

A STUDY OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN RELATION TO THE MARKETING OF CONSUMER DURABLES IN THE RURAL ECONOMY OF KERALA

India is always known for its multifarious cultures, attitudes and even climates. On the business side too, the fact remains relevant and hence the Indian market is generally regarded as a consumer-driven one divided into urban and rural markets. Global corporations look upon India as a vital market for the future. India has a young demographic and a middle class with rising disposable income. For every market or business, the customer is regarded as the end goal because it is he who creates demands and pays for the trade.

Two major far-reaching and evolutionary changes are occurring in the economy, viz., a transformation from domestic to global and from global to rural economy. This has been aptly realized by the corporate sector and they are making every effort devising strategies to tap the vast opportunities existing in the rural markets. Rural market in India with a rural population of 72 crores offers a blooming opportunity for the corporate sector. However, marketing in rural India is not an easy task because of the number of unique problems existing in Indian Rural Market. The rural market of Kerala is different in many respects from the rest of India. The uniqueness of Kerala rural market is mainly attributable to its rural urban continuity, better infrastructure facilities, literacy level of the consumers, developed distribution channels etc. Keeping in view the uniqueness of the Kerala's rural market and accepting the complexity in the nature of rural markets and difficulty in studying the perception of rural consumers, this study was undertaken. Therefore, this study seeks to provide an insight into consumer products marketing in rural Kerala, for which consumer products have been selected. Consumer products include consumer durables and non-durables. This study focuses on consumer durables. This study aims at gaining a better knowledge of the appropriate marketing strategies of rural buying behaviour and purchasing pattern of rural consumers of durable consumer goods in Kerala. This study also intends to elicit information from retailers, who are closely related to consumers, about the above-mentioned variables.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To assess the influence of marketing elements on the purchase behaviour of rural consumers for durables.
2. To examine the factors influencing the selection of consumers durables by rural consumers.
3. To ascertain the factors influencing the consumer preference in making the purchase of durables.
4. To evaluate the awareness and attitude of rural consumers in the purchase of durables.
5. To probe into retailer's views on the factors influencing the purchase decision of consumers.
6. To identify the most popular brands of refrigerators, washing machine, hob, oven and vacuum cleaner.

CONCLUSIONS

The following are major conclusions arrived at based on the findings of the study:

1. Rural consumers are male oriented.
2. Illiteracy is absent among the consumers in the rural areas.
3. The youngsters and rural people have a steady and regular income and are more interested in various rural marketing dealings.
4. Necessity and utility are the major buying motives for consumer durables in rural areas.

5. Rural consumers are much interested in considering available information before making any purchase decision. They are interested in knowing about the dealer network, finance available, credit facilities, after sale service and so on.
6. Media, service centers, neighbors and friends are the major source of information to the rural consumers about the consumer durables.
7. Brand awareness is common among the rural consumers.
8. Purchase of consumer durables is not influenced by the consideration of various brands.
9. Rural consumers in north and central spent much more for consumer durables than rural consumers in south.
10. Product attributes is a major consideration that influence the buying behaviour of rural consumers.
11. There is a tendency on the part of rural consumers that they show their interest in purchasing consumer durables from general dealers and authorized dealers.
12. Immediate cash payment is a mode of payment followed by rural consumer for their purchase of consumer durables.
13. Reputation, after sale service and previous connection with retailers are the factors that influence the selection of a particular dealer for purchase of consumer durables.
14. Branded consumer durables are the moving consumer durables in the rural areas.
15. Rural consumers are satisfied with the overall performance of the dealers.

16. Retailers believe that necessity is the major buying motive for refrigerator, where as utility plays vital role in the case of washing machine, oven and vacuum cleaner. In the case of hob, social status or the privilege of being the owner of such a device urges the purchase decision

17. LG is the market leader brand for refrigerators. IFB is the most traded item for washing machine. Kenwood is the most favored for oven brand in rural Kerala. Bissel and Avers are the most popular brands of vacuum cleaner and Glima occupies major share of traded item in the case of hob.

18. According to the retailers, oral consultation is the most favorite source of information for consumer about the durables.

19. Energy savings and quality are the major factors considered by customers in the purchase of consumer durables.

The study thus throws light on various vital aspects of the Kerala market regarding the various consumer durables and the mindset of Keralites. The various tables clearly reveal the preferences of the consumers, their taste, background, qualifications and behavior patterns. It also throws light on the nuances of market, strategies adopted, favourite or most preferred products and above all the attitude of the sellers. The examination provides a few valuable suggestions derived from the surveys and it can certainly be fruitful for the future analyses.

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