CONSUMER AWARENESS TOWARDS DURABLE PRODUCTS

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Introduction
Washing machines are one of the greatest tools ever invented. It is a dream comes true for the women community. The introduction of washing machine has simplified the task of washing dresses. People have no time to wash their dresses in the modern world. Washing machine is an essential appliance that requires very less manpower for its operation washing is useful to clean and dry clothes. It plays a vital role in the day-to-day life. It comes with variable programs and a lot of other accessories, which can be adjusted according to one’s need. Over the years, washing machines have advanced and are continually being re-worked in order to give the best possible method of clean clothes. Severe competition, price wars and static demand have led to a dismal performance of the consumer durable industry. The organized washing machines industry consists of domestic and multinational players, the latter having carved out a sizeable market presence during the last few years. The present position of the durables market in India has developed a highly competitive arena. In the history of washing machines market between 1980 and 1990 sharply monopolistic competition existed. One after another, the numbers of brands have increased and now there is a perfect competition in the market. Since more models are available in the market and people become choosy, expect lot of comfort facilities in the product.

Concept of Consumer Durables
Consumer durables are a category of consumer products that do not have to be purchased frequently because they are made to last for an extended period of time. They are also called durable goods or durables. The consumer durables can be broadly classified into two segments namely consumer electronics and consumer appliances. Consumer appliances can be further categorized into brown goods and white goods. Consumer durables have an extended product life and are not worn out or consumed quickly when consumers use them. Since they are made to last, consumer durables are typically more expensive than non-durable goods that have to be purchased over and over again. Examples of consumer durables are washing machine, automobile, furniture, jewelry, consumer electronics, microwave oven, sporting good, mobile phone, etc.

Consumer durables are technology driven. The latest models, innovative features and improved performance levels are a definite attraction for the consumers. The consumers’ choice today depends on the premium quality and technology provided. As most of the consumer durables are now a part of kitchen or drawing room furniture, reflecting tastes and lifestyles, the external features play an important role in purchases. With the fast approaching disparity in both technology and prices, brand image is becoming a key purchase influencer. The market has been very price sensitive in the past. The intensity has increased as one moved down from the premium segment to the mass consumption range. The consumer is becoming more sophisticated and beginning to recognize the value of premium quality. As more and more brands of consumer durables are becoming more or less similar in terms of technology, price, and the after sales service has assumed a major influence in buying decisions.

Consumer Durables Market
Indian consumer market is riding the crest of the country’s economic boom. Driven by young population with access to disposable incomes and easy finance options, the consumer market has been throwing up staggering figures. The market share of MNCs in consumer durables is 65 per cent. MNCs offer superior technology to the consumers whereas the Indian companies compete on the basis of firm grasp of the local market, their well acknowledged brands, and hold over wide distribution network. Currently rural markets account for 59 per cent of consumer durables in India. This sector has been witnessing momentous upswing in recent years, helped by drivers such as the emerging retail boom, real estate and housing demand, greater disposable income and an increase in the level of prosperous section of the population. The consumer durables sector is characterized by intense competition, emergence of new companies and introduction of state-of-the-art models, price discounts and exchange schemes. In consonance with the global trend, over the years, demand for consumer durables has increased with rising income levels, double-income families, changing lifestyles, availability of credit, increasing consumer awareness and introduction of new models. Another important factor that has contributed significantly to the expanding consumer durables market is the phenomenal growth in the Indian media. Even consumers in the remotest areas are equally aware of the latest products launched in the market due to the increasing penetration of television channels and cinemas. In addition, aggressive marketing efforts of the domestic majors are also helping the industry. Income levels of
the Indian consumers have steadily increased as a result of increased GDP growth rates. With their rising income levels, the Indian consumers have become the centre of attraction for MNC’s, who perceive India as a potential market place for their goods. However, the penetration of durables and home appliances is as a matter of fact, quite low in India, compared to several other developing countries. This implies that the potential for further growth is indeed quite enormous. However, high manufacturing costs and taxes, coupled with comparatively lower purchasing power, limit the growth rates. Consequently, many domestic manufacturers of consumer durables have substantial unutilized capacity.

Washing Machine Market

The washing machine market in India is set for sustained growth over the long-term, fuelled by favourable consumer demographics, availability of finance, and infrastructure development in rural areas. Several leading companies are now differentiating their products in areas of relevance to the changing aspirations and lifestyle of the consumers. Hence, the future of washing machine is on the verge of evolving from a mere utilitarian product to a truly energy-efficient, well-connected, and value-added appliance. Given the India’s large diverse market and current consumption levels makes great demand for washing machines during 2013-14 to 2017-18. The Indian washing machine industry is dominated by LG, Samsung, Videocon, and Whirlpool with a combined share of 74.60 per cent. Godrej and Onida each are in the vicinity of 6 to 8 per cent market share. IFB, Haier, TCL, and Panasonic are also aggressive in this segment. Other brands include Weston, Toshiba, Gem, T-series, Beltek, Texla, ETA O’General, Maharaja, and SVL.

Review of Literature

Different studies with regard to washing machine connected either directly or indirectly with the present study have been reviewed. The review of literature is highly useful to design the study as it indicates the research gap. The divergent perceptual frameworks involving washing machine is also scrutinized through the review of literature. The study of customers’ satisfaction towards washing machine has attracted the attention of many researchers irrespective of countries, be it developed, developing or least developed. Therefore, studies on these experiments of such countries are also discussed and reviewed in this section.

Selvakumar and Jegatheesan (2012) made an attempt to know the importance of household appliances; to understand the changing behaviour of the customers; to determine the consumers’ brand preference of washing machine; to identify the problems faced by the washing machine users; and to gives suitable suggestions on the basis of the findings of the study. The primary data were collected from 90 respondents through a well-designed interview schedule in Sivakasi taluk of Virudhunagar district. Secondary data were collected from various journals, magazines, newspapers, books and websites. It is found that advertising is the most influence factor in creating brand awareness. 74.44 per cent of the respondents were attracted by television media. 72.22 per cent of the respondents are lodged complaints against product fault to dealers. The most preferred brand of washing machine is Videocon.

Neha Sharm (2013) made an attempt to analyze the relationship between the factors affecting the purchase consideration; to study the various roles played by individuals on purchase consideration of home appliances in Jaipur region; to determine the relationship between the sources of information influencing the purchase consideration; and to determine the significance of nonavailability of buyers’ favourite brand in purchase consideration. The primary data were collected from 200 consumers and 100 dealers/retailers with the help of questionnaire. The results revealed that there exists significant relationship between non-availability of buyers’ favourite brand on purchase consideration. Further, it is revealed that consumer behaviour depends on a number of variables such as demographic variables, personality, needs and buying motives, family life cycle stage, family buying roles and the factors included in the choice criteria.

Ramanath and Dinakar (2015) made an attempt to know the popular durable products in rural market; to understand the level of awareness about the durables; to ascertain factors influencing purchasing decision; to understand priorities and preferences of rural consumers; and to analyze the expectations of rural consumers about the durables. The primary data were collected with the help of structured schedule from Bidare Gudi village of Tiptur Taluk, Tumkur District in Karnataka State. The sample consists of housewives and traders. The respondents said it is not the buying which matters, but the maintenance which matters, but the maintenance of these products that matters a lot to them. According to them, quality of power is a serious concern. The rural consumers are self-contended and, therefore, they have limited aspiration and demand in their life.

Chitra Srivastava (2015) studied the awareness level and the factor effecting the satisfaction of the customers regarding the purchase of washing machines. Various statistical tools have been used to analyze the given data on various aspects and make the study more logical and comparable. It is found from the study that variables like literacy and income level of customers, price of the product and brand reputation of the product have significant impact on the satisfaction of customers. The loopholes exists with the market of these goods are ineffective after sale services and poor dissemination of standard information required by the customers.

Abdul Broske Khan and Muthu Velayutham (2015) made an attempt to study the consumer buying behaviour towards selected home appliance products in Ramanathapuram; and to understand the various factors and its impact on consumer buying decision of home appliance products in Ramanathapuram. The primary data have been collected from the respondents by using a well structured, non-disguised questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, research articles, magazines, reports, newspapers and websites. The study concluded that, the consumer behaviour have a great impact on the home appliance products of the clusters. The relationship between consumer behaviour and home appliance products can be seen as an individual's purchases and use of products and services where these choices constitute part of his life style expression and its reflection.

Purushothaman and Krishnamurthy (2015) made an attempt to study the socio-economic profile of consumers of home appliances; to find out the most influencing source of information for the purchase of home appliances; to examine the satisfaction level of customers of different segments; and to measure the loyalty of customers of different segments. The survey was conducted to obtain the responses from the consumers of the three products namely, microwave oven, washing machine and refrigerator. The researcher distributed 320 questionnaires and obtains 250 responses only. The study suggests that consumers are suggested to avoid frequent use of credit cards while purchasing both home appliances since use of credit card increases the price of the articles and there

are other inconveniences associated with it. Consumers should consider shopping as a pleasant activity. The head of the family may take the family members for shopping.

Saravanakumar and Nithyadevi (2016) made an attempt to study the socio-economic profile of the selected women consumers; and to examine the problem faced by the women while purchasing consumer durables. Primary data have been collected from 50 consumers in Pollachi taluk. This study concludes that the competitive market provides opportunity on one hand and threats on the other hand to both consumer segment of women and products of the product. It is quite important to improve core product with value addition to enrich customer satisfaction more in the similar price range. Not only quality improvements but improvement in after sales service can develop and replace demand for consumer durables as well as for replacement of the products. The dealers or producers and retailers must understand the importance of the consumers and their changing attitude in the process of marketing.

Statement of the Problem

While analyzing the consumer behaviour and mentality in using durable items, a change is found between consumers before 2 decades and now. Present day consumers like to change the product for a new one after using the existing product for certain period. But before 2 decades, users use the same product for long time, replacing and repairing the worn out spares. Thus, the companies try to keep the quality and performance of the products. In this kind of market and competition, there are several factors that users analyze while choosing the brand. Apart from price of washing machines, economy, comfort, and appearance are also noticed. Everyday the technology is developing and new technologies are introduced in new models, the competitors release another new model with further advanced technology. The washing machine industry is fast developing industry. In the world economy this industry plays a major role. Now there are numbers of factories all over the world manufacturing numerous types of washing machines. The Indian washing machine industry was a sequel to the need for industrialization and import substitution, encouraged in the last two decades. In this context, the researcher has made an attempt to study the customers’ satisfaction towards Samsung washing machine in Chidambaram Town.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the present study.

1. To study the factors influencing the customers to prefer Samsung washing machine in Chidambaram Town
2. To study the satisfaction level of customers towards Samsung washing machine in Chidambaram Town.
3. To offer suitable suggestions to increase the market share of Samsung washing machine in Chidambaram Town.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is confined to Samsung washing machine only. The geographical area of the study was limited to Chidambaram Town only. A modest step in the direction of pinpointing the various attributes of the products, marketing activities of the Samsung Company and the need and importance for sustaining the market was delimited to study.

Sampling Design

By adopting convenient sampling, 150 household respondents were selected for this study.

Tools of Data Collection

The present study is empirical in nature based on survey method. The study aims at examining the satisfaction level of customers towards washing machine in Chidambaram Town. This study is mainly based on primary sources of information. The primary data are collected from 150 customers of Samsung washing machine with help of the questionnaire for a period of 3 months from December 2017 to February 2018. The secondary data were collected from the books, records and journals.

Framework of Analysis

In order to study the respondents’ perception towards Samsung washing machine, percentage analysis is employed.

Limitations of the Study

The study has the following limitations.

1. Any study having a bearing on attitude, incomplete, wrong information and non-responses to some questions could not be avoided. However, the researcher took maximum efforts so as to minimize such errors.
2. Due to paucity of time, the study was restricted to 150 respondents only.

Suggestions

In the first phase the basic demand of a consumer create need recognition. There are some considerations available before customers:

Model operational convenience, technology, pricing strategies, promotional packages made to cover huge amount of consumers, availability of product at door steps to enable both time and place utilizes and after sales support.

Considering all the above mentioned facts on comparative basis consumers has to build a positive attitude in purchase of durable consumer products.

Conclusion

The consumer durable product market is in tremendous growth in Indian market with the power of increase in per capita income of individuals and lifestyle change in the competitive global scenario. The study is focused on refrigerator market in Tamil Nadu, the state economy, individual income and lifestyle and its effect in change in industrial era and more over the state’s climate, the demand for the product is continuously on the rise. With rising level of disposable incomes and the need for both partners to work, makes it necessary to go for consumer durable products. Available of credit facility and various models to suit various needs and budgets also contribute significantly to the growth of this industry.
References


