Role and Impact of Merchandising, Branding and Labelling on the Buying Behavior of Consumers in an Emerging Economy

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Abstract

Consumers advancing consciousness of product's brand and label and the resultant transitions in their buying behavior entail the organized retailers to attain the specific needs of the consumers. Subsequently, these transitions are paving the way forward for national and international retailers to expand their retail base in the emerging cities of India. Hence, the primary objective of this paper is to analyze the influence of merchandising and packaging on the buying behavior of consumers. While the secondary objective is to know the factors that influences consumer buying behavior at retail stores in an emerging market. Results obtained in this paper suggest that brand value, social media, private label branding and labelling are major factors that impacts the buying behavior of the consumers.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, Buying behavior, Branding, Merchandising, Labelling, Organized retail, Emerging city, Emerging economy, India.

Introduction

Organized retail consumers of India have demonstrated a significant change in their buying behavior because of a change in their psychological traits and demography (Lysonski and Durvasula, 2013; Kushwaha *et al.*, 2017), and amelioration in modern shopping, lifestyle, and retail store expansion (Kaur and Singh, 2007; Srivastava, 2008). In addition, consumers' changing buying behavior and increased capacity to purchase quality products are enticing the major national and international retailers to invest in organized retail in India (Ali *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, advancing brand consciousness and willingness to purchase more -new and fresh variety of every product- entails the Indian consumers towards organized retail stores (Alam & Sahdeo, 2021). An article of the World Economic Forum suggests that in the coming decade, there will be an additional one billion first-time consumers in the regions covering India, China, and Southeast Asia (Ojha and Ingilizian, 2019). Furthermore, in the coming 10-12 years the retail industry will expand its base into smaller towns and cities of India, and the market share of organized retail will reach up to 25 percent by the year 2024, which was 12 percent in the year 2019 (Naqvi and Soni, 2019). Given these contexts, this study aims to identify the groups/sections of the consumers who prefer to make their purchases from organized retail stores, and their buying behavior in an emerging city of an emerging market. Next, we seek to determine the factors influencing the buying behavior of consumers in organized retail, which may assist in the expansion of organized retail business in the emerging states of emerging economy.

Contrary to today's era, studying consumer behavior was confined only to the manufacturers of consumer packaged goods in its early days. Presently, retailers spend millions of dollars to get a holistic understanding of consumer behavior (Puccinelli *et al.*, 2009). Indian retail market holds a distinctive feature with a blend of organized retail stores and traditional stores. However, a consumer enjoys more variety and low prices of products in organized retail stores, in comparison to traditional stores (Minten *et al.*, 2010). Though multiple pieces of research have been conducted in the context of consumer buying behavior in India, most of these researches are confined to major cities, where the retail industry has already been expanded. Henceforth, it is high time to analyze the buying behavior of consumers of the emerging cities of the emerging economies such as India, i.e. places or states having less number of metro-cities, where the growth parameter in organized retail will be high in the coming years. In view of such evidence, this study attempts to fill the gap.

Review of literature

Goswami and Mishra (2009) state that in India, organized retailers have an edge over Kirana stores, because of their cleanliness, offers, and exclusive store brands. In the organized retail market, retailers can build their own brand by creating new names or by blending two names Keller (2003). Aday and Yener (2014) found that branding has a high impact on the consumers of Turkey in the food product segment. Perrin-Martinenq (2004) found that brand detachment causes the diminishing relationship between brands and consumers in France. Henceforth, repeat buying behavior of consumers also deteriorates with the deterioration in brand attachment.

Clement (2007) has elaborated on the influence of visual awareness with respect to the in-store buying behavior of the consumers based in Denmark and reveals that in the pre-attention phase, the products placed on the shelf of a retail store catch the eyesight of a consumer through its packaging and design. Highlighting the importance of merchandising in Taiwan, a good shelf space allocation strategy can benefit the customers in finding a product and can increase a firm's profit, and helps in cross-selling too (Tsai and Huang., 2015). However, labelling also plays the role of a major informant when it comes to checking up on the health benefits of products being sold in retail stores (Abbott, 1997; Coulson, 2000; Drichoutis *et al.*, 2006; Trijp and Lans, 2007; Kempen *et al.*, 2011).

Service quality, perceived quality, and merchandised quality has been established as major stimulator for successfully running organized retail stores in the United States (Baker *et al.*, 2002; Ozdemir and Hewett, 2010; Taylor *et al.*, 2010). Limited editions and multiple products also tend to enhance the firm's profit in the situation of strong reference group influence (Amaldoss and Jain, 2010). Kristensen *et al.* (1999) have discussed customer satisfaction which every company will to enhance in order to ameliorate its business performance in Denmark. However, a good and efficient supply chain network also plays a significant role in the expansion of retail trade, as it helps in slashing the product's price (Minten and Reardon, 2008).

Mehta *et al.* (2013) have discussed the shopping motivation of Indian consumers in the hypermarket segment of organized retail and found the following four types of hypermarket shoppers;

(i)   Utilitarians: Motivated by price and variety of products

(ii)   Maximizers: Seeks functional and recreational benefits

(iii)   Browsers: High on social motivation

(iv).   Enthusiasts: High on all dimensions of shopping motivation.

Srivastava (2008) cites that an increment in disposable income is a positive sign for retailing in India. He later says that shopping malls are more developed in the Northern and Western parts of India, in comparison to the Southern and Eastern parts. Nearly 75 percent of the consumers used to spend 1-3 hours in the mall. In addition, multiplexes are emerging as a family shopping point. While credit limit and home service are among the major factors which attract consumers to a retail store.

Paul (2017) has analyzed the factors responsible for regulating the shopping preference of consumers at large malls in India, and found that most consumers prefer to shop at large malls because of the latest and trendy items and discount offers in well-known brands. However, a consumer strives for achieving his/her goal through buying and using a particular product or service, which needs to be noticed by the retailers in order to get an understanding of retailing and consumer experience (Huffman *et al.*, 2000). A better understanding of the factors influencing the consumer's in-store buying behavior has always attracted researchers and industry practitioners (Hui *et al.*, 2009).

Materials and Methods

Objectives and hypotheses

Tsai and Huang (2015) found that in Taiwan merchandising plays an important role in the revenue generation of retail trade and helps a consumer to find a product easily. Succeeding the earlier research of Srivastava (2008), this paper tends to identify the factors needed for expanding the retail base in the Eastern part of India. Henceforth, based on these and on the above-cited works of literature, the objectives of this paper are:

- To identify the specific groups/sections of consumers based on their socio-economic demography, who prefer to buy from organized retail stores (Based on Puccinelli *et al.*, 2009).

- To determine the factors which influence their buying in organized retail stores (Based on Huffman *et al.*, 2000; Hui *et al.*, 2009).

Succeeding the earlier research (Srivastava, 2008; Kushwaha *et al.*, 2017), the present research intended to carry out an empirical study for analyzing the determinants of buying behavior of consumers in organized retail of an emerging city of an emerging market. The specific hypothesis tested in this research is as follows:

H_1. Merchandising and packaging influence the buying behavior of consumers.

Research Design

We conducted our survey in the Ranchi city of Jharkhand State of India. Jharkhand is an Indian state located in Eastern India, and Ranchi is the capital city of Jharkhand state. Ranchi is a non-metro city and largely considered as a developing city, possessing a high chance of retail growth in the coming years. We selected Ranchi for this research purpose as Ranchi is attracting big retailers to invest because of enormous urbanization with low rent and low-cost real estate (Mehta, 2019). A working paper published by Observer Research Foundation (ORF) states that the wholesale and retail trade segment accompany 22 percent of the total workforce of Ranchi city, and along with the massive urbanization, Ranchi has now become a business hub and a center of a booming multi-brand retail sector (Mehta and Kumar, 2019).

After going through some of the empirical research papers, we prepared our own structured questionnaire to obtain the data from consumers. In the preceding literature also consumer behavior has been structured as a multiple-item (Kumar & Kapoor, 2014). Subsequently, items were selected and measured on a five-point Likert scale (varying from 5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree), previously used by Lysonski and Durvasula (2013) & Ali and Sudan (2018). Scales were pre-tested with Cronbach's Alpha obtained 0.915 which exhibits that our questions are reliable and possess high internal consistency (Leontitsis and Pagge, 2007). To get an understanding of the key factors influencing the buying behavior of consumers, we run factor analysis (Kaur and Singh, 2007; Paul, 2017) by using SPSS 23 software.

Sampling Design

Proceeding with the earlier research (Wang and Xiao, 2009; Singla, 2010), a stratified cum convenient sampling method was applied to obtain the data from a self-administered survey questionnaire of organized retail consumers of Ranchi city of Jharkhand state, of Eastern India. We sought answers only from those respondents who used to shop in organized retail stores. Out of 150 questionnaires distributed, 43 respondents were removed due to non-sampling errors, hence 107 responses were used for further analysis. Analysis of the data obtained manifests that out of 107 respondents, 63 (58.9 percent) were male and 44 (41.1 percent) were female (Table 1). We assorted the respondents on the basis of their demographic and socio-economic profiles based on the discrete choice questions, including age (Table 2), educational qualification (Table 3), income (Table 4), and occupation type (Table 5).

Table 1: Profile of Respondents: Gender

	No.	(%)	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid				
Male	63	58.9	58.9	58.9
Female	44	41.1	41.1	100
Total	107	100	100	

Results and discussion

This section is assorted into two sections, hypothesis testing and factor analysis.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

	No.	(%)	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid				
Between 20-29	24	22.4	22.4	22.4
Between 30-39	40	37.4	37.4	59.8
Between 40-49	29	27.1	27.1	86.9
More than 50	14	13.1	13.1	100
	107	100	100	

In Table 2, age of the respondents is reported, which exhibits that the consumers aged between 30-39 (37.4 percent) likes more to make their purchase from organized retail stores. Results obtained in Table 3 exhibit that persons with high qualification degrees i.e. Post Graduation (50.5 percent) like to buy more from organized retail stores.

Table 3: Qualification of Respondents

	No.	(%)	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid				
SSC (10th)	4	3.7	3.7	3.7
HSC (12th)	7	6.5	6.5	10.2
Graduation	27	25.2	25.2	35.4
Post Graduation	54	50.5	50.5	85.9
M Phil/PhD	15	14	14	100
Total	107	100	100	

Likewise, we indexed the respondents with reference to their income in Table 4 and found that the respondents having more income than INR 40,000.00/month (30.8 percent) tends to buy more from organized retail stores. Correspondingly, we classified the respondents with reference to their occupation/job nature and found that persons working in private firms (52.3 percent) are more likely to buy from organized retail stores, as reported in Table 5.

Table 4: Segment of Consumers Preferring to Buy from Retail Store with Respect to their Income

	No.	(%)	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid				
Below 10,000	22	20.6	20.6	20.6
Between 10,000-19,999	21	19.6	19.6	40.2
Between 20,000-29,999	15	14	14	54.2
Between 30,000-39,999	16	15	15	69.2
More than 40,000	33	30.8	30.8	100
Total	107	100	100	

Table 5 : Segment of Consumers Preferring to Buy from Retail Store with Respect to their Occupation

	No.	(%)	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid				
Business	8	7.5	7.5	7.5
Government job	7	6.5	6.5	14
Housewife	6	5.6	5.6	19.6
Self-employed/ Contractual employee)	15	14	14	33.6
Private Job	56	52.3	52.3	86
Student	15	14	14	100
Total	107	100	100	

In order to understand the influence of merchandising on the consumer buying behavior, the result is being shown in Table 6, which exhibits that 84.1 percent (strongly agree i.e. 60.7 + agree i.e. 23.4) of consumers do agree or strongly agree with the influence of merchandising in their buying behavior.

Table 6: Summary of Answers-Merchandising in a Retail Store Influences Your Buying Behavior

	Frequency	(%)	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid				
Strongly disagree	1	0.9	0.9	0.9
Disagree	2	1.9	1.9	2.8
Neither agree nor disagree	14	13.1	13.1	15.9
Agree	65	60.7	60.7	76.6
Strongly agree	25	23.4	23.4	100
Total	107	100	100	

1. Hypothesis testing

1. H_1. Merchandising and packaging influence the buying behavior of consumers.

Table 7: Influence of Merchandising and Packaging on Buyers in the Retail Stores

Serial no.	Statement	Mean value Out of (maximum 1 to minimum 5)		Z
		Male	Female	
1	Merchandising in a retail store influences your buying behavior	4.0317	4.0455	-.096
2	Attractive packaging of a product influences your buying behavior	3.5714	3.5909	-.097

The result reported in Table 7 shows that we have used two propositions to analyze this hypothesis. The first proposition states-"Merchandising in a retail store influences your buying behavior"- the result exhibits that the mean score of the male (4.0317) is moderately less than the mean score of the female (4.0455). This indicates that males got more influenced by merchandising in comparison to females. Second proposition states-"Attractive packaging of a product influences your buying behavior"- the result of this analysis shows that the mean score of male (3.5714) is slightly less than the female's score of the mean (3.5909), which exhibits that attractive packaging influences the male buyers more than the female buyers. However, Z score (-.096) for the first proposition and Z score (-.097) for the second proposition is found to be less than the critical value of

1.96 (table value) at 5 percent level of significance, which manifests that there is no significant statistical difference in the buying behavior of male and female buyers. Henceforth, we accept this hypothesis.

Factor Analysis

Table 8	KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy.		0.785
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
Approximate χ^2		1612.843
Df		496
Significance		0.000

Table 9: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha		No. of Items
0.915		32

In the very first stage of factor analysis, principal component analysis was used to subtract the number of components (factors). After conducting the principal component analysis with a factor loading of 0.5, we got 9 attributes out of 32 total attributes. Among the 9 attributes which we got after the extraction method, 2 of the attributes (4th and 9th) were found to be representing the same factors (even after repeatedly conducting the analysis). Hence, we choose 1 attribute which represents the more Eigenvalues (4th represents 1.68 while 9th represents 1.009). Thus, we selected the 4th attribute and the total number of attributes was extracted to 8 attributes. During the hit and trial process of running the factor analysis with 8 attributes, we found the total variance explained is at 49.788 percent. After deducting the number of attributes to 7 and 6, the total variance explained is found to be at 37.945 percent and 41.101 percent respectively, which are less than 60.0 percent. Henceforth, we conducted our factor analysis with a total of 32 attributes. Table 8 exhibits the KMO test, which shows that our sample possesses good adequacy for further analysis, while Bartlett's test of sphericity manifests that there is some presence of shared variance in the total 32 items. KMO score (0.785) is found to be above 0.50, and Bartlett's test (1612.843) was also found to be significant, i.e. 2=1612.843. Table 9 shows that Cronbach's alpha (0.915) is much better than the table value of 0.60. Hence, our sample shows more reliability and is internally consistent.

Table 10: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.119	28.497	28.497	9.119	28.497	28.497	3.269	10.216	10.216
2	2.554	7.982	36.479	2.554	7.982	36.479	2.655	8.298	18.514
3	2.297	7.178	43.657	2.297	7.178	43.657	2.559	7.998	26.512
4	1.68	5.249	48.906	1.68	5.249	48.906	2.462	7.695	34.206
5	1.441	4.503	53.408	1.441	4.503	53.408	2.44	7.624	41.83
6	1.314	4.105	57.514	1.314	4.105	57.514	2.281	7.127	48.957
7	1.137	3.553	61.067	1.137	3.553	61.067	2.244	7.012	55.97
8	1.133	3.541	64.609	1.133	3.541	64.609	2.042	6.381	62.35
9	1.009	3.154	67.763						
10	0.912	2.85	70.613						
11	0.866	2.707	73.319						
12	0.846	2.643	75.962						
13	0.717	2.239	78.202						
14	0.688	2.151	80.353						
15	0.662	2.07	82.423						
16	0.654	2.044	84.467						
17	0.547	1.708	86.175						
18	0.525	1.64	87.815						
19	0.497	1.552	89.367						
20	0.435	1.358	90.725						
21	0.413	1.29	92.015						
22	0.381	1.191	93.206						
23	0.33	1.031	94.237						
24	0.316	0.987	95.224						
25	0.279	0.871	96.095						
26	0.246	0.767	96.863						
27	0.223	0.696	97.559						
28	0.207	0.648	98.207						
29	0.189	0.592	98.799						
30	0.155	0.484	99.283						
31	0.127	0.396	99.679						
32	0.103	0.321	100						

Note: Extraction method: principal component analysis

Factor analysis was used in all of the 32 attributes to shortlist the number of attributes, and a factor with minimum loading of 0.5 was retained. The result exhibited in Table 12 indicates that 8 factors (factor 9 has been removed, as discussed earlier) were extracted through the principal component analysis, explaining 62.35 percent of the total variance. The reported individual variance of different factors exhibits that factor 1 i.e. V1- Brand has caused the highest percentage of variance among the respondents (with 28.497 percent), followed by the factor 2 i.e. V2-Social media (with 7.982 percent of variance), 3 i.e. V3-Private label brand (with 7.178 percent of variance), 4 i.e. V4-Labelling (with 5.249 percent of variance), 5 i.e. V5-Peer group influence (with 4.503 percent of variance), 6 i.e. V6-Health and quality (with 4.105 percent of variance), 7 i.e. V7-Original products (with 3.553 percent of variance), and 8 i.e. V8-In store environment (with 3.541 percent of variance) respectively. So, we obtained that these 8 factors remarkably influenced the buying behavior of consumers listed in the sample.

Conclusion

Based on this study, the following significant discernment can be summarized.

- We found that the success of the organized retail stores in the emerging cities of an emerging market such as India, predominantly depends on perception and expansion of brand value, efficient use of social media, introducing private label branded products, effective means of labelling, meaningful advertising strategies -specifically in WoM (Word of Mouth)- as peer group influence is found to be influential, and health & quality amelioration of the products.

- Our study validates that the finding of Tsai and Huang (2015) stands firm in India's context because it was found that merchandising influences 84.1 percent of retail consumers. As both Taiwan and India are largely considered emerging economies, hence this finding is found to be endorsing the argument of Tsai and Huang (2015).

- Further, in this study we found that merchandising of products on the shelves of retail stores needs to be taken care of, as it was found as an eminent factor that influences the consumers of emerging economies like India. National and international retailers should focus on strategizing their retail policies for emerging retail markets with utmost attention given to efficient merchandising.

Limitations and future research

Every study has its own limitations, hence this study too falls in the same category. The foremost limitation of this study is that only 107 sample sizes were selected to conduct this study. But there are some studies (Kaur and Singh, 2007; Singla, 2010) that have been published in journals of repute having almost the same sample size, which minimizes this constraint to a much lower extent.

This study manifests that there is a scope for more research in the emerging cities of emerging economies because the developed cities of emerging economies have already been tapped by the retailers (backed by fast consumerism). It should also be noted down that the shopping motives of the retail consumers of emerging economies are different from the retail consumers of developed economies. In addition, more strategic planning is needed on the retailer's and marketer's end for improvising the packaging and merchandising of products in retail stores.

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