

STUDY ON SHOPPING STYLES OF YOUNG SHOPPERS

A study with reference to young shoppers in Kerala

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Abstract : Organized retailing is changing the whole concept of shopping, creating a radical shift in consumer buying behaviour. In such a scenario, understanding consumer's shopping styles and preferences is considered to be very crucial in order to succeed in selling a product or service. Consumer shopping styles is a major area of concern for marketers as it provides the advantage of aligning the sales techniques with the buying style, which improves the chances of converting more prospects to paying customers. Today, the market is driven by the changing consumption patterns and aspirations of the youth. Young consumers show more consumer confidence, are active and spend more than they save. They represent a powerful new consumer force and shape the trends that affect the modern retail sector. Moreover, there exists considerable difference in the shopping styles exhibited by urban, semi-urban and rural consumers. The purpose of this study was to investigate the difference in shopping styles of young urban and semi-urban consumers in Kerala, India and to analyze the consumer shopping styles across different demographic variables.

Data for this study were collected from 220 students in Kerala, who frequently shop from modern retail outlets. The study revealed that there exist statistically significant differences in the shopping styles of urban and semi-urban consumers. The consumer shopping styles also vary across demographic variables. This study will help marketers to understand the young shoppers in terms of their shopping styles and to adapt and improve their marketing campaigns as well as strategies to penetrate more into the market.

Key words: Consumer shopping styles, Consumer Style Inventory (CSI), Young shoppers

INTRODUCTION

Organized retailing is changing the whole concept of shopping, creating a radical shift in consumer buying behaviour. In such a scenario, understanding customer's shopping/decision making styles is considered to be very crucial in order to succeed in selling a product or service (Rosen. J and Turano. A. M, 2003). Consumers exhibit different styles while shopping. Some may prefer to have a shopping list in hand and others may browse the aisles and buy whatever catches their eye. People respond to a sales call in many different ways. Some people are more instinctive decision makers. They respond well to a presentation and are willing to take action straight away. Other people may leave decision making to the very last minute because it may not be a priority for them right at that moment. Being able to understand the varying dimensions of consumer shopping styles provide marketers the advantage of aligning the sales techniques with the buying style, which improves the chances of converting more prospects to paying customers.

Consumers' exhibit different characteristics and market behaviors, and they often have different shopping orientations, which are affected by culture, gender role, economic situations, and environment (Buss, 1990). Today, the market is driven by the changing consumption patterns and aspirations of the youth. Young consumers show more consumer confidence, are active and spend more than they save. They represent a powerful new consumer force and shape the trends that affect the modern

retail sector. Moreover, there exists considerable difference in the shopping styles exhibited by urban, semi-urban and rural consumers. Profiling young urban and semi-urban consumers by combining their shopping styles and demographic information can provide more meaningful ways to identify and understand various consumer segments and to target each segment with more focused marketing strategies (Nargundkar, 2003)

A recent study by Kiran and Jhamb (2011) pointed out that most of the studies on Indian retail formats have focused on store attributes and consumer's choice towards emerging retail formats. They stressed the need to further explore and focus on the holistic view of shopping styles of Indian consumers and their choice of format. The present study aims to investigate the difference in shopping styles of young urban and semi-urban consumers and to analyze the consumer shopping styles across different demographic variables.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To investigate the shopping styles exhibited by young shoppers in the context of organized retailing.
- To analyze the consumer shopping styles across different demographic variables.
- To analyze the difference in shopping styles of young urban and semi-urban consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONSUMER SHOPPING STYLE/DECISION-MAKING STYLE

Sproles and Kendall (1986) defined consumer shopping/decision making style as a mental orientation that reveals both cognitive and affective characteristics of a consumer, while making choices (Kavas. A and Yesilada .F, 2008). Shopping styles are relevant to marketing because they determine consumer behavior and are commonly used as a basis for market segmentation and positioning. Most of the studies in the past have focused on consumer shopping styles because of the assumption that all consumers approach the market with certain fundamental decision-making styles (Stone, 1954; Darden and Reynolds, 1971; Lumpkin, 1985).

Research on consumer decision making styles fall into three main categories: the psychographic/life style approach (Lastovicka, 1982), the consumer typology approach (Darden and Ashton, 1974; Moschis, 1976), and the consumer characteristics approach (Sproles 1985; Sproles and Kendall, 1986; Sproles and Sproles, 1990). The cognitive and affective aspect of consumer behavior is explained in the consumer characteristics approach and hence it is considered to be the most powerful construct (Yesilada .F and Kavas. A, 2008).

Inorder to measure consumer decision making styles, Sproles and Kendall (1986) developed an instrument named Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) which measures eight mental characteristics of consumers while shopping – Perfectionist/High-quality conscious (degree to which a consumer searches carefully and systematically for the best quality in products); Brand conscious/Price equals quality (a consumer's orientation towards buying the more expensive, well known national brands); Novelty and fashion conscious (consumers who like new and innovative products and gain excitement from seeking out new things); Recreational and shopping conscious (the extent to which a consumer finds shopping as a pleasant activity and shops just for the fun of it); Price conscious/Value-for-money (a consumer with high consciousness of sale prices and lower prices in general); Impulsiveness/Careless (one who tends to buy on the spur of the moment and appear unconcerned about how much he or she spends); Confused by over choice (a consumer who likely experiences information overload in the market); and Habitual/Brand-loyal (a consumer who repetitively chooses the same favorite brands and stores).

YOUNG CONSUMER'S SHOPPING STYLES

Kaur and Singh (2007) investigated the important dimensions of motivation for young consumers when they shop. The results of the study revealed that young consumers tend to shop with a hedonistic perspective seeking fun and enjoyment from the shopping trip. The main motivation for shopping for them is to get product

ideas, meet friends or even alleviate depression and to have a break from the daily routine. Jain and Bagdare (2009) analyzed customer experience in the context of new format retail stores and stated that the modern outlook and practices of new format stores such as well designed layout, ambience, display, self service, value added services, technology-based operations etc. attracts and influence young consumers and help to satisfy both hedonic and utilitarian needs.

INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

According to Singh (2007) the urban consumers are found to have high degree of brand awareness than rural consumers especially with respect to food products. Post graduate urban and rural consumers exhibit a high level of brand awareness for food products than other education levels. The increase in disposable income has been phenomenal for the increased preference and growth of organized retailing. The study by Ali et al. (2010) indicated that income level is an important factor that affects consumer's purchase decisions. Results revealed that higher income as well as education level of consumers influence their purchase decision where as age and gender have no significant impact.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE

The sample for the study comprised of graduate and post-graduate students in Kerala, who frequently shop from different formats of modern retail. A sample of 220 with equal representation of urban and semi-urban consumers was selected for the survey.

DATA COLLECTION

The information was collected personally from the respondents by administering a pre-tested, structured questionnaire. The study employed Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) developed by Sproles & Kendall (1986); Sproles & Sproles (1990) to measure consumer shopping styles. The CSI is composed of 39 items that cover eight consumer shopping styles namely- Perfectionist/High-quality conscious; Brand conscious/Price equals quality; Novelty and fashion conscious; Recreational and shopping conscious; Price conscious/Value-for-money; Impulsiveness/Careless; Confused by over choice and Habitual/Brand-loyal.

For each style, a three-item short form of the scale with 24 items is available, which was included in the questionnaire. All items are scored on 5-point Likert type scale in which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly

agree (5). The questionnaire also consisted of questions to solicit demographic information of the respondents such as age, gender, marital status, education and monthly income.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

A total of 220 (equal proportion of urban and semi-urban) graduate and post graduate students participated in the

survey. Demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table - I. The urban sample consisted of 45% female and 55% male respondents whereas the semi-urban sample consisted of 71% female and 29% male respondents. Majority of the respondents (urban – 76%, semi-urban – 95%) fall in the age group of 21 and 26 years. 86% of the urban and 99% of the semi-urban respondents were single. Most of the respondents had income above 10,000 (urban – 94%, semi-urban – 87%).

TABLE - I

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF URBAN AND SEMI-URBAN SAMPLE

Variables		% of Sample
		Urban
Age	15-20	18
	21-26	76
	27-35	6
	55 & above	0
Gender	Female	45
	Male	55
Marital Status	Single	86
	Married	14
Education Level	Secondary school or Equivalent	0
	Bachelor Degree	13
	Master Degree	87
Income	Below 10,000	6
	10,000 - 20,000	36
	20,000 - 30,000	39
	Above 30,000	19

Source: Survey data

ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SHOPPING STYLES ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to study the variations in consumer shopping styles across different

demographic variables. The output of ANOVA is summarized in Table - II. The analysis of eight consumer shopping style dimensions is described below:

TABLE – II

ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SHOPPING STYLES ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Dimensions	Age		Gender		Marital status		Edu. Level		Income
	F	Sig	F	Sig	F	Sig	F	Sig	F
Perfectionist	7.233	0.001	1.787	0.183	0.739	0.391	4.326	0.039	2.877
Brand conscious	0.004	0.996	10.48	0.001	0.162	0.688	2.114	0.147	6.927
Novelty	0.162	0.851	2.326	0.129	0.239	0.625	4.885	0.028	5.47
Recreational	1.973	0.141	9.869	0.002	0.108	0.743	1.86	0.174	0.149
Price & Value	0.308	0.735	4.948	0.027	5.352	0.022	0.077	0.781	1.548
Impulsive	0.897	0.409	0.581	0.447	2.166	0.143	1.676	0.197	2.443
Confused	0.174	0.84	4.782	0.03	0.776	0.379	0.49	0.485	3.946
Habitual	0.624	0.537	0.123	0.727	0	0.986	0.726	0.395	5.846

Source: Primary data

PERFECTIONIST / HIGH QUALITY CONSCIOUS

Consumers who score high on this dimension give utmost importance to quality. They search carefully and systematically for the best quality in products. The analysis revealed that the perfectionist dimension varies across age, education level and income. There is no variation seen with respect to gender and marital status. It was found that young consumers in the age group of 15-20 years were more quality conscious (mean value=4.69)

followed by the age group of 21-26 years (mean value=4.28). Respondents in their graduation level and those who have income above 30,000 score high on this dimension.

BRAND CONSCIOUSNESS / PRICE EQUALS QUALITY

Consumers who score high on this dimension considers price as an indicator of quality. They are oriented towards

buying the more expensive, well known National brands. The brand conscious dimension varies across gender and income. No variation is evident in terms of age, marital status and education level. Male consumers were more brand conscious (mean value=3.43) than female consumers (mean value=3.08). Respondents with monthly family income more than 30,000 were more brand conscious (mean value=3.72) followed by the income group of 20,000-30,000(mean value=3.25).

NOVELTY AND FASHION CONSCIOUS

Consumers having high score on this dimension are always driven by novelty products. They like new and innovative products and gain excitement from seeking out new things. The analysis show significant variation across education level and income with respect to novelty dimension. No variation is seen in terms of age, gender and marital status. Young graduate consumers having monthly family income above 30,000 exhibit novelty and fashion conscious behaviour.

RECREATIONAL AND SHOPPING CONSCIOUS

Consumers who score high on this factor considers shopping as a pleasant activity and shops just for the fun of it. The results indicate that recreational dimension varies across gender. No variation is seen with respect to age, marital status, education level and income. Young female consumers were found to be more recreational (mean value=3.34) than male consumers (mean value=3.05).

PRICE CONSCIOUS / VALUE FOR MONEY

Consumers who score high on this dimension are very price conscious. They look for sale prices and lower prices in general. The analysis show significant variation across gender and marital status with respect to price and value consciousness. There exists no variation in terms of age, education level and income. Young female consumers score high on this dimension (mean value=3.46) than male consumers. However, married consumers (mean value=3.67) were significantly higher than single consumers (mean value=3.37) on price and value consciousness.

IMPULSIVENESS / CARELESS

Consumers having high score on this dimension never plan their shopping. They buy spontaneously and appear

to be unconcerned about how much he or she spends. Impulsive behaviour does not vary across age, gender, marital status, education level and income.

CONFUSED BY OVER CHOICE

Consumers who score high on this dimension find the market place as confusing. They perceive too many brands and stores from which to choose and experience information overload in the market. Analysis revealed that confused by over choice dimension varies across gender and income. Female consumers were found to be mostly confused by over choice (mean value=3.84) than male consumers (mean value=3.65). Respondents having monthly family income 30,000 and above score high on this dimension (mean value=3.98).

HABITUAL / BRAND LOYAL

Consumers who score high on this dimension are very brand loyal. They repetitively choose the same favourite brands and stores. Habitual or brand loyal dimension varies across income. No variation is seen in terms of age, gender, marital status and education level. Young consumers who fall in the income group of 30,000 and above were found to be brand loyal consumers (mean value=3.78) followed by consumers in the income group of 20,000-30,000 (mean value=3.49).

ANALYSIS OF SHOPPING STYLES OF YOUNG URBAN AND SEMI-URBAN CONSUMERS

Table III shows variation in the shopping styles of urban and semi-urban consumers in terms of perfectionist, brand conscious, novelty conscious, recreational and habitual dimensions. The young urban consumers demonstrated a higher preponderance than semi-urban consumers in terms of quality consciousness, brand consciousness, novelty consciousness and brand loyalty whereas young semi-urban consumers were more recreational or shopping conscious than urban consumers. There is no difference seen between urban and semi-urban respondents with respect to price and value conscious, impulsive and confused by over choice dimensions.

TABLE - III**ANALYSIS OF SHOPPING STYLES OF YOUNG URBAN AND SEMI-URBAN CONSUMERS**

Dimensions	Urban mean	Semi-urban mean	t test result	
			F	
Perfectionist	4.43	4.22	8.73	
Brand conscious	3.47	2.98	23.26	
Novelty	3.63	3.25	12.43	
Recreational	2.90	3.53	57.90	
Price & Value	3.45	3.33	2.81	
Impulsive	3.48	3.43	0.33	
Confused	3.78	3.73	0.27	
Habitual	3.50	3.28	4.53	

Source: Survey data

The results are in line with the report that there exists considerable difference among urban, semi-urban and rural consumers in terms of shopping behavior. A product being treated as a gift item in an urban area may be perceived as a necessity item in the semi-urban or rural area. It may happen that the urban consumer buys any item out of impulse and for rural consumer it may be a planned activity to buy the same (Singh J, 2011). The present study also attempted to understand the prominent differences in the shopping styles of urban and semi-urban consumers.

CONCLUSION

Examining shopping style differences is an important area of inquiry that lead to a better understanding of consumer behavior. The main objectives of the study were to examine the difference in shopping styles of young urban and semi-urban consumers and to analyze the consumer shopping styles across different demographic variables. This study used the consumer style inventory model, developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986), to determine the young consumer's shopping style differences in the context of organized retailing. The changes in the consumer environment have affected traditional shopping patterns;

thus consumer purchasing behaviour has also been changing over the past years. The study revealed that there exist statistically significant differences in the shopping styles of urban and semi-urban consumers. Young urban consumers were found to be more quality conscious, brand conscious, novelty conscious and brand loyal when compared to semi-urban consumers whereas young semi-urban consumers manifested a greater tendency towards recreational or shopping consciousness than urban consumers.

The consumer shopping styles vary across various demographic variables. It was found that young consumers between the age group of 15-20 years were more quality conscious. Young female consumers were more price conscious, recreational shoppers and often confused by over choice. Moreover, male consumers were higher than female consumers on brand consciousness and preferred to buy the well known brands. Married consumers were more price and value conscious than single consumers. Young graduate consumers prefer best quality products and are variety seekers. Respondents who fall in the income group of 30,000 and above were found to be more quality conscious, variety seekers and brand loyal consumers.

Marketers are eager to know how consumers make their decisions and therefore try to figure out the consumer psyche and various factors that influence the process. The study on consumer's shopping style enables marketers to adapt and improve their marketing campaigns as well as strategies to penetrate more into the market.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

According to Sam Walton and Jack Welch, 'Consumer is the source of competitive advantage and understanding consumer can be a source of redefining business and gaining sustainable advantage'. It is evident that understanding the psyche of the consumer as well as the shopping styles exhibited by them is critical to success in retailing. Youth is emerging as the major consuming class due to high disposable incomes and they are entering the world as new, independent consumers. Aspirations and desires of the young generation are evolving and will undergo frequent shifts in the coming years. Hence for marketers, who always try to stay one step ahead of the competition, future growth relies on understanding and attracting young consumers. With changes that are happening at a rapid pace, a deliberate attempt from the part of marketers to understand the shopper's dynamics

in terms of shopping styles and evolve tailor-made strategies, holds the key to success in modern retailing.

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