CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARKETING: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

With availability of wide variety of products and ample choice of brands within each product category, Indian market has emerged as a highly competitive and buyer’s market in the post-liberalization period. Over a period of time, Indian consumers have become very demanding and discerning in their purchase decisions. Due to increased market-place competition and buyer sophistication within the past few decades, marketers have begun to embrace the existing and upcoming marketing trends in place of old marketing practices.

In this changed scenario, firms are under pressure to embrace ‘marketing concept’ - the implementation of which is known as ‘market orientation’, and to reorient accordingly their business strategies (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990; Jain and Bhatia, 1995; Pehlam and Wilson, 1996; Jain and Bhatia, 2004). However, adoption of marketing concept requires business firms to find out consumer needs and wants in advance and develop such policies and strategies which are capable of fulfilling the identified needs and wants of consumers more effectively and efficiently than competitors, thus providing greater satisfaction to customer (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Understanding of consumer views about marketing system in which consumers participate and information about consumers’ satisfaction from the interaction of consumers with the marketers during the consumption process is vital on the part of marketers for successful marketing (Starver, 1977; Day, 1978, 1987; Lee et al., 2002; Gaski and Etzel, 2005; Ferdous and Towfique, 2008; Sirgy et al., 2008; Jain and Goel, 2008, 2011; Jain, 2011).

1.1 Consumer Attitudes towards Marketing

McCarthy (1960) postulated that consumers’ attitudes towards marketing can be examined through their views towards the four basic dimensions of marketing, i.e., the 4 P’s (product, price, promotion and place). In the past, several efforts have been made by
researchers to determine consumer attitudes towards marketing through four fundamental
dimensions of marketing management, i.e., product, price, promotion and place, and the
importance of these elements to consumers across the various demographic variables
(Barker, 1987; Wee and Chan, 1989; Chan, Yau and Chan, 1990; Chan and Cui, 2004;
Ferdous and Towfique, 2008; Jain, 2011).

Due to the impact of globalization and increased market competition consumers all over
the globe have started exercising their diligence and skills while buying goods and
services, becoming aware of their rights, raising voice against exploitation and seeking
redressal of their grievances. To protect the interest of consumers, government has also
enacted various legislations. Even though protecting the rights and interests of consumers
has been the driving force of consumerism, but attention is also required to be given to
consumer responsibilities that go along with these rights (Barksdale and Darden, 1972 and
Jain and Goel, 2011).

Several national and cross-national studies have focused on consumer attitudes towards
marketing, consumerism, government regulations and consumer responsibilities
(Barksdale and Darden, 1972; Varadarajan and Thirunarayana, 1990; Uray and Mengue,
1996; Bhuian et al., 2001; Lysonski and Durvasula, 2003; Jain, 2011) in relation to
developed and developing economies but not much work has been done in the Indian
context. Few studies available in the area have focused on limited aspects only. Thus, the
present study assumes importance as it focuses on consumer attitudes towards marketing
through four elements of marketing and related issues in reference to Indian consumers
like consumerism, government regulations and consumer responsibilities.

1.2 Consumer Well Being

Consumer well being is defined as the satisfaction of human being as a consumer during
the consumption process. Lee et al. (2002) and Sirgy et al. (2008) refer to six different
types of consumer satisfaction that take place at various spheres of consumption process:
satisfaction concerned with purchasing goods at retail store (acquisition), satisfaction
connected with congregation of product and formulating the product ready for use
(preparation), satisfaction associated with utilization of consumer goods and services
(consumption), satisfaction from possession or retention of the product (ownership),
satisfaction attached to amenities available in the market place to get the products repaired
by service providers as well as taking care of products by the owner themselves (maintenance) and satisfaction related to abandoning the product after use as trash (disposal). The consumption process comprising of above stated six stages, i.e., shopping/purchase, preparation/assembly, consumption/use, possession/ownership, repair/maintenance and disposal, is referred to as consumer life cycle. Thus, it is the satisfaction or dissatisfaction felt by the consumers during the six stages, i.e., from acquisition to disposal of consuming goods and services, which influences consumer well being (Sirgy et al., 2008).

Consumer well being is affected by marketing practices via provision of satisfaction to the consumers throughout the consumption process (Lee and Sirgy, 1995; Rook, 1985). Consumers can be satisfied by making available quality products and services at reasonable prices (Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Ganesan, 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1994; Sirgy, 1996, 2001; Sirgy and Lee, 1996).

Since marketing affects consumer well being, therefore, the impact of marketing practices on consumer well being has arouse the interest of various researchers and they have tried to determine the impact of marketers’ decisions on the well being of consumers (Day, 1978, 1987; Leelakulthanit, Day and Walters, 1991; Lee et al., 2002; Sirgy et al., 2008). Consumer satisfaction with the marketing practices during the consumption process can be ascertained by consumer well being. Thus, it is important to understand, elucidate and predict the effects that the marketing is having on the well being of Indian consumers. So an attempt is made in the present study to determine consumer well being.

1.3 Life Satisfaction

Under the rubric quality of life another significant idea which has gained attention of consumer behaviorists is the concept of life satisfaction (Peterson and Ekici, 2007). Life satisfaction can be defined as the extent to which an individual assess his/her overall quality of life affirmatively (Diener et al., 1985). In other words, it refers to the amount by which an individual adores the life led by him/her. However, Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) argued that satisfaction or dissatisfaction experiences across various life domains like work, family, cultural, spiritual and leisure etc. helps in suggesting and anticipating satisfaction with life. Thus, life satisfaction is broader term as it includes consumption as well as non-consumption satisfaction.
Few studies on life satisfaction have tried to determine the influence of factors like employment status and educational attainment on life satisfaction (Decker and Schulz, 1985; Mehnert, Krauss, Nadler and Boyd, 1990; Krause and Dawis, 1992; Diener and Diener, 1995; Keith, Heal and Schalock, 1996; Boschen, 1996; Oishi, Diener, Suh and Lucas, 1999).

Researchers have emphasized the role of consumer attitudes towards marketing and consumer well being in determining the satisfaction which consumers derive from the life as a whole (Lee et al., 2002 and Peterson and Ekici, 2007). Peterson and Ekici (2007) suggested in their study that consumer attitudes towards marketing and life satisfaction (Quality of Life) are positively related. They have also identified that some of the dimensions of consumers attitudes towards marketing are overlapping with acquisition stage of consumer well being. In a similar vein, Lee et al. (2002) argued that life satisfaction of consumers is being influenced by the emotions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of consumers during the cycle of consumption. Moreover, various domains of life such as health, job, family, social, cultural, leisure, spiritual and finance etc. are influenced by the consumer interfaces with the marketing during the consumption cycle implying that marketing affects life satisfaction through other domains of life (Day, 1978, 1987; Leelakulthanit, Day and Walters, 1991; Lee and Sirgy, 1995; Sirgy, 2001). In simple terms, it means that it is not only the satisfaction with consumption cycle, but also the consumer satisfaction with other domains in life which influences satisfaction with life.

1.4 Influence of Demographic Variables on Consumer Attitudes, Consumer Well Being and Life Satisfaction

In the past, it has been found that consumer attitudes differ across demographic variables. Several efforts have been made by researchers to examine the influence of various demographic variables such as marital status, income, occupation, education, age and gender on consumers’ overall attitudes towards marketing as well as each of the four P’s, i.e., product, price, promotion and place. (Barker, 1987; Wee and Chan, 1989; Chan and Cui, 2004; Ferdous and Towfique, 2008 and Jain, 2011).

Few studies on life satisfaction have also tried to determine the influence of factors like employment status and educational attainment on life satisfaction (Decker and Schulz,

Though not much of the work has been done to determine the influence of demographic variables on consumer attitudes toward consumerism, government regulations, consumer responsibilities and consumer well being, yet based on the discussion in preceding paragraphs it will be of interest to examine the influence of demographic variables on consumer attitudes, consumer well being and life satisfaction.

1.5 Need for the Study

Role of marketing in India is distinct from that in western countries because of the very distinguished feature of mixed economy, i.e., presence of both planned and market economies. Furthermore, lower incomes, lack of information with consumers and feebly developed marketing facilities suggest that pertinent issues regarding marketing may be prominently different from developed nations. Therefore, to serve the consumers more efficiently, more systematic information is needed to impart light on consumer attitudes toward marketing in India, the extent to which consumers feel that consumerism is an important issue and can bring a positive change in the performance of firms and consumer opinions about the sufficiency and efficacy of the government regulations to protect consumer interests as well as consumers own responsibilities and impact of marketing activities on Indian consumer well being (i.e., how far marketing provides satisfaction in the entire consumption process) as well as life satisfaction. The present study is an attempt to collect all this information. Also, an attempt is made in the present study to ascertain the relationship of consumer attitudes towards marketing with consumer well being and life satisfaction.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

The study attempts to fulfill the following objectives:

- To study consumers attitudes towards marketing mix elements i.e., product, price, place and promotion, overall marketing and operating philosophy of business firms.
• To examine the consumers attitudes towards consumerism, government regulations and consumer responsibilities.

• To measure consumer well being (CWB) and satisfaction with life (SWL).

• To ascertain the relation among consumer attitudes towards marketing (CATM), consumer well being (CWB) and satisfaction with life (SWL).

• To assess the influence of demographic variables like gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, family income, marital status and residential area on consumer attitudes towards marketing mix elements, overall marketing, operating philosophy of business firms, consumerism, government regulations, consumer responsibilities, consumer well being and life satisfaction.

• To make suggestions and recommendations for more effective marketing in future.

1.7 Research Hypotheses

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, some of the important hypotheses of this study are stated below:

• There are no significant differences in consumer attitudes towards various elements of marketing mix (i.e., product, price, place and promotion), overall marketing and operating philosophy of business firms across various demographic variables like gender, age, educational qualifications, occupations, family income, marital status and residential area.

• The attitudes of consumers towards consumerism, government regulations and consumer responsibilities do not differ significantly across various demographic variables.

• There are no significant differences in consumer well being (CWB) and satisfaction with life (SWL) across various demographic variables.

• There is no correlation between consumer attitudes towards marketing (CATM) and consumer well being (CWB).
There is no correlation between consumer attitudes towards marketing (CATM) and satisfaction with life (SWL).

There is no relationship between consumer well being (CWB) with satisfaction with life (SWL).

1.8 Research Design and Methodology


Primary data have been collected with the help of survey of Indian consumers. For the present study, using convenience sampling technique, a survey of Indian consumers in and around the metropolitan city of ‘Delhi’ was conducted during the months of February-April, 2012. Due care has been taken during the sampling process to ensure sufficient representation of respondents from different gender, socio-economic, age, education and occupation groups.

The data collected from the survey have been analyzed with the help of various statistical tools such as mean, percent, standard deviation, independent samples t–test, one way analysis of variance and correlation using SPSS software 16.0 version.

1.9 Findings of the Study

Consumers’ attitudes for the various issues are compared across age, gender, marital status, income, education, occupation and residential area, as well as composite results have been obtained and analyzed in this study. The major conclusions of the present study are presented here.

Overall, consumers have least favorable views about price and most positive views about distribution. Consumers have sanguine views about overall marketing, operating philosophy of business firms, consumerism, government regulations and consumer
responsibilities. Consumers have exhibited positive scores regarding their well being and life satisfaction.

While comparing consumer attitudes across gender, it is found that men hold more optimistic views about various elements of marketing than women. Also, men have more positive views about overall marketing, operating philosophy of business firms, consumerism, government regulations, consumer responsibilities, consumer well being and life satisfaction.

In terms of age, it has been found that younger respondents have more positive views about various elements of marketing, overall marketing, operating philosophy of firms, consumerism, government regulations and consumer responsibilities. Also, they demonstrate more affirmative scores toward consumer well being and life satisfaction than older respondents.

Education qualification also influences consumers attitudes as respondents belonging to post graduate group have expressed more sanguine attitudes for the four elements and are more satisfied with their lives and well being than respondents belonging to under graduate group. Also, post graduate respondents are more optimistic for operating philosophy of business firms, overall marketing, consumerism, government regulations and consumer responsibilities.

While comparing consumer attitudes across occupation, professionals have exhibited more positive attitudes toward various elements of marketing and publicized that they derive more satisfaction from their lives than housewives. This finding is not surprising as occupation and educational attainment are related. Those who have better jobs are mostly those who have attained a higher level of education. Since better educated consumers are found to perceive marketing and others issues more favorably, it is reasonable that a similar relationship exist for occupation. Professionals also showed more positive feelings for overall marketing, operating philosophy of business firms, consumerism, government regulations and consumer responsibilities than housewives.

Consumers belonging to high income groups have very positive feelings about the various elements of marketing, operating philosophy of business firms, overall marketing and are more satisfied with their well being and life than consumers belonging to lower income groups. Also, respondents belonging to high income groups have exhibited more positive
attitudes toward consumerism, government regulations and consumer responsibilities than low income groups.

Family income, education and occupation are generally used to measure social status and are always highly correlated. The results of this study reveal that consumers belonging to high income groups, occupation and better education have more positive views about various elements of marketing and other related aspects.

It has been noted that unmarried respondents hold more positive views for various elements of marketing. They have also displayed more favorable feelings for overall marketing, operating philosophy of business firms, consumerism, government regulations, consumer responsibilities, consumer well being and life satisfaction.

Rural consumers have displayed more favorable feelings in respect of price, advertisement, overall marketing, operating philosophy of business firms, consumer well being and life satisfaction than urban consumers. But they have less favorable opinions about consumerism, government regulations and consumer responsibilities than urban consumers. Government regulations and facilities for consumer protection are almost nonexistent in the rural areas and the lack of consumer knowledge enhances rural consumers’ vulnerability, implying greater responsibility for marketers in rural areas.

Positive and significant correlation coefficients have been found while ascertaining the relationship among overall attitude towards marketing, consumer well being and life satisfaction.

Based on the findings of the study, last Chapter suggests the implications to marketing practitioners, consumer welfare advocates and public policy makers. It also discusses the limitations of the study and provides directions for future researches in the area.