



A FUNDAMENTAL STUDY ON RETAIL SHOPPERS BEHAVIOUR

Dr. M. Govindaraj

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CHAPTER 1

TRANSFORMATIVE TRENDS: UNVEILING THE DYNAMICS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND RETAIL EVOLUTION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

This comprehensive document delves into the intricate world of consumer behavior and the evolving retail landscape in India. It explores the profound impact of the digital revolution on consumer decisions and outlines the challenges and opportunities faced by today's marketplace. The distinction between consumers and buyers is emphasized, shedding light on the complexities of understanding consumer behavior and its critical role in shaping effective retail strategies. The conversation encompasses the historical context and evolution of retail banking, emphasizing its essential role in the global economy. The document further delves into the trends and strategies employed by various brands and industries to resonate with consumers, including the shift towards remote working, staycations, and virtual experiences. The importance of understanding retail shopper characteristics in the context of the Indian market is highlighted, along with the various benefits retailers provide to consumers. Factors influencing the growth of the retail industry in India are examined, providing insights into the country's potential as a lucrative destination for retail investors. The concluding section encapsulates the transformative phase of the Indian retailing sector, marked by changing demographics and increased consumption, setting the stage for unprecedented growth.

KEYWORDS:

Consumer Behavior, Digital Revolution, Marketplace, Retail Landscape.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite our differences, one of the most unifying constants among all individuals is our role as consumers, engaging in the regular consumption or utilization of products and services. As consumers, we wield a significant influence on the health of the economy, whether at the local, national, or international level. In the current era of digital revolution, marked by profound changes in the business environment, the impact on consumer behavior presents numerous challenges for today's marketplace [1]. This pertains to how individuals decide to allocate their available resources be it time, money, or efforts towards consumable items. Consumer behavior encapsulates the entirety of decisions made by consumers regarding the acquisition, consumption, and disposal of goods, services, time, and ideas through human decision-making units. Notably, consumer behavior often revolves around decisions within retailing contexts, with retail phenomena serving as defining conditions. Undoubtedly, the significance of comprehending consumer behavior has never been more crucial for retailers.

Specifically, an effective retail strategy surpasses competitors by better satisfying consumer needs, making an understanding of consumer needs and buying behavior imperative for informed retail decision-making and subsequent strategy development. To attract consumers, the retail industry

must grasp the intricacies of consumer behavior, which is inherently complex due to its connection with consumer psychology and dependence on various influencing factors. Distinguishing between a consumer and a buyer is essential [2], [3]. A consumer is an individual who purchases products or services for personal use, not intending for resale. This individual has the authority to decide whether or not to make a purchase at a store, being susceptible to marketing and advertisements. The act of going to a store and deciding to buy items such as toys, shirts, or beverages defines the role of a consumer. On the other hand, a buyer can be a consumer, as seen when a teenager buys and uses a video game. However, a consumer is not necessarily the buyer, as exemplified when a mother buys cereal for her family, with each family member being a consumer of the product. Figure 1, shows the Influence of E-commerce on Conventional Retail Enterprises.



Figure 1: Illustrates the Influence of E-commerce on Conventional Retail Enterprises.

The Ascendancy of E-commerce:

The growth of e-commerce has been remarkable, propelled by factors such as the widespread adoption of smartphones, enhanced internet connectivity, and evolving consumer preferences. Online marketplaces and dedicated e-commerce platforms have emerged as major players on the global retail stage, with industry giants like Amazon, Alibaba, and eBay reshaping the shopping landscape and intensifying competition for traditional retailers.

Escalating Competition:

Traditional retail establishments are grappling with fierce competition from diverse sources, including online retailers, e-commerce platforms, and large-scale retail stores. These competitors entice customers with expansive product selections, competitive pricing, and convenient shopping experiences, diverting patronage away from conventional brick-and-mortar stores. For instance, a local bookstore contends with online retail giant Amazon, which offers an extensive array of books

at competitive prices. Many customers opt for the convenience of online shopping, choosing digital books or e-books over visiting a physical store.

Shifting Consumer Behavior:

The transition in consumer behavior towards online shopping and digital interactions presents a significant hurdle for traditional retail enterprises. Today, consumers increasingly favor the ease of shopping from their homes, comparing prices online, and receiving products at their doorstep. A traditional clothing retailer faces challenges as more customers prefer browsing and purchasing clothes through online platforms. Consumers can easily compare prices, read reviews, and order clothing without leaving their homes, diminishing foot traffic to physical stores.

Comparative Product Options:

In contrast to traditional businesses, e-commerce provides customers with a plethora of alternatives while shopping. It enables customers to explore merchandise and simultaneously compare similar products on various websites. E-commerce facilitates the comparison of prices, a process not as straightforward in traditional business, leading customers to shift from traditional retail towards e-commerce. For example, comparing clothing and prices (including discounts) on different websites like Flipkart, Amazon, and Myntra is more convenient than navigating different shops in a physical marketplace.

Evolution in the Supply Chain:

The surge in e-commerce has instigated significant changes in the supply chain as retailers adapt to heightened demands for efficient and swift shipping. This transformation in the supply chain introduces new logistical and fulfillment challenges for traditional retailers.

Integration Opportunities:

In addition to the challenges, e-commerce also presents opportunities for traditional businesses, particularly in integrating online and offline channels. Traditional retailers have successfully devised omnichannel strategies through e-commerce, enabling customers to shop online and pick up products in-store or order online and return items at physical stores if needed. Examples of businesses employing omnichannel strategies include Decathlon and H&M. The impact of e-commerce on traditional retail businesses is profound. Adapting to the evolving landscape, embracing e-commerce, and delivering a seamless online and offline shopping experience are imperative for traditional retailers to thrive in this highly competitive market. By comprehending the challenges and advantages of e-commerce, traditional retailers can position themselves for success in the ever-changing retail industry.

Consumer:

A consumer is a broad classification encompassing individuals or households that utilize goods produced within the economy. The term "consumer" is employed in various contexts, leading to variations in its usage and significance. Essentially, a consumer is the entity that consumes the goods and services generated by an economy. The role of consumers is pivotal in a nation's economic system, as the effective demand they generate is indispensable; in their absence, the economy would face virtual collapse [4], [5].

Buyer:

A buyer is an individual who purchases a product or service, not necessarily being the end user or consumer. Essentially, a buyer is a customer a person or business engaging in a transaction with a seller. In any scenario, the buyer is the party providing money to the seller in exchange for a product. For instance, a teenager acquiring a video game from a mall store and a distribution company purchasing raw materials from a manufacturer on credit are both considered buyers.

Consumer and Customer:

In common usage, the terms "consumer" and "customer" are often used interchangeably. A customer is someone who regularly makes purchases from a specific store or buys products from a particular company. A consumer is anyone engaged in the activities of evaluating, acquiring, using, or disposing of goods and services. This comprehensive term refers to individuals using products and services generated within the economy. Consumers are the end-users who utilize the products or services they have purchased or that were purchased for them. Their decisions are influenced by information they have heard or seen, guiding them in determining whether they need a particular product [6], [7].

The term "customer" derives from "custom," signifying habit or tradition. Customers are individuals or organizations that frequently patronize a store and make purchases, ideally, from that particular establishment. The owner or storekeeper strives to ensure customer satisfaction, fostering a relationship that anticipates future purchases. This relationship is now commonly referred to as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), reflecting the principle that "the customer is always right."

Distinction between Consumer and Customer:

Consumers encompass individuals who make purchasing decisions, opting either to acquire or abstain from products, and they typically utilize the purchased items. In contrast, customers are individuals who engage in the procurement of various goods and services but might not necessarily be the end-users of the acquired merchandise. Consumers exhibit specific intentions and purposes when making purchases, whereas customers might acquire products either for personal use, resale, or on behalf of others [8], [9]. Consumers are primarily associated with individual or family units, emphasizing personal consumption preferences, needs, and aspirations. In contrast, customers can take various forms, including individuals, organizations, or even fellow sellers engaged in the resale of products. The role of consumers extends to shaping the overall demand for products within the economy, reflecting their preferences and influencing market dynamics. On the other hand, customers, in their varied forms, hold the authority to make decisions determining the success or failure of a product in the market. Their choices impact whether a particular product will gain traction or face challenges in achieving market acceptance.

Retail Shopper Characteristics in the Evolving Indian Market:

India's retail landscape has undergone a transformative journey, adapting to the unique needs and complexities of the country. The organized retail sector, which was virtually non-existent until the 1990s, traces its roots back to the 1800s, marked by the establishment of the 'Spencer's' departmental store in South India in 1897. Today, this sector has diversified into various sub-divisions, hypermarkets, and large retail establishments. Despite contributing 9-10% to the country's GDP and providing employment to around 8% of the workforce, the retail sector in India

is considered one of the least developed. The estimated annual retail sales stand at approximately \$6 billion, with projections anticipating a significant increase to reach the \$17 billion mark by 2010, as reported by the Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry (ASSOCHAM). Organized retail in India currently constitutes around 3% of the total retail market but shows promising signs of robust growth, with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of approximately 30%. The Indian consumer is transitioning into a convenience-oriented shopper, prompting the evolution of retail formats into all-in-one destinations encompassing shopping, dining, and entertainment such as movies [10], [11].

Trend forecasts highlight the considerable potential of organized retail in India. The sector has experienced substantial growth, driven by the emergence of supermarkets and centrally air-conditioned malls. Presently, there are 1500 supermarkets, 11025 departmental stores, and 300 shopping malls, collectively offering 45 million square feet of retailing space. While the Indian retail industry may lag behind the USA by 25 years, there is a strong indication that it will rapidly close this gap within the next five years, driven by the growth of modern retail formats. The changing retail scenario has contributed to Indian consumers adopting a more global mindset, further fueling the evolution of the retail landscape in the country.

Benefits to the Consumer in the Retail Environment:

Retailers play a crucial role in enhancing the value of products and services for consumers while facilitating the distribution of these offerings from producers to end-users. The participation of retailers in the market ensures the delivery of high-quality products and superior service to consumers. Additionally, the entry of retailers into the market provides consumers with numerous alternatives, fostering a broader choice of pricing options. Intense competition among major retailers further contributes to capturing market share. Retail, as a concept, involves the sale of physical goods or merchandise through various channels, such as department stores, boutiques, kiosks, or malls, in small or individual lots directly consumed by the purchaser. Beyond the straightforward sale of products, retailing encompasses facilitating services like delivery, discounts, and consumer sales promotions. The end-users of retail services can be individuals or businesses [12], [13].

In the realm of commerce, a "retailer" typically procures goods or products in large quantities from manufacturers or importers, either directly or through wholesalers. Subsequently, these retailers sell smaller quantities to the ultimate end-users. Retail establishments, often referred to as shops or stores, serve as the final link in the supply chain. Manufacturing marketers recognize retailing as an integral component of their overall distribution strategy, considering it a necessary step in bringing products to the end-consumer. The term "retailer" is also applicable in scenarios where service providers address the needs of a broad consumer base, such as public utilities like electric power providers. In essence, retailers contribute significantly to consumer satisfaction by offering choices, convenience, and additional services in the course of delivering products and services to the end-users.

2. DISCUSSION

Retail establishments can be found in various settings, including residential streets, shopping streets, and malls. Shopping streets, sometimes designated for pedestrians only, may feature partial or full roofs to shield customers from precipitation. Additionally, the advent of online retailing, a form of electronic commerce catering to business-to-consumer (B2C) transactions and mail order,

represents a non-shop retailing approach. Shopping, in its essence, involves the act of purchasing products, which can range from necessities like food and clothing to recreational activities. Recreational shopping often includes window shopping, browsing, and may not always result in a purchase.

In the backdrop of a digital revolution and rapidly evolving consumer preferences, this document embarks on a journey through the intricate realm of retail and consumer behavior, with a specific focus on the Indian market. As consumers, we hold a pivotal role in shaping the economy, and the advent of the digital era has brought about transformative changes in how we make decisions regarding our time, money, and efforts. The retail industry, particularly in the banking sector, has undergone significant transformations, driven by technological advancements and changing regulatory landscapes. The paper explores the essence of retail banking, its evolution, and its crucial role in the global economic system. The conversation expands to various industries, showcasing strategies employed by brands to resonate with consumers during these transformative times. From staycations to virtual experiences, brands are adapting to the current consumer trends. The importance of understanding retail shopper characteristics in the unique context of the Indian market is emphasized, providing a comprehensive view of the country's retail landscape.

Industry experts foresee the next phase of retail sector growth emerging from rural markets, projecting that the rural retail market will hold over 50% market share by 2015. The number of shopping malls is expected to grow significantly, with a compound annual growth rate exceeding 18.9% by 2015. The government's decision to permit 51% foreign direct investment (FDI) in single-brand retailing has been met with industry approval, particularly benefiting luxury brands like Marks & Spencer, Louis Vuitton, or Versace. Retailers perform various functions integral to the industry's dynamics:

1. Providing a diverse range of products and services.
2. Breaking bulk by purchasing goods in large quantities and selling in smaller lots.
3. Holding inventory to ensure product availability.
4. Offering services beyond the mere sale of products.
5. Providing financial assistance through credit and payment options.
6. Offering aftersales services, including customer support and assistance.
7. Adhering to guarantees and warranties to instill consumer confidence.

Currently, employment in the retail industry in India lags behind countries like Brazil (14%) and Poland (12%). However, there is significant potential for the emergence of new retailing formats in the Indian retail industry. A promising factor for the retail sector in India is the rise in the young working population. Factors such as substantial salaries, nuclear families in urban areas, an increasing number of working women, and growing opportunities in the services sector contribute to the growth of the organized retail sector in India. The organized retail sector in India caters to a wide range of preferences, encompassing Apparel & Accessories, Appliances, Electronics, Cosmetics and Toiletries, Home & Office Products, Travel and Leisure, and more. Traditional markets are giving way to new formats like departmental stores, hypermarkets, supermarkets, and specialty stores, marking a rejuvenation in the retail sector. Several factors contribute to the growth of the retail industry in India:

1. Liberalization, opening doors for multinational corporations (MNCs) and exposing Indian consumers to a wider range of alternatives.
2. Changing consumer buying behavior, with a shift towards MNC brands, especially in the durable goods segment.
3. Technological advancements, particularly the internet, connecting people globally and influencing Indian consumer trends.
4. Urbanization, leading to higher customer density and a demand for retail stores.
5. Increased working woman population, providing more purchasing power and driving consumerism with a greater urge to spend.

India has become a potential goldmine for retail investors worldwide, with recent research ranking it as the top destination for retailers seeking an attractive emerging retail market. The vast middle class in India, coupled with its largely untapped retail industry, makes it an appealing prospect for global retail giants looking to venture into new markets. Despite having over 5 million retail outlets, India lacks a modern retailing industry, creating a significant opportunity for international retailing specialists. The organized retail sector is anticipated to outpace GDP growth in the next five years, driven by evolving lifestyles, rising income levels, and a favorable demographic profile.

3. CONCLUSION

The entire paradigm of shopping in India has undergone a transformation, characterized by changes in format and shopper buying behavior, sparking a revolution in the retail landscape. The advent of modern retail is evident in the emergence of expansive shopping centers, multi-storied malls, and vast complexes that seamlessly integrate shopping, entertainment, and dining experiences, all under one roof. This shift signifies a crucial juncture for the Indian retailing sector, where the convergence of organized retailing and increased consumption by the Indian population is poised to propel growth to new heights. The demographics of the Indian population are undergoing a significant shift, contributing to this inflection point. A substantial young working population, with a median age of 24 years, is accompanied by the prevalence of nuclear families in urban areas. Additionally, the rising number of working women and burgeoning opportunities in the services sector are anticipated to act as key drivers fueling the growth of the organized retail sector in India. This transformative phase represents a dynamic period in the retail industry, where consumer preferences, market dynamics, and the retail environment are undergoing a profound evolution.

In conclusion, this document encapsulates the dynamic interplay between consumer behavior and the evolving retail sector in India. The retail industry, once considered one of the least developed, is undergoing a rejuvenation marked by changing demographics and consumer habits. The traditional markets are giving way to modern formats, and the organized retail sector is poised for exponential growth. Factors such as liberalization, changing consumer buying behavior, technological advancements, urbanization, and the increased working woman population are fueling the expansion of the retail industry in India. India is emerging as a coveted destination for retail investors, with its vast middle class and largely untapped retail market. Despite the challenges posed by the digital revolution, the retail sector is adapting, with online and offline retail coexisting and complementing each other. The document captures the essence of this transformative phase, where consumer preferences, market dynamics, and the retail environment

are undergoing a profound evolution, setting the stage for a promising future in the Indian retailing sector.

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CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF RETAIL SHOPPER BEHAVIOR: A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT:

This comprehensive exploration delves into the intricate dynamics of retail shopper behavior, emphasizing its global significance and the pivotal role it plays in shaping the retail industry. Drawing on a multidisciplinary approach encompassing psychology, sociology, social psychology, cultural anthropology, and economics, the study aims to unravel the nuanced decision-making processes of individuals and groups within the marketplace. The exploration defines retail shopper behavior as the study of how individuals, groups, or organizations select, secure, use, and dispose of products to satisfy needs, exploring the impacts of these processes on consumers and society. The exploration emphasizes the need for retailers to comprehend the factors influencing consumer choices, patronage, and overall growth of the retail sector. It sheds light on the proactive role of marketers in understanding personal and group influences, identifying target audiences, and formulating effective strategies to reach them. The study unfolds the layers of shopper decision-making, moving beyond the 'what' of purchases to investigate the 'why, when, where, and how' of buying decisions. The definition of retail shopper behavior is presented, highlighting the examination of individuals, groups, or organizations and their processes in choosing, securing, adopting, and disposing of products.

KEYWORDS:

Economics, Retail Shopper, Social Psychology, Shopper Behavior, Sociology.

1. INTRODUCTION

The retailer's existence is intricately tied to the presence of the customer. The study of retail shopper behavior is a global focal point. It is crucial for retailers to comprehend the factors influencing consumers' choices and patronage of a store. Understanding consumer needs and the various elements impacting the decision-making process of retail shoppers is vital for the overall growth of the retail industry. Shoppers, in essence, wield significant influence over the economic well-being of a nation [1], [2]. The exploration of shopper behavior centers on individuals and the factors that influence their choices in allocating resources toward consumption-related items. Concepts and theories in shopper behavior draw from an array of disciplines including psychology, sociology, social psychology, cultural anthropology, and economics. This field specifically examines how individuals decide to utilize their available resources for consumption-related purposes. Consumer behavior as the actions that consumers exhibit when searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services, all aimed at fulfilling their needs. Marketers are required not only to understand the personal and group influences impacting shopper decisions but also to identify their target audiences and determine effective strategies to

reach them. The study of shopper behavior empowers marketers to comprehend and anticipate shopper actions in the marketplace. Shopper behavior is not solely concerned with the what of shoppers' purchases but delves into the why, when, where, and how of their buying decisions. Research into shopper behavior is imperative at every phase of the consumption process: before, during, and after the purchase [3], [4].

Shopper Behavior is defined as the "study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the process they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society." Breaking down this definition, it signifies the examination of individuals, groups, or organizations, the processes involved in choosing, securing, adopting, and disposing of products or services, all with the aim of meeting their needs. Additionally, it involves studying the repercussions these processes have on buying behavior. Consumer Behavior encompasses the actions and decision-making processes of individuals acquiring goods and services for personal consumption. The term "Consumer" is applied to both personal consumers and organizational consumers, representing two distinct categories of consuming entities. The personal consumer engages in the acquisition of goods and services for individual or household use, whether it be personal items like pens, household essentials like sugar or furniture, or gifts for family members or friends. These goods are intended for final use and are often referred to as "end users" or "ultimate consumers." On the other hand, the organizational consumer category includes both profit and not-for-profit organizations. The consumer or buyer, whether an individual or a group, plays a pivotal role in deciding what to purchase, when to make the purchase, and what not to buy. In a competitive market, manufacturers are constrained from imposing products on consumers unilaterally. Instead, they must produce goods that are in demand or have the potential to be in demand. Marketing professionals analyze consumer behavior to discern market preferences and adjust production accordingly.

Retailing places a strong emphasis on acquiring ultimate consumers as they constitute the foundation of the retail sector. Without consumers, there would be no retailing, and the absence of customers would lead to the collapse of retail outlets. Attracting consumers and persuading them to purchase retail products is a crucial responsibility of retail sales personnel. Understanding consumer needs is imperative for retailers, but customers, being human beings, are not easily understood. Their behavior is often unpredictable and can vary significantly among individuals. To navigate this complexity, retailers must make general and broad predictions about consumer behavior and organize sales strategies based on these predictions [5], [6]. The organizational structure must be highly flexible to accommodate quick adjustments in case predictions are not accurate. Indian customers exhibit distinct behaviors compared to customers in other regions, necessitating caution when adapting retail formats from successful models in the US or Europe.

Understanding retail shopper behavior involves delving into the subset of human behavior focused on the decisions and actions individuals take when purchasing and utilizing products from a manufacturer or a specific retailer. Buyer behavior pertains to the decisions leading up to the purchase act. While the person making the buying decision may not be the same individual who completes the purchase or uses the product, their role is of utmost importance to marketers. Comprehensive understanding of this person allows marketers to develop effective marketing mixes and predict customer responses. Marketing efforts must align with consumer needs and provide solutions to buyer problems. A key factor in comprehending consumer needs and issues lies in the study of retail shopper behavior. Knowledge of retail shopper behavior equips marketers with information to enhance their chances of success in the marketplace.

Retail shopper behavior encompasses the study of the when, why, how, and where individuals choose to either make or refrain from making a purchase. Drawing insights from psychology, sociology, social anthropology, and economics, this field seeks to unravel the decision-making process of buyers, both at the individual level and within groups. It involves examining the characteristics of individual consumers, such as demographics and behavioral variables, to gain an understanding of their wants and needs [7], [8]. Retail shopper behavior is defined as "the activities people engage in when selecting, purchasing, and using products to satisfy needs and desires," with the customer positioned as the central focus around which all marketing activities revolve. Manufacturers tailor their production to meet customer demands, recognizing the variation in buying behavior from person to person. Understanding these diverse behaviors requires manufacturers to identify the motives that drive consumers to make purchases, allowing them to offer comprehensive products that satisfy varying needs. Buying motives can range from a desire for money, vanity, pride, fashion, passion, romance, affection, to comfort. The retail shopper acts in accordance with their inner motives, making it imperative for marketers to study and analyze consumer behavior to enhance sales and product improvement.

A crucial aspect for marketers is to plan production and distribution to align with consumer convenience rather than the company's convenience. Ignorance of retail shopper preferences can hinder a company's ability to fulfill its obligations effectively and responsibly. Hence, retail shopper behavior holds significant importance in modern marketing. Defined as the actions of consumers in the marketplace and the underlying motives for those actions, retail shopper behavior delves into how individuals allocate their available resources toward the acquisition of goods and services. It specifically pertains to the buying behavior of ultimate consumers individuals and households purchasing goods and services for personal consumption [9], [10]. Retail shopper behavior is an integral part of human behavior, inseparable from the broader context. It is characterized by the process through which individuals decide whether, what, when, where, how, and from whom to purchase goods and services. In the evolving landscape, where firms and markets have expanded in size, marketers have lost direct contact with customers, necessitating a turn to retail shopper research. Each retail shopper is unique, and this uniqueness manifests in various aspects such as search behavior, purchasing patterns, consumption habits, and reactions.

Buyer/User Distinction:

The term "buyer" refers to an individual who purchases a product, but this does not necessarily imply that the buyer is also the user of the product. For instance, a boy buying bangles may not be the user himself; instead, his sisters, for whom he purchased the bangles, become the users.

Factors Influencing Retail Shopper Behavior:

The process of making a buying decision involves various stages, each influenced by behavioral forces. Culture, sub-culture, and social class play significant roles in shaping shopper behavior. Buying behavior encompasses underlying influences and motives for purchases, examining the impact of groups such as family, friends, reference groups, and society in general. Economic, cultural, technological, and political factors are among the key influences on retail shopper behavior.

Cultural Factors:

Culture plays a pivotal role in influencing shoppers' behavior throughout the buying process. It is considered one of the foundational determinants of shopper behavior. In the context of retail shopper behavior, culture is defined as the collective body of learned beliefs, values, and customs regulating the behavior of shoppers within a particular society. Beliefs and values act as guides for shopper behavior, while customs represent the customary and accepted ways of behaving.

Impact of Culture:

The impact of culture on society is deeply ingrained, influencing behavior in a manner that often goes unnoticed. Culture provides order, direction, and guidance to society members in various aspects of problem-solving. Dynamic in nature, culture evolves continuously to meet the changing needs of society. Culture is acquired through social experiences, with children learning a set of beliefs, values, and customs from their environments. This learning occurs through formal, informal, and technical channels. Advertising contributes to formal learning by reinforcing desired behavior and expectations, while also providing models for behavior through informal learning. Culture is communicated through a common language and shared symbols, allowing marketers to effectively promote both tangible and intangible products and concepts to consumers.

Role of Social Institutions:

Three major social institutions family, church, and school play a significant role in transmitting the elements of culture. Mass media, including editorial content and advertising, is a fourth social institution contributing to the dissemination of culture. The values embedded in culture provide a strong foundation for segmenting retail shopper markets. The marketing mix elements, such as products, promotion, price, and retail outlets, communicate symbolically with the audience, projecting specific images and associations.

Sub-Culture:

Within a broader culture, sub-cultures exist as smaller, more specific groups that provide unique identification and socialization for their members. Sub-cultures can be based on factors such as nationalities, religions, racial groups, and geographical regions. These sub-cultures play a crucial role in influencing market segments, and marketers often tailor their products and marketing programs to cater to the specific needs of these sub-cultures. Sub-cultures impact preferences in areas like food, clothing, and recreation, and understanding them allows individuals to comprehend another culture in reference to their own sub-culture. Companies often use subcultures as the basis for market segmentation.

Social Class:

Social class refers to relatively homogeneous and enduring divisions in society, with each division comprising individuals who share similar values, interests, and behavior. It is identified as a relatively permanent and homogeneous group of people with identifiable characteristics. Social classes are hierarchically ordered and have a significant impact on individuals' product and brand preferences. Marketers need to study the behavioral patterns of different social classes to formulate effective marketing strategies and promotional communication.

Distinct Characteristics of Social Classes:

1. Behavioral Differences: Individuals from different social classes tend to exhibit distinct behaviors.
2. Perceived Positions: Individuals are perceived to occupy inferior or superior positions based on their social class.
3. Multiple Variables: A person's social class is indicated by multiple variables, including occupation, income, wealth, and education, rather than a single variable.
4. Social Mobility: Individuals can move from one social class to another, either upward or downward, during their lifetime.

Influence on Buying Patterns:

Social classes exhibit distinct preferences in various products and brands, such as clothing, phones, furniture, leisure activities, and cars. The buying patterns of affluent families differ significantly from those of less affluent families. A status-conscious individual may prefer shopping at a prestigious store, while someone with ordinary preferences may opt for an economy store. Expensive consumer durables, like vacuum cleaners, washing machines, dishwashers, and microwave ovens, are often associated with higher income groups who view these items as status symbols. Social factors, including reference groups, family, roles, and status, also play a crucial role in shaping shoppers' behavior.

2. DISCUSSION

A person's behavior is shaped by various small groups, and those with a direct impact and to which an individual belongs are known as membership groups. Reference groups, on the other hand, serve as direct or indirect points of comparison or reference when forming an individual's attitudes or behavior. While membership groups have a direct influence, reference groups may influence a person's attitudes or behavior even if they are not actual members. An aspirational group, for example, is one that an individual aspires to belong to, identifying with the group despite lacking direct contact. Marketers strive to identify the reference groups of their target markets. Reference groups expose individuals to new behaviors and lifestyles, influencing their attitudes and self-concepts as they seek to fit into these groups. Additionally, reference groups exert pressures to conform that can impact an individual's product and brand choices. Consumer reference groups serve as a frame of reference for individuals in their purchase decisions, expanding to include groups with which consumers have no direct face-to-face contact, such as celebrities, political figures, and social classes.

Family, as a major influence on consumption behavior, is often the primary target market for many products and categories. Families, defined as two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption who reside together, come in three types: married couples, nuclear families, and extended families. Families play essential roles in providing economic and emotional support, childhood socialization, and shaping a suitable lifestyle for their members [10], [11]. Within a family, members assume specific roles and tasks, and these roles extend to the realm of retail shopper purchase decisions. Family members may take on roles such as influencers, gatekeepers, deciders, buyers, preparers, users, maintainers, and disposers. The family's decision-making style is influenced by factors such as social class, lifestyle, role orientation, family life cycle stage, product

importance, perceived risk, and time constraints. Family consumption decisions are often categorized as husband-dominated, wife-dominated, joint, or automatic, and the influence of husband and wife varies based on the specific product, decision-making stage, and product features. Retail shopper socialization is a crucial aspect of the overall socialization process of children within a family. It serves as the means through which families impart consumer-relevant knowledge, attitudes, and skills to children. Children, in turn, not only absorb influences from their families but also contribute to family consumption decisions.

Shopper behavior is intricately tied to one's roles and status within various groups. Each role a person plays, such as being a son in the family, a husband in the household, or a professor in a university, comes with a distinct status reflecting the societal esteem associated with it. For instance, the role of a university professor may carry higher status in society compared to the role of a son. The expectations and activities associated with each role influence the shopper's decisions, including choices related to clothing that align with their roles and status. Personal factors contribute significantly to retail shopper behavior, encompassing unique characteristics such as age, life-cycle stage, occupation, economic conditions, lifestyle, personality, and self-concept. Here's a breakdown of some key personal factors:

1. **Age and Life-Cycle Stage:** Age plays a crucial role in determining needs. For example, small children have specific needs for products like milk powder, baby foods, toys, games, and educational facilities, while young adults may prioritize trendy clothing, recreational facilities, and transportation.
2. **Occupation:** A person's occupation directly influences their preferences for goods and services. A clerk might opt for economical products, while a top executive may be inclined towards expensive options. Marketers need to identify the relevant occupational groups interested in their products and tailor marketing strategies accordingly.
3. **Income:** Income is a pivotal factor influencing retail shopper behavior. The types of products purchased are often tied to income levels. People belong to different income groups, and their behavior varies accordingly. Generally, higher income levels correspond to increased purchases of goods.
4. **Economic Conditions:** Economic circumstances, including income, savings, assets, and borrowing power, determine a shopper's capacity to buy products. Marketers analyze trends and patterns in economic indicators to assess customers' purchasing capabilities.
5. **Life-Style:** Shopper behavior is significantly influenced by lifestyles. Individuals from the same sub-culture, social class, and occupation may behave differently in their buying and consumption patterns due to distinct lifestyles. Factors such as activities, interests, opinions, and demographics are considered in identifying and understanding various lifestyles.

Understanding these personal factors is essential for marketers to create targeted strategies that resonate with the specific needs and preferences of different consumer segments:

1. **Activities:** Work, Hobbies, Social Events, Vacations, Entertainment, Clubs, Community, Shopping, Sports.

2. Interests: Family, Home, Job, Community, Recreation, Fashion, Food, Media, and Achievements.
3. Opinion: Themselves, Social Issues, Politics, Business, Economics, Education, Products, Future, and Culture.
4. Demographics: Age, Education, Income, Occupation, Family Size, Dwelling, Geography, City Size, and Stage in the life cycle.

For instance, individuals living in a nuclear family with a child aged up to 10 years may exhibit activities centered around work, shopping, and sports. Their interests may revolve around family, home, and food, while holding favorable opinions about themselves, products, and the future. Marketers can target this demographic by showcasing products related to personal and mental security, such as insurance coverage with medical benefits, and items that enhance home interiors.

Personality and Self-Concept: Each person possesses a unique personality that significantly impacts their purchasing behavior. Personality, defined as "the person's distinguishing psychological characteristics that lead to relatively consistent and enduring responses to his environment," correlates with product and brand choices. Traits like self-confidence, dominance, aggressiveness, defensiveness, achievement, and deference play a role in shaping personality. Alongside personality, 'self-concept' is a related term, referring to an individual's self-image. Consumers tend to purchase goods or services that align with their self-image. Marketers must develop and communicate brand images that resonate with the self-image of their target customers.

Psychological Factors:

Psychological factors, including motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitude, exert a considerable influence on retail shopper behavior: Motivation drives individuals to intensify their willingness to use their potential for achieving objectives. It involves urges, drives, desires, aspirations, strivings, or needs that direct, control, or explain human behavior. Understanding consumer motivation is crucial, as it shapes and explains consumer behavior. Perception is the process through which individuals select, organize, and interpret stimuli, creating a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. Consumers make decisions based on their perceptions rather than objective reality [12], [13]. The interpretation of stimuli is subjective, influenced by previous experiences, plausible explanations, motives, interests, and the clarity of the stimulus itself. Distortions in objective interpretation can arise from physical appearances, stereotypes, halo effects, irrelevant cues, first impressions, and the tendency to jump to conclusions. Marketers must consider these factors when shaping consumer perceptions of their products or brands. Products and brands possess symbolic meanings for consumers, and how a product is perceived or positioned is likely more critical to its ultimate success than its physical characteristics. Favorable perceptions significantly increase the likelihood of a product being purchased. The set of brands that a retail shopper considers when making a purchase choice within a specific product category is referred to as the evoked set.

Learning describes changes in an individual's behavior resulting from experience. Retail shopper learning involves the acquisition of purchase and consumption knowledge that influences future behavior. While some learning is intentional, much is incidental. Key elements contributing to learning include motivation, cues, response, and reinforcement. Motivation stimulates learning, cues guide motives, and reinforcement increases the likelihood of a specific response in the future.

Beliefs and Attitude:

Learning contributes to the formation of beliefs and attitudes, influencing buying behavior. Beliefs are thoughts held about something, guiding actions and contributing to the construction of product and brand images. Attitudes represent enduring favorable or unfavorable cognitive evaluations, emotional feelings, and action tendencies toward an object or idea. Marketers should align their products with existing attitudes rather than attempting to change consumer attitudes.

Customer Buying Behavior Patterns in Retail Shops:

Buying, as opposed to shopping, involves purchasing goods, and understanding customer buying behavior patterns is essential. Buying habits are spontaneous tendencies toward action, while buying behavior patterns represent the collective behavior design of a large number of customers. Customer buying habits or behavior patterns are not fixed and can change due to various factors, including technological advancements, market trends, and shifts in lifestyle preferences.

3. CONCLUSION

The customer is at the core of all marketing activities, assuming different roles such as buyer, consumer, and customer. Manufacturers must understand and identify the motives driving consumers to purchase. Buying motives, such as desire for money, vanity, pride, fashion, passion, romance, affection, or comfort, influence retail shopper behavior. Retailers need to analyze and adapt to factors like economic, personal, cultural, and social influences on consumer behavior. The retail industry faces dynamic changes, with increasing customer demands and intense competition, requiring retailers to be observant and make strategic decisions in response to rapidly changing consumer preferences. In conclusion, this comprehensive exploration underscores the paramount importance of understanding the dynamics of retail shopper behavior for the sustained success and growth of the retail industry. The study encapsulates the intricate relationships between retailers and consumers, emphasizing the need for retailers and marketers to be proactive in comprehending the multifaceted factors influencing consumer choices. By delving into the layers of shopper decision-making, marketers can gain valuable insights that go beyond the mere products purchased to understand the holistic 'why, when, where, and how' of buying decisions.

As retail shopper behavior remains an integral part of human behavior, this exploration reinforces the importance of adaptability and agility for marketers. The evolving landscape of consumer preferences requires continuous observation and quick adjustments to marketing strategies. In the ever-changing retail landscape, knowledge of retail shopper behavior stands as a powerful tool for marketers, empowering them to make informed decisions and enhance their chances of success in a competitive and dynamic marketplace.

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CHAPTER 3

NAVIGATING THE DEPTHS OF RETAIL SHOPPER BEHAVIOR: INSIGHTS, INFLUENCES, AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT:

This research delves into the intricate dynamics of retail shopper behavior, emphasizing the paramount importance of comprehending consumers' needs, purchasing patterns, and the multifaceted factors influencing their buying processes. Retail establishments are urged to employ various tools, techniques, and concepts, such as motivation research, observation, electronic surveillance, interviews, surveys, experimentation, and sales analysis, to decipher and shape purchasing decisions. Without these methodologies, deciphering retail shopper behavior becomes a challenging task. A profound understanding of shopper needs equips retailers to design products with higher market success potential, serving as the foundational step in devising effective retail strategies. This exploration encompasses key aspects, including the determination of product/service needs, information-seeking behaviors, product evaluation processes, payment methods, and post-purchase behaviors. While achieving a comprehensive understanding of retail shopper behavior may not be universally feasible, retailers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with their customers, leveraging early exploration efforts that initially focused on motivation research.

KEYWORDS:

Consumer Behavior, Electronic Surveillance, Consumer Behavior Shopper Behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studying the requirements and purchasing patterns of shoppers, along with the stages involved in acquiring merchandise and the factors impacting the buying process, holds paramount importance. Retail establishments must grasp consumer behavior using tools, techniques, and concepts to shape their purchasing decisions. Without these methodologies, comprehending retail shopper behavior becomes intricate. A thorough understanding of retail shopper needs empowers retailers to craft products with a higher likelihood of success in the market [1], [2]. The comprehension of retail shopper behavior serves as the foundational step in devising a retail strategy. Retailers need to scrutinize the behavior of retail shoppers to assess how their products are perceived. It extends beyond knowing where shoppers make their purchases; retailers must also be aware of the diverse external and internal influences guiding shopper behavior. This involves:

1. Understanding the determination of the need for a product/service.
2. Comprehending the ways in which retail shoppers seek information.
3. Examining the process of evaluating different products and retail establishments.
4. Analyzing the payment process.

5. Assessing post-purchase behavior.

Indeed, achieving a comprehensive understanding of retail shopper behavior may not always be feasible in every scenario. Nonetheless, it is highly advantageous for retailers to familiarize themselves with their shoppers. Early efforts to explore consumer behavior primarily focused on motivation research, relying heavily on Freudian techniques. Consumers can be examined through various methods, including observation, electronic surveillance, interviews, surveys, experimentation, and sales analysis or consumption research. Initially, researchers paid minimal attention to the impact of mood, emotion, or situational context on consumer decisions. However, contemporary motivational research places greater emphasis on incorporating these aspects into the study of shoppers' behavior. Motivational research, being qualitative, aims to enhance shoppers' levels of conscious awareness. Despite certain limitations, marketing research has proven immensely valuable to marketers in generating new ideas and appeals. Motivation research specifically delves into investigating the psychological reasons behind individuals' choices of merchandise or their responses to specific advertising appeals, aiming to uncover the foundations of brand choices and product preferences [3], [4]. Figure 1, shows the theoretical framework of online shopping behavior.

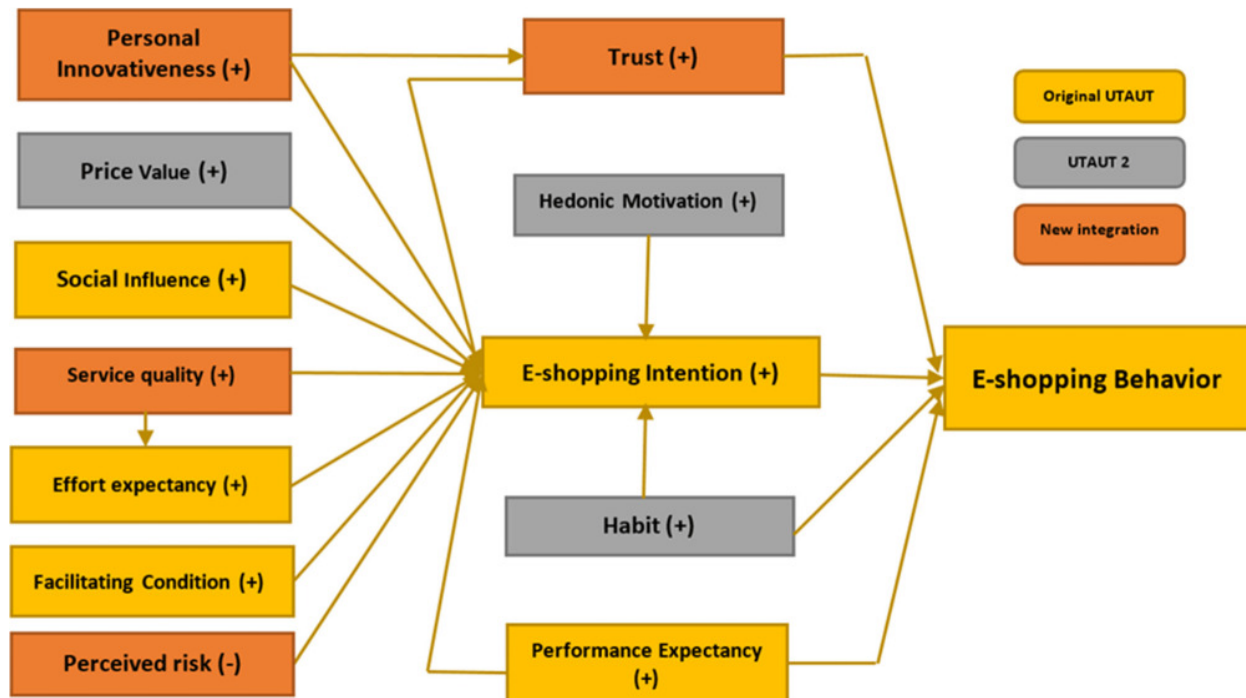


Figure 1: Illustrates the theoretical framework of online shopping behavior.

Motivational research, as a facet of marketing research, seeks to elucidate the underlying motivations that drive consumer behavior. It endeavors to reveal and comprehend aspects of consumer behavior that individuals may not fully grasp about themselves. Implicitly, motivational research posits the existence of underlying or unconscious motives influencing consumer behavior. The goal is to identify forces and influences that may not be apparent to consumers, such as cultural factors and sociological forces. Typically, these unconscious motives are entwined with and complicated by conscious motives, cultural biases, economic variables, and broader fashion trends. Motivational research endeavors to navigate through this complex web of influences and factors,

unraveling the enigma of consumer behavior in relation to a specific product or service. This deeper understanding empowers marketers to comprehend their target audience better and devise strategies to effectively influence them.

Motivational research proves most valuable when underlying, influential motives are suspected to impact consumer behavior. Products and services associated with attraction to the opposite sex, personal adornment, status or self-esteem, power, death, fears, or social taboos are prime candidates for motivational research. For instance, the increased expenditures on clothing and personal adornment products by women nearing the age of 50 to 55 may be driven by factors such as the loss of youth's beauty, fertility, and fears related to losing their husbands' love. While discretionary incomes rise as children leave the nest, other complex motives also come into play, which may not be fully apparent to women themselves and would not be revealed by standard marketing research surveys [5], [6]. Even seemingly benign or low-involvement product categories can benefit from motivational research insights. In these categories, perception variables and cultural influences often play crucial roles. Cultural rules, governing various aspects of our daily lives, can significantly impact product usage. Understanding how these cultural rules influence a specific product becomes valuable information for marketers.

The primary motivational research techniques include observation, focus groups, and depth interviews. Observation, whether conducted in-person or through video, is a method for deriving hypotheses about human motives. Anthropologists have utilized systematic observation to understand behaviors, and similar approaches can yield insightful results about consumer behavior. In-person observation in buying situations or observation via video cameras can be effective, with video cameras being less intrusive. However, video observation requires representative and cooperative stores, and its installation and maintenance pose challenges. In-store observers, with some cover to make their presence less obvious, can also be employed. Nevertheless, observation alone may not answer every question, necessitating supplementation with focus groups or depth interviews to fully comprehend why consumers engage in specific behaviors [7], [8].

Electronic Surveillance:

Electronic surveillance involves the utilization of technology to monitor individuals, often without their awareness, through techniques such as videotaping, photography, and audio recording. This practice is employed by various entities, including officials, businesses, and homeowners, for purposes such as monitoring shoppers, recording illegal activities, and photographing speeding vehicles. In the United States, both federal and state governments have implemented laws to safeguard an individual's right to privacy, regulating the use of electronic surveillance methods. Video cameras are widely deployed in locations like convenience stores, shopping malls, parking lots, highways, and sidewalks to deter shoplifting, vehicle theft, and vandalism, contributing to substantial savings each year. Government entities, like the Department of Transportation, also utilize cameras for monitoring traffic violations and managing traffic congestion. Leading companies globally rely on consumer surveys to evaluate their markets and understand consumer attitudes. Making assumptions without quantitative research can be risky, and regularly conducting consumer surveys is crucial for business success. This approach ensures that products, services, or brands are presented in ways acceptable to the target audience, supporting informed marketing strategies.

Experimentation:

An experiment is a systematic trial-and-error procedure conducted to verify, falsify, or establish the validity of a hypothesis. It aims to provide insight into cause-and-effect relationships by manipulating specific factors and observing the outcomes. Experiments vary in goals and scale but consistently rely on repeatable procedures and logical analysis of results. In the scientific method, experiments arbitrate between competing models or hypotheses [9], [10]. They may test expectations about a process or phenomenon, answer questions without preconceived expectations, or replicate previous results to support or challenge them. Carefully conducted experiments either support or disprove hypotheses, with some philosophical perspectives emphasizing that experiments can provide support but not absolute proof. Controlling confounding factors is essential to maintain accuracy and repeatability, often achieved through scientific control and random assignment in randomized experiments. In engineering and physical sciences, experiments are a fundamental component of the scientific method, testing theories and hypotheses about physical processes under specific conditions. Replication of identical procedures is common in these fields to achieve consistent results. Random assignment is less common in engineering and physical sciences experiments.

2. DISCUSSION

The prevalence of experimental research varies widely across disciplines in medicine and the social sciences. When employed, experiments often adopt the form of clinical trials, where experimental units (typically individual human beings) are randomly assigned to a treatment or control condition, and one or more outcomes are assessed. Unlike norms in the physical sciences, the emphasis is usually on the average treatment effect or another test statistic generated by the experiment. While a single study may not involve replications, systematic review and meta-analysis can aggregate separate studies. Exceptions to these differences exist; for instance, agricultural research frequently utilizes randomized experiments, and experimental economics may test theorized human behaviors without relying on random assignment. Experiments can be categorized based on various dimensions dictated by professional norms in different fields. In disciplines like psychology or political sciences, a 'true experiment' involves two variable types: the independent variable manipulated by the experimenter and the measured dependent variable. A defining feature of a true experiment is random subject allocation, neutralizing experimenter bias, and controlling for confounding factors over multiple iterations.

Sales Analysis:

Sales analysis aims to provide precise management information regarding sales activity, enhancing sales profitability, and facilitating sales forecasting and planning at customer and product class levels. It involves identifying profitable customers, understanding product sales, analyzing market trends, recognizing geographic buying patterns, evaluating profit generated by each product, assessing the performance of business divisions and sales personnel, and utilizing business graphics for instant presentation of sales performance. Sales analysis contributes to improved forecasting and measures actual performance against quantity or revenue forecasts [11], [12]. In the hands of a skilled moderator, the focus group serves as a valuable motivational research technique. For optimal motivational potential, the group interview should adopt a largely nondirective style, fostering spontaneous interaction within the group. It is the mutual reinforcement within the group that unveils revelations and behaviors indicating underlying motives. A focus group dominated by the moderator or characterized by direct questioning is

unlikely to yield motivational insights. When actively led by the moderator and allowing for participant interaction, the focus group becomes a legitimate motivational technique.

The Depth Interview in Motivational Research:

At the core of motivational research lies the depth interview—an extensive, one-on-one, and personal interaction conducted by the motivational researcher, lasting one to two hours. The efficacy of the depth interview hinges on the researcher's insight, sensitivity, and skill, making it a task that cannot be delegated to traditional marketing research interviewers lacking training in motivational techniques. During this interview, the motivational researcher strives to establish an empathic relationship with each respondent, fostering rapport, mutual trust, and understanding. The aim is to create an environment where respondents feel free to express their feelings and thoughts without fear of embarrassment or rejection, conveying that their opinions are important and worthwhile.

Nondirective interviewing techniques play a pivotal role, with the researcher encouraging respondents to talk freely. General topics are introduced rather than direct questions, and probing is done through facial expressions, paraphrasing, or reflecting respondents' words in a questioning tone. Nondirective techniques are chosen for their non-threatening and unbiased nature. Projective techniques are also employed, involving activities like storytelling, role-playing, drawing, sentence completion, or word association. Stimuli such as photographs, product samples, packages, and advertisements can evoke additional feelings and comments. Throughout the interview, the researcher observes clues that might indicate sensitive topics, including pauses, slips of the tongue, variations in voice pitch, emotional expressions, body language, and more. These sensitive issues become the focus of additional exploration later in the interview. The researcher meticulously reads and analyzes verbatim respondent dialogue, searching for systematic response patterns, logical inconsistencies, contradictions, and the use of unusual words or phrases. Implicit content is considered alongside explicit content, and the researcher diligently explores what is not said as much as what is said. Like a detective, the researcher sifts through clues and evidence to deduce the forces and motives influencing consumer behavior, emphasizing the convergence of evidence and facts for significant conclusions. In the scientific tradition, the synthesis of empiricism and logic is crucial for making sense of the data.

The analysis initiates at the cultural level, recognizing that cultural values and influences form the pervasive backdrop of our lives, often unnoticed. Fundamental aspects such as our eating habits, clothing choices, thoughts, emotions, and language are integral components of our culture. These ingrained cultural dimensions serve as the foundational elements guiding the motivational researcher's analysis. Culture, being the overarching context, must be comprehended before delving into the understanding of individual behavior within that context. Every product is embedded with cultural values and rules that shape its perception and usage. Once the cultural context is reasonably grasped, the next step involves exploring the distinctive motivations linked to the product category. Questions arise regarding the psychological needs fulfilled by the product, its social and anthropological significance, its connection to status aspirations, competitive drives, self-esteem, security needs, and potential masochistic motives. Some of these motives may need to be inferred, as respondents may not always be consciously aware of why they behave as they do. However, this analysis remains incomplete without considering the last major dimension—the business environment. This includes factors such as competitive forces, brand perceptions, market shares, the role of advertising, and marketplace trends. While part of this business context

knowledge may come from respondents, a comprehensive understanding is vital for interpreting consumer motives effectively and deriving actionable marketing and advertising recommendations.

Understanding consumer motives becomes valuable only when this knowledge can be translated into practical recommendations. Occasionally, motivational studies are complemented by quantitative surveys to validate motivational hypotheses and measure their prevalence in the general population. However, in cases involving completely unconscious motives, survey research may not provide conclusive evidence. In such instances, the evaluation of hypothesized motives often occurs through testing concepts or advertising alternatives that address different motives or through other types of contrived experiments. A crucial aspect for successful motivational research is maintaining an open-minded perspective, avoiding overly theoretical approaches. A researcher should refrain from forming rigid hypotheses before conducting the study, as strongly held preconceptions can hinder the success of the study. An objective, open, and unprejudiced mindset is the motivational researcher's greatest asset. Retailers should examine environmental influences, such as demographic, social, economic, and cultural factors, along with individual factors like personality, perception, attitude, beliefs, and motivation, to understand their profound impact on retail shopper behavior.

The research traces the evolution of consumer behavior study from early motivation research heavily influenced by Freudian techniques to contemporary qualitative research that incorporates mood, emotion, and situational context. The focus is on motivational research, a qualitative approach seeking to unearth consumers' unconscious motives that influence their behavior. The conversation highlights the value of motivational research in exploring powerful underlying motives, especially in product categories associated with personal adornment, status, power, and social taboos. Even low-involvement product categories can benefit from insights provided by motivational research, considering the impact of cultural rules on consumer behavior. The major techniques employed in motivational research, including observation, focus groups, and depth interviews, are discussed. Observation, whether in-person or through video, is presented as a method for deriving hypotheses about human motives. Electronic surveillance techniques, such as videotaping, photography, and audio recording, are explored in the context of monitoring consumer behavior. The research emphasizes the significance of consumer surveys, experimentation, and sales analysis in comprehending and influencing retail shopper behavior.

The depth interview emerges as the heart of motivational research, conducted one-on-one by skilled researchers aiming to create an empathic relationship with respondents. Nondirective interviewing techniques and projective techniques are employed to encourage respondents to express their feelings and thoughts freely. The analysis process involves careful observation of verbal and non-verbal cues, looking for clues indicating sensitive topics, and reading hundreds of pages of verbatim dialogue to identify patterns and inconsistencies. The analysis is conducted at cultural, psychological, and business environment levels, providing a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research underscores the significance of retailers examining environmental influences and individual factors that profoundly impact retail shopper behavior. By understanding how consumers buy and the influences on them, retailers can enhance their success in selling goods and services. The application of motivational research proves instrumental in uncovering

unconscious motives, enabling retailers to refine marketing strategies and tailor offerings to align with the desires of their target audience. The research encourages an open-minded approach, avoiding overly theoretical perspectives, and emphasizes that retailers must continuously adapt to the evolving landscape of consumer behavior. For a retailer to thrive, it is imperative to grasp essential insights into how consumers make purchasing decisions and the multitude of factors influencing them. The crux of understanding retail shopper behavior lies in comprehending the impact of environmental elements, such as demographic and socio-cultural factors, as well as the influence of personal factors like attitude, perception, personality, beliefs, and motivation on buying behavior. A retailer can achieve success in selling goods and services by gaining a nuanced understanding of retail shopper behavior through various methodologies and concepts, including motivation research, observation, electronic surveillance, interviews and surveys, experimentation, and sales analysis or consumption research. Motivational research, a subset of marketing research, emerges as a powerful tool in this endeavor. It seeks to elucidate the reasons behind consumers' behaviors, aiming to uncover aspects that consumers may not be fully conscious of about themselves. Implicit in motivational research is the assumption that underlying or unconscious motives play a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior. By delving into these deeper motivations, retailers can refine their strategies and tailor their offerings to better align with the needs and desires of their target audience.

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CHAPTER 4

NAVIGATING CONSUMER DYNAMICS: UNDERSTANDING BUYING BEHAVIOR, ADOPTION PATTERNS, AND RETAIL STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT:

This comprehensive exploration delves into the intricate world of consumer behavior, emphasizing the pivotal role of retail shoppers as the ultimate destination in the distribution chain. The study unfolds the layers of buying behavior, addressing the challenges posed by the unpredictable nature of human behavior and the significant variations observed, particularly among Indian consumers. Cautionary considerations for retailers in adapting global formats underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of diverse consumer preferences. The research encompasses insights from firms investigating brand beliefs, consumer involvement, awareness levels, and post-purchase satisfaction, enabling tailored strategies for varied customer segments and product categories. The study further delves into the complexities of high and low involvement products, shedding light on the dynamic decision-making processes consumers employ. Additionally, the exploration extends to the adoption patterns of new products, classifying consumers into categories such as innovators, early adopters, and late majority. The strategic importance of researching the demographic and psychographic characteristics of these adopter segments is emphasized for effective market positioning. In conclusion, the research emphasizes the significance of understanding consumer behavior for retailers, providing insights into crafting tailored strategies and optimizing the adoption rate of innovative offerings in the ever-evolving marketplace.

KEYWORDS:

Buying Behavior, Consumer, Consumer Behavior, Decision-Making.

1. INTRODUCTION

A purchaser, whether termed a buyer, consumer, or customer, represents the ultimate destination in the distribution chain. Regardless of whether marketing occurs through direct channels or intermediaries, the end consumer is the final point. Retailing, as a concept, relies entirely on customers or consumers. The absence of customers would lead to the collapse of retail outlets, as there would be no individuals to whom products could be sold. Therefore, the attraction of consumers and the ability to influence them into purchasing retail products are pivotal dimensions of the role played by retail sales personnel or workers [1], [2]. Understanding consumers is a fundamental requirement for retailers. However, customers, being human beings, pose a challenge in terms of comprehension due to the inherent unpredictability and unreliability of their behavior.

Moreover, substantial and significant variations exist among customers, and this is particularly evident when comparing Indian customers to those in other regions. Consequently, retailers in India must exercise caution when adapting formats followed in different countries. Many companies conduct extensive research on the purchasing decisions made by customers concerning their products. This research encompasses various aspects, such as customers' brand beliefs, their

level of engagement, how they become aware of products or brands, and their satisfaction before and after making a purchase. This information enables companies to tailor their strategies for diverse customers and products.

Definition of Buying Behavior:

Engaging in buying behavior entails active participation in both the decision-making process and subsequent physical activities. The decision-making process triggers spontaneous involvement in physical actions, culminating in a transactional scenario. Various consumer buying behaviors are shaped by the level of involvement in the purchase decision, signifying the significance and intensity of interest in a product within a specific situation. The buyer's level of involvement dictates the motivation to seek information about specific products and brands while potentially overlooking others. High-involvement purchases encompass items such as motorcycles, high-priced goods, products visible to others, and those associated with elevated risks, including social, personal, and economic risks.

Routine Response/Programmed Behavior: This category involves the acquisition of low-involvement, frequently purchased, and low-cost items. It necessitates minimal search and decision effort, often resulting in automatic purchases. Examples of such items include soft drinks, snack foods, and milk [3], [4].

Limited Decision Making: This behavioral type manifests when purchasing a product occasionally or when there is a need to gather information about an unfamiliar brand within a familiar product category. It requires a moderate amount of time for information gathering. Instances include buying clothes when the buyer is familiar with the product class but not the brand.

Extensive Decision Making/Complex: This behavior is linked to high-involvement, unfamiliar, expensive, and infrequently purchased products. It entails a high degree of economic, performance, or psychological risk. Examples encompass cars, homes, computers, and education. Buyers dedicate a substantial amount of time to seeking information and navigating all six stages of the buying process, obtaining insights from various sources.

High Involvement and Low Involvement Buying Situations:

1. **High Involvement Products (HIP):** These are products for which buyers are willing to invest considerable time and effort in the search process. Examples are typically expensive items.
2. **Low Involvement Products (LIP):** These products are bought frequently with minimal thought and effort, as they do not significantly impact the consumer's lifestyle.

The level of involvement for a product can change based on circumstances. Initially, choosing a shampoo may be a high-involvement decision, but subsequent repurchases of the same brand become low involvement. Changes in hairstyle or color may elevate the decision to high involvement until a new preferred brand is established. The decision cycle involves realizing the need, conducting research, assimilating information, and making a decision. Generally, HIP products are expensive, while LIP products are not [5], [6]. The context of the purchase is more likely to influence how consciously brands are evaluated in the consideration set than the dollar value of the purchase. Corporate buyers may have longer research phases than individual buyers

as they need to justify decisions to the company. Situational involvement refers to a temporary state of arousal directed towards attaching relevance to a person, object, or situation. It is specific to a situation and can vary from low to high depending on situational factors, creating a short-term affective state when thinking about a particular person, object, or situation. Figure 1, shows the brand loyalty and consumer behavior.



Figure 1: Illustrates the brand loyalty and consumer behavior.

In an illustrative scenario, a middle-aged lady decides to gift an iPad to her son on his birthday, despite not being technologically inclined and having little interest in the product category. In pursuit of this purchase, she visits various stores in an electronics mall that sell computers, laptops, and iPads. Collecting information on product features and prices, she seeks assistance from her middle-aged neighbor to reach a final decision. Her involvement in this purchase activity is best described as situational involvement. Enduring involvement, on the other hand, occurs when the level of engagement with a product or service category extends over a prolonged period across various situations. For instance, a person planning to buy a laptop for his son, to be gifted when he goes to college in three years, demonstrates enduring involvement. Over this period, the individual actively collects information through advertisements, brochures, trade journals, visits to dealers, and word of mouth from peers and colleagues. This extended engagement allows him to make an informed decision based on the accumulated facts. Enduring involvement with a product category can lead to the emergence of an opinion leader.

2. DISCUSSION

An opinion leader is someone deeply interested in a specific product or service category, acting as a specialist who gathers comprehensive information about the category and its brands. Such individuals share their knowledge and information with others, making them sought-after guides for decision-making. When a person seeks advice and guidance for a purchase, they often turn to these opinion leaders. In the example provided, if the lady approaches her neighbor for advice because he is young, technologically savvy, and knowledgeable about electronics, particularly iPads, she is effectively seeking the assistance of an "opinion leader."

Retail Shopper Behavior in Embracing Novel Products:

The diffusion process, as illustrated in the figure below, initiates gradually, gains momentum with an increasing number of individuals embracing the new product, peaks at a certain threshold, and subsequently experiences a decline with fewer adopters remaining. A concise overview of the adopter categories is provided below.

Innovators: Innovators, constituting 2.5% of customers, are characterized by their venturesome nature. These individuals are pioneers or innovators of new products, displaying a willingness to experiment with novel offerings.

Early Adopters: Comprising the next 13.5% of customers, early adopters function as opinion leaders within their community. They adopt new products early, but with a careful and informed approach. Early adopters actively gather product information before making a purchase.

Early Majority: The early majority, constituting 34% of retail shoppers adopting the new product, are not leaders but adopters before the average person. Once this segment embraces the new product, it transitions from being a luxury or novelty item to a more widely accepted choice.

Late Majority: Skeptical in nature, the late majority comprises 34% of buyers. They adopt a new product only after a significant majority has tried it. This segment demonstrates a cautious approach and tends to be more conservative in accepting innovations.

Laggards: Representing the final category of buyers adopting a new product, laggards constitute 16% of customers. These individuals are tradition-bound, suspicious of changes, and maintain a conservative outlook. They associate with like-minded individuals who share a similar traditional perspective.

The classification of adopters, encompassing categories such as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards, underscores the critical need for companies introducing new products to delve into comprehensive research on the demographic and psychographic characteristics of innovators and early adopters. This strategic insight is essential for navigating the intricacies of consumer behavior and effectively positioning innovative offerings in the market. Innovators, constituting a small but influential 2.5% of consumers, are the pioneers or trailblazers of new products. Early adopters, comprising the next 13.5%, are opinion leaders who adopt new products cautiously and play a crucial role in shaping perceptions within their communities. Both these segments contribute significantly to the initial stages of the diffusion process, setting the tone for the product's acceptance and success in the market.

Understanding the nuances of how consumers seek information about novel products and the decision-making processes they employ is paramount. Researching the preferences, lifestyles, and motivations of innovators and early adopters allows companies to tailor their marketing strategies, messaging, and communication channels to resonate effectively with these influential consumer segments. It enables businesses to address specific needs, concerns, and preferences, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful adoption and positive market reception [7], [8]. Furthermore, insights into the demographic and psychographic profiles of innovators and early adopters provide valuable guidance for product design, feature development, and overall market positioning. By aligning product attributes with the preferences of these influential segments, companies can create a strong foundation for broader market acceptance as the product moves through subsequent stages of the adoption curve. In essence, a thorough understanding of

innovators and early adopters, gained through meticulous research, empowers companies to proactively shape their product introduction strategies. This knowledge becomes a catalyst for informed decision-making, enabling businesses to navigate the complexities of consumer behavior and optimize the adoption rate of innovative offerings in the dynamic marketplace.

The behavioral patterns of retail shoppers encompass a wide array of activities and processes associated with the acquisition, utilization, purchase, or disposal of goods and services. The term "buying behavior" pertains to the decision-making processes and actions undertaken by individuals involved in the procurement and utilization of products [9], [10]. Consumer buying behavior specifically zooms in on the purchasing tendencies of the ultimate end consumer. While it is paramount for retailers to comprehend consumer behaviors, the inherent nature of customers as human beings introduces challenges due to the unpredictability and unreliability in their actions. There exist notable variations and deviations among customers, with Indian customers exhibiting distinctions from their counterparts in other regions. This distinction underscores the necessity for caution among retailers in India when considering the adaptation of formats from different countries.

Numerous firms engage in research to delve into the intricacies of customers' purchasing decisions. This research scrutinizes elements such as brand beliefs, the extent of consumer involvement, awareness levels regarding products or brands, and the satisfaction experienced post-purchase. Such thorough investigations empower companies to customize their strategies to accommodate the diverse preferences of customers and varied product categories. In the realm of consumer goods, high-involvement products are characterized by buyers dedicating significant time and effort to the exploration process [11], [12]. Conversely, low-involvement products are acquired frequently with minimal contemplation and effort, given their limited impact on the consumer's lifestyle and lack of vital importance. Understanding the degree of customer involvement in the purchase decision process is pivotal for retailers in formulating effective strategies tailored to different product types and consumer segments.

Consumer Behavior Fundamentals:

Consumer behavior, at its core, is the exploration of how individuals navigate choices related to the acquisition, utilization, and disposal of products, services, or ideas. A multidisciplinary field, consumer behavior draws insights from psychology, sociology, economics, and marketing to unravel the intricacies of the decision-making process. This understanding serves as a cornerstone for businesses seeking to tailor their marketing strategies, product development, and customer engagement initiatives. It is the linchpin for aligning offerings with consumer desires, fostering enduring relationships with target audiences.

The Vital Role of Consumer Behavior:

Consumer behavior yields crucial insights into the desires, needs, and expectations of target audiences. By comprehending the motivating factors behind purchasing decisions, businesses can fine-tune products, services, and marketing approaches precisely. This alignment not only elevates customer satisfaction but also cultivates brand loyalty. Consumer behavior serves as the pivot for effective marketing. Crafting compelling and relevant campaigns becomes feasible when businesses grasp:

1. The sources of information consumers rely on

2. How consumers assess alternatives
3. The factors influencing consumers' choices

This targeted approach enhances the likelihood of converting potential customers into loyal patrons. Furthermore, consumer behavior provides a roadmap for adapting to dynamic market shifts. Businesses can anticipate evolving trends and preferences, positioning themselves ahead of the competition and maintaining agility in their strategies.

Exploring Diverse Consumer Behaviors:

Consumer behavior is intricate, involving various ways individuals act when making purchasing decisions. Recognizing prevalent behavior within specific market segments empowers companies to tailor their approaches for more meaningful customer interactions, ultimately steering consumer buying behavior in desired directions.

These behaviors fall into four primary types:

Complex Buying Behavior: Characterized by extensive research and evaluation, complex buying behavior arises in high-involvement decisions. Consumers weigh options, assess pros and cons, and seek information from multiple sources. For instance, businesses contemplating premium software options invest time in detailed evaluations, reviews, and consultations with experts.

Habitual Buying Behavior: Reflecting a low-involvement decision-making process, habitual buying behavior involves repeated purchases of familiar products. Brand loyalty and routine purchases typify this behavior, as seen in daily workflows where tech teams consistently use familiar tools and services.

Dissonance-Reducing Buying Behavior: Post-purchase cognitive dissonance occurs when customers feel uncertain or regretful after a significant decision. To address this, businesses must provide post-purchase support through excellent customer service, transparent policies, and comprehensive resources.

Variety-Seeking Buying Behavior: Consumers with variety-seeking behavior actively seek new experiences and enjoy experimenting with different products or brands. Businesses can attract these consumers through constant updates, free trials, and marketing products as novel and exciting.

3. CONCLUSION

This in-depth exploration of retail shopper behavior has illuminated the intricate dynamics involved in the acquisition, utilization, and disposal of goods and services. Acknowledging the complexities of buying behavior, particularly among diverse consumer segments, is crucial for retailers seeking sustainable success. The study underscores the challenges posed by the unpredictable nature of human behavior, necessitating caution for retailers, especially in diverse markets like India. The significance of research in unraveling consumer intricacies cannot be overstated, as it forms the foundation for tailored strategies that resonate with diverse preferences and product categories. Understanding the nuances of high and low involvement products equips retailers to navigate varied decision-making processes effectively. Furthermore, the exploration of adoption patterns sheds light on the influential role of innovators and early adopters, emphasizing the strategic importance of researching their demographic and psychographic characteristics. In

essence, this research provides a roadmap for retailers to navigate the dynamic landscape of consumer behavior, fostering informed decision-making and ensuring the successful adoption of innovative offerings.

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CHAPTER 5

NAVIGATING CHANGE: THE IMPACT OF WAL-MART'S 'BEST PRICE' ON VIJAYAWADA'S RETAIL LANDSCAPE AND BUSINESS DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT:

This comprehensive case study delves into the transformative impact of Wal-Mart's entry, operating under the brand name "Best Price," on the retail landscape in Vijayawada, a bustling commercial and trade hub in Andhra Pradesh, India. Examining the repercussions on traditional wholesale businesses, major retailers, and the overall local economy, the case explores the dynamics of competition, pricing strategies, and the implications of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the retail sector. The study highlights the contrasting effects on various stakeholders, with farmers and consumers benefiting from remunerative prices and access to high-quality products. However, small traders and street vendors face challenges to their livelihoods, and the local wholesale market experiences significant disruptions. The competitive pricing strategy of 'Best Price' and the introduction of foreign products reshape consumer choices but also lead to unsold local food products. Throughout the analysis, the case method approach is employed, emphasizing the development of analytical, creative, and communication skills among students. The teacher's role as a facilitator in guiding conversations, encouraging independent thinking, and summarizing diverse viewpoints is crucial. The case unfolds in three discernible phases, prompting students to acknowledge diverse perspectives, embrace cooperative assistance, and cultivate independent thinking skills.

KEYWORDS:

Business, Environment, Learning Experience, Management, Stakeholders.

1. INTRODUCTION

Businesses must comprehend and navigate the dynamic business environment, and the idea of market dynamics is essential to their success. The forces and variables that shape market behaviour are collectively referred to as market dynamics. These include supply and demand, rivalry, customer preferences, technical developments, and prevailing economic circumstances. Businesses may remain competitive in their sectors, make well-informed choices, and adjust to changes by understanding these dynamics. Understanding supply and demand is a key component of market dynamics. The way these factors interact affects how much products and services cost and are available. For example, prices often rise when demand for a product grows and supply stays the same. On the other hand, a surplus might result in lower prices. Businesses are able to modify production levels, pricing tactics, and marketing campaigns by keeping an eye on supply and demand patterns. One important factor influencing market dynamics is competition. Competition in the industry drives innovation, improves product quality, and shapes pricing tactics as they compete for greater market shares. For instance, in order to surpass one another, businesses

like Apple and Samsung are often releasing new features in the smartphone market. Comprehending the competitive environment helps organizations to set themselves apart, spot opportunities, and create winning marketing plans.

The behaviour and preferences of consumers are essential elements of market dynamics. These elements are subject to quick change due to societal movements, economic shifts, and technology breakthroughs. For example, the growth of e-commerce has changed how people shop. Businesses need to acquire input from customers, do market research, and customize goods and services to meet changing consumer needs in order to adapt. Developments in technology drive changes in market dynamics. Disruptive technology and innovation transform sectors, opening up new markets and making outdated items and services. Businesses may address changing client requirements and get a competitive advantage by using technology. Think about how Netflix and other streaming services have affected the conventional television and movie rental markets. Market dynamics are also influenced by economic factors such as unemployment, interest rates, and inflation. These elements affect corporate investment choices, consumer buying power, and market stability in general. There may be a decline in consumer expenditure during recessions. By keeping an eye on economic indicators, companies may make necessary adjustments to their strategy, reduce risks, and seize opportunities. Firms must comprehend market dynamics in order to successfully negotiate the intricate business environment. Through the process of evaluating and adjusting to changes in the economy, customer preferences, supply and demand patterns, and competition, firms may remain competitive and prosper in their particular markets. In a market that is always changing, market dynamics act as a compass for companies, helping them succeed.

A case serves as a depiction of a real or hypothetical situation and is employed as a pedagogical tool to enhance a diverse range of skills among students. Within a case, numerous solutions and alternatives can be explored, making it a versatile learning instrument. The primary purpose of most cases is to provide students with an opportunity to apply analytical techniques and problem-solving approaches. Contrary to these two schools, other business institutions adopt a modified approach, integrating the case method with traditional lecture methodologies [1], [2]. A case typically documents an issue previously confronted by a manager, accompanied by relevant facts, opinions, and biases that influence managerial decisions. Cases may encompass multiple problems, and their interpretation varies across fields and individuals within the same field.

The case method is acknowledged for its efficiency, time and energy economy for both teachers and students, and its ability to yield exceptional results. Students trained under this method develop confidence, precision, and a firm grasp of knowledge within a relatively short timeframe. The essence of this method lies in the practical application of theory, emphasizing the ultimate goal of education as the development of understanding, judgment, and communication skills leading to effective action. This approach fosters open channels of communication between students and between students and teachers. In the case method, students' progress through three discernible phases, contributing to a comprehensive and immersive learning experience. Initially, students come to the realization that their peers possess the ability to consider aspects that may not have crossed their own minds [3], [4]. This acknowledgment forms the first phase of their exposure to the case system. Secondly, students readily embrace the concept of cooperative assistance, recognizing the value of collaborative efforts in tackling complex problems. The third and final phase involves students understanding that, despite the teacher holding the perceived "best" perspective, they are encouraged to articulate and adhere to their own viewpoints. A noteworthy

outcome of the case system is the emphasis it places on cultivating independent thinking skills among students.

Case categories can be broadly classified into short cases and long cases. Short cases, focusing on specific problems, serve as concise tools for learning various disciplines such as accounts, production management, costing, and operations research. On the other hand, long cases offer in-depth, factual accounts that may extend up to fifty pages. These cases delve into human relations, technical issues, or a combination of both, providing students with ample information to analyze, diagnose, and comprehend the broader implications of their conclusions within the specific case context. Additionally, cases can be categorized based on the type of management problems they address, including individual problems, isolated incidents, organizational challenges, or a combination thereof. From the teacher's perspective, cases can be further classified into data dimension cases, analytical method dimension cases, and value dimension cases. Various methods are employed to utilize cases effectively in the learning process. Case illustration involves presenting factual examples from personal experiences, sparking conversations on alternative approaches to address similar situations. Case problems offer a practical application of knowledge gained in lecture classes, allowing students to compare their solutions with those provided by the teacher or with actual outcomes. Syndicate conversation involves dividing the class into syndicates, each responsible for reporting back to a plenary session after analyzing a given case. Case presentation involves a group presenting its case analysis in a class session, followed by a conversation on the group's analysis, assumptions, and conclusions [5], [6].

Incorporating role plays into the case method extends its applicability to the action phase of case deliberations. Role plays can be particularly beneficial in scenarios involving human relations or administrative practices. The incident method addresses a limitation of the conventional case method by capturing the dynamic nature of actual events. The teacher initiates the incident process by narrating a concise incident, with additional case details provided upon specific student requests. The group then undertakes the analysis, and the leader eventually reports the "real-life" solution, fostering a nuanced understanding of the case situation's unfolding process. The utilization of cases extends beyond mere illustrations of principles, rules, or points; instead, it involves the application of principles when students possess sufficient knowledge about their relevance and limitations [7], [8]. Active situations presented in case studies facilitate the transfer of substantial knowledge and content from the teacher to the students. Moreover, the student's need for knowledge in problem-solving scenarios results in a deeper acquisition of knowledge. Interpretation and judgment within case studies are intertwined with the social values held by the student, and with the guidance of a skilled teacher, questions of value are related to problems of action rather than addressed in isolation.

Skills Developed Through Case Method:

The case method serves as a vehicle primarily for skill development. The following skills are cultivated through the analysis of cases:

1. **Analytical Skills:** Students acquire the ability to classify, organize, and evaluate information systematically.
2. **Application Skills:** Students learn to discern which techniques are suitable, when to employ them, and how to implement them effectively.

3. **Creative Skills:** The case analysis process encourages creativity, particularly in generating alternative solutions to complex problems.
4. **Communication Skills:** There is a substantial enhancement of communication skills as students engage in deliberations and present their analyses within the context of case studies.
5. **Social Skills:** Case analysis fosters the development of interpersonal skills, including effective communication, active listening, supportiveness, argumentation, guidance, and self-control.

Challenges and Considerations in Case Methodology:

1. **Large Classes:** The method's effectiveness in developing the ability to formulate, state, and defend a reasoned opinion may be diminished in large classes.
2. **Time and Preparation:** Significant time and thoughtful preparation are required to create a case study, which can be a practical constraint.
3. **Controlled Environment:** Unlike real-life situations where individuals must live with problems, the case method may not fully replicate this aspect.
4. **Critical Approach:** Prolonged exposure to case studies can potentially cultivate an overly critical approach, fostering a habit of focusing on what is wrong rather than instilling a more positive and constructive mindset.
5. **Teacher Expertise:** Fully trained teachers are essential to lead case deliberations and effectively instill the habit of case analysis in students.

While the case method undeniably provides invaluable opportunities for the development of various skills, it is imperative to conscientiously address the associated challenges and considerations to optimize its effectiveness within the educational setting. One significant aspect to consider is the potential impact of class size on the efficacy of the case method. In larger classes, the method's ability to foster the development of students' capacity to formulate, articulate, and defend reasoned opinions may be somewhat compromised. The dynamic nature of case deliberations and the individualized attention required for each student might face constraints in larger groups. Therefore, educators must strategize and implement additional measures to ensure that the benefits of the case method are realized even in expansive class settings.

Moreover, the considerable investment of time and thoughtful preparation necessary for crafting comprehensive case studies should not be underestimated. Educators need to strike a balance between the depth and breadth of case studies, ensuring that the content aligns with the curriculum while providing meaningful learning experiences. This involves careful consideration of the topics covered, the complexity of the issues presented, and the relevance to the students' academic and professional goals. A critical aspect often overlooked is the controlled environment in which case studies are conducted. Unlike real-life situations where individuals must grapple with problems on an ongoing basis, the case method offers a snapshot of a specific scenario. Educators should be mindful of this limitation and incorporate supplementary activities or simulations that expose students to the evolving and dynamic nature of real-world challenges [9], [10].

Furthermore, there is a need to strike a balance in cultivating a critical approach among students without inadvertently fostering a habit of focusing solely on identifying what is wrong. While critical analysis is a cornerstone of the case method, educators should concurrently emphasize a constructive and positive mindset. This involves guiding students to not only identify problems but also propose innovative and viable solutions, fostering a well-rounded approach to problem-solving. Finally, the role of the teacher is pivotal. Fully trained and experienced educators are essential to lead case deliberations effectively. Their expertise goes beyond facilitating deliberations; it involves guiding students through the intricacies of case analysis, encouraging active participation, and providing valuable insights. Teacher training programs should encompass the nuances of case teaching, ensuring that educators are equipped to navigate the challenges and harness the full potential of the case method in cultivating analytical, creative, and communicative skills among students. In essence, while the case method is a potent pedagogical tool, a thoughtful and adaptive approach is necessary to overcome challenges and ensure that its benefits are maximized in the ever-evolving landscape of educational practices.

2. DISCUSSION

In the realm of case deliberations, assumptions play a pivotal role, shaping the perspectives of both teachers and students. To mitigate potential frustrations arising from these assumptions, several pragmatic solutions are proposed. Firstly, a proactive approach involves the distribution of assumptions a day before the class session. This provides students and the teacher with an opportunity to thoroughly prepare for the conversation, allowing them to delve into the foundational assumptions that will underpin the analysis. During the case conversation, the emphasis shifts to the group defending its position based on sound logic. The evaluation centers around inferential reasoning rather than scrutinizing the assumptions themselves. This approach not only encourages a robust defense of viewpoints but also fosters a deeper understanding of the logical constructs guiding the analysis.

A subsequent step in refining the case conversation process involves a critical assessment of the validity and relevance of each assumption. As students' progress through higher-level sessions, the quality of assumptions and the depth of analysis naturally improve. This iterative process contributes to the continuous enhancement of analytical skills and the ability to discern the underlying assumptions inherent in complex scenarios. For the case method approach to yield optimal results, it should be integrated as a regular and consistent element of the learning process. This continuity allows students to acclimate to the methodology, fostering a more seamless and effective learning experience. The role of the teacher in the case method approach is multifaceted. An open-minded approach is essential, avoiding excessive dominance and authoritarianism. The teacher should create an environment conducive to free expression, allowing students to articulate their views openly. Possessing broad knowledge across different areas is advantageous, particularly when dealing with Multi-Functional Cases. This breadth enables the teacher to interconnect subject knowledge with organizational functions, enriching the depth of the deliberations. Collaborating with faculty members from diverse areas further enriches the learning experience.

The teacher, in this context, assumes the role of a facilitator, guiding the analytical and synthetic processes by synthesizing the opinions of the class. By adopting a facilitative stance, the teacher empowers students to actively engage in the learning process, fostering independent thinking and collaborative problem-solving skills. This dynamic interaction between teacher and students is

fundamental to the success of the case method approach, creating an environment conducive to comprehensive learning and skill development in the field of management. Facilitating a case discussion in a classroom setting requires the acknowledgment that there is no singular correct solution for a case. The teacher plays a crucial role in orchestrating the class dynamics, ensuring active participation from every segment. This involves strategically selecting students at different junctures to foster a healthy and inclusive conversation. Adopting a flexible strategy allows for the incorporation of new themes that may emerge during the class. The teacher must be prepared to intervene when necessary, guiding the class to change themes, refine arguments, or address overlooked issues. Leveraging the rich data inherent in cases, the teacher can involve students with industry-specific experience or invite executives to provide real-world insights during the conversation. Varied teaching methods and aids, such as role plays, written reports, films, slides, film strips, and OHP transparencies, can be employed based on the specific learning objectives [11], [12].

After the case discussion, the teacher's role transitions to summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the diverse views and opinions expressed by the students. It is emphasized that the bulk of the discussion should be led by the group, with the teacher intervening to maintain balance, redirect discussions when necessary, and highlight points of value as they emerge. Fostering a conducive atmosphere and establishing good rapport between students and the teacher is imperative. The teacher is encouraged to treat students as adults, promoting an environment of mutual respect and open communication. In the context of a case study focusing on the impact of Wal-Mart in Vijayawada, a commercial and trade hub in Andhra Pradesh, it becomes evident that the retail landscape is undergoing significant changes. Wal-Mart's entry, operating under the brand name "Best Price," has disrupted the traditional wholesale businesses in Vijayawada. The once thriving wholesale market is now facing intense competition, prompting local wholesalers to reduce their prices and operate on thin profit margins. Established players in the retail sector, such as Spencers, Reliance, and Big Bazaar, are experiencing a decline in turnover as a result of Wal-Mart's presence. For instance, Spencers, with a previous monthly turnover of 1 crore 70 lakhs, has seen a reduction to 1 crore 10 lakhs following the entry of "Best Price." Similarly, other major retailers are witnessing business losses ranging from 25 lakhs to 40 lakhs.

This case study presents an opportunity for a comprehensive discussion on the dynamics of competition, pricing strategies, and the overall impact of large-scale retailers on local businesses. The teacher's role in guiding the discussion becomes pivotal in extracting valuable insights and encouraging critical analysis from the students. The entry of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the retail sector, exemplified by Wal-Mart's 'Best Price,' has created a contrasting impact on farmers, consumers, and the local business landscape in Vijayawada. On the positive side of the spectrum, farmers find themselves in a favorable position as they receive remunerative prices for their agricultural produce. This aligns with the broader objective of supporting farmers and ensuring fair compensation for their efforts. Consumers, too, benefit from this shift, enjoying access to high-quality products at competitive prices. The availability of 'Best Price' products has garnered approval from customers who appreciate the affordability without compromising on quality. However, the positive sentiments are not universally shared, especially among small traders and street vendors. The local trade and commerce scene in Vijayawada is undergoing a significant transformation, with small traders and street vendors facing challenges and potential threats to their livelihoods. The formidable presence of Wal-Mart's 'Best Price' is perceived as a force that

could lead to the decline of small-time traders, signaling a crisis in the Vijayawada wholesale business.

One critical aspect of this transformation is the competitive pricing strategy employed by 'Best Price'. By selling foreign products at prices lower than those in the wholesale market, the retail giant has altered the dynamics of the local market. Additionally, the introduction of meat and seafood imported from Vietnam adds to the array of available products. While this expands consumer choices, it has also led to local food products remaining unsold, further impacting the traditional players in the market. The entry of FDI and the presence of Wal-Mart's 'Best Price' have brought about a mixed bag of outcomes. While farmers and consumers benefit from favorable prices and product quality, small traders face existential challenges, and the local market undergoes a significant shift in its dynamics. The impact on the Vijayawada wholesale business raises important considerations about the coexistence of large-scale retail and traditional commerce.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the case study sheds light on the complex interplay between global retail giants, local businesses, and the broader economy. The entry of Wal-Mart's 'Best Price' illustrates the far-reaching consequences of FDI, bringing both opportunities and challenges to Vijayawada's retail sector. The case method, as a pedagogical tool, proves effective in developing a range of skills among students. The iterative process of assumptions, logical reasoning, and critical analysis enhances students' analytical, application, creative, and communication skills. However, challenges such as class size, time constraints, and the need for teacher expertise must be navigated to maximize the benefits of this method. The study underscores the importance of adaptability and thoughtful consideration in incorporating the case method into the curriculum. Striking a balance between depth and breadth, fostering a positive mindset, and addressing challenges head-on are essential for harnessing the full potential of the case method in management education. As Vijayawada grapples with the impact of global retail dynamics, this case study provides a valuable platform for students to engage in meaningful discussions, honing their skills and perspectives for real-world challenges in the dynamic field of management.

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CHAPTER 6

NAVIGATING THE DYNAMICS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN EVOLVING RETAIL LANDSCAPES

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ABSTRACT:

The retail industry is a dynamic and integral part of the global economic structure, impacting the daily lives of individuals. Over time, retailing has transitioned into a sophisticated, global, and high-tech business, catering to diverse consumer needs. This study explores the multifaceted landscape of retailing, focusing on various retail formats and their impact on consumer behavior. From neighborhood grocery stores to expansive shopping malls, retailers strive to understand and meet the evolving demands of consumers. The analysis encompasses demographic factors, lifestyles, culture, and social influences, shedding light on the intricate web of influences that guide shoppers' decisions. The study also delves into the strategic actions taken by retailers and the environmental factors shaping consumer patronage. Ultimately, the success of retail strategies rests on the retailer's adept identification of shopper characteristics and the formulation of a targeted marketing plan. This research provides insights into the evolving nature of consumer behavior and its implications for the retail industry.

KEYWORDS:

Consumer Behavior, Consumer Demand, Economic, Retail Industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

Retailing plays a significant role in both the economic structure and the fabric of our daily lives. While the trade of goods has transitioned into a more formal and brand-dominated activity, retailing has evolved into a global, high-tech business. The retail market is dynamic, with various formats catering to specific consumer groups. In the face of heightened competition, retailers are continually exploring new avenues to tap into consumer demand. Several factors contribute to the growing consumer demand for retail outlets [1], [2]. The expanding middle class with increased disposable income and rising consumer aspirations, influenced by exposure to global lifestyles through media, are key drivers. The retail landscape has adapted to these shifts by segmenting the market and tailoring offerings to meet the specific needs of diverse consumer groups. Retailers are strategically positioning themselves to cater to different consumer segments through various retail formats. Friendly neighborhood grocery stores, strategically located close to residential areas, offer easy accessibility for consumers seeking beverages, ready-to-eat snacks, and grocery items. These stores serve as convenient options for day-to-day necessities.

Chains of stores, designed with exclusivity, synergy in merchandising, and tailored service strategies, are established by single retailers. Each store operates as a Strategic Business Unit (SBU) with a focus on specific product categories. These retailers, often owned by large national chains, cover various departments such as clothing, personal care and cosmetics, books and stationery, houseware goods, and electronics, all under a single roof. Large-scale department stores

like Lifestyle, Shoppers' Stop, Pantaloon, Westside, and Ebony exemplify this retail format. These stores, characterized by their expansive size and diverse product offerings, cater to a broad spectrum of consumer needs [3], [4]. Shopping malls represent another prominent retail format, providing a comprehensive shopping experience. These malls house a mix of anchor stores and other retailers, each functioning as tenants. Retailers within the mall premises pay rent or lease payments to the developers. Shopping malls go beyond retail, incorporating food courts, entertainment options, and parking facilities. Examples in Bangalore include The Forum, Central, and Sigma Mall.

The retailing landscape has transformed into a multifaceted and sophisticated industry, adapting to the evolving needs and preferences of consumers. The variety of retail formats ensures that consumers have access to diverse shopping experiences, ranging from local convenience stores to expansive shopping malls. Understanding and catering to the specific demands of different consumer segments remain paramount for retailers in this dynamic and competitive market. The success of a retail strategy hinges on the retailer's adept identification and understanding of its shoppers, coupled with the formulation of a well-crafted strategy mix to appeal to these shoppers. This intricate process involves a thorough examination of shopper characteristics, needs, and attitudes, understanding the decision-making patterns of shoppers, and subsequently devising a targeted marketing plan [5], [6]. Retailers must also delve into environmental and individual factors that impact purchasing decisions. In the contemporary retail landscape, shoppers are presented with an extensive array of choices, both in terms of where they make purchases and the items they choose to buy. Specialized stores catering to specific product categories have emerged, allowing consumers to tailor their shopping experiences based on their preferences. For example, individuals seeking jewelry might frequent stores renowned for their exquisite jewelry collections, while those in search of furniture would gravitate towards establishments specializing in furniture retail.

Supermarkets and hypermarkets further diversify the retail landscape by addressing various needs and preferences of shoppers. Successful retail stores are those that can discern the diverse requirements of consumers and effectively cater to them, thereby securing their position in the face of intense competition. Retail chains such as More, Foodworld, Reliance Mart, and Star Bazaar exemplify this approach, offering a comprehensive range of products to meet varied consumer demands. Shoppers play a pivotal role in determining which retail store to visit, guided by considerations such as the quantity, quality, and type of products they intend to purchase. In this context, a single store may not excel in all categories [7], [8]. For instance, one store may be celebrated for its jewelry collection, while another stands out for its electronics, cosmetics, readymade garments, or provisions. The ability of retail stores to identify and cater to the diverse needs and tastes of consumers is a key determinant of their survival and success in the dynamic landscape of intense retail competition.

2. DISCUSSION

The model of retail consumer behavior encompasses several key factors that significantly influence the shopping patterns and preferences of consumers. These factors are instrumental in shaping retail strategies and tailoring offerings to meet the diverse needs of the target audience.

Demographics:

Demographics comprise objective, quantifiable, and easily measurable population data that include a range of characteristics. These characteristics encompass gender, age, population growth rate, life expectancy, literacy, family size, marital status, income, place of residence, occupation, education, and religion. Understanding these demographic factors is crucial for retailers as they have a profound impact on shopping behavior. Retailers need a comprehensive understanding of overall demographic trends and the specific demographics of their target shoppers to tailor their strategies effectively.

Lifestyles:

Lifestyles represent the ways in which individual consumers and households live and allocate their time and resources. Consumer lifestyles are influenced by social factors such as culture, social class, reference groups, and family life cycle, as well as psychological factors like personality, attitude, and perception. Retailers can formulate targeted strategies by understanding consumer profiles, appealing to different age groups (teenagers, adolescents, retired individuals, middle-aged individuals), and addressing the diverse preferences influenced by factors like age, income, family size, education, occupation, and culture.

Culture:

Culture encompasses the intricate web of religions, beliefs, customs, traditions, languages, ceremonies, arts, values, and ways of life embraced by a community. In India, for example, cultural diversity is manifested in the myriad languages, religions, dance forms, music genres, architectural styles, food traditions, and customs that vary across regions. India's culture, often viewed as an amalgamation of diverse sub-cultures, is spread across the Indian subcontinent and reflects traditions that span millennia. For retailers, understanding the cultural nuances of different regions is vital for tailoring products, services, and marketing approaches that resonate with the local population. The model of retail consumer behavior acknowledges the multifaceted nature of influences that guide consumers in their shopping decisions. By delving into demographics, lifestyles, and culture, retailers can gain profound insights that empower them to craft strategies aligning with the diverse needs and preferences of their target audience. This understanding forms the bedrock for successful retail operations in an ever-evolving consumer landscape [9], [10].

Social class, a concept central to the social sciences and political theory, revolves around models of social stratification that organize individuals into hierarchical categories. It serves as a crucial subject of analysis for sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, and social historians. Despite its significance, there exists no unanimous agreement on the optimal definition of "class," leading to varied contextual meanings. In everyday language, "social class" is often interchangeable with "socio-economic class," denoting individuals with comparable social, economic, or educational status, such as "the working class" or "an emerging professional class." Reference groups, as recognized by sociologists, are any groups individuals use as benchmarks to assess themselves and their behaviors. These groups serve as standards for evaluating the characteristics and sociological attributes of oneself or others. A reference group is not only a psychological association but also a frame of reference and a source guiding an individual's experiences, perceptions, cognition, and self-concept. It plays a crucial role in shaping a person's self-identity, attitudes, and social connections, serving as the foundation for comparisons, contrasts, and assessments of appearance and performance.

The family life cycle encompasses the emotional and intellectual stages individuals traverse from childhood to retirement within a family context. Each stage presents unique challenges that necessitate the acquisition of new skills. These skills aid in navigating the inevitable changes that occur within families. While not everyone experiences these stages seamlessly, external factors such as severe illness, financial challenges, or the loss of a loved one can impact the progression. Fortunately, missing skills in one stage can be acquired in subsequent stages. Identifying consumer needs and desires is imperative for retailers. Needs refer to fundamental shopping requirements aligned with a person's demographics and lifestyle, while desires encompass discretionary shopping goals influencing attitudes and behavior. Understanding shopping attitudes and behavior is crucial for retailers to create an enjoyable and fun shopping experience. In the contemporary era of information and communication, retailers must be attuned to the evolving tastes and preferences of people, recognizing that shopping serves purposes beyond mere acquisition and can encompass relaxation, amusement, and entertainment [11], [12].

The key considerations influencing shoppers' store patronage include accessibility, the store environment, salespeople, and overall ambiance. Consequently, retailers should prioritize investments in store atmospherics, encompassing elements such as music, color schemes, lighting, aroma, and visual merchandising. Adequate parking facilities for both two-wheelers and four-wheelers are also essential. Retailers employ various strategies, including mass marketing, concentrated marketing, and differentiated marketing. For example, Big Bazaar adopts a mass marketing strategy by emphasizing good quality products at the lowest prices. During festive seasons, the store offers substantial discounts to attract different market segments. Shoppers at Big Bazaar experience convenience, comfort, quality, service, and standardized pricing. In contrast, Fabindia pursues a concentrated marketing strategy as a specialty chain focusing on diverse craft traditions in India. The brand aims to provide customers with handcrafted products that support and promote traditional craftsmanship. Fabindia's product range spans garments, garment accessories, home furnishings, and non-textile items. The brand's home design centers offer personalized solutions tailored to individual customers' tastes and home décor.

Environmental factors, such as inflation rates, economic booms or depressions, increased disposable income, the growing women workforce, changing fashion trends, the emergence of new retail shops, and sales promotion offers, also play a pivotal role in influencing consumer patronage towards retail stores. Consumer behavior, defined as the study of how individuals, groups, or organizations select, acquire, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs, is intricately linked to these environmental influences, shaping both individual consumer choices and their broader impact on society. Consumer behavior, particularly from a retail perspective, encompasses the actions and decision-making processes of individuals who purchase goods and services for personal consumption. It's essential to note that industrial buying activities fall outside the scope of retail activities. For successful marketing, companies must establish a robust connection with their customers. Embracing a holistic marketing orientation involves gaining a 360-degree understanding of consumers, including their daily and long-term needs, and other key aspects in a modern economy. By comprehending the changes that occur in consumers' lives and obtaining an in-depth understanding, organizations can ensure that they market the right products to the right consumers in the right manner. The success of an organization hinges on its ability to grasp the dynamic needs of consumers and offer products at the right time, at the right price, and with the right service perspective. This necessitates the development of a customer-centric approach, achievable only when organizations adopt a holistic approach toward their

customers. This is not a recent trend, as many prominent organizations have invested significant time and resources in researching consumer behavior. The evolution of marketing and sales has seen various phases, from customer satisfaction and customer delight to the current emphasis on surprising customers. It's worth noting the insight of the Father of Management, Peter F. Drucker, who asserted that "consumers do not buy products; they buy a sense of satisfaction through products." This emphasizes that business organizations must provide what customers perceive as value. Drucker introduced a distinct theory of value, stating that value must be perceived from an outside-in perspective—seen through the eyes of the customer. This underscores the importance of aligning products and services with customer perceptions and expectations to create a lasting sense of satisfaction and value.

The evolution of marketing in the Indian context has undergone critical scrutiny. While the 1990s witnessed transformative shifts in the marketplace, the early 21st century has seen a rapid transformation, placing customers at the forefront in shaping the industry's purpose. The entry of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Information Technology, and call centers in the 21st century has introduced new dimensions to the Indian marketing landscape. The belated emergence of the services sector in India, accompanied by its rapid growth, has had a profound impact on so-called developing countries, prompting management philosophers to reassess the significance of consumer behavior. Among the various sectors within services, such as Banking, Finance, Services, and Insurance (BFSI), which have already attracted global players, a noteworthy area gaining momentum in India is retail marketing services. With the country's organized retail sector expected to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of approximately 35 percent in the coming years, the study of consumer behavior in retailing has become increasingly important.

Organized retailing in India is experiencing significant momentum, evident from the entry of leading domestic business houses and global retail giants into this burgeoning segment. The robustness in consumer spending power and increasing disposable income makes this sector highly lucrative. Conglomerates are making substantial investments in developing efficient back-end and front-end operations. While back-end operations focus on strengthening supply chain management practices, front-end operations demand an in-depth study of consumer behavior. Indian retail operations have embraced different retail formats and product-specific approaches to attract consumers. Each conglomerate adopts a unique retail format to position itself and communicate with its target segment. However, none of the conglomerates has yet established universally tested retail formats or decided on potential locations beyond metros and tier 1 cities. Therefore, this study aims to address some of the issues related to changing consumer perspectives and their potential impact on these organized retail stores, with a focus on urban markets.

Understanding consumer behavior is crucial for any effective study, as it provides insights into how retail consumers make decisions and engage with retail products. To comprehend the various ways in which consumers choose and evaluate alternative retail services, it is essential to recognize the multitude of variables involved in consumer behavior across different decision-making scenarios. To gain a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior, retailers must be cognizant of the following factors:

1. **Motives of Shoppers:** Identifying the motives that drive shoppers to visit organized retailers is fundamental. Understanding the reasons behind their choices provides valuable insights into consumer preferences.

2. **Demographic Changes:** Recognizing how demographic changes may impact retail purchasing is crucial. Changes in age, income, family size, and other demographic factors can significantly influence consumer behavior.
3. **Promotional Tactics:** Analyzing the effects of various promotional tactics adopted by retailers is essential. Promotions play a key role in influencing consumer decisions, and retailers need to understand the impact of different promotional strategies.
4. **Purchase Decision Complexity:** Recognizing the complexity and the process of purchase decisions is vital. Some purchases may involve extensive decision-making processes, while others may be more impulsive. Understanding this variation is essential for retailers.
5. **Emotional and Perceptual Influences:** Acknowledging that consumers are influenced by their emotional and perceptual framework to mitigate risks in retail purchases is critical. Emotional factors often play a significant role in shaping consumer decisions.

While consumer behavior can be predicted to a certain extent, it can never be fully understood due to the mix of rational and irrational elements in decision-making. Identifying both rational and irrational aspects sets a framework for understanding the diverse stances taken by different theorists. It's important to note that the same person may not follow the same approach or criteria for all buying decisions, making it challenging to precisely predict behavior. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the types of purchase activities, motives behind buying behavior, and the learning process is essential to decipher consumer behavior. Starting with demographics, age is a primary characteristic that directly influences buying behavior.

The most conspicuous characteristic of Indian consumers is their median age, which stands at 24.9 years, in contrast to 32.7 years for the Chinese population. This age demographic is significantly lower than that of Europe and North America. It is crucial to recognize that what is pertinent in one country may not be universally applicable to others. Distinct factors such as tastes, preferences, and needs vary between older and younger populations, as well as between genders, especially as women gain financial independence and decision-making authority. Consumer behavior is intricately influenced by ethnic, cultural, religious, generational, and gender differences, each contributing to unique patterns. Moreover, market disparities, income levels, the array of products and choices available, and the awareness people possess about these factors collectively shape consumer behavior.

The efficacy of a retail strategy hinges on the retailer's adept identification and understanding of shoppers. Crafting a strategy mix to attract shoppers involves recognizing their characteristics, needs, and attitudes, understanding the decision-making process, and formulating a targeted market plan. This process also entails a thorough examination of environmental and individual factors influencing purchasing decisions. In the contemporary landscape, shoppers are presented with a myriad of choices in terms of where and what to purchase. The retail shopper's behavior is multifaceted and influenced by diverse factors, including demographics, lifestyle, culture, social norms, needs and desires, shopping attitudes and behaviors, retailer actions, and environmental factors.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the retail industry's transformation into a multifaceted and technologically driven sector underscores the need for retailers to adapt to changing consumer behaviors. The diverse

retail formats, from local stores to shopping malls, cater to specific consumer segments, reflecting the industry's responsiveness to evolving needs. Retail success hinges on the ability to understand and cater to demographic trends, lifestyles, cultural nuances, and the complex interplay of factors influencing consumer decisions. Retailers adopting a customer-centric approach, leveraging strategic actions, and staying attuned to environmental shifts position themselves for success in a competitive market. As the retail landscape continues to evolve, retailers must remain vigilant in identifying and addressing the ever-changing preferences and demands of consumers. This study provides valuable insights for industry stakeholders seeking to navigate the complexities of contemporary consumer behavior in the retail sector.

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CHAPTER 7

NAVIGATING THE SHIFTING LANDSCAPE: UNDERSTANDING AND ADAPTING TO THE COMPLEXITIES OF INDIAN SHOPPER BEHAVIOR AND FAMILY LIFECYCLES

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ABSTRACT:

The retail landscape in India faces a formidable challenge due to the dynamic demographic and psychographic profile of consumers. This study delves into the intricate relationship between family lifecycles and shopper behavior, highlighting the complexities faced by retailers in categorizing and understanding the evolving preferences of consumers, particularly women. With a focus on personal factors, economic conditions, lifestyle, personality, education, occupation, and family dynamics, the paper explores the nuances that shape shopper behavior. The study emphasizes the importance of retailers delving into consumer behavior analysis to optimize their marketing strategies, attract foot traffic, and ultimately drive sales. The investigation also underscores the unique purchasing tendencies exhibited by Indian consumers, necessitating a departure from replicating Western models to adopting adaptable and refined formats.

KEYWORDS:

Consumer Behavior, Education, Economic Conditions, Substantial Resources.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ever-changing demographic and psychographic profile of Indian consumers presents a challenging scenario for retailers. Consumers, particularly women, are increasingly discerning and unwilling to settle for anything less than what they believe they deserve. Retailers find themselves grappling with the difficulty of categorizing consumers accurately, whether it involves distinguishing an educated housewife from someone with limited awareness or understanding the spending habits of a working woman who may contribute all her earnings to the family [1], [2]. This uncertainty underscores the imperative for retailers to delve into the study of consumer behavior. Retail establishments invest substantial resources in setting up stores, hiring sales personnel, and sourcing goods globally. However, these efforts can be futile if they fail to attract shoppers. To address this, retail stores must actively promote their outlets through advertising and communication strategies that pique the interest of potential shoppers. The primary goal is to increase foot traffic, which can subsequently translate into sales. Virtually all major business conglomerates in India have ventured into the retail sector, emphasizing the critical importance of understanding shopper behavior for retail success.

For any retail store, comprehending the factors and forces influencing shopper behavior is pivotal. Personal factors play a significant role in shaping a shopper's choices related to products, stores, and brands. Consequently, exploring the personal influences on a shopper's store choice becomes essential. However, predicting shopper behavior with precision is a complex undertaking, with potential deviations from anticipated patterns [3], [4]. Indian shoppers exhibit unique purchase

tendencies distinct from those in other countries, necessitating retailers to adapt and refine formats derived from successful models in the United States and Europe, rather than simply replicating them. A person's occupation significantly shapes their purchasing decisions. Blue-collar workers, for instance, tend to prefer simple clothing and may prioritize practical items like a lunch box. In contrast, white-collar workers often opt for sophisticated white or colored clothing and goods that reflect their status. Lifestyle, defined as a person's chosen pattern of life, is frequently correlated with products by retailers and marketing managers. The science of measuring and categorizing lifestyles is known as "psychographics," a methodology that has gained acceptance. However, marketers have expanded lifestyle categories, introducing terms like Sleepwalkers, Chameleons, and Avant-Guardians into marketing literature. Figure 1, shows Comprehending Indian Purchasing Behavior and Readyng Your Online Ventures for the Festive Season.

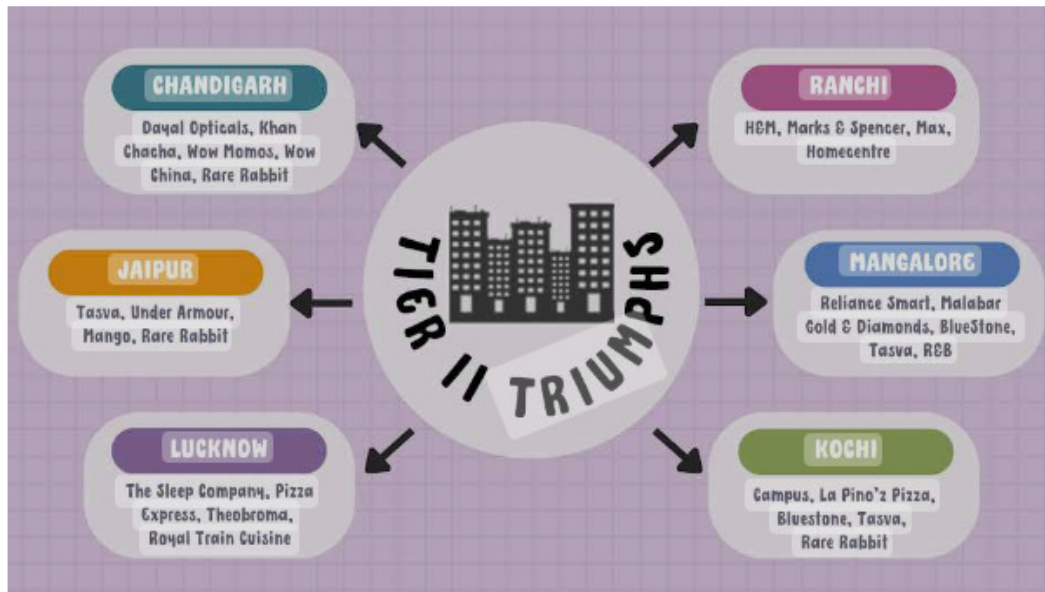


Figure 1: Depicting the Comprehension of Indian Consumer Behavior and Readyng Your Online Ventures for the Festive Season.

In the realm of marketing, numerous tools have emerged to identify shopper behavior, shedding light on buying tendencies and spending patterns. Shopper behavior is a nuanced aspect, recognizing that not all individuals share similar product preferences. Understanding why individuals choose certain products and services while rejecting others is at the core of shopper behavior analysis. Personal factors play a crucial role in shaping shopper buying behavior, with occupation standing out as a significant influencer. An individual's job directly impacts the products and brands they select [5], [6]. Occupation is a widely accepted variable for measuring social status, influencing choices related to clothing, vehicles, food preferences, shopping patterns, hobbies, and media preferences. For example, the role of a CEO, like Rao, necessitates wearing elegant and unique attire to command respect. Designation and nature of work profoundly influence an individual's buying decisions, with lower-level workers unlikely to invest in business suits or premium brands for everyday wear on the shop floor.

Age:

Age and the various stages of the human lifecycle play a significant role in shaping shoppers' buying behavior. Teenagers, for instance, are inclined towards bright and vibrant colors, while

middle-aged or elderly individuals may prefer more subdued and sophisticated designs. The preferences of a bachelor may revolve around indulgent spending on items like beer, bikes, music, clothes, parties, and clubs, with less interest in substantial investments such as property, insurance, or gold. In contrast, individuals with families prioritize purchases that benefit their family and contribute to a secure future.

2. DISCUSSION

The ever-changing demographic and psychographic profile of Indian consumers presents a formidable challenge for retailers striving to understand and cater to their diverse preferences. This paper aims to explore the intricate relationship between family lifecycles and shopper behavior, shedding light on the uncertainties faced by retailers in accurately categorizing consumers. With a particular focus on personal factors, economic conditions, lifestyle, personality, education, occupation, and family dynamics, this study examines the multifaceted aspects that influence shopper choices. In a retail environment where substantial resources are invested in store setup, personnel, and global sourcing, understanding consumer behavior becomes imperative for success. The paper underscores the need for retailers to employ effective advertising and communication strategies to attract shoppers, increase foot traffic, and enhance overall sales. Additionally, the study emphasizes the necessity for retailers to move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, recognizing the unique purchasing tendencies of Indian consumers and adapting marketing strategies accordingly [7], [8].

An individual's buying tendencies are closely tied to their monthly income or earnings. Those with higher incomes are more likely to invest in expensive and premium products, whereas individuals from middle- and lower-income groups tend to focus on essential items. For instance, someone with a limited income may prioritize spending on groceries and survival necessities over designer clothes and watches. Household income, combined with accumulated wealth, determines purchasing power, making income a popular measure of personal status, although not universally accepted among researchers.

Lifestyle:

Lifestyle, a concept introduced by Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler in 1929, refers to the way an individual lives in society. For some, wearing branded clothes is crucial, while others may not be brand-conscious. Individuals residing in affluent areas may feel the need to maintain their status and image through their lifestyle choices. Lifestyle encompasses style, attitude, perception, social relations, and immediate surroundings. Figure 2, shows the influence of Family Life Cycle (FLC) on Consumer Behavior.

Personality:

Personality is among the many factors influencing consumer behavior. It comprises an individual's psychological traits, characteristics, motives, habits, attitudes, beliefs, and outlook. Personality traits are reflected in an individual's buying behavior. For example, a fitness enthusiast is likely to prioritize fitness equipment, while a music lover may willingly spend on musical instruments, CDs, concerts, and musical shows. Each person's unique personality traits contribute to their distinctive buying preferences and patterns.

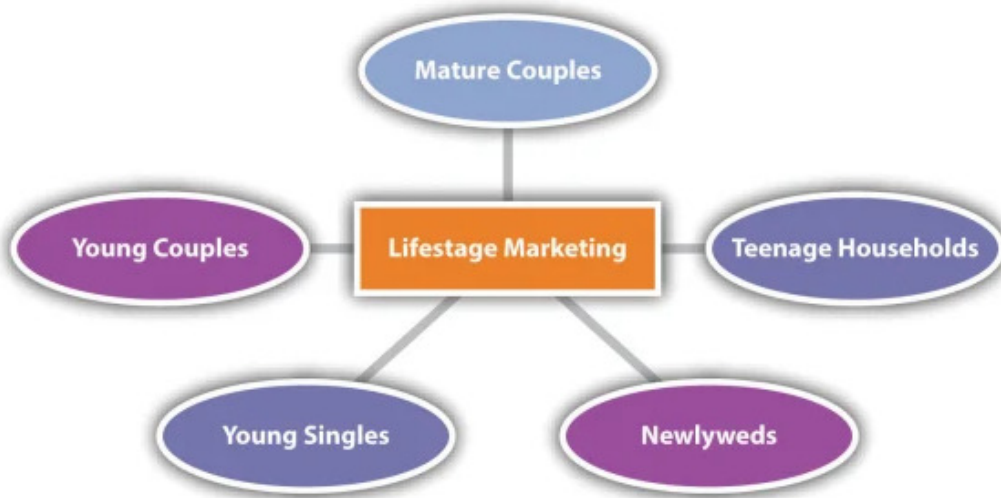


Figure 2: Illustrates the influence of Family Life Cycle (FLC) on Consumer Behavior.

Education:

Education holds high value in various cultures as it serves as a pathway for upward social mobility. The level of formal education a person attains is often used as a parameter to estimate their social status. Highly educated individuals are likely to have higher incomes or hold respectable positions. Retailers targeting specific products and services for different occupation groups often mention educational qualifications. Education not only influences one's income and occupation but also plays a significant role in shaping thinking processes, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships. Adequate education empowers individuals to earn and spend wisely, making it a key factor in consumer behavior.

Family:

Family, as a social group encompassing earning, consuming, and decision-making units, is a crucial element in understanding shopper behavior. It is a subset of the broader classification of a household, serving as the fundamental purchasing and consuming unit. The family, comprising two or more related or unrelated individuals residing together, takes on various forms such as married couples, nuclear families, and extended families. Family functions include providing emotional support, economic well-being, fostering a suitable lifestyle, and socializing family members. Families significantly influence shopper behavior as both primary groups (characterized by intimate, face-to-face interaction) and reference groups (members adhering to certain family values, norms, and standards in behavior) [9], [10]. The strength of bonds within a family, rather than sole determinants like demographic factors, determines the family's influence. The family, being directly involved in consumption, is an economic unit where members collectively establish consumption priorities, make decisions about products and brands, and determine where and how consumption occurs. Individual saving and consumption habits often align with the family environment in which one is raised. Understanding the nature of family influence on its members and how purchasing decisions are made within the family is crucial for retailers to develop effective marketing strategies.

Family Lifecycle:

Similar to individuals having lifecycles, families also progress through lifecycles, representing the various life stages a family unit undergoes over time. The concept of the family lifecycle (FLC) classifies family units into distinct segments based on these stages. FLC analysis assists retailers in segmenting families by considering variables such as marital status, family size, age of family members, and household employment status. The age of parents and their relative disposable incomes are influenced by the stage in the FLC. The family lifecycle concept is broadly categorized into two sections: traditional and non-traditional family life cycle stages, with the latter focusing on alternative family living arrangements. Understanding these lifecycles helps retailers tailor their strategies to meet the changing needs and preferences of families over time. The relationship between family lifecycle and shopper behavior has been explored by various researchers, who have categorized lifecycle stages differently. Despite variations in their approaches, researchers unanimously acknowledge a robust connection between lifecycles and shopping behavior. Numerous studies reveal substantial variations in consumption patterns at different lifecycle stages. The Family Lifecycle (FLC) model serves as a reliable indicator of attitudes and leisure activities, particularly influencing food and beverage consumption, as well as the purchase of household appliances and furniture.

Households can be categorized based on durable goods ownership and purchasing plans, with newly formed households facing challenges in acquiring all necessary durables. These households must establish priorities and decision plans for purchasing, as revealed by researchers who identified patterns in the priorities and order in which durables are acquired. Another research study establishes a systematic relationship between the size and composition of household expenditure and the family lifecycle stage. These findings offer valuable insights for retailers in predicting product and service demand. Marketing decisions are significantly influenced by the nature of family roles and decision-making patterns, impacting various aspects such as product design, pricing, distribution, promotion, and channels. Understanding household purchase patterns is crucial, with family roles and decision-making influencing advertising and selling messages. Differentiation in decision-making roles, such as one spouse dominating versus joint decisions, requires tailored advertising messages. Variances in media use among family members necessitate the use of diverse channels to reach dominant family members [11], [12].

In the context of advertising products involving children in the decision-making process, a strategic approach is crucial. Fast-food choices, influenced by children, exemplify this, with companies like McDonald's and Burger King targeting both children and parents through advertisements. Four principles underlie the shopper influence perspective: the shopper is sovereign, behavior can be understood through research, shoppers can be influenced, and shopper influence is socially legitimate. Retailers can enhance their marketing strategy by understanding the basis of shoppers' consumption decisions. Familiarity with shoppers enables retailers to make informed managerial decisions, predict reactions to internal and external factors, and tailor marketing strategies accordingly. In conclusion, family decision-making, involving two or more family members, undergoes continuous transformation due to evolving social structures. The changing roles of men and women, particularly the dual roles adopted by women (traditional and modern), impact family purchasing decisions. Understanding these shifting patterns, especially in marriage roles, is crucial for retailers seeking to adapt to evolving consumer dynamics.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study illuminates the intricacies of the relationship between family lifecycles and shopper behavior in the context of the Indian retail landscape. The findings underscore the challenges faced by retailers in accurately categorizing consumers and the imperative need to understand the diverse factors shaping shopper choices. The unique purchasing tendencies exhibited by Indian consumers emphasize the necessity for retailers to move beyond Western models and adopt adaptable strategies. The paper emphasizes the pivotal role of personal factors, economic conditions, lifestyle, personality, education, occupation, and family dynamics in influencing shopper behavior. Retailers are urged to invest in consumer behavior analysis to optimize their marketing strategies, predict reactions to internal and external factors, and tailor their approaches for sustained success in the dynamic Indian market. Ultimately, this research aims to guide retailers in navigating the complexities of shopper behavior and family lifecycles to enhance their competitiveness and relevance in the ever-evolving retail landscape.

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CHAPTER 8

NAVIGATING SHOPPER BEHAVIOR: UNRAVELING THE INTERPLAY OF CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN GLOBAL MARKETS

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ABSTRACT:

This research paper explores the intricate interplay of cultural, social, and environmental factors shaping shopper behavior in global markets. With a focus on understanding the evolving dynamics of shopping experiences, the study employs a behavioral intentions modeling approach to examine the strength and significance of social referent influence across distinct shopper segments. Additionally, the research assesses shopping orientations and retail feature preferences within these segments. The second part of the study investigates the diverse consumption patterns in Indian society, emphasizing the substantial influence of psychological, social, and cultural factors. The paper also underscores the importance of international retailers comprehending cross-cultural distinctions among shoppers in different countries. The third section delves into the influence of social factors on shoppers, specifically exploring the impact of social class, reference groups, and family dynamics. Lastly, the paper examines the profound influence of culture on shopper behavior, categorizing cultural values into widely held beliefs that impact activities, relationships, feelings, and goals within a community. The insights derived from this study offer guidance for retailers aiming to tailor strategies that resonate with diverse consumer segments in both domestic and international contexts. This comprehensive review delves into the intricate relationship between cultural, social, and environmental factors and their impact on shopper behavior, providing a foundational backdrop for understanding consumer choices. The study explores the evolving dynamics of shopping experiences, emphasizing the role of social interactions and changing gender dynamics. Employing a behavioral intentions modeling approach, the research investigates the strength and significance of social referent influence on distinct shopper segments, each characterized by varying role expectations. Additionally, the study assesses shopping orientations and retail feature preferences within these segments.

KEYWORDS:

Cultural, Environmental Factors, Human Behavior, Social, Shopper Behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

The effects of cultural and social environmental factors on shopper behavior provide a foundational backdrop for other influencing elements. Shopping, often a socially conspicuous activity, is commonly undertaken in the company of friends or family. The significance of the social interactions woven into the shopping experience implies that social references can impact consumer patronage behavior [1], [2]. Nevertheless, the sway of social references on patronage may hinge on the individual's perception of the importance of their role as a shopper. Historically, the role of shopper was predominantly associated with females. However, contemporary evidence

suggests a shifting dynamic, wherein the role of shopper has gained prominence for males while diminishing for females not fulfilling traditional housewife roles. This study employs a behavioral intentions modeling approach to explore the strength and significance of social referent influence on three distinct shopper segments, each with varying role expectations. Additionally, the study assesses the shopping orientations and retail feature preferences within these segments.

Consumption patterns across various segments in Indian society exhibit considerable diversity attributable to psychological, social, and cultural factors. The pronounced dissimilarities within a nation suggest even greater variation among members of different countries. International retailers must grasp the cross-cultural distinctions among shoppers in diverse countries to formulate targeted strategies for entering foreign markets [3], [4]. Cultural values, encompassing beliefs about what society deems desirable or undesirable, exert influence on human behavior through societal norms. These norms prescribe how individuals should respond to specific situations and vary across different cultures. Recognizing disparities in cultural values across nations is crucial for retailers seeking success in diverse markets. There exist numerous cultural values that vary across cultures and exert a significant impact on consumption patterns. These cultural values influencing consumers can be broadly categorized into three main groups: other-oriented, environment-oriented, and self-oriented. While a single value may impact more than one category, its primary influence typically lies within one specific category. Self-oriented values mirror the approaches and objectives desired by individuals within a society, and these values carry substantial implications for marketing strategies. For instance, societal patterns dictate the acceptance and use of credit, revealing whether individuals prefer immediate consumption for satisfaction or opt for postponed satisfaction.

Social Influence on Shoppers:

Social class is characterized as a relatively permanent and homogeneous division or structure in society, differing in status, wealth, education, possessions, values, beliefs, attitudes, friendships, and communication styles. Social classes encompass various categories, and shoppers' behavior is notably influenced by their social class. This hierarchy represents how individuals in a society rank each other based on different social positions, closely tied to shared beliefs, values, and behavioral norms. Interactions within different social groups impact the consumption patterns of group members, such as the choice of living location affecting residents' living status and consumption decisions. Social groups, defined by interactions among members, can exert influence on individual behavior, providing information that shapes subsequent actions. Social class involves an informal ranking based on income, occupation, education, and other factors, with people within each class often sharing similar values. Consequently, a consumer's behavior is significantly influenced by these social factors:

1. Reference Groups
2. Social roles and statuses
3. Family

Reference groups play a crucial role in shaping individuals' thoughts and behavior, categorized into aspirational groups (desired but not belonging), membership groups (actively belonging), and dissociative groups (unwanted association). Face-to-face groups, notably families, wield the greatest impact, with opinion leaders within these groups influencing others' views. Reference

groups, encompassing family, close friends, and co-workers, exert direct or indirect influence on an individual's behavior through frequent informal interactions, leading to the absorption of preferences [5], [6]. A person's reference groups include those with direct influence, termed "membership groups," such as Kingfisher's frequent fliers club, Rotarians, and Lions club members. Primary membership groups involve continuous and informal interactions, including family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Secondary membership groups, such as religious, professional, and trade-union affiliations, are more formal and require less continuous interaction.

2. DISCUSSION

In an era of globalization, understanding and navigating the complexities of shopper behavior in diverse markets is crucial for retailers seeking sustained success. This paper aims to unravel the multifaceted interplay of cultural, social, and environmental factors that influence the choices consumers make in a global context. The study employs a comprehensive approach, utilizing a behavioral intentions modeling framework to explore the strength and significance of social referent influence on distinct shopper segments. By investigating shopping orientations and retail feature preferences within these segments, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for retailers looking to tailor strategies that align with diverse consumer expectations. As the global marketplace becomes increasingly interconnected, it is imperative for retailers to recognize the diversity within societies, particularly evident in consumption patterns across different segments.

The paper specifically delves into the unique landscape of Indian society, emphasizing the profound influence of psychological, social, and cultural factors on consumer choices. Furthermore, the discussion highlights the necessity for international retailers to comprehend the cross-cultural distinctions among shoppers in various countries to formulate targeted strategies for market penetration. Individuals are notably influenced by reference groups in three ways: exposure to new behaviors and lifestyles, impact on attitudes and self-concept, and the creation of pressures for conformity, potentially influencing actual product and brand choices. Reference groups serve as significant influencers in individuals' lives, shaping their preferences and decisions. The family holds a pivotal role as the most crucial consumer buying organization in society, with family members constituting the primary and most influential reference group. Two distinct families play significant roles in a buyer's life: the family of orientation, including parents and siblings, and the family of procreation, comprising a spouse and children [7], [8]. From the family of orientation, individuals acquire values related to religion, politics, economics, personal ambition, self-worth, and love. Despite reduced interaction, parents continue to exert a substantial influence on behavior, especially in countries where parents cohabit with grown children. The family of procreation, specifically a spouse and children, has a more direct influence on everyday buying behavior.

Roles and Status:

An individual's roles and status within various groups shape their activities and expectations. Roles are defined by the activities a person is expected to perform, each carrying a distinct status. Marketers keenly observe the roles and influence of family members in purchasing a diverse range of products and services. Joint decision-making becomes more prevalent in significant purchases like cars, vacations, or housing. Financial service firms recognize the increasing financial influence of women and have adapted strategies to attract women investors and business owners. Furthermore, the traditional perception that men are the primary buyers of technology is evolving, with women actually surpassing men in technology purchases.

Cultural Influence on the Shopper:

Culture plays a substantial role in shaping shoppers' behavior, encompassing a complex set of values, ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and symbols transmitted across generations. Subcultures emerge within a culture due to geographic, religious, nationality, and ethnic differences. Culture is defined by shared meanings, rituals, norms, and traditions within an organization or society. The Indian culture, emphasizing individuality, success, education, and material comfort, encompasses various subcultures like Christianity, Islam, Jainism, and Buddhism. The impact of culture is so ingrained and automatic that its influence on behavior is often taken for granted, existing to satisfy the needs of individuals within a society. The term "culture" typically encompasses an individual's values, preferences, wants, and desires, exerting a significant influence on their behavior. These influences stem from the environment, education, and experiences encountered throughout childhood and adulthood. For instance, individuals in the middle class often prioritize security and risk aversion, while those in the lower middle class, with limited income, may exhibit a level of suspicion. Culture plays a vital role in shaping human behavior, offering insights beyond biological and physiological factors. It suggests that while people may be biologically similar, their behavior is heavily influenced by their cultural background [9], [10].

A cultural framework aids in decision-making and influences reactions to various situations, determining aspects such as how people dress, speak, and eat. The cultural bag, representing accumulated cultural knowledge, enables individuals to navigate daily activities seamlessly without conscious thought, allowing them to concentrate on more complex tasks. Culture, defined as learned meanings, values, and behavior patterns shared by a society, encompasses knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, customs, and habits acquired by individuals as members of that society. This cultural influence extends to the consumption patterns of shoppers, evident in the wide variations in food habits across nations. Recognizing the profound impact of culture enables marketers to interpret shoppers' reactions to alternative marketing strategies, emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding in shaping effective marketing approaches.

Cultural Values:

Cultural values are defined as widely held beliefs or sentiments within a community regarding the importance of certain activities, relationships, feelings, or goals for the community's identity or well-being. Shopper behavior is intricately tied to cultural values, shaping their actions and decisions in alignment with or in avoidance of these values. Values serve as a set of standards that shoppers reference before making decisions, influencing their actions and thoughts. As individuals interact within society, values become ingrained in their perspectives. Retailers making strategic decisions must carefully consider these cultural values, as culture provides direction and guidance to society members for their well-being and survival. Culture is a dynamic entity that evolves gradually to meet the changing needs of society.

Social Class:

Social class delineates different social strata or layers within a group. For instance, individuals from families of office goers may exhibit a strong inclination towards clerical thinking, while those from small business backgrounds may display a propensity for risk-taking in their behavior. Conversely, individuals from farming backgrounds may exhibit a cautious approach. While predictable behavior patterns may emerge, they do not universally apply to all individuals within a particular social class [11], [12]. Understanding the psychological factors associated with social

class is essential for identifying and comprehending consumer lifestyles, enabling retailers to predict and plan for consumer behavior effectively: Personality encompasses the collective traits that make an individual distinct, including self-confidence, innovativeness, autonomy, sociability, emotional stability, and assertiveness.

3. **Class Consciousness:** Refers to the extent to which a person desires and actively pursues social status. It influences the utilization of reference groups and underscores the significance of prestige purchases. A class-conscious individual places value on the status associated with goods, services, and retailers.
4. **Attitudes (Opinions):** Represent the positive, neutral, or negative feelings an individual harbors about various topics, including their perceptions of a retailer and its activities. These attitudes encompass judgments about a retailer's desirability, uniqueness, and fairness in pricing.
5. **Perceived Risk:** Denotes the level of risk a consumer believes is associated with the purchase of a specific good or service from a particular retailer, irrespective of the accuracy of this belief. Perceived risk tends to be high when dealing with new retailers or brands, budget constraints, limited personal experience, numerous choices, and socially visible or complex purchases.
6. **Importance of Purchase:** The significance of a purchase to the consumer influences the time spent making a decision and the range of alternatives considered. When a purchase holds substantial importance, perceived risk tends to be higher, necessitating retailers to adapt accordingly.

3.CONCLUSION

Several variables influence the dynamics of purchasing decisions within a family setting. These include culture, subculture, social class, reference groups, stages in the lifecycle, geographical location, mobility, and the presence of children. Culture plays a pivotal role in providing direction and guidance to society members, contributing to their well-being and survival. It is a dynamic entity that evolves gradually to meet the changing needs of society. In Indian society, diverse segments exhibit wide variations in consumption patterns, attributed to psychological, social, and cultural factors. Such variations within a nation suggest even greater diversity among individuals from different countries. International retailers must comprehend the cross-cultural differences among shoppers in various countries to formulate specific strategies for successful market penetration in foreign markets. Understanding these variables is essential for tailoring marketing approaches that resonate with the diverse influences shaping purchasing decisions within families.

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the complex interplay of cultural, social, and environmental factors in shaping shopper behavior on a global scale. The insights gleaned from the behavioral intentions modeling approach underscore the importance of understanding social referent influence across diverse shopper segments. The exploration of consumption patterns within Indian society serves as a microcosm of the broader global landscape, emphasizing the need for retailers to tailor strategies that resonate with the unique influences on consumer choices. In essence, this paper provides a comprehensive perspective on navigating shopper behavior, offering valuable insights for retailers aiming to craft strategies that are not only culturally sensitive but also socially and environmentally attuned. As the global marketplace continues to evolve, the

ability to unravel and adapt to these interconnected factors will be a defining factor for retailers seeking sustainable growth and success.

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CHAPTER 9

NAVIGATING THE DYNAMIC TERRAIN: UNDERSTANDING AND ADAPTING TO THE RETAIL MARKETING ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT:

In the realm of retail, success hinges on a profound comprehension of the multifaceted marketing environment. This environment, comprising both external and internal factors, presents a myriad of challenges and opportunities for retailers. Demographic shifts, economic conditions, physical and technological considerations, political and legal frameworks, and socio-cultural influences collectively shape the marketplace. As retailers strive to understand and meet consumer needs, they must also grapple with the ever-changing external forces that impact decision-making processes. This paper aims to dissect the crucial elements of the retail marketing environment, exploring their implications for consumer behavior and retail strategies. This comprehensive exploration delves into the intricate dynamics of the retail marketing environment, scrutinizing both micro and macro factors that significantly influence consumer behavior and retail strategies. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding and adapting to the evolving landscape shaped by demographic shifts, economic conditions, technological advancements, political and legal frameworks, and socio-cultural influences. Retailers must navigate these forces to effectively identify and fulfill consumer needs while sustaining profitability. The study provides a condensed overview of the key environmental factors and their implications for retail marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS:

Consumer Behavior, Decision-Making, Economic, Marketing Environment, Retail Marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every shopper is consistently motivated by the desire to fulfill their needs when seeking to purchase a product or service. Retailers, in turn, strive to discern these needs and endeavor to satisfy them while generating profits for their organization. The efficacy of a retail strategy hinges on how adeptly a firm identifies and comprehends its customers, tailoring its strategy mix to resonate with them [1], [2]. This involves recognizing consumer characteristics, needs, and attitudes, understanding decision-making processes, and formulating an effective target market plan. Additionally, it entails studying environmental factors influencing purchase decisions. Beyond grasping general demographic and economic trends, it is crucial to acknowledge the diverse motivations driving consumers to shop, encompassing activities like browsing, fulfilling specific needs, seeking experiences/fun, and comparing prices. Individual consumers' needs and motivations for purchasing vary throughout any given timeframe, whether it be a day, week, month, or lifetime. Retailers may not be able to cater to every consumer's needs at all times; however, those who can anticipate and adapt to changing consumer preferences and needs will thrive.

Consumer Satisfaction and Confidence: Many shoppers today exhibit heightened knowledge and cosmopolitanism, being more attuned to trends in tastes, styles, and goods and services. Nonconforming behavior is widely accepted as consumers are self-assured and appreciate the array of choices available to them. Confident shoppers are inclined to experiment more, emphasizing the importance of retailers understanding not just the functional benefits but also the personal resonance of what a product or brand communicates about the consumer and how it aids in self-expression. In developing a target market profile, retailers should pinpoint key consumer needs and desires [3], [4]. Needs represent a person's fundamental shopping requirements aligned with their current demographics and lifestyle, while desires encompass discretionary shopping goals that influence attitudes and behavior. For instance, someone may need a new car for commuting to work and seek a dealer with Saturday service hours. Simultaneously, they may desire a luxury brand with additional perks, but be content with a more budget-friendly option that aligns with their lifestyle.

Modern consumers allocate a smaller proportion of their spending to essential needs like food, clothing, and shelter compared to 25, 35, or 50 years ago. Conversely, there is an increased expenditure on non-essential, discretionary purchases driven by emotions and desires. A retail strategy aimed at fulfilling consumer needs and desires taps into the underlying motives driving their behavior. Consumer preferences and choices vary significantly based on the type of retailer. Hence, businesses must identify the outlets where consumers are most likely to make purchases and strategically plan accordingly. Certain supermarket patrons routinely purchase items available at the supermarket from convenience stores, full-line department stores, drugstores, and specialty food stores. Similarly, some department store customers frequently buy products from department stores at factory outlets and full-line discount stores [5], [6]. A significant portion of online shoppers also engage in shopping with catalog retailers, mass merchants, apparel chains, and department stores. Cross-shopping is particularly prevalent in categories such as apparel, home furnishings, shoes, sporting goods, and personal care items. The environment, encompassing external factors beyond the organization's control, plays a crucial role. It provides resources and opportunities, but simultaneously imposes limits and constraints on the organization, influencing its survival and growth.

A business entity functions as a socio-economic system within a broader environmental context, requiring continual adaptation to cope with opportunities, threats, risks, and uncertainties arising from changes in external forces. If an organization operates as a closed system, solely focusing on its internal environment without acknowledging and responding to changes in the external environment such as shifts in consumer demand, market conditions, competition levels, technology, political and legal landscapes, economic conditions, and labor relations it is at risk of missing opportunities and facing unforeseen threats. The organization's survival and growth are contingent on its ability to meet the demands of its external environment. A business entity is not isolated but exists in an interdependent relationship with its environment. This mutual interdependence necessitates continuous interaction, where the organization provides output and services to its environment, seeking approval and endorsement for its activities to thrive.

Marketing Environment:

The marketing environment presents ongoing challenges to marketers, and a thorough understanding of this environment is crucial for both shoppers and retailers. Numerous environmental factors significantly impact a company's marketing activities, influencing its

decision-making processes. Collectively, these forces constitute the marketing environment, and a company's marketing system must operate within the framework of these environmental factors. As defined by Philip Kotler, the marketing environment encompasses external factors and forces that affect a company's ability to establish and maintain successful transactions with its target customers. For instance, the pertinent environment for a tire manufacturing company like MRF Tyres includes factors such as automobile manufacturers end buyers, tire manufacturing technology, tax structures, import-export regulations, dealers, competitors, and more. Additionally, the company must consider its internal resources, including production capacity, technology, marketing network, sales force, finance, and human resources. The marketing environment presents a mix of opportunities and threats, prompting businesses to utilize marketing research and intelligence systems to monitor and adapt their strategies in response to environmental changes.

Micro/Organizational Internal Environment:

Marketing management collaborates with various internal groups, such as top management, finance, R&D, purchasing, manufacturing, and accounting, to formulate effective marketing plans. These interconnected groups collectively constitute the internal environment. Top management establishes the company's mission, objectives, broad strategies, and policies, providing a framework for marketing managers to make decisions aligned with these policies. Marketing plans undergo approval by top management before implementation. The collaboration extends to other departments within the company. Finance is responsible for mobilizing and utilizing funds to execute the marketing plan, while the R&D department focuses on designing and developing innovative products. The purchasing department procures necessary supplies and materials, and the manufacturing department concentrates on producing the required quantity and quality of products. The accounting department, by measuring revenues and costs, provides insights into how well marketing is achieving its objectives. In essence, each of these departments influences the plans and actions of the marketing department.

Suppliers:

Suppliers are entities and businesses that furnish essential resources like raw materials, components, and sub-assemblies required by a company for the production of goods and services. It is imperative for the company to actively seek potential suppliers, identifying and selecting those capable of providing an optimal combination of quality, quantity, reliability, credit facilities, warranties, and competitive pricing. These choices significantly impact the company's production operations, product quality, and overall cost. Effective supply chain management, meticulous materials management, and inventory control are essential for gaining a competitive advantage. Marketing managers need to monitor the price trends of crucial inputs, as an increase in supply costs may compel the company to adjust the prices of its offerings, potentially impacting sales volume.

Marketing Intermediaries:

Typically, manufacturers enlist various intermediaries to assist in promoting, selling, and distributing goods and services to end consumers. These intermediaries encompass middlemen, physical distribution firms, marketing services agencies, and financial intermediaries.

- a. **Middlemen:** These are entities within the distribution channel, such as wholesalers, retailers, and agents, that aid the company in reaching customers and facilitating sales. Middlemen wield substantial influence over business enterprises.
- b. **Physical Distribution Firms:** These entities assist the company in stocking and transporting goods from production points to consumption destinations. Warehousing firms store and safeguard goods before onward shipment, while transportation firms like railways, trucking companies, and airlines specialize in moving goods. The marketing manager must select the most cost-effective storage and transportation methods, balancing considerations of cost, delivery, speed, and safety.
- c. **Marketing Services Agencies:** Comprising marketing research firms, advertising agencies, media firms, and marketing consulting firms, these agencies help businesses identify their target market. The marketing manager selects these agencies based on their performance, creativity, quality, service, and pricing.
- d. **Financial Intermediaries:** Encompassing banks and insurance companies, financial intermediaries facilitate the company's financial transactions. Fluctuations in credit costs and limited credit availability from these intermediaries can impact a company's marketing performance. Therefore, maintaining positive relations with financial intermediaries is crucial.

Customers:

Thorough scrutiny of customers is imperative for a business enterprise. Customers can be categorized as follows:

- (i) **End Users:** These are the ultimate consumers, encompassing individuals and households.
- (ii) **Industrial Consumers:** Organizations that procure goods and services for the production of other goods and services fall into this category.
- (iii) **Reselling:** Intermediaries who acquire goods and services with the intention of reselling them at a profit.
- (iv) **Government and Other Non-profit Customers:** Customers in this category purchase goods and services to produce public utility services, transferring these goods and services to others in need.
- (v) **International Customers:** Individuals and organizations from other countries purchasing goods and services either for consumption or industrial use. These buyers may include consumers, producers, resellers, and governments.

For a company to achieve success, it must surpass competitors in satisfying the needs and wants of consumers. Marketers need to gain a strategic advantage by positioning their offerings strongly in the minds of consumers compared to competitors [7], [8]. A public is any group with an actual or potential interest in or impact on an organization's ability to achieve its objectives. The various types of publics include:

- (i) **Financial Publics:** Entities that influence the firm's ability to mobilize funds, including banks, stockholders, and financial institutions.

- (ii) **Media Publics:** Comprising newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV, which disseminate news, features, and editorial opinions.
- (iii) **Government Publics:** Understanding the government's concerns on certain issues, with marketers often consulting the company's lawyers on matters such as product safety and advertisement claims.
- (iv) **Public Interest Groups:** Organizations questioning the marketing decisions of companies, such as consumer organizations and environmental groups focused on healthy products and a healthy environment.
- (v) **Local Publics:** Referring to people living in the neighborhood and community organizations, maintaining positive relations with these groups is crucial.
- (vi) **General Public:** A company must be attentive to the general public's attitude toward its products and activities, as the public image significantly impacts sales.
- (vii) **Internal Publics:** Including company workers, managers, and the board of directors, companies use newsletters and other means to inform internal publics. Positive employee attitudes contribute to a favorable image with the external public.

2. DISCUSSION

These environmental factors are beyond our control, yet they exert a profound impact on marketing activities, affecting retailers as well. Consumer behavior is also subject to the influence of such forces, making a thorough examination of external variables crucial for retailers. Demography, the study of population in terms of age, gender, education, etc., is a pivotal aspect of marketing. The demographic environment in marketing encompasses population growth, age distribution, gender composition, educational patterns, family influences, and shifts. A burgeoning population indicates a growing market, especially for baby products. Anticipating a baby boom holds tremendous market potential [9], [10]. Conversely, a reduction in birth rates and slower population growth necessitates adjustments in the marketing programs of companies specializing in baby products. Demographic analysis delves into quantitative elements such as age, gender, education, occupation, income, geographic concentration, dispersion, and urban and rural population, among others. Demography provides a consumer profile crucial for market segmentation and target market determination. Demographic characteristics evolve rapidly, influencing consumer behavior and, consequently, impacting the marketing activities of firms. Companies must adapt their existing marketing policies, practices, and strategies in response to these changes. Hence, marketers should maintain a continuous vigil on shifts in population structure.

Economic Environment:

The economic condition plays a pivotal role in the marketing system. High economic growth ensures a higher level of employment and income, leading to a marketing boom in numerous industries. Marketing plans and programs are influenced by various economic factors such as interest rates, money supply, price levels, consumer credit, etc. Economic considerations, including trends in Gross National Product (GNP), patterns of income distribution, expenditure trends, consumer savings, cost of living, and disposable income, significantly influence a company's marketing decisions. Anticipating future economic conditions enables firms to devise appropriate marketing strategies.

Physical Environment:

The business landscape is significantly impacted by the physical environment, necessitating marketers to consider factors such as the quantity and quality of forest wealth, sea product exploitation, and health hazards arising from pollution. Marketers must address air pollution, noise pollution, and water pollution caused by their operations. Natural renewal forces include forests, agricultural products, and sea resources, while non-renewable resources encompass oil, coal, and minerals. Governments are actively pursuing conservation and recycling measures through legislation and campaigns, compelling companies to take steps to protect the environment.

Technological:

In any country, the state of technology plays a crucial role in determining the type and quality of goods produced, as well as the choice of plant and equipment. Consequently, every company must engage in technological forecasting. Advancements in automation and information technology pose challenges for future business scenarios. Technology stands as a major force in business, with new developments potentially creating new industries or rendering existing profitable products obsolete. It also shortens the life cycle of existing products, making it imperative for companies to stay abreast of technological changes to avoid product obsolescence and capitalize on new opportunities. Ongoing scientific developments promise breakthroughs in various areas, presenting both opportunities and threats to existing businesses.

Political and Legal Environment:

This environment provides the legal framework within which marketers operate, encompassing factors such as political parties, stability, government intervention, trade policies, and industrial policies. For instance, government policies led to the discontinuation of Coca-Cola's bottling and sale in India in the late seventies, and the subsequent entry of Pepsi in 1989. Revisions in the government's industrial policy in 1991 liberalized licensing procedures, imports, foreign investments, and technology inflow. The privatization (denationalization) of public sector banks and the opening up of sectors like power, oil, insurance, and communications to private participation have reshaped the competitive landscape. Globalization and the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have presented new challenges. Various laws and regulations, such as FEMA, MRTP Act, and the Consumer Protection Act, impact and regulate business decisions.

Socio and Cultural Environment:

Business decisions are significantly influenced by socio-cultural factors. In India, shifts in people's attitudes toward food and clothing have occurred due to industrialization, increased female employment, and higher education levels. This transformation has led to the growth of food processing and the ready-made garments industry. Companies are encouraged to produce goods beneficial to society, and various pressure groups, including social workers, organizations, reformists, activists, and consumer forums, exert influence on corporate decisions. Religion, an integral aspect of culture, also impacts marketing [11], [12]. For example, Hindus consider cows sacred and refrain from consuming beef, influencing the market demand. Therefore, societal culture plays a role in shaping consumer preferences. A comprehensive understanding of micro and macro environmental factors reveals that companies navigate within the dynamic framework of these environmental forces, which present both opportunities and threats. Corporate responses

to environmental changes depend on factors such as finance, production capacity, marketing strategies, human resources, and technology.

Information System:

The role of the marketing information system is pivotal for the growth of retail marketing, aiding in the analysis of the marketing environment. An information system involves the organized transmission, reception, and recording of messages, encompassing both formal and informal information flows. Information should be adequate, up-to-date, reliable, timely, and understandable. In the modern business landscape, information is considered a fundamental resource alongside personnel, materials, machines, and facilities. The marketing information system (MIS) is defined as a system comprising people, equipment, and procedures to gather, sort, analyze, evaluate, and distribute needed, timely, and accurate information to marketing decision-makers. Information serves as cues or guidelines influencing managerial decisions, facilitating the recognition, definition, and resolution of problems. Lower management focuses on operational information, middle management on tactical information, and top management on strategic information. A robust MIS is an ongoing process providing essential information for sound marketing decisions on plans, policies, and programs. The MIS consists of four interrelated subsystems: internal records, marketing intelligence, marketing research, and information analysis. These subsystems exchange information with target markets, channels, and external economic, social, and political forces in the marketing environment.

Marketing Information System:

Internal records are compiled from data gathered within the organization, including the accounting, production, customer service, and sales departments. Marketing intelligence provides information about changes in the marketing environment, aiding in the preparation and modification of marketing plans based on everyday developments. This system determines the necessary intelligence, collects it from the environment, and delivers it to marketing managers who require it. Sources of marketing intelligence include company personnel such as executives, engineers, scientists, purchasing agents, and the sales force. Marketing research aims to collect and analyze information about management's challenges. The data gathered from various sources are processed and analyzed using computers to derive conclusions for use by marketing managers. Marketers must forecast the direction and intensity of future environmental changes and adjust plans accordingly. Accurate sales forecasting involves organized information systems, leading to reliable forecasts, plans, and profitable marketing activities with minimized risks. Marketing research is a component of the marketing information system, incorporating three systems:

1. **Marketing Control System:** Provides management information about market trends, issues, and opportunities, enabling performance assessment and future planning. Useful for controlling marketing costs and identifying reasons for poor sales.
2. **Marketing Planning System:** Furnishes information for future product planning, including alternatives to existing products. Addresses issues such as sales forecasting, promotional planning, and credit management.
3. **Marketing Research:** Analyzes and solves current marketing problems, measuring characteristics of various customer types and their behavior under different conditions. Focuses on issues related to advertising, pricing, etc.

Marketing research and marketing information systems (MIS) are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing. A marketing information system comprises procedures and methods for regular, planned information collection, analysis, and presentation to support decision-making in marketing. Marketing research plays a vital role in the development of an MIS by addressing the following aspects:

1. **Specification of Required Information:** Determining the details needed for specific purposes, such as preparing an advertising budget.
2. **Determination of Variable Relationships:** Establishing the relationships between variables involved, like understanding how the readership of an advertisement correlates with sales.
3. **Data Collection:** Gathering the necessary data, for example, comparing sales differences between an advertised and a non-advertised item.

3. CONCLUSION

Successful retailers recognize that the marketing environment continually presents a stream of opportunities and threats. Both Marketing Information Systems and Marketing Research serve as means to leverage these opportunities. Retailers must analyze the needs and trends of the marketing environment, encompassing both external and internal factors. Numerous environmental elements affect a company's marketing activities, shaping decision-making capabilities. These forces include the microenvironment, consisting of suppliers, customers, intermediaries, and the public, and the macro environment, which includes demographic, economic, physical, and socio-cultural factors. An information system is defined as "a system that consists of people, equipment, and procedures to gather, sort, analyze, evaluate, and distribute needed, timely, and accurate information to marketing decision-makers." Marketing research is an integral part of the marketing information system. In conclusion, the retail landscape is a dynamic arena where success is contingent on a nuanced understanding and strategic adaptation to the prevailing marketing environment. The exploration of demographic trends, economic indicators, technological advancements, and socio-cultural shifts underscores the intricate tapestry that shapes consumer behavior. As retailers navigate this complex terrain, they must remain agile, anticipating and responding to changes in the external environment. Whether it be the influence of political decisions, the ramifications of technological breakthroughs, or the evolving preferences of a diverse consumer base, the ability to align strategies with the pulse of the market is paramount. In a world where the only constant is change, retailers who embrace a proactive approach to understanding and leveraging environmental forces will thrive.

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CHAPTER 10

UNRAVELING THE COMPLEX THREADS OF PERSONALITY: THEORIES, INFLUENCES, AND IMPLICATIONS"

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ABSTRACT:

This comprehensive exploration delves into the multifaceted realm of personality, examining the diverse theories and influences that shape individuals' distinct characters. The study navigates through trait theories, psychoanalytic perspectives, humanistic theories, and bio-psychological considerations, shedding light on the intricate interplay of genetics, environment, and behavior. Emphasis is placed on the impact of personality in various contexts, from consumer behavior to organizational dynamics. The "nature vs. nurture" debate is addressed, revealing the intricate balance between genetic predispositions and environmental influences. The role of projective tests in understanding behavioral indicators is explored, and the significance of personality in shaping responses to the surrounding world is underscored. The study draws on empirical research, including twin studies and adoption cases, to unravel the complexities of personality development. The intricate tapestry of individual differences is woven together, providing a nuanced understanding that transcends oversimplified classifications. The abstract serves as a gateway to a comprehensive exploration of personality, offering insights into its enduring nature and implications for diverse aspects of human life.

KEYWORDS:

Consumer Behavior, Environmental Influences, Genetic Predispositions, Psychoanalytic.

1. INTRODUCTION

Personality constitutes the unique blend of characteristics or traits that shapes an individual's distinct character. This amalgamation of traits is enduring and consistent, showcasing inherent individual differences that may or may not undergo change. Individuals vary in their sociability, punctuality, assertiveness, optimism, and other attributes. Deciphering the complex and intricate nature of people's personalities and attitudes is challenging, exacerbated by the lack of consensus among theories on the precise definition of personality [1], [2]. The concept of personality is multi-dimensional, encompassing various interacting elements like individual moods, values, attitudes, motives, and habitual responses to situations. Understanding personality proves valuable in unraveling fundamental consumer orientations, including brand and store preferences, usage patterns, susceptibility to persuasion, and other facets of consumer behavior. This knowledge enhances the analysis of consumer product choices and buying behavior. Research has underscored the significant impact of personality on consumer decisions, influencing not only product choices but also responses to promotional efforts by firms. Consequently, companies strive to formulate market segmentation strategies that leverage specific personality characteristics.

Personality can be defined as the internal psychological attributes that both shape and manifest in an individual's responses to their surroundings. These internal characteristics encompass qualities,

attitudes, beliefs, values, traits, factors, and mannerisms that set one person apart from others. Some theorists posit that personality is shaped by the combined influence of genetics and the early experiences of an individual, while others acknowledge the role of social and environmental factors. The development of personality is a continuous process, emphasizing the uniqueness of each individual rather than their similarities. It underscores the consistency of an individual's disposition rather than variations in behavior across different situations, elucidating how personality influences actions and reactions in various environmental scenarios. In the realm of organizations, the question arises: does personality matter? Pose this inquiry to individuals with experience in organizational settings, and the majority will instinctively affirm its significance. Often, people readily provide examples illustrating how personalities have impacted team dynamics or shaped their organizational experiences, either positively or negatively. In the study of organizational behavior, personalities indeed play a consequential role [3], [4].

The term "personality" is derived from the Latin root "persona," which translates to "mask." According to this etymology, personality signifies the impression we convey to others—the metaphorical mask we wear in the world. Later in our conversation, we will reference this linguistic origin when examining how individuals' behaviors serve as manifestations of their personalities. In the context of our study, we define personality as "a distinctive set of traits and characteristics that remain relatively consistent over time." It is evident that personality is inherently unique, as each individual possesses their own distinct personality, distinct from that of others. Our definition also implies that personality does not undergo daily fluctuations; in the short term, it remains relatively fixed or stable. However, this definition does not imply that personality is rigid, unalterable, or set in stone. Rather, it acknowledges the potential for long-term changes in personality.

Origins of Personality: The Nature-Nurture Debate:

In the realm of psychologists exploring personality development, the "nature vs. nurture" debate has been central. This dichotomy posits that biology (an individual's genes) and society (the environment in which a person grows up) are competing forces in development. Historically, the debate sought to determine which factor held more significance. Presently, most psychologists recognize that both nature and nurture are integral to personality development, each contributing to shaping who we are. Behavior genetics serves as one avenue to discern how genetics and the environment influence personality. By examining individuals' behavior, psychologists attempt to ascertain the proportion of that behavior linked to genetic differences and the proportion associated with environmental differences.

Twin studies are particularly valuable in investigating genetic differences. For instance, to comprehend the impact of both nature and nurture, researchers may study identical twins who share both a living environment and identical genetic makeup, as well as fraternal twins who share a living environment but possess different genetic compositions. Such studies have revealed that genetic differences can explain approximately 40 to 50 percent of variations in personality traits, while environmental influences contribute to about 30 percent of these differences. However, the clear distinction between what constitutes nature and what is nurture remains challenging. For example, what may appear as "external influences" could be more connected to genetic predispositions. Individuals may actively seek out or create environments that align with their genetic tendencies, such as a confrontational person gravitating toward situations where arguments are likely to occur.

While genes may not have a direct impact on specific personality traits, they do play a crucial role in shaping the development of our nervous and endocrine systems. Consequently, considering that body chemistry can influence behavior, it can be argued that genetics does have an impact on personality. A notable example is the link between testosterone and aggression. On average, men tend to display more physical aggression than women, with boys engaging in significantly more roughhouse play than girls. Statistics indicate that men are responsible for 90 percent of all violent crimes. In adulthood, men typically have up to ten times the circulating testosterone levels found in women. Numerous studies have established a connection between testosterone and aggression in various species, and similar relationships have been identified in humans. Prenatal exposure to testosterone has been shown to permanently alter the brain structure of fetuses [5], [6]. While male babies are typically exposed to a significant amount of testosterone in the womb, there are instances where female babies are exposed to testosterone-like hormones, leading to later engagement in rough play and the development of interests more commonly associated with boys. In the realm of psychology, behavioral indicators are employed to construct projective tests designed to draw conclusions about personality based on observed behaviors. These tests often rely on how individuals interpret ambiguous situations to make assessments about their personality traits and characteristics. One well-known projective test is the Rorschach inkblot test, introduced in 1921. This test prompts individuals to interpret what they see in inkblots, with the assumption being that, since the inkblots lack inherent meaning, any interpretation is shaped by the individual's personality. In this way, individuals "project" elements of their personality onto what they perceive.

The term "personality" is defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics unique to an individual that influences their cognitions, emotions, interpersonal orientations, motivations, and behaviors in various situations. The word "personality" originates from the Latin "persona," meaning mask. In the ancient Latin-speaking world's theatre, the mask wasn't used to disguise a character's identity but rather to represent or typify that character. Personality can also encompass the consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, social adjustments, and behaviors displayed by an individual over time, significantly influencing expectations, self-perceptions, values, attitudes, and predicting reactions to people, problems, and stress. The study of personality within psychology encompasses a diverse history with various theoretical traditions. Major theories include the dispositional (trait) perspective, psychodynamic, humanistic, biological, behaviorist, and social learning perspective. Despite this richness, there is no unanimous definition of "personality" in psychology, leading researchers to often adopt an eclectic approach without exclusive allegiance to a specific perspective. Research methods vary, with some emphasizing empirical approaches such as dimensional models based on multivariate statistics, while others prioritize theory development, as seen in psychodynamics. Additionally, there is a significant focus on the applied field of personality testing. In psychological education and training, the study of personality and its psychological development is typically a prerequisite for courses in abnormal or clinical psychology.

2. DISCUSSION

The foundation of personality study lies in the recognition that while people share similarities, they also exhibit unique differences. Contemporary psychologists generally agree on a definition of personality as the pattern of characteristic thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that distinguishes one individual from another, persisting over time and situations. Trait Theories, as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association, consider personality

traits as enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself, evident across various social and personal contexts. Theories underpinning traits assume that traits are relatively stable over time, vary among individuals, and exert influence on behavior. Traits, often discussed when describing a person, are considered relatively constant and bipolar, existing along a continuum between opposing extremes (e.g., friendly vs. unfriendly). The most common trait models incorporate three to five broad dimensions or factors, with extraversion and neuroticism being foundational dimensions present in many theories, historically rooted in Hippocrates' humoral theory. Trait models have faced criticism for being predominantly descriptive and lacking explanations for the underlying causes of personality. Eysenck's theory stands out by proposing biological mechanisms as drivers of traits, and contemporary behavior genetics research has demonstrated a clear genetic foundation for these traits. However, a potential drawback of trait theories is that they may lead individuals to accept oversimplified classifications or, worse, provide advice based on a superficial analysis of personality. Additionally, trait models often underestimate the impact of specific situations on people's behavior, emphasizing that traits are statistical generalizations that may not always align with an individual's actions.

Age differences add complexity, particularly within a family, making twins an ideal subject for comparison. Twins share a family environment, known as a shared environment, which includes aspects like teachers, school, and friends. On the other hand, a non-shared environment involves entirely different surroundings for each individual. For heredity and personality studies, identical twins separated at birth and raised in different families offer valuable insights because any similarities between them are solely attributed to genetic influences. Vulnerability was considered in this study, indicating that monozygotic co-twins would exhibit more similarity than dizygotic co-twins over time. Addressing biological versus adoptive relatives, adoption serves as a real-life experiment, creating two groups: genetic relatives (biological parents and siblings) and environmental relatives (adoptive parents and siblings). The question arises whether adopted children resemble their biological parents, who share genes, or their adoptive parents, who share the same home environment. While studying adoptive families, it was discovered that people growing up together, regardless of biological relation, do not strongly resemble each other in personality. In certain traits like extroversion and agreeableness, adoptees tend to be more similar to their biological parents than their adoptive ones. Despite limited shared-environment effects, which may minimize the family environment's impact on personality, adoptive parenting does influence children's attitudes, values, faith, manners, and politics. Although there is a slightly higher risk of psychological disorders, most adopted children thrive, especially when adopted as infants, with seven out of eight reporting a strong connection with one or both of their adoptive parents.

This personality typology incorporates elements of a trait theory, explaining behavior in terms of opposing fixed characteristics. In traditional models, the sensing/intuition preference is considered fundamental, categorizing individuals into "N" (intuitive) or "S" (sensing) personality types. An "N" is further differentiated by thinking or feeling and grouped into the "NT" (scientist, engineer) or "NF" (author, humanitarian) temperament. Conversely, an "S" is assumed to be guided more by the judgment/perception axis, leading to the "SJ" (guardian, traditionalist) or "SP" (performer, artisan) temperament. Critics note strong stereotypes associated with professions, although the creators, Myers and Keirsey, did not engage in such stereotyping in their type descriptions. This criticism contributed to the emergence of the five-factor view, which focuses less on work conditions and more on personal and emotional circumstances. Despite objections, the MBTI is

not designed to measure the "work self" but rather what Myers and McCaulley termed the "shoes-off self." Some critics argue for more or fewer dimensions, while others propose entirely different theories, often with distinct definitions of personality [7], [8].

Psychoanalytic theories, pioneered by Sigmund Freud, explain human behavior by examining the interaction of various personality components. Freud introduced the term psycho-dynamics, drawing on thermodynamics to propose the conversion of psychic energy into behavior. Central to Freud's theory are dynamic, unconscious psychological conflicts, dividing human personality into the id, ego, and super-ego. The id operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate gratification, while the ego navigates between the id's wishes and external reality based on the reality principle. The superego, or conscience, imposes moral judgment and societal rules on the ego, incorporating parental and social ideals established during childhood. In social cognitive theories, behavior is explained through cognitions, particularly expectations about the world and other people. Albert Bandura, a social learning theorist, emphasized the interplay of memory, emotions, and environmental influences. Bandura's renowned "Bobo Doll Experiment" demonstrated observational learning or modeling, where a college student's aggressive behavior towards a bobo doll influenced kindergarten children to display similar aggression when presented with the same scenario.

The recognition that the belief in the correlation between hard work and persistence leading to the achievement of life and academic goals has significantly influenced formal educational and counseling practices since the 1970s. Research on achievement has led to counseling efforts directed at encouraging individuals to set ambitious goals and work towards them, acknowledging the impact of external factors. This approach often results in the adoption of a more positive achievement style by students and employees in various settings, including higher education, the workplace, and justice programming. Humanistic theories in psychology emphasize the concept of free will, highlighting the active role individuals play in determining their behavior. Humanistic psychology focuses on the subjective experiences of individuals rather than external, deterministic factors. Abraham Maslow, a prominent figure in humanistic psychology, dedicated much of his research to studying "self-actualizing persons" those who fulfill themselves and strive to reach their maximum potential. Maslow posited that individuals interested in personal growth naturally move towards self-actualization, characterized by dimensions such as:

1. Awareness: Maintaining constant enjoyment and awe of life. Self-actualizers often experience "peak experiences," defined as an intensification of any experience to the degree that there is a loss or transcendence of self. These moments involve perceiving an expansion of oneself and recognizing unity and meaningfulness in life.
2. Intense Concentration: Individuals engaged in activities that invoke a peak experience, such as running a marathon, may exhibit intense concentration, contributing to a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction.

These humanistic principles underscore the significance of personal growth, autonomy, and the pursuit of meaningful experiences in shaping individual behavior and well-being. Individuals characterized by a reality and problem-centered approach tend to focus on addressing issues in their surroundings. They embrace acceptance and spontaneity, acknowledging and adapting to aspects of their environment that cannot be changed. Possessing an un-hostile sense of humor and maintaining a democratic attitude, they avoid making offensive jokes about others, fostering friendships across diverse backgrounds and religions [9], [10]. They view individuals as active,

creative beings who respond subjectively to their current perceptions, relationships, and experiences. In contrast to the pessimism found in Freudian psychoanalysis, humanistic theories emphasize the innate tendency of the human personality toward growth and self-actualization. The self, according to this perspective, remains at the center of a constantly changing world, shaping and being shaped by encounters with the environment. This understanding aims to counteract feelings of hopelessness and redundancy. Humanistic therapy, influenced by the works of Rogers, places importance on the client's role in shaping therapy. Clients provide information about their past and its impact on the present, allowing for an individualized therapeutic approach. Rogers emphasized reflective or empathetic responses, where therapists reflect the client's feelings and context, encouraging deeper self-reflection and understanding.

Shifting to bio-psychological theories, the case of Phineas Gage, who experienced personality changes after a severe head injury in 1848, sparked early considerations of biological influences on personality. Personality genetics, driven by molecular genetics and evolutionary concepts, explores the relationship between genetics and personality. Twin studies, particularly comparing identical and fraternal twins, indicate a moderate genetic influence on personality traits, with heritability estimates around 40%. Behavior genetics methods, resembling natural experiments, assess genetic and environmental influences by comparing mono-zygotic and di-zygotic twins. The observed differences between genetically identical mono-zygotic twins can be attributed to environmental factors. Di-zygotic twins, or fraternal twins, originate from two separate ova and share, on average, 50% of their genes. They are genetically no more alike than other siblings. Any observed differences between fraternal twins are a result of a combination of genetic and environmental factors. The twin method assumes that environmental influences are uniform for both types of twins. If identical twins exhibit greater similarity than fraternal twins, the difference in their correlations is attributed to the increased genetic similarity of identical twins, indicating a genetic influence on the trait.

To explore the complexities of developmental genetic influences on personality during young adulthood, a longitudinal twin study was employed. This classic twin design utilizes two types of twins: monozygotic (identical) and dizygotic (fraternal). Monozygotic twins share 100% of their genes, while dizygotic twins share only 50%. If there is a significant genetic influence, monozygotic co-twins tend to be more similar than dizygotic twins. A longitudinal design involves assessing twins twice in their life, enabling the identification of genetic influences at two different times and examining genetic factors that contribute to intra-individual change over time. While cross-sectional twin studies have been extensively used to investigate infant and young children's development, longitudinal studies provide a more comprehensive understanding of genetic influences on adult personality. In this study, a large sample of monozygotic and dizygotic twins was assessed at the ages of 20 and 25, utilizing a condensed version of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). This inventory measured self-reported personality characteristics relevant to genetic interest. The assessment aimed to address three primary questions during the study:

Age differences introduce additional variables, even within a family, making twins the optimal subjects for comparisons. Twins commonly share a family environment referred to as a shared environment, encompassing factors like teachers, schools, and friends. A non-shared environment implies entirely different surroundings for each subject. "Biologically related children who are separated after birth and raised in different families live in non-shared environments." Identical twins separated at birth and raised in distinct families represent ideal cases for studying heredity

and personality, as their similarities are solely attributed to genetic influences. Vulnerability was a considered factor in this study concerning the impact of genetic influences on vulnerability. The study concluded that monozygotic co-twins would exhibit greater similarity than dizygotic co-twins in terms of change over time [11], [12]. The data indicated no significant differences in variances between monozygotic and dizygotic co-twins regarding the genetic influence on personality change. Genotypes, or the genetic makeup of an organism, exert influence but do not entirely determine a person's physical traits. These traits are also influenced by the surrounding environment and behaviors. For instance, a person's height is influenced by genetics, but malnourishment can stunt growth regardless of genetic coding. Environment alone is not solely responsible for personality outcomes. An example from Marvin Zuckerman's "Psychobiology of Personality" is alcoholism: while studies suggest a genetic predisposition to alcoholism, a person with a strong biological background may not develop the condition if never exposed to alcohol.

Examining biological versus adoptive relatives involves a real-life experiment—adoption. This categorizes individuals into genetic relatives (biological parents and siblings) and environmental relatives (adoptive parents and siblings). The question arises: Are adopted children more similar to their biological parents, who share the same genes, or their adoptive parents, who share the same home environment? Consequently, do adopted siblings, sharing the same home environment, develop shared traits? A study of numerous adoptive families revealed that individuals growing up together, whether biologically related or not, do not closely resemble one another in personality. In characteristics such as extroversion and agreeableness, adoptees align more with their biological parents than their adoptive parents. Shared-environment effects do not diminish the effectiveness of adoptive parenting. Despite genetic limitations on the family environment's influence on personality, parents do shape their children's attitudes, values, faith, manners, and politics. In adoptive homes, child neglect, abuse, and parental divorce are uncommon. Consequently, despite a slightly elevated risk of psychological disorders, most adopted children excel, particularly when adopted as infants. Remarkably, seven out of eight reported feeling a strong connection with one or both of their adoptive parents.

3. CONCLUSION

Personality encompasses inner psychological characteristics, including attitudes, beliefs, and values, which shape and reflect an individual's responses to their environment. While personality reflects enduring individual differences, it may undergo changes over time. Various personality theories, such as type, trait, psychoanalytic (including Freudian, Jungian, and Neo-Freudian), and behavioral theories, attempt to elucidate the complexity of personality. Understanding these theories is valuable in comprehending consumer preferences and buying behaviors. Tailoring promotional campaigns and advertisements to align with consumer personality attributes can evoke positive sentiments toward products.

Although a correlation between consumers' personality and buying behavior exists, the precise strength of this influence remains unpredictable. In response, researchers propose delving into the concept of self to gain insights into consumer purchasing patterns. The self is defined as an individual's self-perception, where products are seen as extensions of the self. Different facets of the self, such as ideal self, social self, actual self, and aspirational self, contribute to influencing consumer behaviors. Social interactions serve as the foundation for the development of these self-perceptions. Processes like self-appraisal, reflected appraisal, social comparisons, and biased scanning contribute to the formation of the self. Consumers, driven by a desire for self-

enhancement, tend to favor products that align with their self-concept, showing a particular attraction to those that contribute to their 'ideal self-image. In conclusion, this extensive study illuminates the intricate and enduring nature of personality, emphasizing the uniqueness that defines individuals. The theoretical traditions, ranging from trait theories to psychoanalytic perspectives, contribute to a rich tapestry that captures the essence of human character. The interplay between nature and nurture is acknowledged, with genetics and environment jointly shaping personality development. Real-life experiments, such as twin studies and adoption cases, provide valuable insights into the influence of genetic factors and environmental surroundings. The study underscores the limitations of oversimplified classifications and highlights the role of personality in diverse domains, from consumer behavior to organizational dynamics. The dynamic and organized set of characteristics that make up an individual's personality, influenced by cognitions, emotions, and behaviors, remains a central focus. As the metaphorical mask individuals wear in the world, personality serves as a lens through which we interpret and respond to our surroundings. This exploration invites further research and consideration, acknowledging the complexity of personality and its profound implications for understanding human behavior and experiences.

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CHAPTER 11

DECODING PERCEPTION: INFLUENCES ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND RETAIL STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT:

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of the perceptual processes that significantly influence consumer behavior in the retail sector. Understanding that a shopper's decision to purchase is intricately linked to their perception of products, the research navigates through the cognitive facets of perception. It sheds light on how individuals interpret and respond to stimuli, encompassing physiological and psychological factors, subliminal messaging, and perceptual selection. The study also delves into the practical implications for retailers, examining store layout, product placement, and package design. Recognizing the importance of consumer imagery, the research underscores how perceived image impacts a product's success in the market. The concept of the Just Noticeable Difference (JND) is explored, providing insights into consumer responses to changes in marketing variables. This research aims to equip retailers and marketers with a nuanced understanding of perception, enabling them to tailor strategies that resonate with target audiences.

KEYWORDS:

Buying Behavior, Consumer Behavior, Psychological Factors, Retail Strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the perceptual process is crucial for retailers, as a shopper's decision to purchase a product is significantly influenced by their perception of the product. Perception, in essence, is how we interpret the world around us. Individuals respond and react based on their perceptions, rather than objective reality. Each person's reality is a highly personal phenomenon, shaped by their needs, wants, values, and personal experiences. Consequently, an individual's reality is essentially their unique perception of things [1], [2]. For marketers, this implies that consumer perceptions and their impact on buying behavior outweigh objective reality. Consumer perceptions play a pivotal role in influencing actions, purchasing patterns, and recreational choices. Various physiological and psychological factors contribute to human perception, and a grasp of these factors empowers marketers to create advertisements that resonate with their target audience.

Perception is the cognitive process through which individuals gain awareness and understanding of their environment by organizing and interpreting sensory information. It involves the reception of signals in the nervous system, stemming from the physical stimulation of sense organs. However, perception is not a passive reception of these signals; it can be molded by learning, memory, and expectations. The process of perception incorporates both "top-down" effects influenced by cognitive processes and the "bottom-up" processing of sensory input. While the nervous system's intricate functions are essential to perception, the subjective experience often feels effortless as much of this processing occurs outside conscious awareness. Perception involves

the intricate process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensations. Sensations, the immediate responses of sensory organs to stimuli such as light, color, sound, odors, taste, and textures, form the basis for perception. Individuals make decisions and take actions based on their perceptions, not on an objective reality. Consequently, an individual's reality is shaped solely by their perception of things [3], [4]. This highlights the significance for marketers, emphasizing that consumer perceptions and their impact on buying behavior outweigh objective reality. Consumer perceptions play a pivotal role in influencing actions, purchasing patterns, and leisure habits. Human perception is influenced by various physiological and psychological factors. Marketers can leverage their understanding of these factors to craft advertisements that resonate with their target audience.

The process of perception is defined as the mechanism through which an individual select, organizes, and interprets stimuli to form a meaningful and coherent understanding of the world. It acknowledges that different individuals may perceive the same event differently, leading to varied responses. In essence, people tend to interpret the same phenomenon or situation differently based on their perceptions of the objects or things involved. Perception is the mental process by which an individual select, organizes, and attaches meaning to events in the environment. It represents a cognitive or thinking process where individuals select data from the environment, organize it, and derive significance or meaning. As a cognitive process, perception shapes an individual's activities, emotions, and feelings, as these are grounded in their perceptions of the surrounding environment [5], [6].

Conventional wisdom suggests that the purchasing behavior of industrial consumers differs from that of consumer products buyers. Moreover, within the realm of consumers, the retail sector exhibits unique characteristics, setting it apart from buyers in conventional stores. This study delves into various aspects of retailing that may influence and impact the buying behavior of retail consumers. Following the principle that marketing operations begin with the customer and culminate in their satisfaction, retail marketing adheres to this principle. To provide meaningful insights, the study explores consumer behavior by comparing two significant retail formats – general category and specialty malls. The investigation is organized into three broad sections:

- a) Customer-centric factors (Intrinsic and Extrinsic factors)
- b) Inducements employed by retailers, such as Product Mix, Store Design and Layout, influence through Customer Service Associates (CSA), Store-specific Drives, and motivational factors like advertisements and promotional issues.
- c) The ultimate decisive views that wield influence over consumer behavior.

Perception, in this context, refers to 'the way we look at' objects, individuals, events, and the world in general. Our sense organs constantly receive stimuli in the form of sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and sensations. These stimuli, including products, brand names, and advertisements, serve as units of input to our senses. We recognize, select, organize, and interpret these stimuli based on our expectations, needs, and values. This process is known as perception. For example, in the realm of cosmetics, quality is perceived through factors such as company image, packaging, and price. Understanding different perceptions associated with stimuli allows marketers to emphasize those aspects that elicit the most favorable responses from consumers [7], [8]. The study of perception involves examining how we subconsciously modify raw sensory inputs to create our individualized picture of the world. Sensation is our immediate and direct response to stimuli, such as

advertisements, packages, and brand names. It is intricately connected to the functioning of our sense organs and influenced by the strength of the stimuli. The quality of our sensory experience is tied to the proper working of our sense organs. For example, a blind person may have heightened sensitivity in hearing due to the lack of the sensation of sight. Figure 1, shows the Influences on Consumer Behavior.

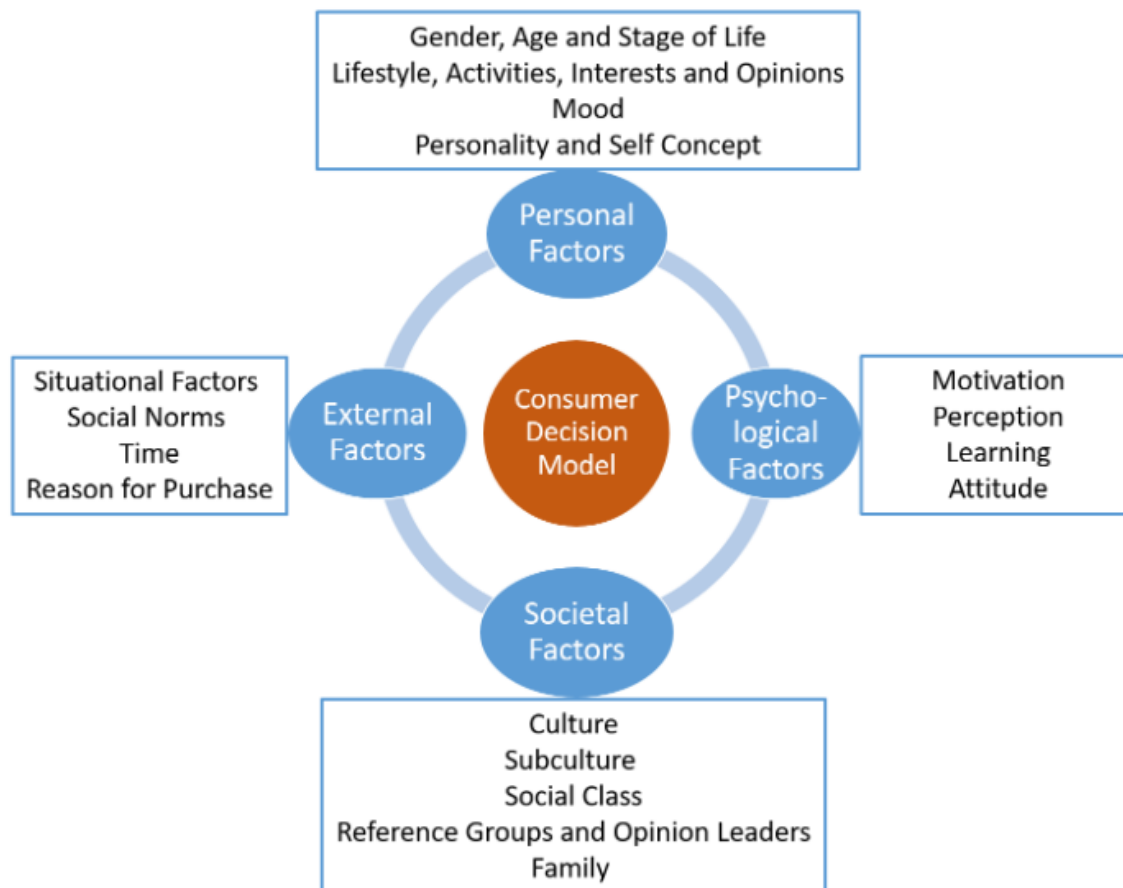


Figure 1: Illustrates the Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior.

The concept of the absolute threshold is fundamental to understanding sensation. It represents the lowest point at which a stimulus is distinguishable from nothing. To illustrate, seeing a hoarding on a highway from a specific distance constitutes our absolute threshold. Importantly, individuals vary in their absolute threshold; two people may perceive the hoarding at different times and distances. Constant stimulation can lead to an increase in the absolute threshold, resulting in sensory numbness. When exposed to a continuous stimulus, such as numerous hoardings along a highway, it becomes challenging to determine whether a single hoarding will have a significant impact. This phenomenon is often described as the 'get used to' feeling, where individuals become accustomed to a persistent stimulus. For instance, scavengers may become accustomed to the stink of garbage, and people may acclimate to the odor in a fish market.

2. DISCUSSION

Constant stimulation tends to dull the senses, leading to an increase in the absolute threshold. For instance, driving through a corridor of billboards for half an hour may result in none of the

individual billboards making a significant impression a phenomenon known as 'adaptation,' or becoming accustomed to certain sensations. This poses a challenge for TV advertisers facing advertising clutter. To combat this, advertisers frequently change their campaigns, fearing that audiences will become so accustomed to current ads that they no longer provide sufficient sensory input to be noticed.

The concept of the Just Noticeable Difference (JND) becomes crucial, especially in scenarios like discount sales. Without considering JND, discounts may go unnoticed by consumers. Negative changes in a product should be noticeable, and the company strategically uses quantity reduction and price increase. It's essential that the reduction in quantity remains below the JND to ensure consumers do not perceive any difference in taste, especially in products like coffee and chicory. Downsizing a package without a price increase essentially amounts to an invisible price increase. Consumers may not notice the downsizing for which they are still paying the same price. Package design alterations are made in a way that differences are not readily noticeable [9], [10]. Changes are introduced gradually, ensuring the transition goes unnoticed, even though the final package may differ significantly from the original. An abrupt change in packaging exceeding the JND may lead consumers to perceive a product that has undergone a drastic transformation. Striking the right balance is crucial product improvements should neither exceed nor fall below the JND. This ensures that improvements are perceived accurately without affecting repeat purchases. The JND concept aids in determining the precise degree of improvements needed.

Hence, marketers apply Weber's law to anticipate how consumers will respond to variations in marketing variables. Depending on the situation, marketers aim for consumers to either detect differences, such as improvements in products or reduced prices, or overlook differences, like reductions in product size or quality, increased product prices, or changes in packaging when design recognition is essential. Understanding that people can be motivated below the level of conscious awareness is crucial. Subliminal perception occurs when stimuli are below the threshold of awareness but not beneath the absolute threshold of the receptors involved. Consumer choices are impacted by subliminal messages, a concept explored by communication professor Wilson Bryan Key. He suggests that sublimity is an inherent aspect of all communication, often utilized in advertising, such as in junk food or lifestyle textile ads, and particularly prominent in cigarette advertising, where glamorous figures associated with a brand convey a subliminal message of emulation. Business organizations worldwide endeavor to shape consumer behavior by encouraging them to purchase products and services.

Achieving this involves a comprehensive understanding of consumer needs and the implementation of effective strategies to drive product sales. Various marketing strategies are employed to influence consumer behavior, ultimately impacting purchasing decisions. One crucial aspect of devising marketing strategies is the emphasis on emotional communication with consumers. Utilizing promotional materials to capture the consumer's attention is a common approach. Studies indicate that consumers are particularly drawn to products that evoke emotions, such as joy and surprise. In the global business landscape, organizations are constantly searching for solutions to ensure sustained sales, profitability, and market viability. The key to achieving these goals lies in closely monitoring the primary source of revenue—consumers—and, more significantly, understanding and influencing their behavior.

Perceptual selection serves as a screening system that filters the countless stimuli bombarding individuals daily. This selection process depends on the nature of the stimulus, the consumer's

previous experiences influencing expectations and motives, and the value of contrast to grab attention. Various techniques, such as large ads, white space utilization, and soundless commercials, employ contrast to arrest attention. Package design aims for distinguishability to ensure rapid consumer perception, while infomercials and advertorials in print media capitalize on the lack of contrast to engage viewers. Consciousness for products that satisfy needs and wants leads to heightened awareness of relevant stimuli, making advertisers seek recognition, interpretation, and retention of the stimuli in consumers' memory. Therefore, closer examination of various aspects of perception is necessary.

Selective Exposure:

Individuals tend to embrace messages that are agreeable and avoid those that are either distressing or threatening. For instance, smokers may steer clear of information suggesting nicotine's carcinogenic properties, while favoring reports that cast doubt on such declarations. Selective exposure leads us to gravitate towards messages that affirm our judicious choices in purchasing specific products.

Selective Attention:

When considering purchasing consumer durables like color TVs, fridges, or music systems that are extensively advertised, our awareness of these ads increases once the decision to buy is made. Previously overlooked, these advertisements become noticeable. We are more inclined to pay attention to stimuli related to our immediate needs. Advertisers must accurately target the customer segment, as other segments are less likely to notice the stimuli. After identifying the customer segment, advertisers must ensure that stimuli are captivating enough to attract and retain attention. People exhibit differences in the type of information they prefer and show varying preferences for media. Some prioritize appearance, others social prestige, and some focus on price. Preferences also extend to the complexity of ads, with some favoring elaborate messages and others preferring simplicity. Consumer selective attention to commercial stimuli displays considerable variation.

Selective Distortion:

Consider a customer who decides to purchase brand A of a music system. With the decision made, the customer actively seeks information that validates the correctness of choosing brand A. If encountering positive remarks about brand B, the customer may selectively identify flaws to reinforce the belief that brand A is the right choice. In this manner, when information is interpreted to align with our preconceived ideas or meanings, selective distortion occurs. Advertisers may find their messages interpreted in various ways by different customers.

Selective Retention:

People tend to recall only the positive features of brand A, reinforcing the correctness of their decision, while neglecting other stimuli. Retained information aligns with our values and decisions. Retail outlets, dealing with a vast array of products and accompanying information, must facilitate effective information processing to avoid overwhelming consumers and causing frustration. Retailers often use exposure strategically, designing store interiors to guide customers through more of the store, placing high-margin items in high-traffic areas, and allocating shelf space based on item and brand popularity. In-store information cues, layout, point-of-purchase displays, external building characteristics, and advertising all contribute to enhancing the store's image [11], [12].

Examining perceptual selection, attention, distortion, and retention, the study unveils the nuanced ways in which consumers interact with stimuli. The importance of selective exposure, attention, and distortion in consumer decision-making processes are emphasized, revealing the crucial role of these factors in shaping preferences and reinforcing choices. Furthermore, the study addresses the practical applications of perception in retail strategies, covering aspects such as store layout, product placement, and package design. Recognizing the significance of consumer imagery, the research underscores how a product's perceived image, beyond its tangible attributes, plays a pivotal role in market success. The concept of Just Noticeable Difference (JND) is explored in the context of marketing variables, illustrating its relevance in determining consumer response to changes in products, prices, and packaging. This research advocates for a nuanced understanding of perception as a cornerstone for effective retail strategies. By unraveling the complexities of how individuals perceive and respond to stimuli, marketers can tailor their approaches to resonate with target audiences, ultimately influencing purchasing patterns and market success. The findings offer practical insights for retailers, advertisers, and marketers seeking to navigate the intricate landscape of consumer perception. Consumer behavior plays a pivotal role in shaping marketing strategies, significantly impacting the success of a product. Therefore, the development of marketing strategies should be informed by a thorough analysis of consumer behavior to comprehend their preferences. Swiftly responding to consumer demands emerges as the most efficient approach to generate profits, serving as the ultimate objective for every firm.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the paramount importance of understanding and leveraging perception in the retail landscape. The profound impact of perceptual processes on consumer behavior underscores the need for retailers to craft strategies that align with the way individuals interpret and respond to stimuli. Selective exposure, attention, distortion, and retention are identified as critical components influencing consumer decisions. By recognizing the significance of consumer imagery and employing subliminal messaging intelligently, retailers can enhance their market positioning. Practical applications, such as store layout optimization and strategic product placement, emerge as essential tools in shaping consumer perceptions. The concept of JND provides valuable insights into consumer responses to changes, guiding marketers in making informed decisions. Overall, this study advocates for a holistic understanding of perception as a key driver in influencing purchasing patterns and market success in the ever-evolving retail environment.

Perception is the cognitive process wherein an individual selectively chooses, organizes, and interprets stimuli, forming meaningful and coherent thoughts and mental images. Consumer behavior is significantly influenced by perceptions, shaping their actions and purchasing habits. Attention, a key aspect of perception, is contingent upon the stimulus, the individual, and the situation. Individuals exhibit selectivity in recognizing stimuli (perceptual selection), organize the chosen stimuli (perceptual organization), and attribute meaning to them (perceptual interpretation). Subliminal perception, the ability to perceive stimuli without conscious awareness, is strategically employed by marketers in advertisements and product promotions to subtly influence consumers and encourage product purchases. Consumer imagery holds importance for marketers, focusing on how well a product aligns with individual perceptions and self-image. Beyond the tangible characteristics of a product, the perceived image of its quality and utility plays a crucial role in determining its success in the market. An understanding of consumer perception is essential for

designing effective retail strategies, developing brand names and logos, formulating media plans, and creating impactful advertisements and packaging designs.

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CHAPTER 12

MOTIVATING CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT: UNVEILING THE DYNAMICS OF MOTIVATION IN MARKETING AND RETAIL

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ABSTRACT:

The exploration begins with an elucidation of how marketing endeavors aim to address diverse consumer needs and convince them of the efficacy of specific products or services. The crucial role of optimal staff performance in meeting shopper satisfaction is underscored, emphasizing that consumers seek not just products but the fulfillment of motives and solutions to problems. The narrative unfolds to explore manifest and latent motives, shedding light on the task of marketing managers in deciphering the combination of motives influencing the target market. Motivation research is unveiled as a key tool, revealing the myriad motives guiding purchasing decisions. The narrative seamlessly transitions to the foundation of marketing - understanding shopper needs. The competitive landscape is discussed, emphasizing that a company's survival hinges on its ability to identify and satisfy unmet shopper needs more effectively than competitors. The insights of psychologists and shopper behaviorists are incorporated, highlighting the importance of understanding human motives for predicting behavior in the marketplace.

KEYWORDS:

Marketing Strategies, Motivation, Marketplace, Psychologists.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing endeavors to meet the diverse needs of consumers and endeavors to convince them that particular products or services will effectively address their specific needs or a set of needs. Retailers must ensure optimal performance from their staff to cater to the satisfaction of shoppers. In essence, consumers do not merely purchase products; rather, they seek the fulfillment of motives or solutions to problems [1], [2]. Marketers must delve into the identification of specific motives that their products and brands can address, shaping their marketing strategies to align with the satisfaction of these motives. Motivation research has revealed that individuals make purchasing decisions driven by a myriad of motives. Manifest motives are those motives that are known and openly acknowledged by consumers. For example, when a consumer buys products to satisfy basic physiological needs such as food, drink, or shelter, they are propelled by manifest needs that align with societal values and are expressed without reservations.

On the other hand, certain motives may remain undisclosed to the consumer or be reluctantly admitted. Such motives are termed latent or hidden motives. For instance, a woman purchasing cosmetics may have a latent motive to showcase her beauty, even though she may prefer to state that she acquires these products for personal care. Given that, during a particular purchase process, an array of motives, both manifest and latent, may be in play, the marketing manager's role is to discern the combination of motives influencing the target market. The foundation of all marketing lies in understanding shopper needs [3], [4]. In an intensely competitive marketing landscape, a

company's viability, profitability, and growth hinge significantly on its capacity to identify and address unmet shopper needs more effectively and promptly than its competitors. Successful retailers define their markets based on the needs they anticipate fulfilling, rather than focusing solely on the products they offer. Psychologists and shopper behaviorists assert that while people may experience similar needs and motives, the expression of these motives varies. Consequently, an understanding of human motives equips retailers to anticipate human behavior in the marketplace more effectively.

Motivation, in the context of consumer behavior, holds paramount significance as the needs of consumers continually evolve in response to economic, social, and political changes. Failing to adequately identify and leverage the motivational patterns of shoppers can render retailers' efforts futile and potentially counterproductive. Hence, retailers must maintain a constant awareness of the various motives influencing shoppers' actions. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the role motives play, it is essential to delve into the meaning of motives. A motive is an internal state that mobilizes bodily energy, directing it selectively toward goals typically situated in the external environment. Motivation serves as the explanatory force behind behavior, unraveling why an individual engages in certain actions. It operates as an unobservable inner force that not only stimulates and compels a behavioral response but also imparts specific direction to that response. Motives delineate the intricate relationship between needs, behavior aimed at overcoming those needs, and the ultimate fulfillment of those needs. This dynamic process of motivation unfolds in three stages [5], [6].

Firstly, there is the motivating state, encompassing motives, drives, or needs that propel behavior. Secondly, the actual behavior, often termed instrumental behavior, is set in motion by these needs or drives. Finally, this instrumental behavior leads to the accomplishment of an objective or goal. Motives can be categorized as either learned or unlearned. Unlearned motives encompass fundamental physiological drives and primary drives, which seemingly lack an obvious physiological basis. On the other hand, learned or secondary motives emerge through the process of learning, where previously neutral stimuli evoke motive states. Furthermore, motives can be characterized as either positive or negative [7], [8]. Positive goals represent those objectives that an individual strives to achieve. Conversely, negative goals involve endeavors to evade challenging or unpleasant situations, driven by a desire to avoid failure, such as the fear of failing an exam. In essence, a nuanced understanding of motives is indispensable for retailers aiming to effectively navigate and cater to the complex landscape of consumer behavior.

2. DISCUSSION

The discussion then takes a nuanced turn, delving into the meaning of motives. Motive is defined as an internal force mobilizing bodily energy towards external goals. The dynamic process of motivation is unpacked in three stages, encompassing motivating states, instrumental behavior, and goal achievement. The categorization of motives into learned or unlearned, positive or negative is explored, providing a comprehensive understanding for retailers aiming to navigate consumer behavior. Moving into the discussion section, the pivotal role of motivation in the ever-changing landscape of consumer needs is emphasized. The constant requirement for retailers to be aware of the various motives influencing shopper actions is underscored. The narrative then culminates in the significance of motivation in organizational settings, impacting factors such as maximum utilization of resources, willingness to work, reduced absenteeism, decreased labor turnover, availability of the right people, and the building of good labor relations. The

implementation of motivational plans is portrayed as mutually beneficial for both workers and management, fostering a closer rapport between the enterprise and its workforce. Increased efficiency and output are outlined as direct outcomes of motivational efforts, with harmonious cooperation emerging as the fundamental basis of organizational success. Motivational theories by Maslow, Herzberg, and Vroom are introduced, offering valuable insights into human behavior and goal-oriented efforts.

The diverse needs of individuals are examined through the lenses of achievement, power, and affiliation, showcasing their roles in shaping motivational behavior. Vroom's Valence-Expectancy Theory is presented as a nuanced framework, highlighting the importance of individual perceptions in motivation. The narrative concludes with an exploration of various motivational techniques, ranging from monetary incentives to leadership styles and sensitivity training. In essence, this comprehensive exploration serves as a valuable resource for marketers, retailers, and organizational leaders seeking to unravel the complexities of motivation in the dynamic realm of consumer behavior and workplace dynamics [9], [10]. Motivation, defined as the intricate set of forces that initiates and sustains an individual's engagement in organizational activities, plays a pivotal role in driving individuals to action and maintaining their commitment to ongoing efforts. It revolves around instilling enthusiasm in an individual at work, intensifying their desire, and fostering a willingness to channel their energy toward the accomplishment of organizational goals. The significance of motivation in the organizational context is multifaceted.

1. **Maximum Utilization of Factors of Production:** Motivation catalyzes workers, prompting them to perform their duties with sincerity. This results in the optimal utilization of factors of production, encompassing both labor and capital. By inspiring individuals to contribute effectively, motivation enhances overall productivity.
2. **Willingness to Work:** While a person may possess the technical, mental, and physical aptitude for a job, motivation plays a crucial role in influencing their willingness to work. It ignites a sense of purpose and dedication, encouraging workers to perform their tasks with a higher degree of commitment and excellence.
3. **Reduced Absenteeism:** Motivational strategies, especially those involving financial incentives, act as compelling factors for workers to invest more effort in their roles. Financial incentive schemes, tied to the number of hours engaged, effectively reduce absenteeism by creating a tangible link between effort and reward.
4. **Reduced Labour Turnover:** The impact of motivation extends to both financial and non-financial incentive schemes, contributing to the reduction of labor turnover. By fostering a positive work environment and recognizing the efforts of employees, motivation aids in retaining existing laborers. This, in turn, allows enterprises to plan and execute activities on a more stable, long-term basis.
5. **Availability of Right People:** Motivational strategies, whether financial or non-financial, not only retain current employees but also attract individuals from outside the enterprise. The appeal of these incentives draws talented and skilled individuals to join the organization, ensuring that the right people are attracted to contribute their skills and expertise.
6. **Building Good Labour Relations:** Motivation plays a crucial role in addressing and resolving various labor-related issues, such as absenteeism, labor turnover,

indiscipline, and grievances. By fostering a positive and motivated workforce, organizations can cultivate strong and positive labor relations, contributing to a harmonious work environment.

Motivation emerges as a driving force within organizations, propelling individuals to achieve their best potential and contribute positively to the overall success of the enterprise. Its impact extends beyond individual performance, influencing aspects such as organizational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and the cultivation of a positive workplace culture. The implementation of motivational plans yields substantial benefits for both workers and management within an organization. One of the key advantages lies in the mutual gains experienced by workers and management. For workers, increased wages are a direct outcome of enhanced output and efficiency. Simultaneously, the organization witnesses heightened productivity and profits attributable to the collective efforts of motivated individuals. A well-designed motivation scheme fosters a closer relationship between the enterprise and its workforce. This connection instills a sense of ownership among workers, wherein they begin to perceive the enterprise's interests as their own. Consequently, a harmonious alignment emerges, erasing distinctions between workers and the enterprise [11], [12].

Efficiency and output undergo significant improvements through collaborative efforts facilitated by motivation. Cooperation, a cornerstone for organizational success, is nurtured through motivation, serving as its fundamental basis. Motivated employees exhibit a heightened commitment to achieving organizational goals. Their involvement goes beyond mere task completion; they possess a deep-seated sense of dedication to the organization's mission. Motivated employees willingly invest effort to enhance their skills and knowledge, contributing to improved job performance. Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides valuable insights into the sequential progression of human needs. Individuals prioritize lower-level needs before progressing to higher-order needs. The satisfaction of a lower-level need is a prerequisite for activating the next higher-level need. Once a need is satisfied, it ceases to serve as a motivator, prompting individuals to seek fulfillment in another need.

Frederick Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory further enriches our understanding of human motivation. This theory distinguishes between two types of needs, independent of each other, influencing behavior in distinct ways. Hygiene or maintenance factors encompass aspects such as company policies, administration, working conditions, interpersonal relations, money, status, and security. While these factors do not contribute to output growth, they play a crucial role in preventing losses in worker performance. Recognizing and addressing both motivational and hygiene factors is vital for creating a work environment that fosters sustained motivation and overall organizational success.

Motivators, as delineated by Herzberg, revolve around factors that evoke feelings of achievement, professional growth, and recognition. These elements go beyond merely preventing job dissatisfaction; they actively contribute to the development of job satisfaction. Unlike hygiene factors, which can only maintain motivation at a baseline level, motivators can elicit enthusiasm and readiness from employees. Herzberg advocated for job enlargement and job enrichment to make roles more interesting, meaningful, and challenging, enhancing the intrinsic appeal of the job itself. In examining individual needs and motivations, the concept of "Need for Achievement" plays a pivotal role. Individuals with a strong need for achievement find satisfaction in performing tasks commendably. They are dedicated to their responsibilities, tackling obstacles with

determination. These individuals exhibit self-confidence and attribute success to their efforts rather than luck. While they may view money as a symbol of achievement, their primary motivation is not financial gain. Research by McClelland highlights the correlation between achievement orientation and economic development, particularly noting the entrepreneurial class's role in driving economic growth.

The "Need for Power" represents the desire to exert influence within a group and dominate one's environment. Individuals with a high need for power often seek leadership positions in politics, business, education, or the arts. Some are motivated by the sheer pleasure of having power. In organizational contexts, managerial behavior is often influenced more by the urge for power than the need for achievement. These individuals derive satisfaction from exercising authority and achieving their objectives. Another dimension is the "Need for Affiliation," characterized by a sensitivity to others' feelings, a preference for warm interpersonal relations, and a desire for social support and friendships. While this need is less predominant among managers, it can significantly aid them in influencing their subordinates. Vroom's valence-expectancy theory challenges Herzberg's two-factor theory, introducing an expectancy approach to motivation. According to Vroom, an individual's motivation toward an action is determined by the anticipated value of all outcomes multiplied by the strength of their expectancy that the action will yield the desired goal. In essence, motivation is a product of the anticipated value of an action and the perceived probability that the action will lead to the desired outcome. This theory introduces three key components: force (strength of motivation), valence (strength of preference for an outcome), and expectancy (probability that an action will lead to a desired outcome).

Vroom's model underscores the significance of individual perceptions and assessments in understanding organizational behavior. It posits that individuals evaluate various behaviors based on the likelihood of achieving desired goals. The model highlights that the importance lies in the individual's perception and value attached to specific goals rather than the manager's beliefs about what the individual should perceive. For instance, one individual may highly value a salary increase and perceive superior performance as the key to achieving that goal, while another individual may prioritize promotion and view political behavior as instrumental in reaching that goal. The model aligns with the notion that behavior is goal-oriented, akin to the perspectives presented by Maslow and Herzberg. It emphasizes individual goal-setting and the role of perceptions in influencing efforts towards goal attainment. The importance of understanding and aligning with individual perceptions becomes a central tenet of Vroom's model. Motivational techniques play a crucial role in influencing organizational behavior. Some commonly employed techniques include:

1. **Monetary Incentives:** These encompass pay revisions, salary increases, fringe benefits, and bonuses. Monetary incentives are often considered more potent motivators than non-monetary ones.
2. **Job-Based Techniques:** These techniques involve job simplification, job rotation, job enlargement, job enrichment, and job analysis. Job enrichment, for example, enhances an individual's understanding of the purpose behind a specific job, while job rotation helps alleviate work monotony.
3. **Management by Objectives (MBO):** MBO involves the active participation of both workers and managers in defining areas of responsibility and expected results. It serves as

a guiding framework for operations and assessing contributions to organizational development.

4. **Leadership Techniques:** Leadership styles, such as autocratic, democratic, and persuasive leadership, have implications for worker motivation in both the short and long term.
5. **Sensitivity Training:** This type of training is provided to groups of managers, who, in turn, motivate their subordinates after undergoing sensitivity training. Sensitivity training enhances managers' self-understanding, fosters insight into work situations, promotes scientific thinking, and equips them with behavioral skills for dealing with subordinates.

3. CONCLUSION

Understanding the motivational process is of paramount importance for marketers, as it not only influences product formulation and promotional strategies but also holds significant implications for retailers seeking optimal job performance from their staff. Motivation serves as the internal driving force propelling individuals into action, and the foundation of this drive lies in human needs. The term "motivation" captures the intricate interplay between needs, behaviors directed at overcoming these needs, and the eventual fulfillment of those needs. In organizational settings, achieving goals hinges on steering human behavior in the desired direction, emphasizing the need to identify the reasons behind such behavior. Before guiding or directing employees, it becomes essential to discern the underlying motivations. For marketers, this understanding is crucial as it enables them to effectively motivate shoppers based on these reasons. Motivation, in this context, refers to the enthusiasm with which a person approaches their work, intensifying their desire and willingness to expend energy towards the accomplishment of organizational objectives. It stands as a dynamic force that not only initiates action but also sustains individuals in their chosen course of action with enthusiasm. This recognition of the motivational dynamics within individuals is fundamental for shaping strategies that resonate with both employees and consumers in the marketplace.

Understanding the motivational process is not just a fundamental aspect of marketing and retail; it is the cornerstone for success in an ever-evolving landscape. The intricate interplay between consumer needs, behavior, and the fulfillment of those needs forms the basis of effective marketing strategies. The internal driving force of motivation propels individuals into action, and in organizational settings, it is the catalyst for achieving goals. For marketers and retailers, the recognition of the diverse motives influencing consumer behavior is indispensable. It is not merely about selling products; it is about addressing latent and manifest motives to resonate with the target market. Motivation research becomes a guiding tool, providing insights into the myriad motives guiding purchasing decisions. In organizational contexts, motivation emerges as a multifaceted force. From maximizing resource utilization and reducing absenteeism to fostering good labor relations, the impact of motivation permeates every facet of operations. The implementation of motivational plans yields mutual benefits for workers and management, creating a sense of ownership and commitment. Motivational theories by Maslow, Herzberg, and Vroom offer valuable frameworks for understanding human behavior and goal-oriented efforts. The diverse needs of individuals, whether driven by achievement, power, or affiliation, shape motivational behavior. Vroom's model emphasizes the importance of individual perceptions, challenging traditional views.

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CHAPTER 13

NAVIGATING BUYING ROLES: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF FAMILY DECISION-MAKING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT:

This study delves into the intricate framework of buying roles within families, dissecting the decision-making processes and roles of various family members in the purchase of consumer durable products. It explores the evolution of traditional buying roles, particularly the changing dynamics influenced by factors such as gender roles, societal shifts, and lifestyle changes. The research emphasizes the critical stages of initiation, influence, decision-making, purchasing, and end-user satisfaction. Marketers are challenged to adapt strategies to this evolving landscape, considering the influence of each family member and their impact on post-purchase behavior. The study also explores gender-specific shopping behaviors, shedding light on the nuances that guide the preferences and decision-making processes of male and female shoppers.

KEYWORDS:

Consumer Behavior, Decision-Making, Gender, Post-Purchase Behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of buying roles is formulated to provide structure to large-scale sales in intricate corporate settings. Within a company, the decision to make a purchase is influenced not only by the individual responsible for the decision but also by employees striving to enhance operational effectiveness and development. Various roles come into play in the decision-making process. The initiator is the person who first suggests or conceives the idea of buying a specific product. For instance, a book publisher initiates the professor to recommend the book to students. The publisher serves as the initiator, initiating the buying process [1], [2]. The influencer is an individual who explicitly or implicitly holds sway over the final buying decision of others. Students may be influenced by the professor's advice when deciding to purchase a book, making the professor the influencer. The decider is the person who ultimately determines any aspect of the buying decision, such as whether to buy, what to buy, how to buy, when to buy, or where to buy. Children act as deciders for toy purchases, while a homemaker may decide on kitchen provisions, and the head of the family may decide on durable or luxury items. The buyer is the person who executes the purchase. The buyer may also be the decider, or it could be another individual. For example, children, acting as deciders, may choose toys, but the actual purchases are made by the parents. The user is the individual who consumes or utilizes the services or products.

The marketer's responsibility is to analyze the buying process, understand the main participants, and discern their roles in the process. The marketer needs to initiate each participant to make purchases of the product at different stages and through various strategies. The family unit is often regarded as the most crucial "buying" organization in society and has undergone extensive research [3], [4]. Marketers are especially interested in the roles and influence of the husband, wife, and

children in purchasing a diverse range of products and services. Traditionally, the wife has been considered the primary buyer for the family, particularly in areas such as food, household products, and clothing. However, evolving societal dynamics, with more women in full-time employment and men adopting roles as "home workers" or "telecommuters," are causing a shift in these traditional roles. The challenge for marketers lies in understanding how these changes might impact the demand for products and services and how the promotional mix needs to be adjusted to attract male buyers instead of female buyers.

In a family, any member can express the need for a product or service, often intended for the use of the entire family. The need for a specific product may remain latent until triggered by internal or external stimuli. Internally, normal needs can escalate to a "drive" when one or more family members express the desire to purchase the product, and the idea is shared among different members. Externally, stimuli such as advertisements or word-of-mouth publicity can initiate the buying process. The behavior of initiators is influenced by the nature of the consumer durable product and the demographic characteristics (such as sex, age, level of education, income, etc.) of the involved family members. Identifying the initiators for different products is crucial in understanding consumer behavior [5], [6]. The Influencer, in the family decision-making process, is a person whose opinions hold weight in the final decision. Family members serving as influencers typically express their views on the features of a particular product and the brand to be selected. Unlike organizational buying processes, family influencers usually do not have expertise but assume their roles based on family dynamics. The influencer's role spans stages II and III (information search and evaluation of alternatives) of the decision-making process. Once the decision to buy a specific consumer durable product is made and announced, family members may share the information they have about the product and may be assigned to gather additional information. Influencers may use various sources of information, including personal, commercial, public, and experiential, to collect data. The degree of acceptance of information and the preferences of influencers may vary. Although there is a separate role for the 'decider,' the consideration of ideas and suggestions depends on all members acting as influencers. The person trusted by the influencers assumes the role of the moderator and may instruct members to collect the desired information.

2. DISCUSSION

In the complex realm of family decision-making for consumer durable products, the concept of buying roles plays a pivotal role in structuring large-scale sales, particularly within intricate corporate environments. This exploration aims to unravel the multifaceted roles that individuals within a family undertake during the buying process. Initiators spark the idea, influencers shape decisions, deciders finalize choices, buyers execute purchases, and users consume the products. The marketer's task is to navigate these roles, strategically initiating each participant at different stages to ensure successful product adoption. The family, considered a paramount "buying" organization, undergoes shifts in roles, especially with the changing landscape of gender dynamics. Understanding these shifts is crucial for marketers seeking to tailor their approaches to diverse family structures [7], [8].

The Decider, in the family decision-making process, emerges as a crucial role as the family progresses through the various stages. Based on the information collected in earlier stages, a member takes on the responsibility of making the final decision regarding the characteristics of the product to be purchased. The decider executes the decision concerning the brand, vendor,

timing, and payment method. Despite multiple family members acting as influencers, providing opinions and gathering information, the decider plays a pivotal role in sifting through this information for practical use. The decider's role is of utmost importance, holding the responsibility of evaluating alternative products and serving as the ultimate authority on the chosen product. In the context of a typical Indian family, the decision-making process tends to be male-dominated, especially for significant purchases like consumer durable products. While more female members are now part of the workforce, the primary breadwinner in Indian families remains predominantly male. For high-value products, the main financial contribution is likely to come from male members.

The Actual Buyer, within the scope of this study, refers to the family member(s) physically involved in the process of purchasing a product. Traditionally, in North India, it is considered auspicious to buy a consumer durable product on Dhanteras, the day preceding Diwali. Similar sentiments prevail in other parts of the country on different important festivals. Considering these market characteristics and consumer behavior, the responsibility of purchasing the product is typically bestowed upon the most significant person in the household [9], [10]. Even though this stage represents an advanced point in the decision-making process where most aspects have been discussed and decided, the buyer remains exposed to the influence of the retailer. It is essential to assess the buyer's awareness of different aspects of the product and the extent to which the retailer can influence the purchase decision. These aspects have profound implications for marketers as they balance push and pull selling strategies. The buyer's role corresponds to stage IV (purchase decision) of the decision-making process, and the product finally purchased by the buyer determines subsequent post-purchase behavior.

The End User:

While nearly all family members benefit from a product, it is crucial to pinpoint the actual end user and assess their satisfaction with different aspects of the product. Given that multiple family members influence the purchase decision; user satisfaction may vary across different dimensions. For instance, in the case of an audio system purchased with collective family input, children may emerge as the actual users. The satisfaction of children with the product can influence their post-purchase behavior. (The role of a user corresponds to stage V—Post-purchase behavior of the decision-making process.) Users may or may not recommend the product based on their satisfaction levels, presenting significant implications for marketers as word of mouth plays a crucial role in consumer durable product purchases. Shopping behavior for both genders is undergoing transformation due to changes in family structure and lifestyle. The role of women in retail shopping has evolved significantly, with women generally being more attuned to and enjoying the shopping process. They take pleasure in evaluating various merchandise before making decisions and tend to be more value-conscious rather than brand-conscious. Women prefer a calm and deliberate approach to shopping, often avoiding haste. This deliberate attitude is evident in the fact that women typically handle price negotiation during shopping. Their temperament is naturally well-suited for this activity. In contrast, men are often less patient, more decisive, more brand-conscious, and tend to make decisions quickly with less effort.

According to a senior manager at an Indian retail store, female customers visit during both weekdays and weekends. On weekdays, they either shop alone or with female companions, buying for themselves and spending more time. On weekends, they shop with the family, make purchases for the entire family, and spend less time. To illustrate this point, consider two large departmental

stores specializing in the sales of ladies' designer items. Both stores offered similar products and attractions. In the first case, there was no provision for accommodating men accompanying their wives to the sale. As a result, men were observed either sitting idle on the staircase, staring into space, or checking their watches. This situation would likely have a negative impact on wives' shopping experiences. In contrast, in another case where the sale coincided with the cricket world cup, the store management installed a large TV screen on the floor. This kept non-shoppers, mainly men, occupied by watching the match in an air-conditioned environment. During such events, it is essential to make men comfortable by providing amenities they may appreciate, such as allocating a specific portion of the shop for their perusal [11], [12].

Male and female shoppers exhibit differences in behavior. Typically, male shoppers are less likely to ask for directions, preferring to navigate the shopping space independently. On the other hand, female shoppers enjoy interacting with sales staff and have no hesitation in seeking assistance or directions. For instance, when men shop for shirts, they often require less guidance, proceeding directly to their favorite brands and making quick decisions. Therefore, signage on the shirts floor should be clear and self-explanatory, guiding the customer to the merchandise. If a man has difficulty finding his preferred brand, he may leave the shop. Westside, a store in Mumbai, serves as an excellent example of effective signage that helps customers locate their preferred brands.

In cosmetic sections, there are usually a few male cosmetics available, but they are typically sold from female cosmetic stalls. To cater to male customers more effectively, opening a separate counter specifically for male cosmetics may prove successful. However, this trend is reversed for technology-driven products. Men, considering themselves technologically literate, often spend more time studying the technical features of products, while women focus on the functionalities of the products. Within the family decision-making process, various members assume distinct buying roles at different stages. The same individual may fulfill multiple roles, including initiator, influencer, decider, buyer, consumer, and more. These roles contribute to the overall dynamic of the family's purchasing decisions.

1. **Initiator:** This role involves identifying the need to purchase a specific product or service to address a particular issue or organizational problem. The initiator kickstarts the process by recognizing the requirement.
2. **Influencer:** Influencers hold the power to impact the decisions of buyers and deciders within the family's buying center. They can shape opinions and preferences, influencing the overall outcome of the purchasing decision.
3. **Decider:** The decider is the individual who ultimately approves or disapproves of the entire buying decision. This encompasses determining whether to make a purchase, what to buy, how to buy, and where to buy. Their decision-making authority is crucial in finalizing the transaction.
4. **Buyer:** The buyer is the family member with the formal authority to select the supplier and negotiate the terms and conditions of the purchase. They play a central role in the execution of the buying decision.
5. **User:** The user is the individual within the family who consumes or uses the purchased product or service. Their satisfaction and experience directly impact the post-purchase behavior and overall success of the decision.

6. **Gatekeeper:** The gatekeeper controls access to information and decision makers or influencers within the family. They regulate the flow of information, ensuring that only relevant details reach those involved in the decision-making process.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study illuminates the nuanced dynamics of buying roles within families, emphasizing the evolving nature of decision-making processes in the purchase of consumer durable products. The traditional husband-wife buying roles are undergoing transformations, necessitating a recalibration of marketing strategies to align with changing societal norms. The study underscores the importance of recognizing influencers, deciders, buyers, and users within a family unit and tailoring marketing efforts accordingly. As gender-specific shopping behaviors evolve, the need for accommodating amenities and personalized strategies becomes evident. In a rapidly changing consumer landscape, marketers must stay attuned to these shifts to remain effective and resonate with diverse consumer segments.

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