

Consumer Behaviour and Role of Consumer Research in Marketing

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Abstract

The study of consumer behaviour is the study of how individual make decisions to spend their available resources (money, time, and effort) on consumption-related items. It includes the study of what they buy, why they buy it, how they buy it, when they buy it, where they buy it, and how often they buy it. Consumer behaviour is the process whereby, individuals decide whether, what, when, where, how, and from whom to purchase goods and services. The role of consumer research in marketing has been increased significantly. In this research paper an attempt has been made to provide an understanding to the concept Consumer behaviour and to highlight the role of consumer research in marketing.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Research, Marketing-mix.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term consumer behaviour is defined as the behaviour that consumer display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of product, services and ideas that they expect will satisfy their needs. The study of consumer behaviour is the study of how individual make decisions to spend their available resources (money, time, and effort) on consumption-related items. It includes the study of what they buy, why they buy it, how they buy it, when they buy it, where they buy it, and how often they buy it. Consumer behaviour is the process whereby, individuals decide

whether, what, when, where, how, and from whom to purchase goods and services. Consumer behaviour consists of the mental and physical activities for acquiring the products (which are themselves bundles of physical and psychological satisfactions) and obtain satisfaction from them. Another feature of consumer behaviour is that it includes both observable physical and mental activities. Physical activities can be walking through the stores and examining the merchandise while mental activities can be forming attitudes, perceiving advertising materials and learning to prefer particular brands. Attitudes and preferences can be determined by studying shopping, purchasing, motivation, perception, attitude change, and personality of the buyers. Consumer is a king in the kingdom of market. To understand his behaviour is very necessary for the marketing man. Consumer is the focus of all the marketing activities. Knowledge of his activities and behaviour is one of

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the most important aspects of the marketing. The consumers buy the goods to satisfy a number of needs and drives. Human wants are unlimited and varying time to time; from place to place and man to man. The study of consumer behaviour holds great interest for us as consumers, as students and scientists, and as marketers. As consumers, we need insights into our own consumption related decisions: what we buy, why we buy, and how we buy. The study of consumer behaviour makes us aware of the subtle influences that pursued us to make the product or service choices we do.

Consumer Behaviour is a rapidly growing discipline of study. It means more than just how a person buys products. It is a complex and multidimensional process and reflects the totality of consumer's decisions with respect to acquisition, consumption and disposal activities. There are number of reasons why the study of consumer behaviour developed as a separate marketing discipline. Marketing scientists had long noted that consumer did not always act or react as economic theory would suggest. The various reasons why the study of consumer behaviour developed as a separate marketing discipline are shorter product life cycles, increased interest in consumer protection, growth in marketing services, growth of international marketing, development of computer and information technology and increasing competition, etc. Consumer research process involves six major steps : (1) defining research objectives (2) collecting and evaluating secondary data (3) primary research design (4) collecting primary data (5) analysing data and (6) report preparation. Consumer research is the methodology used to study consumer behaviour. As in any science, consumer behaviour theories must be tested and either supported or rejected before conclusions can be generalized as principles applicable to marketing practice. Consumer research is relevant to each variable in the marketing mix: product mix, price mix, promotion mix and distribution mix. Consumer behaviour

doesn't remain the same or constant in every situation it changes time to time. There are various factors which affects consumer behaviour. As the change comes in these factors, consumer behaviour also changes. Following are the factors which affect consumer behaviour: (1) age (2) sex (3) marital status (4) income(5) family background (6) education (7) occupation (8) family size (9) geographic factors(10) psychological factors. In this grim battle for snatching maximum share of market, only those producers are destined to emerge victorious who will be able to read the pulse of the buyers? And this is here, where buyer behaviour has a very important role to play.

(a) Objectives of the Study

- ◊ The main objective of this research paper is to provide an understanding to the concept Consumer behaviour.
- ◊ To highlight the role of consumer research in marketing.

(b) Research Methodology (Data Collection)

The data has been collected from secondary resources. The secondary data is collected from various sources like Books, journals, Research reports, Dealers, Magazines, articles from newspapers and Websites.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Joseph D. Brown (1972), studied both the degree of loyalty and the factors appearing to affect it were studied in this project, which was based on interviews with 198 shoppers in the Muncie, Indiana, metropolitan area. Both methodology and procedures were well covered in the report. It was found that one-third of food shoppers were completely loyal to one store; 81 percent purchased at least one private brand; one-third of the shoppers were loyal purchasers of private levels; store loyalty appeared to be a minor factor in explaining loyalty to private brands; between the two most important loyalty factors-price and quality, price tended to be more important.

Donald H. Grabois and Richard W. Olshavsky (1972), reviewed some of the findings of behavioural research on the consumer and suggested the implications of their research for the probable effectiveness of a public policy concentrated exclusively on improving the quality of consumer information. Research is summarized for consumer planning, information search and deliberation, product evaluation and purchase processes, and post purchase behaviour.

Irvin Penner (1972), evaluated consumer attitudes towards credit sales. The author examined a group of female respondents what single word they most associated with their credit cards. Of the total, 67 percent selected "convenience." 31 percent selected "privilege," and 2 percent selected "right". In response to other questions, he found that the consumers felt a strong obligation to pay their credit card debts (may be stronger than for other types of debts) and were willing to accept service changes. He called for more research into consumer attitudes and opinions on credit to serve as aids to various congressional committees considering credit related legislation.

Singh and Raghbir (1973), in their book made an attempt to understand the behaviour of consumer and also pointed out how consumer behaviour study was beneficial to the business and economy. Marketing starts with the consumers and ends with the consumer. Satisfaction of consumers becomes the most important goal of a business enterprise. The key to ensure consumer satisfaction lies in understanding the consumer, his likes and dislikes, his expectations and motivations, in short in understanding consumer behaviour. Consumer Behaviour provides a sound basis for identification and understanding consumer needs. Therefore, the study of consumer behaviour for any product is of vital importance to marketers in shipping the fortunes of their organizations. Also, a study of consumer Behaviour is significant for regulating consumption of goods and thereby maintaining economic stability.

London, E. Laird (1974), the present study presents prepurchase support for a self concept/purchase intention link and also indicates that some subjects predominantly match product-image with self-image while others tend to match product-image with ideal self-images.

Munsinger, Garg M., Jean E. Weber and Richard W. Hansen (1975), research depicts that the housing decision can be divided into seven elements or sub-decisions. Husbands and wives, interviewed independently, were asked about their relative influence in making these sub-decisions. Relationships between dominance in decision making and husband-wife agreement concerning that dominance were analyzed.

Danny N. Bellenger, Dan H. Rebertson (1978), discussed the divergent views of impulse purchasing behaviour and reported the results of a survey of 1600 store customers and their impulse shopping behaviour. The study concluded that impulse purchasing varies by merchandise line, purchase dollar volume, age, and purpose for being downtown within merchandise lines, impulse behaviour varies by age and race. Retailers would do well to monitor impulse purchasing behaviour over time and adjust in store promotions accordingly.

Olshavsky, Richard W. and Donald H. Grabois (1979), studied consumers pre-purchase behaviour and suggested that a substantial proportion of purchase did not involve decision making, not even in the first purchase. The heavy emphasis in current research on decision making might discourage investigation of other important kinds of consumer behaviour.

Agarwal, Manoj Kumar and Brian T. Ratchford (1980), this paper illustrates how the Rosen (1974) model of consumer choice can be used to estimate demand and supply functions for product characteristics; in this case, for six characteristics of automobiles. We also show how the demand functions for characteristics can be used to recover consumer preference functions.

Park, C. Whan (1982), characterized in his study that joint decision making as being reached by muddling through process rather than by a synoptic strategy. In spite of this muddling-through, joint decision-making is conceptualized as being effectively based on three conflictavoiding heuristics.

Andreasen, Alan R. (1984), A theoretical model linking measures of the objectively defined changes in consumer life status to change in brand preferences and overall satisfaction with product and service purchases is proposed and empirically tested. Bivariate and multiple equation analysis of cross-sectional data in one metropolitan area indicate strong support for the model. The results imply that households undergoing status change are more likely to be (1) undergoing spontaneous changes in brand preferences and (2) open to intervention by change agents in the future.

Qualis, William. J. (1987), this study examines the impact of sex role orientation on the outcome of a family home purchase decision. A relatively strong relationship is found between sex role orientation (SRO) and the degree of household influence, preference agreement, made of conflict resolution and decision outcome. Finally, it is found that household decision behaviour is better explained in the context of a theoretical network of systemic household relationship rather than through a series of bivariate family relationships.

Bagozzi, Richard P. and Paul R. Warshaw (1990), in his study the researcher pointed out an important but relatively neglected area of consumer behaviourThe pursuit of goalwas addressed. Two recent modifications of the fishbein model were discussed, and an extension was introduced to better explain goal pursuit. Major revisions included (1) specification of three dimensions of attitude towards success, failure, and the process of trying, (2) the incorporation of self-efficacy judgements as expectations of success and failure, and (3) refinement in the specificity of referents and their correspondence to reflect trying as the focal

explanatory concept. Recency and frequency of the past trying were independent variables in date three models tested with weight less data.

Armstrong, J. Scott (1991), in his study pointed out that those persons who were familiar with scientific research on consumer behaviour were found much able to make predictions about phenomena in this field. Predictions were made for 105 Hypotheses from 20 empirical studies selected from Journal of Consumer Research. A total of 1736 predictions were obtained from 16 academics, 12 practitioners, and 43 high school students. The practitioners were correct on 58.2 per cent of the hypotheses, the students on 56.6 per cent, and the academics on 51.3 per cent. No group performed better than chance.

Yadav, Manjit S. (1994), observed that bundling, the joint offering of two or more items, was a common selling strategy, yet little research had been conducted on buyers evaluation of bundle offers. The author developed and tested a model of bundle evaluation in which buyers anchored their evaluation on the item perceived as most important and then made adjustments on the basis of their evaluations of the remaining bundle items. The results of two computerized laboratory experiments suggested that people to examine bundle items in a decreasing order of perceived importance and make adjustments to form their overall evaluation of bundle.

Bettman, James R., Mary Frances Luee, and John W. Payne (1998), described consumer decision making a focal interest in consumer research, and consideration of current market place trends (e.g., technological change, an information explosion) indicated that this topic would continue to be critically important. They argued that consumer choice was inherently constructive. Due to limited processing capacity, consumers often do not have well-defined existing preferences, but construct them using a variety of strategies contingent on task demands. After describing constructive choice, consumer decision talks, and decision strategies,

they provided an integrative framework for understanding constructive choice, review evidence for constructive consumer choice in the light of that framework, and identify knowledge gaps that suggested opportunities for additional research.

Bagozzi, Richard P. (2000), purpose of his study was to encourage research on the social aspects of consumer behaviour, particularly as found in groups of consumers and manifested through group action. Based on work by leading contemporary philosophers, a new concept of social facts is presented that is grounded in the way members of a group see themselves and the implications of this for group action. Group action, in turn, is shown to require different conceptual schemes than commonly used for individual action or interpersonal and macro social perspectives. Among other ideas, the notion of what it means for a group member to intend that the group act and how individual intentions are contributory to group action are discussed.

Adval, Rashmi (2012), study reveals that participants experiencing positive or negative affect judged products described by brand and attribute information. Four studies using parameter-estimation and reaction-time procedures determined whether the impact of affect on brand name was the result of its influence on (a) participant's perception of its evaluative implications at the time of encoding or (b) the importance they attached to it while integrating it with other information to compute a judgment. Results showed that positive affect increased the extremity of the brands evaluative implication rather than the importance that participants attached to it. A fifth experiment demonstrated the implications of these findings for product choices made 24 hours after affect was induced.

Yeung, W. M. and Robert S. (2015), when consumers get verbal information about a products attributes, the influence of the affect they are experiencing on their product evaluations depends on their belief that the product should be judged on

the basis of hedonic versus utilitarian criteria. When consumers see the product before they receive attributes information, however, the products appearance can stimulate them to form an affect-based initial impression that they later use as a basis for judgments independent of the criteria they would otherwise apply. Consequently, the mood that consumers happen to be in has different effects on their judgments than it would otherwise.

3. FACTOR AFFECTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumer behaviour doesn't remain the same or constant in every situation it changes time to time. There are various factors which affects consumer behaviour. As the change comes in these factors, consumer behaviour also changes. Following are the factors which affect consumer behaviour:

(a) Demographic Factors

- (i) **Gender** : We can classify gender into two categories male or female. Women in our society have started purchasing most of the goods items and other household goods, independent of the decisions of their husbands. But men still make most purchasing decisions relating to automobiles, TVs, refrigerators, cameras and other consumer durables. Thus, who will purchase, the product, affect the study of consumer behaviour.
- (ii) **Age** : i.e. infant, child, adolescent, young adults, mature adults, senior citizens, etc. Our wants, needs, desires and aspirations all change with age.
- (iii) **Marital Status** : i.e. single, engaged, married, separated, divorced, widow, etc. Married people always constitute a stronger market for homes, life insurance, consumer durables and children's clothing than unmarried people. Thus the life of widow and her shopping habits are different to a great extent as compared to a typical married

woman of the same age. Thus it is important to consider the marital status of a consumer before studying his/her buying behaviour.

- (iv) **Ethnic factor** : i.e. low class, middle class, upper class etc. Minority group everywhere have traditionally received less education, fewer cultural opportunities and earned lower incomes than others. The condition of such people are no doubt changing but still the consumption pattern of minority group people w.r.t. both 'type and quality' of goods they purchase, differ from others.
- (v) **Income factor** : i.e. low, low middle, middle, upper middle, upper, etc. An individual's income determines to a very great extent the type and quality of products he buys. People with low income are forced to spend most of their money for food, rent, clothing and other essentials. As they become more affluent, they tend to purchase higher quality items and buy more non-essentials. Of course, people earning the same amount of money may spend it in different ways depending upon other personal factors.
- (vi) **Education** : i.e. illiterate, primary education, high school education, college education, university education, professional education, etc. Researches have shown that preferences in music, art, entertainment, food, clothing, automobiles etc. are influenced by the extent, kind and quality of one's education. Generally speaking the more educated a person is, the more discriminating a shopper he is.
- (vii) **Occupation** : i.e. unskilled, semiskilled, skilled, bureaucrats, professional, businessmen etc. The product preferences of white collar workers tend to be quite different from that of blue collar workers. Thus the study and prediction of the behaviour of a consumer is eased if we know exactly his occupation.

(viii) **Family size** : i.e. small family, big family and joint family, etc. If size of the family small it will purchase essentials in small quantity but if the size of the family is large it will purchase essential products like food, clothes, etc. in large quantity to fulfill the necessity of every member of the house.

(b) Geographic Factors

For some goods or services, geographical variations may be quite important. In United States, for example, distinctly different taste preferences for food exist when comparing the North and the South or the East-West and the West coast, ranging from what to eat for breakfast to what to drink with dinner. These geographic differences are even greater around the world. For example in the United Kingdom, northerners prefer white pickled onions, whereas southerners prefer brown ones. Few people drink orange juice for breakfast in Iran, but many do so during the day as refreshment. In Japan, soup is consumed mainly for breakfast. If the geographic environment of the area where the consumer is living is hot, naturally the demand for refrigerators will be high if the area is cold the demand for heater will be more. To better understand existing consumer differences based on geography, marketers go to great lengths to research and analyze behavioural patterns. The availability of such geographic information can help the marketer target mailings, advertisement, or personal sales pitches that will be most effective and efficient.

(c) Psychological Factors

A number of psychological factors also influence buyer behaviour, ranging from the teachings of Freud to Herberg's discussion of dissatisfiers and satisfiers. In the context of marketing, perhaps the most widely quoted psychological approach is that of Abraham Maslow. He developed a hierarchy of needs, shaped like a pyramid, which: ranges from the most essential immediate physical needs such as hunger, thirst and shelter to the most luxurious

none-essentials. It was Maslow's contention that individual addresses the most urgent need first, starting with the physiological. But as each need is satisfied and lower level physical needs are satisfied, attention switches to the next higher level, resulting ultimately in the level of self-actualization or fulfilment. It has been argued that marketers in industrialized nations should increasingly focus their attention on the two highest levels for the citizens of their countries. However, it appears that even in rich countries, the elementary needs of many remains unfulfilled. An interesting phenomenon the foreign concern emerges as an additional post-Maslowian level. Many who themselves have achieved high level of needs fulfilment-begin to focus on individuals and countries are encouraged to seek and offer self-actualization, without addressing their won often unfulfilled basic needs such as nourishment and housing. Such approaches can lead to disagreement and even conflict, particularly in the international trade and policy areas, without necessarily improving the quality of life.

4. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR APPLICATIONS IN MARKETING

Consumer behaviour principles are applied in many areas of marketing as discussed below :

(a) Analysing market opportunity

Consumer behaviour study helps in identifying the unfulfilled needs and wants of consumers. This requires examining the trends and conditions operating in the marketplace, consumer's lifestyles, income levels and emerging influences. This may reveal unsatisfied needs and wants. The trend towards increasing number of dual income households and greater emphasis on convenience and leisure have led to emerging needs for household gadgets such as washing machine, mixer grinder, vacuum cleaner and childcare centres etc. Mosquito repellents have been marketed in response to a genuine and unfulfilled consumer need.

(b) Selecting target market

A review of market opportunities often helps in identifying distinct consumer segments with very distinct and unique wants and needs. Identifying these groups, learning how they behave and how they make purchase decisions enables the marketer to design and market products or services particularly suited to their wants and needs. For example, consumer studies revealed that many existing and potential shampoo users did not want to buy shampoo packs priced at Rs. 60 or more and would rather prefer a low priced sachet containing enough quantity for one or two washes. This finding led companies to introduce the shampoo sachet which became a good seller.

(c) Marketing-mix decisions

Once unsatisfied needs and wants are identified, the marketer has to determine the right mix of product, price, distribution and promotion. Here too, consumer behaviour study is very helpful in finding answers to many perplexing questions:

(i) **Product** : The marketer designs the product or service that would satisfy unfulfilled needs or wants. Further decisions regarding the product concern to size, shape and features. The marketer has also to decide about packaging, important aspects of service, warranties and accessories etc.

Nestle first introduced Maggi noodles in masala and capsicum flavours. Subsequently, keeping in view the consumer preferences in some regions, the company introduced garlic, Sambar and other flavours.

(ii) **Price** : The second important component of marketing mix is price. Marketers must decide what price to charge for the product or service. These decisions will influence the flow of revenue to the company. Should the marketer charge the same, higher, or lower price in comparison to competition? Is the consumer price sensitive and would a lower price stimulate sales? Should there be any

price discounts? Do consumers perceive lower price as being indicative of poor quality? To answer such questions, the marketer must understand the way the company's product is perceived by consumers, the importance of price as a purchase decision variable and how different price levels would affect sales. It is only through consumer behaviour study in actual buying situations that the marketer can hope to find answers to these important issues.

(iii) Distribution : The next decision relates to the distribution channel, that is, where and how to offer products and services for sale. Should the products be sold through all the retail outlets or only through selected ones? Should the marketer use only the existing outlets, which also sell competing brands, or should new exclusive outlets selling only the marketer's brands be created? Is the location of retail outlets important from consumer's point of view? Should the company think of direct marketing?

The answers to these questions are furnished by consumer behaviour research. For example, when Eureka Forbes introduced its vacuum cleaners many years ago, few stores knew anything about this product and most were not willing to buy it. Consumer awareness about the product was also low and no retail shops carried the product. Under these circumstances, the company decided to sell the product only through personal selling, with salespeople calling directly on the consumer at her/his home. These salespeople had enough time to explain and demonstrate the vacuum cleaner and convince prospects about its usefulness. Retail outlets would not have been suitable for this sales approach. This strategy was based on understanding of consumer behaviour and yielded good results.

(iv) Promotion : Promotion is concerned with

marketing communications to consumers. The more important promotion methods are advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity and direct marketing. The marketer has to decide which method would be most suitable to effectively reach the consumers. Should it be advertising alone or should it be combined with sales promotion? The company has to know the target consumers, their location, what media do they have access to and what are their media preferences, etc.

In most cases of industrial products there is very little or no advertising. Brochures containing technical specifications are often posted to clients and the salespeople make follow-up visits. Consumer products get the maximum share of advertising. Pharmaceutical industry exclusively uses personal selling for prescription drugs. Insurance companies use both advertising and personal selling.

(d) Use in Social and Non-profits Marketing

Consumer behaviour studies are useful to design marketing strategies by social, governmental and not-for-profit organisations to make their programmes such as family planning, awareness about AIDS, crime against women, safe driving, environmental concerns and others more effective. UNICEF (greeting cards), Red Cross and CRY etc. make use of consumer behaviour understanding to sell their services and products and also try to motivate people to support these institutions.

5. THE DEVELOPMENT CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR FIELD

There are number of reasons why the study of consumer behaviour developed as a separate marketing discipline. Marketing scientists had long noted that consumer did not always act or react as economic theory would suggest. Consumer preferences are changing and this is not true only in

case of consumer markets but even in industrial markets, where needs for goods and services are always more homogeneous than in consumer markets. The various reasons why the study of consumer behaviour developed as a separate marketing discipline are shorter product life cycles, increased interest in consumer protection, growth in marketing services, growth of international marketing, development of computer and information technology and increasing competition, etc.

Consumer research has emerged as an extension and an integral part of marketing research. It is the set of methods used to identify the needs and then develop products and services to satisfy those needs. The focus of consumer research is exclusively on exploring consumer behaviour. In the beginning, consumer research was used to help marketers to predict the consumer reactions to marketer's promotional messages and to understand why consumers made purchase decisions which they did. Marketers were reasonably convinced that if they could know everything about consumer decision process, they would be in a position to design marketing strategies and promotional campaigns that would influence the consumers in such a manner that they would buy the company's products or services. At this time, marketing was viewed as simply applied economics and the prevailing theory was that of an 'economic man', assuming that consumers are rational beings who make objective evaluation about products or services and choose only those that offer them maximum satisfaction at the lowest cost. Consumer behaviour research is now used to identify both felt and latent needs, to learn how consumers perceive products, brands and stores, but their attitudes are before and after promotional campaigns and how and why they make their purchased decisions.

6. CONSUMER RESEARCH PROCESS

Consumer research process involves six

major steps (1) defining research objectives (2) collecting and evaluating secondary data (3) primary research design (4) collecting primary data (5) analysing data and (6) report preparation.

(a) Defining Research Objectives

At the outset, it is important to clearly define the purpose and objective of research study on which the marketing manager and the researcher agree. This will ensure the development of appropriate research-design. For example, if the purpose of the research study is to come up with new ideas for advertising campaigns, then a qualitative study might be fruitful. The sample size would be small due to cost of each interview and a highly trained professional will spend more time face-to-face with respondents and subsequently would also analyse and interpret the data. The findings however, may not be representative of the entire market place.

In case the purpose of the study is to learn what percentage of people use certain products and how frequently they use them, then a quantitative study is more appropriate. In case the researcher is not clear what questions to include in the questionnaire, then he may conduct a small-scale exploratory research to spot critical issues and include appropriate questions to ask.

(b) Collecting and Evaluating Secondary Data

Secondary data is any information originally generated for some other purposes rather than the current problem under consideration and can be either internal or external to the organisation. It includes findings based on data generated in-house for earlier studies, customer information collected by company's sales or credit departments and research conducted by outside organisations. The act of locating secondary data is called secondary research. Original research done by individuals or organisations to meet specific objectives is called primary research.

Sometimes secondary research uncovers enough useful data related to the present problem that it eliminates the need to conduct primary research. In

most cases, secondary research offers clues and direction for the design of primary research. Government agencies, industry sources, trade associations, marketing research firms and advertising agencies are important sources of secondary data.

(c) Design Primary Research

The selection of a research design depends on the purposes of the study. If a marketer needs descriptive information, then a quantitative research study is called for, but if the purpose is to generate new ideas, then a qualitative study is appropriate.

Since the approach to research design for qualitative and quantitative research differs in terms of data collection method, sample design and use of data collection instrument, both research approaches are discussed here :

(i) Qualitative Research Design : The researcher first takes into consideration the purpose of the research study and the kind of data needed, data collection techniques for qualitative studies include focus group, depth interviews and projective techniques. All these techniques relate to psychoanalytic and clinical aspects of psychology. The emphasis is on open-ended and free-response types of questions so that the respondents reveal their unconscious thoughts and beliefs. These techniques are frequently used in early stages of attitude research to learn product-related beliefs or attributes and the resulting attributes. Data collection methods :

- ◇ Depth Interviews.
- ◇ Focus Groups.
- ◇ Projective Techniques.

(ii) Quantitative Research Design : Quantitative research design includes the method for data collection, the data collection instruments and the sample design. There are three basic approaches to collecting data in quantitative study :

- ◇ Observation

- ◇ Experimentation and
- ◇ Survey

(d) Collecting Primary Data

Data collection phase of research is probably the most expensive and quite prone to error. The four major problems encountered are: some respondents will not be available at home and must be either contacted again or replaced, other respondents will refuse the interview, still others will give biased or dishonest answers and some interviewers themselves will be biased or dishonest.

A quantitative study generally employs a field staff, recruited and trained directly by the researcher or contracted from a firm that specializes in conducting field interviews. The completed questionnaires received are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the recorded responses are clear and complete.

(e) Analysing Data

The last step in the research process is to extract relevant findings from the collected data. In qualitative research the moderator/analyst usually analyses the respondent's responses. The researcher supervises the data analysis in quantitative research. The responses are converted into numerical scores then tabulated and analysed with the help of computers using sophisticated analytical techniques.

(f) Report Preparation

The researcher prepares a report of her/his findings to be presented to the relevant parties. It may or may not include any recommendations for action depending on the requirements of the management. The report includes a description of the methodology used, as well as tables and graphics to support the research findings. The researcher should present major findings that are relevant to decisions facing management and avoid detailing numbers and fancy jargon such as "multivariate analysis of variance."

7. THE ROLE OF CONSUMER RESEARCH IN MARKETING

Consumer research is the methodology used

to study consumer behaviour. As in any science, consumer behaviour theories must be tested and either supported or rejected before conclusions can be generalized as principles applicable to marketing practice. Some Consumer Behaviour Research is conducted on the basis of observations of actual behaviour in the market place. Other research is conducted under controlled conditions in the laboratory; still other research is based on the manipulation of marketing variables within a simulated marketing context. Only through constant testing, evaluation, rejection, and support of related hypothesis can behavioral principles be developed to provide marketers with meaningful insights into psychological and environmental factors that influence consumer decision making. Consumer behaviour research also enables marketers to carve out new market segments based on variables that emerge as important discriminators among consumer for a specific product or product category.

Consumer behaviour research is conducted for every phase of the consumption process: from before the purchase take place (when the consumer first becomes aware of a need), to the search and evaluation of product alternatives (ranging from simple to extensive information search), to the actual purchase decision (including such factors as product and brand choice, store choice, and method of payment), to after the purchase take place (through any periods of uncertainty, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, repurchase, or further search in the market-place).

8. CONCLUSION

In this research paper an attempt has been made to provide an understanding to the concept Consumer behaviour. The research paper also highlights the role of consumer research in marketing. Consumer is the focus of all the marketing activities. Knowledge of his activities and behaviour is one of the most important aspects of the marketing. The consumers buy the goods to satisfy a number of needs and drives. Human wants are unlimited and varying time to time; from place to place and man to man. The study of consumer behaviour holds great interest for us as consumers, as students and scientists, and as marketers. Consumer research has emerged as an extension and an integral part of marketing research. It is the set of methods used to identify the needs and then develop products and services to satisfy those needs. The focus of consumer research is exclusively on exploring consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour research is conducted for every phase of the consumption process: from before the purchase take place (when the consumer first becomes aware of a need), to the search and evaluation of product alternatives (ranging from simple to extensive information search), to the actual purchase decision (including such factors as product and brand choice, store choice, and method of payment), to after the purchase take place (through any periods of uncertainty, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, repurchase, or further search in the market-place).

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