level of probability

Conclusion

- Female respondents were more particular to make shopping lists and plan budget of expenditure than male respondents. After buying the products, majority of females looked for the cash memo 'always' and checked it before making payments but the males were not so much conscious about the same.
- Buying practices followed by the male and female respondents before and while buying did not show a significant difference.
- Only the buying practices followed after making the purchases showed significant difference between the male and female respondents.

Recommendations

- It can be suggested that more programmes on consumer awareness and buying practices can be telecast on television to create public interest.
- Consumer should themselves be assertive in having their rights and conscious about their responsibilities as well.

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