PRE-PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR OF URBAN AND RURAL CONSUMERS WITH REFERENCE TO TELEVISION

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ABSTRACT
This study focuses on pre-purchase behaviour of consumers in both urban and rural areas. Paying more attention to relevant factors before deciding the brand such as pre-purchase search, reference group and self-opinion in both urban and rural areas is important because many studies have focused on researching urban consumers buying behavior. The role of these factors is of high importance because this helps to project the product and is to influence people.

Keywords: Urban area, Rural area, Pre-purchase search, Reference group, Advertisement

INTRODUCTION
Pre-purchase search is a consumer decision making process in which the consumer perceives a need and actively seeks out information concerning products that will satisfy that need. Reviews of the numerous studies of the planning Information search and shopping behaviors preceding actual durable goods purchases however, conclude that some what idealized process does not occur. Substantial proposition of the buyers’ report purchases in which a single brand was considered, one store visited and little or no external information search was undertaken. Longitudinal studies on purchase plan reported earlier stated that large numbers of purchase for which no plan was reported during the first wave interview. It seems that further conceptualization of the process is required to bring out a closer fit between theory and research findings. Hence the respondents are requested to give their responses for the importance of pre-purchase information on a 5 point scale.

A person or group that serves as a point of comparison for an individual in the formation of either general or specific values, attitudes or behaviour so the theory of social interaction (Homans, 1961; Thibaut and Kelly, 1959) has received attention in buyer behaviour through reference group influences on buying decisions. Barone et al. (2004) suggests a possible dual effect of a reference group on the consumer in determining (i) his goals, and (ii) specific courses of action. The former will be reflected in buying or not buying a product class, while the latter will influence the type and brand within a product class. There may be many in the family and outside the family influencing a purchase. In this study the importance of six categories of people viz., self, spouse, friends and relatives, children, peers and sales person are taken-up for study.
Attitude toward advertising can be defined as the predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure situation (Mackenzie et al. 1986). Previous advertising research has shown that attitude toward advertising is a good indicator of advertising effectiveness. Shimp (1981) and Mackenzie et al. (1986) reported that attitude toward advertising is a useful construct that contributes to explaining the effects of advertising exposure upon consumer brand beliefs, brand attitude, and purchase intentions. And also many recent researchers also suggested a substantial and significant relationship between attitude toward advertisement and purchase intention. So the respondents’ opinion about advertisements is taken up for the study.

Advertising can be classified into two categories: brand building and directional (Fernandez and Rosen, 2000; Lohse and Rosen, 2001). Brand building advertising is synonymous with product advertising and is commonly seen in traditional mass media, including TV, radio, magazine, and newspaper. Brand building advertisements tend to be product/service- (or retailer-) oriented with the purpose to establish a positive image and creating demand for a product or service that leads to eventual purchase (Barrow, 1990; Rosenberg, 1995). The communication route is typically one-to-many and is designed to reach a mass audience by using a tactic of intrusion aimed at capturing the attention of users. Directional advertising is designed to help potential buyers to locate interesting information (Fernandez, 1995). Ducoffe (1996) argues that media context is thought to have an important influence on the value of advertising. Previous studies also confirmed that advertising placed in a more credible medium such as a newspaper are perceived as more informative, reliable, and believable while advertising placed in a less credible medium like TV is considered to be less informative (Bauer and Greyser, 1968; Becker, Martino, and Towners, 1976; Larkin, 1979). Therefore, consumes attitudes toward the medium is essential. Respondents were asked to express their view about suitable media for advertisement.

This research purpose would be served if a comparison on consumer behavior could be conducted between a rich region and a poor one within a developing country. Little attention has been paid to rural consumers’ buying behavior (Home, 2002) Many studies on Indian consumer behavior have focused on a particular subset of the entire population, especially the urban consumers. As India’s rural economy continues to develop and as multinational corporations (MNCs) expand from urban areas into rural regions, studies of both rural and urban consumers will also carry significant marketing implications.

It is a myth that a rural consumer usually waits for a seldom visiting buys to his village to make his trip towards a nearby town to buy ‘branded’ products/services. This scenario has been changing very rapidly as many domestic and multinational conglomerates have bringing rural markets in the distribution network map.

Under these circumstances understanding how consumers behave while buying television product pose a problem. Finding a solution to this problem will help the marketers to come out with their plans of action, and try to revitalize and renew the products in the interest of consumers. Also, new products which the consumers require could be introduced by the marketers.

**OBJECTIVES**

- To examine the pre-purchase search pattern of urban and rural consumers in the selection of television.
- To know the respondents importance level of reference group and self opinion towards purchase.
- To identify the attitudes of respondents towards advertisement and also identify the respondents preferable media for advertisement.
To judge the suitable medium for advertisement

METHODOLOGY

Period of the study
The period of the study is confined to six months that is from February 2012 to July 2012 as that period of study is considerably enough to find out the pre-purchase behaviour of urban and rural consumers with reference to television.

Product selection
Rural and Urban consumers possess different durable products at home. It is very important for the researcher to select a popular and essential product for the present study. The researcher has conducted a pilot study for the selection of products. In this pilot study the researcher has found out that television is an important and essential durable product presents at all the homes of rural and urban consumers. Therefore, television has been considered.

Data Collection
The study is descriptive in nature because it explains the cues preferred by urban and rural consumers. For investigating the research objectives the authors have chosen questionnaire as primary data source. This is because of intricate research area, hence questionnaire become natural way of gathering primary data. Items in the research instrument were developed on the basis of literature review. The questions were framed in such a manner to elicit the different types of information relating to the buyer behaviour of television in rural and urban areas.

Questions listed in the questionnaire were pre-tested on a sample of 20 consumers (10 from rural and 10 from urban area). The pre-testing of questionnaires has helped in modifying some questions. Some of the respondents were happy to reveal their experiences and sought necessary changes to be incorporated in the questionnaires which has duly done. The Cronbach alpha method is used to identify reliability of the questionnaire. It reveal that 88.7% (α = .88) of total variance is present for the statement in likerts 5 point scale or 10 point scale. Hence the reality of the statement is significant. Content validity of the tool was confirmed by discussing with the experts. The final (modified) questionnaire after pre-testing was used for collecting the data. The questionnaire is translates in their vernacular language for collecting data from rural consumers.

For the study multistage random sampling method has been used for collecting necessary primary data. In the first stage, two towns have been randomly selected in the district. From each town two areas are randomly selected. Finally, from each town twenty five respondents have been selected randomly.

Rural areas in the same two towns were selected. Then, two blocks have been randomly selected in a district. From each block, two villages have been randomly selected. From each village 25 respondents have been selected randomly. A sample size of 100 urban consumers and 100 rural consumers are selected and they have been requested to exhibit their responses.

The questionnaire was first developed in English for collecting responses and then translated in to their vernacular language (Tamil) for understanding and to elicit correct responses in rural areas and make to sure that both versions carrying same meaning. The questionnaire was given with a personal request and adequate briefing, to enable the respondents to understand the contents easily. t- test, Chi-square test, Friedman test and Kruskal-Wallis test were carried out to study the objectives.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-purchase search

The consumer may purchase a new television. They may collect sufficient information about television through past experience, new information search even from others. The respondents are requested to give their responses for the importance of pre-purchase information on a five point scale. The t-test was carried out for the three sources as mentioned above. The mean values are ranging from 2.99 to 3.30 for urban respondents and 2.41 to 3.93 for rural respondents.

Table 1: Pre-purchase search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Mean Value</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Experience</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>-4.54</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New information Search</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>-5.72</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information through others</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data
* Significant at one percent level

It is inferred that new information search is considered very important for both urban and rural respondents in the purchase of television. It also inferred that past experience and new information search is important for rural respondents and information through others is important for urban respondent. It can be concluded that information search pattern is varies across urban and rural areas.

Importance to Reference Group and self opinion in Purchase

Table 2 shows the respondents views about importance of reference group opinion in purchase. Six important members’ opinions were taken in to consideration. It is necessary to find out whose opinion has major impact on purchase decision. The mean values obtained from the respondents ranged between 2.81 and 3.57. From the mean values, it is found that spouse decision is more important for taking purchase decision (3.57), followed by self decision (3.52) and children’s opinion (3.40). Friedman test is applied to test whether the opinion of people vary among the reference groups.

Ho: 1 Respondents importance about reference group and self opinions are similar.

Table 2: Importance to reference group and self opinions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Opinions of peoples</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean rank</th>
<th>Friedman’s test value and significance</th>
<th>Multiple Comparison Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>79.98 p&lt;0.001</td>
<td>1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Children’s</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Friends &amp; Relatives</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sales person</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data
* Significant at one percent level
From the result of the Friedman’s test the importance attached to various references differ significantly at one percent level. It can be concluded that importance attached to opinion of people varies. Friedman Multiple Comparison test was used to identify the rank of importance to their opinion. First level of importance is given to spouse and self opinion. Second level of importance is given to children’s opinion. Third level of importance is given to friends and relatives opinion and fourth level of importance is given to peers and sales person opinion.

Further an attempt has been made to identify the difference in the opinion of groups based on weightage. Kruskal-Wallis test is applied to know the difference the areas with regard to opinion of people.

Table 3: Area wise Analysis of Reference Group and Self Opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions</th>
<th>Urban Mean</th>
<th>Urban SD</th>
<th>Rural Mean</th>
<th>Rural SD</th>
<th>Kruskal Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>135.544*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>67.987*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends &amp; Relatives</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>13.962*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>6.998*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>4.859**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Person</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>35.238*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data
* Significant at one percent level
** Significant at Five percent level

Ho: 2 Importance level of reference group in purchase are similar in both areas

Comparing the mean values it is observed that people of rural areas give more importance to self compared to urban buyers. Importance levels of spouse vary significantly between the two areas. In rural areas consumers give more importance to children. In rural areas people may have reservation with outsiders like peers, whereas in urban more importance are given to peers and sales persons opinion.

Attitude of respondents towards advertisements

Attitude toward advertising can be defined as the predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure situation (Mackenzie et al. 1986). Previous advertising research has shown that attitude toward advertising is a good indicator of advertising effectiveness. Shimp (1981) and Mackenzie et al. (1986) reported that attitude toward advertising is a useful construct that contributes to explaining the effects of advertising exposure upon consumer brand beliefs, brand attitude, and purchase intentions. Brown and Stayman (1992) also suggested a substantial and significant relationship between attitude toward ad and purchase intention.

Table 4 shows opinion of respondents about the advertisement. The calculated means values are ranging from (2.38) to (4.17). From the mean value it is revealed that the outcome of advertising increases sales (4.17), increases the brand image is the opinion of the majority
of the respondents: is the second level opinion (3.91) and gives product information is the least positive attitude (3.84).

Table 4: Opinion of Respondents towards Advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Friedman’s test value and Significance</th>
<th>Multiple Comparison Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Advertisement increases the brand image</td>
<td>3.9103</td>
<td>.9801</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>75.140* &lt;0.001</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Advertisement increases the sales</td>
<td>4.1657</td>
<td>.7793</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Advertisement result in price hike</td>
<td>3.2943</td>
<td>1.0667</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Advertisement gives product information</td>
<td>3.8363</td>
<td>.9904</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Advertisement exploits public</td>
<td>2.5107</td>
<td>1.0516</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Advertisement exploits women flock</td>
<td>2.3879</td>
<td>1.0494</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td></td>
<td>5, 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data

*Significant at one percent level

H0: 3 Respondents opinions towards advertisements are similar

Friedman’s test was performed to rank the respondents opinion about advertisements. From the Friedman’s calculated value 995.140 and P-value is 0.001 there is significant variation among the respondents view about advertisement. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. Further, Friedman multiple comparison test was used to find how people perceive advertisement. By computing, the six statements have been grouped into five categories.

The opinion about advertisement is: Advertisement increases sales is the first category; it increases brand image is second; advertisement gives product information is in the third category; advertisement results in price hike is the fourth level of opinion; and advertisement exploits public and exploits women flock is in the fifth category. Over all respondents have positive attitude towards advertisement.

Further Kruskal test was carried out to identify the areas differ significantly regard to opinion of advertisements between the two areas.
Table 5: Respondents Opinion about Advertisements across Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Urban Mean</th>
<th>Urban SD</th>
<th>Rural Mean</th>
<th>Rural SD</th>
<th>Kruskal value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advertisement increases the brand image</td>
<td>3.8178</td>
<td>1.1061</td>
<td>4.0039</td>
<td>0.8253</td>
<td>1.533 (NS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Advertisement increases the sales</td>
<td>4.0543</td>
<td>0.8490</td>
<td>4.2784</td>
<td>0.6851</td>
<td>8.651**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Advertisement result in price hike</td>
<td>3.3566</td>
<td>1.0196</td>
<td>3.2314</td>
<td>1.1107</td>
<td>1.186 (NS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Advertisement gives product information</td>
<td>3.8101</td>
<td>1.0052</td>
<td>3.8627</td>
<td>0.9765</td>
<td>0.547 (NS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Advertisement exploits public</td>
<td>2.6938</td>
<td>1.1849</td>
<td>2.3255</td>
<td>0.8603</td>
<td>12.584*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Advertisement exploits women flock</td>
<td>2.5155</td>
<td>1.0740</td>
<td>2.2588</td>
<td>1.0096</td>
<td>12.584**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data
* Significant at one percent level **Significant at five percent level, NS- Not Significant

Ho: 4 Respondents opinions are similar in all areas

In case of advertisement increases brand name both rural and urban respondents have same opinion. In case of advisement result in price hike also there is no significant variation among the respondents in both areas. The difference exists in the statements are advertisement increase sales and it gives product information also. With regard to advertisement exploits public and advertisement exploits women folk are also differ significantly based on areas. Rural people belief is more that advertisement increase sales. Urban people expressed that through advertisement marketers exploit public and women.

Suitable Media for Advertisement

Respondents were asked to express their view about suitable media for advertisement. The frequency distribution explains the opinion of respondents regarding suitable media for advertisement.

Table 6: Suitable Media for Advertisement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Area Urban</th>
<th>Area Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Chi square</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>18.020</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News paper</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data
* Significant at one percent level

From the table 6 it is inferred that in both areas electronic media is preferable by the respondents. Advertisement through radio is less preferred by respondents of urban areas. It is also found that rural consumers prefer print media, whereas urban consumers prefer electronic media. An attempt has been made to found out if there is any association between media preference with areas.
Ho: 5 The opinion about of media preference for advertisement is similar in both areas.

Chi-square test was employed to test the hypothesis. The test value is 18.020 and the P-value is 0.001. Hence null hypothesis is rejected at one per cent level. It can be concluded that there is significant difference between suitability of media in both areas. The difference exists in the preference for magazine. Urban people prefer magazines and not so by rural respondents.

SUGGESTIONS

- Marketers’ frame appropriate advertisement campaign to increase their sales.
- Advertisements’ major role is to create awareness. Information focus need not be given importance especially for durable products. It must be attractive and develop brand image.
- Marketers to select television and print media for promotion of television in urban and rural areas.
- Respondents’ opinion towards advertisement varies across urban and rural areas. So marketers and advertisers have to design a different campaign strategy to attract different areas.

CONCLUSION

The result shows that rural and urban consumers, are different in terms of their attitudes toward, product promotions (e.g. through mass media advertising), pre purchase search, reference group and self opinion.

A rural-urban regional segmentation approach with different product, communication and distribution strategies is a key for marketers to succeed in this giant nation with emerging and maturing urban markets and, promising and relatively untapped rural markets. By identifying and describing different groups of urban and rural consumers the result can provide guidance for marketers, who often have to do business with in margins. Many trading areas are relatively isolated. As such, marketers have to rely on their local population for survival. In order to remain successful in business marketers need to better understand the shopping behavior of urban and rural consumers.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study points out the influences, suitable media for advertisement and preferred promotional strategies. This will enable the business community to sustain in the market with suitable modifications. It also gives a very useful advice for marketers and advertisers to select the right type of retail outlets and media to reach urban and rural consumers. Television and Print media have good potential for promotion.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The area of urban and rural consumer behaviour is enormous, and most topics are important as they are interesting; many topics for further research can be mentioned.

Further studies on each variable may also be undertaken in-depth, for instance, a study could be undertaken to explore the different pre-purchase information search pattern between two population segments.

There is scope to conduct a comparative study to identify differences in the consumer behaviour between durable and non-durable products.
Understanding consumer behaviour to different market place environment is an important issue in marketing. Research may also be undertaken to examine behaviour across shopping environment, the in-store and the (non-store) online, impulse buying, etc can be compared.

REFERENCES

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