



Consumer Behaviour while buying Refrigerator: A focus group study of the new age buyers

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ABSTRACT

Study of consumer behaviour is done by many researchers and is done since long back in history but researchers need to continue to study the emerging trends in consumer's behaviour as especially for the potential consumers and the influencers of decision making. Hence a focus group research was undertaken for the consumers between the age group of above twenty five years and their consumer behaviour towards buying of refrigerator was studied. The reason to take this age group was because when a focus group for below 25 years was conducted then they were not able to give important insights into buying of refrigerator the reason being their less participation in decision making of buying refrigerator. Many important insights into their preference of refrigerator features, their perception regarding unorganized and organized retail stores, their role in family decision making, their preferred promotional scheme, their preferred occasion to buy are given in this research paper and also a conceptual model is given to understand the consumer buying of refrigerator from the perception and opinions of consumers from the age group of more than 25 years to make it useful to management students, researchers, and managers of consumer durable industry.

KEYWORDS

Consumer, Behaviour, Refrigerator, Buying

Introduction:

Consumer durables have become part and parcel of modern day life. Once considered as luxury now they have become a necessity. Now it is surprising if we see a home without a refrigerator. In India refrigerator is used for various purposes from storing of vegetables, fruits, milk, cooked meals, to freezing of seasonal vegetables, ice-creams etc. With the advancement in technology and because of both husband and wife working refrigerator has become a medium for storing food to keep it fresh. Availability of new colors, designs, new storing technologies, frost free variants refrigerator market has become one of the fastest growing consumer durable markets.

Looking at the changing consumer trends and looking at the upcoming refrigerator technology refrigerator it was found necessary that the new segment of consumers should be surveyed for their preferences of features, their family decision making process, their preference of unorganized or organized retail, etc this study was conducted keeping in mind the consumer behaviour of consumers above 25 years of age who influence the family decision making by their knowledge. A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging (Henderson, Naomi R. 2009) . Hence a focus group research was conducted in which 6 male and 6 female respondents participated and showed their views, opinions, attitudes, preferences and overall behaviour when it comes to buying a refrigerator.

Consumer behaviour is defined as the behaviour that consumer display in searching for, purchasing, chasing, using, evaluating, and disposing off products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs. (Schiffman, Kanuk, Kumar, Wisenblit, 2010).

Consumer behaviour also includes what they buy, why they buy, when they buy, where they buy, how they buy such type of questions and answer to these questions. (Schiffman, Kanuk, Kumar, Wisenblit, 2010). In the following research the above definition was applied to study the consumer behaviour for buying of refrigerator.

Research Methodology:

Objectives of the research:

- To study buying behaviour of respondents towards refrigerator
- To study the preference of unorganized versus organized retail

- stores by respondents
- To study the features most preferred by respondents for buying a refrigerator
- To study the role played by the respondents in the buying behaviour and role of different members of the family in decision making process

Type of Research: Focus group research, Qualitative research

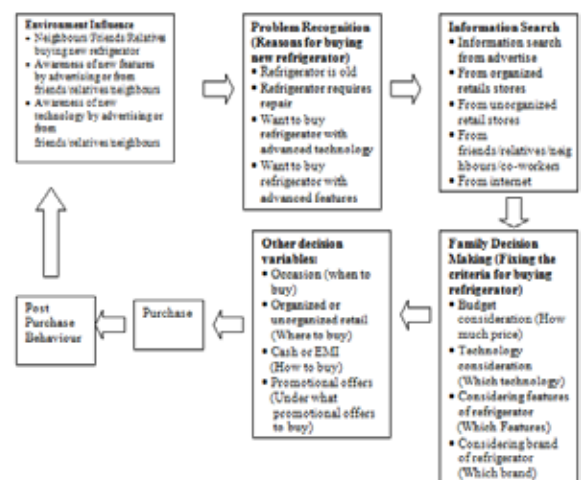
Sample Size: Total sample size 36 (18 male and 18 female divided in a group of 12 – 6 male and 6 female at a time in one group conducting the focus group three times for three different groups) in the age group of more than 25 years. (Malhotra, Dash 2009)

Research Instrument: unstructured questionnaire

Sampling Unit: Respondents in the age group of more than 25 years

Findings: A conceptual model can be developed from the focus group research which is mentioned as follows:

Conceptual Model of Refrigerator Buying for Indian Consumers:



Some useful findings are summarized herewith: Most preferred features in the refrigerator: (What?)

According to the focus group most of the respondents mentioned that they were more interested to see the color, design or refrigerator, whether it is single door, two door, side door or multidoor refrigerator, how many starts it is having which indicates the energy consumption and how many litre capacity it is having. They also mentioned that size of refrigerator was directly related to number of family members as well as their habit of storing various things in the refrigerator. Those who had habit of storing things for a long duration of time needed a bigger refrigerator than those who believed that food should not be stored more and used as fresh as it can be. More storing of foods will help in fewer visits to market for buying fruits and vegetables because of lack of time from daily schedule. Other technology mentioned by respondents which they want in their refrigerator are ice dispenser, frost free, open door sensor, digital display, fast ice making, multi air flow, exterior LED display, inverter compressor technology etc.

Refrigerator buying decision making process: (How?)

Most of the respondent have mentioned as their father or husband as the main decision maker in the refrigerator buying process but the decisions were highly influenced by the recommendation of mother/wife because the mother/wife is the main user of refrigerator and understands her refrigeration need and could express her need and participate as the main influencer in the decision making process. Apart from mother/wife father also gets information from his friends, relatives, co-workers. Also neighbours have a very high influence on buying of refrigerator because they are the main reference giver to mother/wife. Father/Husband and mother/wife move from one shop to another for collecting and average response was moving to approximately four shops before finally deciding the brand and place to buy the refrigerator. So all these act as influencers in decision making. Also father/husband is concerned more about the budget part and getting the best deal according to the needs of mother/wife. Mother/wife doesn't interfere more in the feature of refrigerator or brand of refrigerator.

Who gets the information for buying the refrigerator? (Who?)

On asking this question to the respondents they replied that most of the time father/husband takes the mother/wife with him for getting the information. Sometimes father go alone to get the information related to refrigerator.

Which outlet they prefer organized or unorganized? (Where?)

Most of the respondents like to buy from unorganized outlet especially because unorganized outlets are near their residence. Mostly the owner of the unorganized outlet is present there. Also respondent perceive that owner of unorganized outlets are well informed, well trained, responsible and trustworthy. Respondents perceive that unorganized retailers will give them more discount, better service, and will be available when anything goes wrong. Whereas the organized retailers are far from their residence, sales people don't respond properly at most of the organized retailers, there is no one to give information required, sales people are not well trained and well informed, there is no surety of discount or any other offer, there is no good relation with the store owners of the organized retailer and respondents perceive that if there is any complain then organized retailers will not provide proper and timely service and consumer complain will not be listened by the staff of the organized retailers.

Respondents had dissatisfying experience when they visited organized retailers. The dissatisfaction was related to the sales person's behaviour, sales person's knowledge and sales person's attitude. However respondents had positive perceptions about the range of products available at the organized outlet, the display of the products in the organised retail shops and

the amount of visible information available from the organized outlets.

Respondents named few organized retailers which they visited before buying their refrigerator. Out of the three they were dissatisfied and gave a rating of 6 to 7 on a ten rating scale to two of the organized retailers and rated the third organized retail outlet at a 9 rating because they were satisfied with the sales person behaviour, sales person knowledge and sales persons attitude in the third organized retail outlet. Most of the respondents replied that they prefer organized retail outlet only as a source of gathering information whereas they make their purchases from an unorganized retail store which is located near their residence.

Reason for buying new refrigerator: (Why?)

Most of the respondent said that new technology was a major reason for buying new refrigerator. If the old refrigerator is not working, It requires some repairing, these are few other reasons to buy new refrigerator. Also exchange offer is a good reason to exchange a refrigerator with old for a refrigerator with new technology.

Preference of promotional schemes: (Which?)

Most of the respondents mentioned that they prefer promotional scheme like discounts, fast delivery, 0% finance, festival discount, more warranty, to buy the refrigerator.

Occasion to buy the refrigerator: (When?)

Respondents mentioned starting of summer, 26th January, as few occasions when they would like to buy the refrigerator. However World cup is perceived as an occasion to buy refrigerator only by male respondents and female respondents disagreed on considering world cup as a occasion to buy refrigerator. According to an unorganized retailer refrigerator companies gives a scheme on 15th August and 26th January but the respondents did not mention this two occasions on which they prefer to buy the refrigerator.

Awareness regarding various technologies in refrigerator: (What?)

Most of the respondents were aware about frost free technology. Also the respondents were aware about ice dispenser, inverter compressor technology. But respondents said the the refrigerator which has more inbuilt technology were very costly and also the refrigerator with more number of starts which consumer less power were also expensive.

Limitations of the study:

Focus group research is a qualitative research so the findings of the research cannot be generalized to a large population

Focus group research always gives qualitative results and the same can be used to take decision which are qualitative like applying it to making of advertise, preparing communication strategies related to the product but for determining price or such other quantitative decisions this research cannot be used.

The research focused on a particular segment so the result cannot be generalized for all segment of the population

Conclusion:

Focus group research was used for this research and it was found that it was very useful to bring out attitude, perceptions, and over all behaviour of respondents who are pursuing their are in the age group of above 25 years. Some interesting findings have come out from this research mainly which features of refrigerator are preferred by this segment of respondents, the role of the respondents and other family member in decision making process, the most preferred promotional schemes by the respondents, the preference of organized versus unorganized retail for this respondents. Author expects that this research will be useful to management students, researchers, managers, retailers who are dealing with consumer durable retailing.

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