CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

7.1. CONCLUSIONS
In the foregoing chapters, the researcher has discussed why, when, how aspects of the study. Chapter no. 6 has dealt in detail the data analysis, the findings of data analysis were discussed, and what followed were the interpretations based on the data analysis. The researcher intends to summarise and conclude the findings in this chapter. The suggestions and recommendations which the researcher feels, if taken notice of by the managers of supermarkets will benefit them in formulating strategies and evolve business processes, that will satisfy customer needs. The customers on the other hand will be benefitted, as their needs and wants will be satisfied and ultimately shopping will become a pleasure at the supermarkets.

7.1.1. Customers profile based on their demographics
It may not be wrong to conclude that findings discussed in subsection 6.1 of chapter 6 supports the theories & practices adopted by supermarket managers regarding the influences of demographic characteristics on the buying behaviour of the customers. This argument is highly supported by the very fact that the managers of the superstores even before starting the activity of retailing, do scout for locations for setting up the stores that cater to the profiled customers. The managers are experts in societal marketing, as they have opined that the consumers aspire to shop at the supermarkets because as the customers feel they belong to higher class of the society when they shop at supermarkets. Thus in order to achieve total customer satisfaction, generate and retain customers, the managers of supermarkets must take into consideration the demographic profile of the customers.

7.1.2. Shopping Pattern & Habits
The respondents although varied in their demographic characteristics, but were found to follow a pattern when it came to shopping. It was noticed that irrespective of their occupation, the number of visits to the supermarket in a month had a same pattern (20-27% customers visit 2-4 times in a month). It indicates that there is ample of scope for the managers to increase the frequency of visits. The more the
number of visits, more would be the sales turnover. The managers of the superstores have got the pulse of the customers, they are quite sure when, the customer is likely to visit the store during the day of the week and at what time of the day. Therefore managers leave no leaf unturned to get maximum benefit of increase in footfalls on the weekend evenings. The low percentage of customers making purchases above Rs. 4000 per month is one major conclusion that can be drawn from the buying pattern.

7.1.3. Responses to stimuli of supermarkets: The phenomenon of marketing can best be termed as a game of action and reaction. The roles can be interchanged between the marketers and customers. The researcher had identified some important stimuli that the managers of the supermarkets induce and recorded the reaction of the customers. The section 6.3 of chapter 6 has focussed on these aspects. It can be concluded that the association / correlations found out by the researcher complete the story. Thereby implying that the marketing is a dynamic function of management and some older and newer factors that stimulate the purchasing at supermarkets can be utilised. From the section 6.11, it may be concluded that the major features of supermarket that influence the customers and make it a place of attraction are price advantages, quality, higher POP displays. Similarly, it is noticed that ambience, variety and large product range work as major strengths of supermarket. The layout of the stores too is a major factor, it decides how the shoppers move in the shop, how the bond between the customer and the products is strengthened. The shopping at the supermarkets is more of a pleasure than just a place to fulfil the needs. The managers have been found to use modern technological tools coupled with use of ICT, people and processes, to win over the customer from the unorganised retail stores. The researcher is of the opinion that these tools are going to take a while to show the results.

7.1.4. Purchase influencing factors: The conclusions that can be drawn from the factors that influence the customers to buy a particular product, as discussed in section 6.4 of chapter 6 are as follows:
There is a definite association between the demographic factors of the respondent and the factors:

- Brand
- Quality
- Price
- Discount
- Environment
- Necessity

Thus it is of utmost importance for the supermarket managers to take these associations / correlations into consideration to reap the benefits of satisfying customer needs. The analysis of the responses of the managers of the superstores supports the researcher to conclude that, the customers who visit the superstore primarily shop for quality goods at affordable prices.

7.1.5. Influence of social group on purchase decision: The researcher has successfully attempted to have a deep look at the influencers among the members of the social group of the respondents, be it family members / friends / peers. The analysis of the data showed that for variety of products, there were different key influencers, suggesting that the products bought by the customers who may not be the end user, has strong relationship with the social fabric.

7.2. SUGGESTIONS
The researcher was completely aware that the true scientific research must bring some suggestions that evolve out of the efforts of data analysis. Interestingly, the study has some meaningful suggestions for both, the customers and the managers of supermarkets. These suggestions will be helpful for the stakeholders of retail industry too.

There is a continuous and significant change in the approach of consumers towards organised retail. The change is witnessed in a phased manner from curiosity to attraction and from attraction to action. The doubts, questions and misconceptions
about malls & supermarkets are still dominant because the entire concept of
supermarket & malls is new and unseen in India as in past. Malls & Supermarkets
as a marketing revolution is a phenomenon of recent origin. The spread of
supermarkets and their development is also uneven. From class A cities, the journey
has began and slowly it is taking its grip towards B & C class cities. How the
consumers are responding to this change has already been discussed in the earlier
chapter. In this area, the researcher has some suggestions based on the data analysis,
insights gained and ideas generated. The suggestions are classified in two categories
as to:

1. Suggestions to customers
2. Suggestions to supermarket managers

7.2.1. Suggestions to customers
The customer as a class is not homogenous. On the contrary, it is extremely
scattered, heterogeneous and dispersed. As rightly said, every customer is an island
in himself / herself. He has his own identity, view & approach. Hence suggestions
given here are offered considering consumers as a specific class. However the
applicability of suggestions will change with the change in the structure and
composition of consumer class. Following are the suggestions to the customers:

7.2.1.1. Collect necessary information as to the nature of supermarket:
Consumers are advised to collect adequate and necessary information as to which
type of supermarket they intend to visit. Before selecting supermarket, the
consumer should confirm what they intend to buy and in what manner.

7.2.1.2. Assess your need & requirement: A good customer should always first
identify what he intends to buy, decide appropriately his budget, needs, buying
pattern and value his visits to the supermarkets.

7.2.1.3. Not to get influenced by offers & promotional schemes: It is advisable
for the customers, that he should make rational decision of schemes and offers
which are used as promotional tools by the supermarket managers. It is extremely
essential to read between the lines, understand the fine print and conditional clauses governing different offers.

7.2.1.4. Restrained from impulse buying: A customer should not fall prey to the trap of discount, gifts, POP display and other benefits. Often the realities are different from what they see apparently as truthful. A careful and judicious examination before finalisation of buying decision is a customers’ prime responsibility.

7.2.1.5. Develop a comparative sense: A customer should develop a comparative sense of selection, analysis and buying in order to gain from different buying proposition. The blind belief of ‘supermarkets sell cheap’ needs reassessment. Similarly, the misconception of retailers’ personal attention need not be totally relied on.

7.2.2. Suggestions to supermarket store managers & marketing managers
The managers are the policy formulators for the promotion and operation of supermarket. The managers have to look at market from both the point of view as an opportunity and as a challenge. As an opportunity marketing offers a group change to enhance business, expand market share and attract new customer segment. As a challenge, it has to resolve the threat of growing competition, emergence of new business & products and changes in the other external variables affecting the sales and performance adversely. Following are the suggestions to managers as to what can be done to sustain challenge of competition and enhance the performance:

7.2.2.1. Develop rational promotional program: The crux of the situation is promotion. In marketing, noting works like a good promotion. It is necessary for the marketing managers to design the most suitable, acceptable and influential promotional program. The suggested promotional program should have following features:

i) Creativity
ii) Focussed efforts
iii) Consumer centric approach  
iv) Interesting appeals  
v) Emphasising on impulse buying.

7.2.2.2. Develop suitable loyalty programs: The success of supermarket depends on enhancing frequency of repeat buyers. In order to retain the existing customers and prove their relationship, loyalty program become an essential tool in the hands of managers. The loyalty program leads to improvement in number of existing customers, multiplication of visits and repeated visits, retention of interest in a particular product or product category, mouth publicity of CRM program. The ideal loyalty program should have following features:

i) Attract customers interest.  
ii) Create desire to be the members of the scheme.  
iii) Offer concrete, visible & real benefits to the customers.  
iv) Strong emotional appeal
A MODEL DEPICTING SUITABLE MARKETING STRATEGY FOR SUPERMARKETS IN PUNE CITY

After reviewing the responses of the respondents and opinions of supermarket managers, the researcher has come out with a tentative holistic model explaining market strategy for a supermarket in order to attract, retain and enhance customer base.

[Diagram of the model with the following components:
- Consumer Response
- Interaction
- Interface
- Inquiry
- CFA
- USP
- Loyalty Programmes
- Promotional Policies
- Defined Market Goals
- Effective PP
- VAS
- C/S]
This model is a dynamic interactive model explaining consumer behaviour and responses to marketing policies of supermarket. The model is divided in following four parts:

1. Dynamic interaction of external factors.
2. Analysis of marketing inputs.
3. Interaction of customer oriented marketing activities.
4. Resultant responses of customers.

1. The researcher feels that there are two dynamic forces that influence the marketing strategy of supermarkets. These are:
   a. Competitive Factors (CF),
   b. Market Forces (MF).

2. Similarly there is significant impact of marketing inputs on the success of marketing strategies of a supermarket. These inputs are
   a. Consumer Segmentation (CS),
   b. Value Added Services (VAS),
   c. Effective Promotional Programme (EPP).

3. Consumer oriented marketing activities that influence the marketing policies are as follows:
   a. Defined Marketing Goals (DMG),
   b. Promotional Policies (PP),
   c. Loyalty Programmes (LP),
   d. Unique Sales Proposition (USP),
   e. Consumer Focussed Activities (CFA).

4. The consumer response to the marketing policies of a supermarket thus is evoked in the following manner.
   a. Inquisitiveness & enquiries,
   b. Arousing interest,
   c. Interact with the proposal & offers,
   d. Taking interest,
e. Positive consumer response.

Thus the present model tries to explain the consumer behaviour of urban consumers in relation to marketing policies of supermarkets.