

A STUDY ON THE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR OF PET RETAILING TOWARDS DOG FOOD

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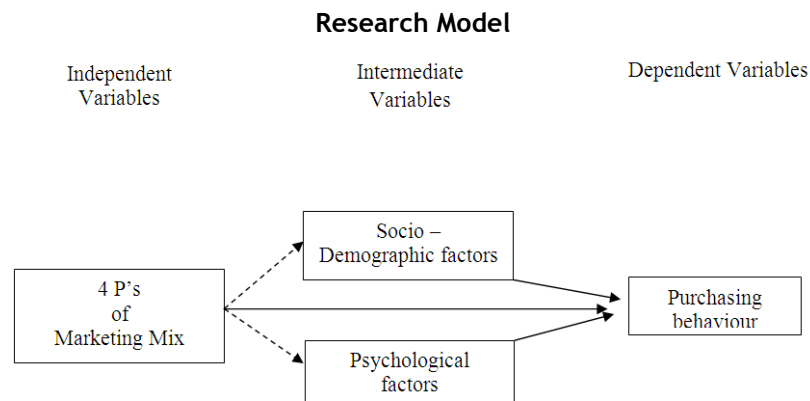
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Abstract

Consumer Behaviour is the study of individuals, groups or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society. It attempts to understand the decision-making processes of buyers, both individually and in groups such as how emotions affect buying behaviour. Changing lifestyles in the form of the rise in nuclear families and double income households have encouraged the growth of pet ownership in urban areas of India. The Indian pet foods market is a young, growing market and there are a few major players that are active in it. The study presents commercial as well as research opportunities, as pets not only provide value to their owners but also influence their human companions' behaviours. For this reason, understanding the segments within this market and their characteristics, such as key value orientations and behavioural patterns, is imperative. The study is particularly relevant for pet-related customer's purchase behaviour because they are intangible and are not for buyer's

Introduction

The increasing number of pet shops and advertisements for pet food brands, combined with greater concerns about the pet health and welfare, are driving the shift towards prepared pet food. The number of advertising campaigns directly targeting pet owners is rising and most advertisements strive to communicate the benefits of prepared pet food and its nutritional value over homemade alternatives. The support of vets for these campaigns has led pet owners to purchase prepared food for their pets. Indian consumers traditionally favoured freshly cooked over prepared pet food. Most pet owners continue to give their pets homemade food, while offering prepared food as a snack. Thus, the diet of pets in India is a combination of prepared and non-prepared pet food. However, the perception that freshly prepared, homemade pet food is healthier and more nutritious is changing, as manufacturers and vets advocate the benefits of prepared pet food. Manufacturers have aggressively targeted vets with their products and many are using the professionals to recommend prepared pet food to pet owners. Effem India Pvt Ltd was one of the first manufacturers to target pet owners directly through media advertisements and direct communications. Other manufacturers are increasingly using advertisements in pet magazines and leaving promotional literature in veterinary clinics. These marketing strategies have increased the consumers' general awareness and acceptance of prepared pet food



The four P's of Marketing mix are Product, Price, Promotion and Place. The Socio - Demographic factors are gender, age, education, occupation, income and marital status. The psychological factors are motivation, perception and learning.

Statement of the Problem

The study presents commercial as well as research opportunities, as pets not only provide value to their owners but also influence their human companions' behaviours. For this reason, understanding the segments within this market and their characteristics, such as key value orientations and behavioural patterns, is imperative. Among the research that studied customer's based on their behaviours, human pet relationships were considered by researchers as a crucial factor. The study is particularly relevant for pet-related customer's purchase behaviour because they are in Tangible and are not for buyer's usage

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To know the most preferred brand of pet foods;
- To investigate the influence of peers and family on the buying behavior of the respondents;
- To examine the influence of the quality of the product on the purchase behavior of the respondents;
- To understand the influence of advertisements on their purchase behavior.

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses formulated after reviewing the relevant literature are presented below:

H₀₁: socio - demographic factors do not have a strong association with the purchase behavior of the respondents

H₀₂: psychological factors do not have a strong association with the purchase behavior of the respondents

H₀₃: the product factor does not have a strong association with the purchase behavior of the respondents

Scope of the Study

Through this study, the researcher makes an attempt to This study is undertaken to study the factors influencing the purchase decision of the customers while purchasing the food for their pets. The researcher has confined the study only with the purchase of dog foods.

Methodology

Method of Data Collection

The data employed to analyse the factors influencing customers' purchase decision making processes were obtained through a survey. The instrument used to collect the primary data was a questionnaire. The researcher selected this tool because of its numerous advantages. Because each respondent receives the same questions and the process is identical for each respondent. Questionnaires guarantee confidentiality; hence respondents act without any fear or embarrassment. The questions were divided into three segments as follows:

1. Questions on socio - demographic information, including characteristics such as age, education, income and gender.
2. Questions on the factors that impact consumers and consumer behaviour
3. Questions on brand loyalty.

In the second part of the questionnaire responses were measured on a 5 point Likert Scale, ranging from one (Strongly disagree) to five (Strongly agree).

Secondary sources like journals, articles, and databases like PROQUEST, SCOPUS and SSRN were used to collect review of literature and other concepts for the study.

Sampling technique

The questionnaires were given to all to visited the clinic. This gave the researcher a Universe of around 425 retail investors in equity market to distribute the questionnaires. Totally 235 questionnaires were collected, 15 incomplete questionnaires were rejected, and the researcher was left with 220 completely filled in questionnaire to carry out the analysis.

Statistical Tools Applied

- Pearson's correlation coefficients between the variables associated with questions answered on the Likert scale such as social factors, psychological factors, marketing mix and customer behaviour.

- To find the relationship between personal factors and customer behaviour, a one-way ANOVA was used. Data that represented these factors were divided into three groups: education, age and monthly income.
- Multiple regressions were used to learn about the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

Limitations of the Study

- The findings and suggestions of the study may not be generalised for the respondents of other than Tamilnadu since the data have been collected from the respondents in Tamilnadu.
- Suggestions of the study are based on the findings of the study that were obtained by analyzing the opinions of the respondents which are subject to their psychological and intellectual limitations.

Findings of the Study

Major findings of the study are presented below:

- Royal Canin was the most preferred dog food by the respondents followed by Pedigree, Nutra Nuggets and Drools.
- 62% of the respondents agree that they mostly buy from shops which are located in places where transporting and or transiting of their goods back home is easier
- 12% of the respondents disagree to the fact that easy access to transportation is a factor to be considered when thinking of which shop to visit.
- 53% of the respondents agree that they buy mostly from the shop where the needed items can easily be obtained on time
- 9% of the respondents do not buy mostly from a shop just because the needed items can easily be located.
- 13% of the respondents disagree that spending less time in transaction affect their buying decision on which shop to buy their goods and services from.
- 19% of the respondents buy mostly from a shop where they can pick and pay for what they want as quickly as possible
- 27% of the respondents do not know the effect of spending less time in a transaction on their buying decisions.
- 46% of the respondents agree that they buy mostly from shops where they are treated with respect 10% do not buy repeatedly from a particular shop because they are treated with much respect
- 24% of the respondents do not know the effect of how they are treated by shop attendants on their buying decisions.
- About 54% respondents agree that they buy mostly from shops where the sales personnel have credible knowledge in their area of the business.

- On the contrary, 29% of the respondents disagree with the fact that shop attendants who are experts in their area of the business influence their decision to buy repeatedly from the shop. Customers prefer buying repeatedly from shops where the attendants have credible knowledge in their area of the business. The implication is that customers feel more satisfied when they are served by expert attendants, and by so doing they are influenced to buy repeatedly from such shops.
- 31% of the respondents agree that they buy from shops which offer low prices for their goods and services
- 31% of the respondents do not buy mostly from a shop because it offers low prices for goods and services. This indicates that low prices for goods and services do not influence their decision to buy mostly from such shop.
- 18% of the respondents do not know the effect of low prices of goods and services on their buying decisions.
- 62% of the respondents agree that they buy mostly from shops which offer fair prices for their goods and services. This implies customers compare prices of goods sold in various shops and finally choose to buy from shops which offer low prices for goods of low quality and high prices for goods of high quality.
- 26% of the respondents do not buy mostly from a shop because it offers fair prices for goods and services. This indicates that fair prices for goods and services do not influence their decision to buy mostly from such shops
- The results reveal that there is not a statistically significant difference between the influences of education and age on consumer behaviour. Only monthly income has an impact on behaviour.
- Psychological factors ($\beta = 0.43$) influenced customer behaviour more than the social factors ($\beta=0.30$), marketing mix factors Product ($\beta = 0.27$), Price ($\beta =0.293$), Promotion ($\beta=0.249$) and Place ($\beta=0.206$).
- The relationship between personal factors and customer behaviour was insignificant with a p-value of 0.08.

Suggestions of the Study

Based on the analysis of the data some suggestions are given below:

- Building trust in customers through fair pricing has a positive long term effect Most customers seek “value pricing” expecting to get the most value for their money (Abrams, 2008). Customers feel comfortable buying from a shop which they are optimistic about the authenticity of sale prices presented in an advertisement.
- Retailers should demonstrate competence, and a high sense of respect when interacting with customers (Berry, 2001). Customers will not buy from you if they entertain fears, and do not trust in you, or have ever had any bad past experience (Debelak, 2006). Therefore, interacting with customers in a high sense of respect

has a positive influence on customers as they tend to buy from you over other competitors.

Scope for Further Research

Based on the results of the study, further research can be done on the role of the producers within the dog food industry would be interesting to investigate additionally along with a study on specific segments of the customers of premium dog food brands.

Conclusion

This research contributes to the understanding of customer purchasing behaviour in the pet foods market. The major findings of the study indicated that the overall set of independent variables was weakly associated with the dependent variable. However, the in-depth analysis found that social factors, physical factors and marketing mix elements were strongly associated with the buying behaviour.

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