Study on Decision Making Styles of Consumers in Malls

A study with reference to malls in Ernakulam in Kerala

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Abstract

The retailing sector in India has undergone significant transformation in the past 10 years. The organised retail industry in India is expected to grow at 25-30% annually and would triple in size from Rs. 35,000 crore in 2004-05 to Rs.109,000 crore ($24 billion) by 2010. Retailing is gradually inching its way towards becoming the next boom industry. The consumer decision-making process is a complex phenomenon. The purchase of goods or services includes a number of factors that could affect each decision. Decision making is more complex and even more important for consumers today than in the past.

The objectives of this study were to investigate the decision-making styles of Indian shoppers in shopping malls and to study the variations in these styles across different demographic variables. Mall intercept survey was conducted to study the decision-making styles of Indian shoppers in shopping malls. The sample included 128 active mall shoppers. The Consumers decision-making styles were identified by a structured questionnaire and captured in six styles by conducting factor analysis. These decision-making styles were price consciousness, quality consciousness, recreational, confused by over choice, novelty consciousness, and variety seeking.

This study will help managers of shopping malls to understand the underlying decision making styles of the shoppers in the malls and help them to craft their marketing strategies. Profiling consumers by their decision-making styles provide more meaningful ways to identify and understand various consumer segments and to target each segment with more focused marketing strategies.

1. Introduction

Over the last few years, retail has become one of the fastest growing sectors in the Indian economy. Though the country has the highest retail outlet density in the world, Indian retail sector is highly fragmented and organised retail in the country is at very nascent stage. Organised retailing accounts for less than 5% of the retailing industry in India. Therefore, there is no real retail revolution in India since the industry is still in a stage of infancy. The organized retail industry in India is expected to grow 25-30% annually and is projected to attain USD 23 billion by 2010 (FICCI, 2005). Retailing is gradually inching its way towards becoming the next boom industry.

Consumers are the major beneficiaries of the retail boom. The Indian consumer is changing rapidly. They now have a choice of a wide range of products, quality and prices. Organised retailing is changing the whole concept of shopping in terms of consumer buying behaviour. In such a scenario, consumer decision making is of great interest for consumer educators and marketers interested in serving the consumer (Canabal, 2002). Therefore, there is clearly a need for research on this issue in India. In this study, an attempt was made to study the consumer decision-making styles in shopping malls of India.

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2. Objectives of the Study

Major objectives of this study include :
1. To investigate consumer decision-making styles in shopping malls.
2. To study variations in consumer decision-making styles across different demographic variables.

This research paper is divided into three major sections. First, we discuss the theoretical background and previous research that has been conducted in this area. Although there has been a dearth of such type of studies in the Indian Context, theoretical exploration can be based on international studies carried out in other countries. Second, we present the research methodology adopted to investigate consumer decision making style in shopping malls. The research method includes a survey data collection instrument and the use of a mall-intercept face-to-face interview method. Finally, we provide a general discussion of the findings, as well as limitations of the study and directions for future research.

3. Literature Review

Retailers and marketers often seek to learn how and why people shop. The consumer decision-making process is a complex phenomenon. The purchase of goods or services includes a number of factors that could affect each decision. Decision making is more complex and even more important for consumers today than in the past. Consumers are besieged by advertising, news articles, and direct mailing that provide an abundance of information, much of it with mixed messages. In addition, increases in the number and variety of goods, stores, and shopping malls, and the availability of multi component products and electronic purchasing capabilities have broadened the sphere for consumer choice and have complicated decision making (Hafstrom et al., 1992)

Sproles and Kendall (1986) define a consumer decision making (CDM) style as "a mental orientation characterising a consumer's approach to making choices." Broadly speaking, there are three types of approaches in studying consumer decision-making styles: the psychographic/lifestyle approach, which identifies hundreds of characteristics related to consumer behavior; the consumer typology approach, which classifies consumers into several types; and the consumer characteristics approach, which focuses on different cognitive dimensions of consumer decision making (Fan et al., 1998).

In the extant consumer behaviour literature, most studies assume that all consumers approach shopping with certain decision-making traits that combine to form a consumer's decision-making styles. Academicians and researchers have long been interested in identifying these underlying decision styles of shoppers. For example, consumers are identified as economic shoppers, personalizing shoppers, ethical shoppers, apathetic shoppers, store-loyal shoppers, recreational shoppers, convenience shoppers, price-oriented shoppers, brand-loyal shoppers, name-conscious shoppers, problem-solving shoppers, quality shoppers, fashion shoppers, brand conscious shoppers and impulse shoppers. (Bellenger and Korgaonkar 1980; Darden and Reynolds 1971; Stone 1954, Williams, Painter, and Nicholas 1978, Moschis 1976;

Stephenson and Willett 1969, Gehrt and Carter 1992, Jacoby and Chestnut 1978, Lumpkin 1985). (Hiu, A.Y. et al., 2001).

Using the consumer characteristics approach, Sproles (1985) developed a 50-item instrument to profile the decision making styles of consumers. Using data collected from 111 undergraduate women in two classes at the University of Arizona and employing a factor analysis technique, Sproles (1985) found six consumer decision-making style traits He named and described these traits: (1) Perfectionism, (2) Value Conscious, (3) Brand Consciousness, (4) Novelty-Fad-Fashion Consciousness, (5) Shopping Avoider-Time Saver-Satisficer (6) Confused, Support-Seeking Decision-Maker.

In a later study, Sproles and Kendall (1986) developed a comprehensive instrument called Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) to measure consumer decision making styles. The instrument was administered to 482 students in 29 home economics classes in five high schools in the Tucson, Arizona area. (ref. Fan, J.X., 1998). This instrument measures eight mental characteristics of consumer's decision making: perfectionism, brand consciousness, novelty-fashion consciousness, recreational, price-value consciousness, impulsiveness, confused by over choice, and brand-loyal/habitual, (ref. Mitchell, Vincent-Wayne, 2001). These styles are discussed in Table 1.

Table I: Characteristics of Eight Consumer Decision-Making Styles

1. Perfectionist/high quality-conscious consumer : decision style of consumers who systematically search for the best quality products possible. Consumers have high standards and expectations for consumer goods, and are concerned with the function and quality of products;
2. Brand consciousness : decision style of consumers concerned with getting the most expensive, well-known brands. They feel that price is an indicator of quality.
3. Novelty and fashion conscious : decision style of consumers who like new and innovative products and who gain excitement from seeking out new things. They are conscious of new fashions and fads.
4. Recreational and shopping conscious : decision style of consumers who take pleasure in shopping and who shop just for the fun of it.
5. Price conscious : decision style of consumers who are concerned with getting lower prices. They are likely to be comparison shoppers.
6. Impulsiveness/careless : decision style of consumers who never plan their shopping and tend to buy spontaneously. They are not concerned about how much money they spend.
7. Confused by over choice : decision style of consumers who feel they have too many brands and stores to choose from and who likely experience information overload in the market. Consumers find the marketplace confusing, view brands as alike, and seek help from friends
8. Habitual/brand loyal: decision style of consumers who are apt to have favorite brands and stores. They shop at the same stores and tend to buy the same brands each time.

According to Sproles & Kendall (1986) identification of these

characteristics among consumers "helps to profile an individual consumer style, educate consumers about their specific decision making characteristics, and counsel families on financial management".

Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) developed by Sproles & Kendall (1986) was used by many researchers to study the consumer decision making styles. Some of the research are briefly described below.

Hafstrom et al. (1992) used the CSI to identify the decision-making styles of Korean students. They confirmed seven of the eight factors using Sproles & Kendall's analytical methods and conceptual framework. The only factor that was not confirmed was 'novelty fashion consciousness. They attributed this to possible links between 'brand consciousness' and 'fashion consciousness among young Korean consumers.

Hiu et al. (2001) administered the CSI to 387 adult consumers in China. Their findings indicate that five decision-making styles are valid and reliable in Chinese culture. These styles were perfectionist, novelty-fashion conscious, recreational, price conscious, and confused by over choice.

Fan and Xiao (1998) used a modified CSI with Chinese students. They clearly identified five dimensions of consumer decision making styles : brand consciousness; time consciousness; price consciousness; quality consciousness; and information utilization.

Walsh et al. (2001) confirmed seven factors of consumer decision-making styles for German consumers. These factors were brand consciousness, perfectionism, recreational/ hedonism, confused by overchoice, impulsiveness, novelty-fashion consciousness, variety seeking.

Durvasula etal. (1993) administered the CSI on 210 undergraduate business students at a large university in New Zealand. They found eight consumer decision making styles. These styles are perfectionist, brand conscious, novelty-fashion conscious, recreational shopping conscious, price-value conscious, impulsive, confused by over-choice, and habitual/ brand-loyal.

Canabal, M.E. (2002) investigated the decision making styles of South Indian Consumers utilizing Customer Style Inventory. Using data collected from 173 college students from two institutions of higher education in the city of Coimbatore, South India, Canabal (2002) identified five decision making styles of South Indian. These styles are (1) Brand Conscious Style, (2) High Quality Conscious / Perfectionist Style, (3) Confused by Overchoice Style, (4) Impulsive / Brand Indifferent Style, and (5) Recreational Shopper Style.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Sample
This study used mall intercept survey method. Data were collected from shopping malls located in various parts of Ernakulam (Kochi) which is considered to be the commercial capital of Kerala (known as Gods own country. The study was conducted during the first two weeks of Onam festival (August

last week to first week of September 2009), which is considered to be a major time for shopping for Keralites. The target population for this study consisted of active mall shoppers.

A structured questionnaire was developed to measure the customer decision making styles in the shopping malls. The questionnaire consisted of questions concerning customer decision making styles and demographic information of respondents. For this study items were adapted from Consumer Style Inventory (CSI) developed by Sproles and Kendall (1986). CSI items were adopted from various available articles i.e. Mitchell, Vincent-Wayne (2001); Wesley et al. (2006) and Canabal, M.E. (2002). All of these were five point Likert-type scales in which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Lastly, the questionnaire also consisted questions to solicit demographic information of the respondents such as gender, age, education, household income and marital status.

Questionnaire was hand carried and personally explained to respondents by the interviewers. Interviewers gave instructions for completing the questionnaire and waited while respondent independently filled out questionnaire.

4.2 Demographic Profile of the Sample
A total of 128 respondents participated in the survey. Selected demographic characteristics of the sample including gender, age, education, marital status and monthly family income, are presented in Table 2.

The sample consisted of 53.13% of male and 46.87% female respondents. Respondents were mostly between the ages of 11 and 30 years (76.57%). 56.25% of the respondents were single. Almost 92.19% respondents had at least a bachelor degree and Almost 75% reported that their family income was more than Rs. 20,000.

4.3 Consumer Decision Making Styles
Factor analysis was adopted to capture the consumer decision making styles in shopping malls. Table II summaries the results of the factor analysis which was run using the Principal Component Approach with a varimax rotation.

Bartlett's test of sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure are adopted to determine the appropriateness of data set for factor analysis. High value (between 0.5 to 1) of KMO indicates that the factor analysis is appropriate, low value below the 0.5 implies that factor analysis may not be appropriate. In this study, the result of Bartlett's test of sphericity (0.00) and KMO (0.686) indicate that the data are appropriate for factor analysis.

- All the six factors together accounted for 74.249 per cent of the total variance.
- Bartlett's test of sphericity = 0.00
- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin KMO (0.686)

In this study, factor analysis was carried out in two stages. In stage one, known as the factor extraction process, objective was to identify how many factors to be extracted from the data. Using principal component analysis, seventeen items were extracted by six factors. Only the factors having latent roots or

Table 2 : Demographic Profile of the Sample

Variables		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	68	53.13
	Female	60	46.87
Age	Under 11	0	0
	11 – 20 yrs	28	21.88
	21 – 30 Yrs	70	54.69
	31 – 40 Yrs	15	11.72
	41 – 50 Yrs	9	7.03
	Above 50 Yrs	6	4.67
Education	Lower than secondary school	0	0
	Secondary School or Equivalent	10	7.81
	Bachelor degree	105	82.03
	Master Degree	13	10.16
	Doctoral degree	0	0
	Others	0	0
Marital Status	Single	72	56.25
	Married	56	43.75
Monthly Family Income	Less than Rs 10,000	0	0
	Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000	32	25.00
	Rs 20,000 to Rs 30,000	78	60.94
	Rs 30,000 to Rs 40,000	12	9.37
	More than Rs 40,000	6	4.69

(Source- Primary data)

eigen value greater than 1 were considered significant; all factors having eigen value less than 1 were considered insignificant and were discarded. All the six factors together accounted for 74.249% of the total variance.

In the second stage, all the factors were interpreted and labeled. Items having factor loading more than 0.6 were included in the interpretation. More detailed descriptions of the factors are presented in the next section.

4.4 Impact of Demographic Factors on Consumer Decision Making Styles

The factors that factor analysis produced were put under further analyses by conducting an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to study the variations in the consumer decision making styles across different demographic variables. Dependent variable consisted of six decision making styles identified by factor analysis. Independent variables included five demographic variables: gender, age, education, marital status and monthly family income. The output of the ANOVA was summarized in Table III and discussed in the following section.

5. Results and Discussion

As discussed above, six consumer decision making styles have been extracted with the help of factor analysis and ANOVA was used to study the variations in the consumers' decision making styles across demographic variables. The six factors are summarized here.

Factor 1 : Price Consciousness

This factor measures the price dimension of consumer decision making styles of Indian consumers in our sample. Consumers who score high on this factor are very price conscious. They are very conscious to get the best price for the products they buy. They check and compare the prices of products before purchasing them. They even go to more than one store to get the lowest price. The highest loading (0.895) item in this factor is "It is important to me to get the best price for the products I buy."

Table III revealed that the significance values of F for gender, age, education, and family income are greater than 0.05. So they do not have significant impact on price consciousness. Only marital status has impact on price consciousness. In our sample, single customers (mean = 3.62) are more price conscious than married customers (mean = 3.26).

Factor 2 : Quality Consciousness

This factor reflects the quality conscious dimension of consumer decision making style of Indian consumers in our sample. Indian consumers consider the quality of the products while purchasing the products in shopping malls. It is very important for them to by best. Consumers who score high on this factor perceive the quality of a product to be very important and are willing to make special efforts to choose products with the very best quality. The highest loading item in this factor is "In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality."

Table III revealed that the significance values of F for gender, age, education, marital status and family income are greater than 0.05. So they do not have significant impact on quality consciousness.

Factor 3 : Recreational

The decision making style identified by this factor is that Indian consumers do purchase in shopping malls for enjoyment. We can call such type of consumers as recreational shopping conscious consumers (Hafstrom at al. 1992). "Shopping is a

Table 3 : Result of Factor Analysis

Factor Labels and Items	Rotated Factor Loadings	Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach Alpha)
Factor 1 : Price Consciousness		0.889
It is important to me to get the best price for the products 1 buy	0.895	
I find myself checking the price even for small items	0.867	
I compare the prices of at least a few brands before I choose one.	0.812	
I would never shop at more than one store to find low price	0.645	
Factor 2 : quality Consciousness		0.874
In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality.	0.841	
Getting good quality is very important to me.	0.782	
I make a special effort to choose the very quality products	0.745	
I always buy the best	0.698	
Factor 3 : Recreational		0.890
Shopping is a Pleasant activity to me	0.875	
Shopping in many stores wastes my time	0.612	
I make shopping trips fast.	0.625	
Factor 4 : Confused by Over Choice		0.832
There are so many brands to choose from the I often feel confused	0.845	
All the information I get on different products confuses me.	0.788	
The more I learn about products, the harder it seems to choose the best.	0.776	
Factor 5 : Novelty Conscious		0.841
It's fun to buy something new and exciting	0.712	
To get variety, I shop different stores and choose different brands.	0.649	
Factor 6 : variety Seeking		0.812
If use the same brands over and again, I get tired of them	0.678	
I buy different brands to get some variety.	0.612	

funny activity for them. The highest loading (i.e., 0.875) item in this factor is, "Shopping is a pleasant activity to me." Other two items "shopping in many stores wastes my time" and "I make shopping trips fast" has negative loading. So it can be concluded that enjoyment during shopping has impact on consumer purchase in shipping malls.

Table III revealed that the significance values of F for gender, education, marital status and family income are greater than 0.05. So they do not have significant impact on recreational shopping. Only age has impact on recreational shopping. Respondents between the age group of 11-20 years (mean = 3.51) are most recreational in their shopping followed by the age group of 31-40 years (mean = 3.29).

Factor 4 : Confused by Over Choice
Consumers having high score on this factor perceive product related information available to be confusing. The items included in this are "there are so many brands to choose from that I often feel confused, "all the information I get on different products confuses me, and "the more I learn about products, the harder it seems to choose the best." Consumers who score high on this factor are overwhelmed by all the choices of
products and stores available to them and do not know what to

do about the information. On the opposite end of the continuum, consumers who score low on this factor can take advantage of the available information and make better choices (Fan, J.X., 1998).

Table III revealed that the significance values of F for gender, age, education, marital status and family income are greater than 005. So they do not have significant impact on factor 4.

Factor 5 : Novelty Consciousness
The decision making style identified by this factor is that
Indian consumers always driven by novelty product. The highest loading (i.e., 0.712) item in this factor is, "it is fun to buy something new and exciting."

Table III revealed that the significance values of F for gender, age, education, marital status and family income are greater than 0.05. So they do not have significant impact on novelty consciousness.

Factor 6 : Variety Seeking
Consumers having high scorers on this factor are likely to
switch brands, even if their current brands satisfy their needs. They may also switch brands to experience better alternatives

Table 4 : Effect of Various Demographic Variables on Consumer Decision Making Styles : One Way ANOVA

	Gender		Age		Education		Marital Status		Income	
	F	Sig	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Price Consciousness	0.076	0.783	0.990	0.416	0.701	0.624	5.460	0.005*	1.463	0.217
Quality Consciousness	0.756	0.386	0.297	0.880	1.015	0.412	0.728	0.485	0.875	0.481
Recreational	0.317	0.575	2.982	0.022*	0.956	0.447	1.547	0.217	0.788	0.535
Confused by Over Choice	0.047	0.829	1.221	0.306	0.890	0.490	0.838	0.435	1.854	0.123
Novelty Consciousness	0.218	0.642	0.768	0.548	1.618	0.160	1.930	0.149	0.795	0.530
Variety Seeking *P<0.05	0.073	0.787	0.799	0.529	0.624	0.682	0.714	0.492	1.782	0.137

or to increase stimulation by bringing something new into their lives. Items in this factor are "if I use the same brands over and over again, I get tired of them," and "I buy different brands to get some variety."

Table III revealed that the significance values of F for gender, age, education, marital status and family income are greater than 0.05. So they do not have significant impact on variety seeking shopping behavior.

6. Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to investigate consumer decision-making styles in shopping malls and to study variations in consumer decision making styles across different demographic variables.

Following the study of Sproles and Kendall (1986), an attempt was made to profile decision-making styles of Indian Consumers in shopping malls. Sproles and Kendall (1986) identified nine decision making styles while in this study researcher found only six decision¬making styles in Indian environment. These decision making styles are price consciousness, quality consciousness, recreational, confused by over choice, novelty consciousness, and variety seeking. This study does not confirm four dimensions proposed, i.e., fashion consciousness, brand consciousness, impulsiveness, and brand loyalty. These dimensions of decision making styles were reported in the study of Sproles and Kendall (1986).

In addition, this study shows that the average Indian shoppers in our sample were not very brand conscious, but were quite price and quality conscious. It is found that single consumers are more price conscious than married consumers. Indian consumers are recreational in their shopping. Shopping is funny activity for them. Young consumers between the age group of 11-20 years are most recreational in their shopping. Above all Indian consumers are confused by over choice, novelty conscious, and variety seekers.

7. Managerial Implications

Information on consumers' decision-making style will be useful for retailers targeting Indian markets. As Indian retail Industries is in boom today and more and more national and international players are interested in the emerging retail market in India, an understanding of Indian mall shopper behaviour, with particular reference to their decision-making styles, is crucial. Profiling consumers by combining their decision-making styles and demographic variables provide more meaningful ways to identify and understand various consumer segments and to target each segment with more focused marketing strategies (Hiu, A. Y. et al., 2001).

8. Limitations and Further Research

There are several limitations that warrant future research. The study has been conducted in Ernakulam only. The results of the same, if conducted in other parts of the county may vary. It is because a country like India has geographically, economically, socially and culturally very different areas. This difference is too significant to be ignored. The sample consisted of 162 active mall shoppers. The small sample size is also error-prone. Further research may address the following important questions :
1. Do the various formats of the shopping malls affect the consumers' decision making styles in particular malls?
2. How do cultural factors influence the consumers' decision-making styles in shopping malls?
3. Do the people from different geographical areas of Indian differ in their decision-making styles in shopping malls?
4. Do the people from urban area and rural area differ in their decision making styles in shopping malls?

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