CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION
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A brief summary of findings and conclusions that have emanated from the study are presented in this chapter. In addition, suggestions to be considered and scope for further research are also highlighted here.

Comparative ads of durables are being used extensively in the Indian industry ever since the Indian Government took steps to reform, liberalise and globalise the Indian economy. The increase in competition has forced companies to use aggressive advertising tactics. For durables like television, washing machine and refrigerator, repeated comparative ads are being given in the print media. The target group for such advertisements is upper middle class, upper class, educated consumers or industrial consumers. These advertisements are high on information content and significance of information provided as well. Advertisers are using comparative graphs / pictures / schedules and all these have made these advertisements rich on information content. In the comparative schedule, a number of attributes, features, price, performance factors and product benefits are listed. The presence of all the attributes/features in the comparison brand and absence of all these in the competitors’ brands is indicated by a tick mark (✓) and into mark (✗). If the consumers perceive that accurate comparative information about the product of interest is provided and that they are, as a result, better informed and they tend to regard the comparative ad of durables as valuable.

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH

This research is “Impact of Comparative Advertisement on Consumer Buying Behaviour—A study with special reference to selected consumer durables in the city of Chennai”.
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

**General:** The broad objective of the study is to examine and find out whether or not comparative ad impacts the purchase of consumer durables in the city of Chennai. The study further attempts to find out the reasons for such an impact whether favourable buying or unfavourable buying among the consumers in the city of Chennai.

**Specific:** Based on the above general objective, the following specific objectives were framed for the study:

(i) To study the characteristics of consumers owning selected consumer durables i.e. Television, Washing machine and Refrigerator.

(ii) To ascertain the extent of awareness of the consumers about comparative ad of different brands of selected consumer durables.

(iii) To find out consumers’ perception about comparative ads for selected consumer durables.

(iv) To analyse the impact of comparative ads on purchase of selected consumer durables

(v) To verify whether the comparative ad is more effective than non-comparative ad

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The universe of the study consists of male and female respondents who are very much interested in seeing comparative ads of durables in the print media. Through adoption of random sampling technique, a sample of 300 users of durables was selected in the city of Chennai. Therefore, the sample size is 300. The required information has been collected from the both sources of data.
Secondary data has been collected from standard text books, magazines, journals, newspapers and Internet. The primary data has been collected directly from sample respondents through questionnaire which is pre – tested among 30 users of durables and modified. All the tables for the present study are constructed from the information gathered in questionnaire. Simple percentage, mean, standard deviation, t–test, F–test, ANOVA, Chi – square test and multiple regression analysis have been used to analyse the data for the present study.

**PRODUCTS SELECTED FOR THE STUDY**

Three durables viz., television, washing machine and refrigerator have been chosen for the study because most of the comparative ads are given only for these three products in the print media.

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The findings of the study have been summarized under three major headings viz., consumer buying behaviour with respect to consumer durables, consumers’ perception about comparative ad and product – wise impact of comparative ad. All these three aspects have been discussed in the following pages:

I. **ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR WITH RESPECT TO DURABLES**

Although this study is mainly focused on ascertaining the impact of comparative ad on durable purchase behaviour of consumer, the researcher of the present study has made an attempt to learn about personal profile and general buying behaviour of users of selected durables like television, washing machine and refrigerator. For this purpose, questions relating to consumers’ personal profile such as age, sex, marital status, educational qualification,
occupation, monthly family income, family size and number of family members employed, durables owned by them, brand of durables they possess, attributes they considered at the time of purchase, their level of satisfaction on purchased durables, brand loyalty and factors influenced their durable purchase decision were posed to 300 sample respondents. The responses of the sample respondents have been analysed by using simple percentage. The following are the major observations made after making an analysis of data collected from various respondents and from general discussions made with them:

- Majority (54.66%) of the consumer respondents are in the age groups of 26 to 45, i.e. the young and middle aged categories.

- Majority (55.67%) of the consumer respondents are female.

- Majority (64.33%) of the consumer respondents are married.

- 10% of the consumer respondents completed only school education and the remaining 90% of the consumer respondents have higher education qualifications. There are no illiterates in the sample consumer respondents.

- A sizeable percentage (42%) of consumer respondents are employed in private sector.

- A sizeable percentage (41.67%) of consumer respondents are in the income group of Rs.5,001 to Rs.15,000 per mensum.

- With regard to family size, the study reveals that majority (81.34%) of the consumer respondents’ families are nuclear families (consisting of four to five members).
With regard to number of persons employed, the study discloses that the majority (59.67%) of the consumer respondents families having two to four members are employed.

Out of 300 consumer respondents, 100% of the respondents owned television, 65.67% of the respondents possessed washing machine and 86.33% of the respondents are having refrigerator.

In case of television product, 22.33% of consumer respondents own BPL Television, 17.33% of consumer respondents own LG Television.

In case of washing machine, 21.32% of consumer respondents use Whirlpool washing machine, 14.72% of consumer respondents use BPL and Kelvinator washing machines.

In case of refrigerator, 20.48% of consumer respondents have LG Refrigerator, 17.76% of consumer respondents are having Samsung Refrigerator.

Attributes that are considered at the time of purchase, the study shows that the consumer respondents of all the three durables (i.e. television, washing machine and refrigerator) look for quality of product rather than any attribute followed by brand name, price, product features, performance, after sales service, warrantee and hire purchase facility.

Regarding level of satisfaction of consumers respondents on durables purchased, the study reveals that the overwhelming majority of consumer respondents of all the three durables are satisfied with their durables owned by them (score wise as well as percentage wise – more than 75%).
Regarding brand loyalty of consumer respondents, the study shows that the majority of the consumer respondents (more than 50%) intend to go for the same brand of all the three durables (i.e. television, washing machine and refrigerator) in future. The conviction arising out of personal experience from the usage of product has developed brand loyalty among the overwhelming majority (84.07%) of the consumer respondents.

With regard to intention to switch over, the study reveals that although 47 consumer respondents, out of 300 consumer respondents, are not interested in continuing the same brand of the product, majority of them (76.60%) have not yet decided to go in for some other brands.

Regarding reasons for switching brands, the study shows that the overwhelming majority of the users of television and washing machine intend to change their brands due to presence of advanced features in other brands. The majority of the users of refrigerator (54.55%) have decided to change their brands for the same reason.

Regarding attention to advertisement for durables, the study discloses that the overwhelming majority of the consumer respondents (83.67%) are attentive towards advertisement given by different durable players.

With regard to effectiveness of different media of advertisement of durables, the study reveals that the majority of the consumer respondents having television (52.19%) are attracted by newspaper advertisement, followed by television advertisement, whereas in case of users of washing machine and refrigerator, a
sizeable percentage of consumer respondents evince interest in newspaper advertisement, followed by television advertisement.

- Factors influencing the purchase of durables, the study shows that 300 consumer respondents have given 358 answers saying that the factors influencing their durable purchase decision. It implies that some of the 300 consumer respondents have taken into consideration not only advertisement but also other factors such as advice of family members, suggestions from friends and dealers/representatives recommendations at the time of durable purchase. However, overwhelming majority of the consumer respondents (83.67%) are influenced by advertisement,

II. ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF COMPARATIVE ADVERTISEMENT

As comparative ad is gaining popularity in India, the researcher of this study evinced interest in studying the perception of consumers towards the same. For this purpose, questions relating to consumer awareness of comparative ad, usefulness of comparative ad to arrive at purchase decision, influence of comparative ad on actual purchase, honesty and tolerability of comparative ad, exaggeration in comparative ad, Influence of comparative ad on buying motivation, product information, buying decision, post purchase behaviour and negative effects of comparative ad and exclusive benefits of comparative ad were posed to the respondents. Apart from these, an attempt was made to assess the behaviour of consumer’s characteristics viz., gender, marital status, age, education, occupation, income and family size, on the impact of comparative ad. The superiority of comparative ad over non-comparative ad was also questioned with the consumers. The following are the findings of the study relating to perception of consumers towards comparative ad:
CONSUMER AWARENESS

A sizeable number of respondents (42%) sometimes notice comparative ad if catchy, followed by conscious search for them.

PURCHASE DECISION

Majority of the consumer respondents (64.3%) consider the information given in the comparative ad really useful in arriving at proper purchase decision.

ACTUAL PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

Majority of the consumer respondents (51%) are influenced by the comparative ad while making actual durable purchase.

HONESTY

Majority of the consumer respondents (51.33%) are of the opinion that the comparative ads given by BPL and LG companies for their televisions products are not honest and believable.

TOLERABILITY

Majority of the consumer respondents (56%) have opined that the comparative ads for washing machine are within tolerable limit as far as LG and Whirlpool companies are concerned.

EXAGGERATION

Majority of the consumer respondents (56%) have felt that there are no exaggeration in the claims made in the comparative ads given by LG and Samsung companies for their refrigerators.
BUYING MOTIVATION

The study has examined the extent of influence of various factors of comparative ad (i.e. public attention, true picture of product, useful information, boosts the consumer ego, creating confidence, brand image, reflects quality, value to product and publicity) on buying motivation. It is found that there is significant difference between mean rank towards factors of comparative ad influencing the buying motivation. This implies that different factors of comparative ad may have different levels of influence on buying motivation.

ENHANCEMENT OF PRODUCT INFORMATION

The study has attempted to identify whether the comparative ad has really enhanced product information. For this purpose, factors of comparative ad like instant awareness, lasting impression, pave way for USP, recognition of product, product identification, noticed better and a source of information were taken into consideration. It is found that there is significant difference between mean rank towards influence of factors of comparative ad in enhancement of product information. This implies that different factors of comparative ad may have different levels of influence in enhancement of product information.

BUYING DECISION

The study has explored to identify the extent of influence of various factors of comparative ad (i.e. refreshes memory, favourable attitude, intelligent choice, enhancement of buyer’s urge, reduces risk and add new dimensions) on taking proper purchase decision. It is found that there is significant difference between mean rank towards influence of factors of comparative ad in taking proper purchase decision. This implies that different
factors of comparative ad may have different amount of weightage on durable buying decision.

POST PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

The study has also attempted to ascertain the extent of influence of factors of comparative ad (i.e. new life style, effective method of sales promotion, positive impact on future product, reducing psychological tension, possibility of purchase of comparatively advertised product) on post purchase behaviour of consumer. It is found that there is significant difference between mean rank towards influence of factors of comparative ad on post purchase behaviour of the consumers. This implies that different factors of comparative ad may have different amount of impact on consumers' post purchase behaviour.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS

The study has investigated the extent of agreement to the different negative effects of comparative ad (i.e. tall claims, depreciating competitor’s product, affecting price, legal problems, free advertising for competitors’ products, retaliation from competitors, false information, playing on weaknesses of consumers, confusing consumers). It is found that there is significant difference between mean rank towards different negative effects of comparative ad. This implies that different negative effects of comparative ad may have different amount of weightage.

EXCLUSIVE BENEFITS

The study has investigated the amount of benefits (such as features, price, shortcomings of competing product, technical details, clear picture of diverse brands) enjoyed by the consumers out of comparative ad. It is found that there is significant difference between mean rank towards exclusive
benefits of comparative ad. This implies that each exclusive benefit of comparative ad may vary in terms of its value.

**SEX AND IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD**

The study has examined the differences on perception towards impact of comparative advertisement between male and female respondents. It is found that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents with respect to dimensions of impact of comparative ad. It implies that irrespective of the group, they belong to, that in sex wise, have similar views on the concept of comparative ad.

**MARITAL STATUS AND IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD**

An attempt was made to find out the differences on perception towards impact of comparative ad between married and single respondents. It is found that there is no significant difference between married and single respondents with regard to dimensions of impact of comparative ad. However, surprisingly there is significant difference between married and single respondents with regard to buying motivation and negative effects of comparative ad. This implies that irrespective of their marital status, the respondents might have found some contents of comparative ad unbelievable and exaggerated.

**AGE AND IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD**

The study has examined the differences of perception towards impact of comparative ad among the four age groups. It is found that there are no significant differences among four age groups with regard to dimensions of impact of comparative ad. However, regarding negative effects of comparative ad, there are significant differences among four age groups. This implies that the older people with their vast experience could have come across negative
effects of comparative ad in their lives compared to youngsters who lack experience.

EDUCATION AND IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD

An attempt has been made, in this study, to identify the differences on perception towards impact of comparative ad among the five educated groups. It is ascertained that there are no significant differences among the five educated groups with regard to dimensions of impact of comparative ad. However, regarding negative effective of comparative ad, there are significant differences among five educated groups of respondent.

Among the five educated groups of respondents, the professional group differs from graduate group in respect of negative effects. This implies that the professional group might have got more information on negative effects of comparative ad than the graduate group.

OCCUPATION AND IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD

The study has investigated the differences on perception towards impact of comparative ad among the respondents in different occupations. It is found that there are no significant differences among the respondents in different occupations with regard to dimensions of impact of comparative ad. This implies that irrespective of occupation they indulge in, their perceptions towards comparative ad are the same.

INCOME LEVEL AND IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD

An attempt has been made, in the present study, to ascertain the differences on perception towards impact of comparative ad among the different levels of income groups. It is found that there are no significant differences (at 1% level of significance) among various income groups with
respect to dimensions of impact of comparative ad. This implies that the respondents, irrespective of their income, appear to have similar perception of comparative ad

FAMILY SIZE AND IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD

The study has examined the differences on perception towards impact of comparative ad among the three different family sizes of the respondents. It is found that there are no significant differences among the three different family sizes of the respondents with regard to dimensions of impact of comparative ad. It implies that all the three family groups whether big or small, are influenced in the same way by comparative ad for purchase of durables.

COMPARATIVE AD VERSUS NON-COMPARATIVE AD

An attempt has been made to identify the superiority of comparative ad over non comparative ad. The multiple regression analysis has revealed that the comparative ad is more effective than non comparative ad. The effectiveness of comparative ad is being enhanced due to independent variables such as buying motivation, enhancement of product information, buying decision, post purchase behaviour and exclusive benefits. However, there is a decline in the effectiveness of comparative ad due to presence of negative elements effects in it.

III. ANALYSIS OF PRODUCT–WISE IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD OF DURABLES

Comparative advertising for durables has been on increasing side in India. In order to find out the extent of influence of comparative ad in durable purchase decision, three products i.e. television, washing machine and refrigerator for which repeated comparative advertisements given in print media, have been chosen for the present study. As far as television is
concerned, four durable players such as LG, BPL, Akai, and Panasonic are using comparative ad to popularize their products. In washing machine segment, LG, Samsung, Whirlpool and BPL companies are battling with their competitors using comparative ad as a weapon. In refrigerator market, there is a war of words in comparative ads given by refrigerator companies such as LG, BPL and Whirlpool. Through questionnaire, perception of comparative ad and purchase behaviour of users of all the three comparatively advertised products were collected. Similarly, the views about comparative ad and purchase behaviour of non-users of all the three comparatively advertised products were gathered. The views of both users and non-users of comparatively advertised durables are analysed and presented as given below:

**USERS OF TELEVISION**

The study has explored to identify the number of respondents having comparatively advertised television and other televisions. It is found that the majority of the respondents (55.33%) are using televisions of those companies which adopt comparative ad. This implies that majority of the respondents were influenced by comparative ad in their television purchase.

**USERS OF WASHING MACHINE**

An attempt has been made, in this study, to find out users of comparatively advertised washing machine and users of other washing machines. It is ascertained that majority of the respondents (58.88%) are having washing machine of those companies which follow comparative ad. This implies that the majority of sample respondents might have been influenced by comparative ad while purchasing their washing machines.

**USERS OF REFRIGERATOR**
The study has also attempted to ascertain the users of comparatively advertised refrigerator and users of other refrigerators. It is observed that the sizeable percentage of respondents (49.81%) are having refrigerator of those companies which consider comparative ad as a tool to popularize their products. This implies that the impact of comparative ad is felt in the refrigerator market also.

TELEVISION PURCHASE DECISION

In this study, an attempt has been made to find out the differences of opinion regarding usefulness of comparative ad in making television purchase decision. It is observed that there is significant difference between users of comparatively advertised television and users of other televisions with regard to usefulness of comparative ad in making purchase decision. This implies that the users of comparatively advertised television might have found the contents of comparative ad more informative than users of other televisions.

ACTUAL TELEVISION PURCHASE

The study has examined the differences of views regarding influence of comparative ad in actual television purchase. It is found that there is significant difference in the rating of influence of comparative ad between users of comparatively advertised television and users of other televisions. This implies that the users of comparatively advertised television might have purchased their own televisions on the basis of information given in comparative ad.

WASHING MACHINE PURCHASE DECISION

An attempt has been made, in the study, to ascertain the differences of perceptions regarding usefulness of comparative ad in taking washing machine purchase decision. It is observed that there is significant difference between users of comparatively advertised washing machine and users of other washing
machines. This implies that the users of comparatively advertised washing machine might have got more information from the features listed in comparative ad for taking purchase decision than users of other washing machines.

ACTUAL WASHING MACHINE PURCHASE

The study has investigated the differences of views regarding influence of comparative ad in actual washing machine purchase. It is observed that there is significant difference between users of comparatively advertised washing machine and users of other washing machines with respect to influence of comparative ad in purchasing washing machine. This implies that the users of comparatively advertised washing machine might have purchased their own washing machines on the basis of comparative features listed in the comparative ad.

REFRIGERATOR PURCHASE DECISION

In the present study, an attempt has been made to know the differences of opinions regarding usefulness of comparative ad in taking proper purchase decision of refrigerator. It is observed that there is significant difference between users of comparatively advertised refrigerator and users of other refrigerators, with regard to usefulness of comparative ad in taking proper purchase decision for refrigerator. This implies that the users of comparatively advertised refrigerator might have got more information about features and price of difference brands from comparative ad for taking their purchase decision than users of other refrigerators.

ACTUAL REFRIGERATOR PURCHASE

The study has examined the differences of views regarding the extent of influence of comparative ad in actual refrigerator purchase. It is found that
there is significant difference in the rating of influence of comparative ad between users of comparatively advertised refrigerator and users of other refrigerators. This implies that the users of comparatively advertised refrigerator might have used all those features, price information given in comparative ad for their own purchase of refrigerator.

**DIMENSIONS OF IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD - TELEVISIONS PURCHASE**

An attempt has been made in this study, to find the differences of perceptions regarding dimensions of impact of comparative ad on purchase of television. It is observed that there is no significant difference between users of comparatively advertised television and users of other televisions with regard to dimensions of impact of comparative ad on television purchase. This implies that both users appear to have similar views on pros and cons of comparative ad for television.

**DIMENSIONS OF IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD-WASHING MACHINE PURCHASE**

In this study, an attempt has been made to ascertain the differences of opinions regarding dimensions of impact of comparative ad on purchase of washing machine. It is found that there is no significant difference between users of comparatively advertised washing machine and users of other washing machines with respect to dimensions of impact of comparative ad on washing machine purchase. This implies that both users seem to have similar views on contents of comparative ad for washing machine.

**DIMENSIONS OF IMPACT OF COMPARATIVE AD-REFRIGERATOR PURCHASE**
The study has examined the differences of views regarding dimensions of impact of comparative ad on purchase of refrigerator. It is observed that there is no significant difference between users of comparatively advertised refrigerator and users of other refrigerators. This implies that both users may have similar views on benefits of comparative schedule, in which features of different brands are listed, given in comparative ad for refrigerator.

SUGGESTIONS

As majority of the sample respondents have voiced their concerns over negative effects of comparative ad, serious attention is badly needed to remove such stain in the comparative ad. In order to make the comparative ad more informative and consumer-friendly, the following suggestions may be useful to advertisers and agencies:

- Comparative ads that denigrate competitors may gain attention but at the same time it may not result in positive feelings after viewing the advertisement. Too much of negative comparison creates intense dislike toward the sponsored brand (Naveen Donthu 1991). Thus, advertisers must exercise caution and avoid denigration of competitors, while targeting consumers.

- In comparative ad for durables, the language used was found to be unintelligible. The use of technical language should be avoided to the maximum extent.

- Quoting of accreditation agencies in the advertisement to substantiate the claims made would enhance the effectiveness of the advertisements.

- In the Indian context it was also observed that the number of comparison brands in a specific advertisement was on the higher
side (more than five). Research done in the past suggests that the sponsoring brand is likely to be perceived similarly to that of the comparison brand (Pechman and Rathenshwar 1991). Thus, advertisers should be conscious of the likelihood of the sponsoring brand being perceived similarly to that of the comparison brands in terms of attributes not mentioned in the advertisement.

- While it is important for comparative ads to be high on information content, too much of information would definitely reduce the effectiveness of the advertisements. Thus, advertisement must attempt to highlight highly relevant, familiar and brief set of features and benefits as against unfamiliar, unintelligible and exhaustive set of features and benefits.

- Inclusion of price information appears to enhance the effectiveness of comparative ads from a managerial point of view. In the Indian context, very few advertisements had provided price information, which is very surprising. Indian advertisers may do well to include price comparisons to enhance the effectiveness of their advertisements.

- To put in nutshell, Comparative ads could be a useful tool for advertisers to differentiate against competitors, to break myths about competitors and to break the brand loyalty of competitor brands and gain entry into the markets. Research has proved that this format of advertisement could be very beneficial to new entrants. However, the information content of comparative ad (especially in the print media) is very important. The information provided should be useful, beneficial, presented effectively to minimize negative feelings and enable change of attitudes and to
facilitate better decision-making. Too much of denigration of competitors, excessive information and providing insignificant information would not only reduce the effectiveness of the advertisement but may also have negative impact on the consumers.

Scope for Further Research

The impact of comparative ads on brand loyalty is yet another aspect that needs to be studied. Creation of brand loyalty with the help of comparative information is bound to change when competitors provide information to the contrary on a future date. Thus, whether brand loyalty can be created on a sustained basis with the help of comparative ads is question that can be answered through further study in this area.

It may also be of interest to study how comparison factor can be used to achieve the various objectives of an advertisement like gaining interest, enhancing image, level of persuasion, etc.

In a given study, certain advertisers had based their comparisons on many attributes, features, performance factors and benefits. The effectiveness of comparative ads in differentiating the product, is put to question when consumers are forced to consider so much of information. It may not be possible for a consumer to associate a particular brand with so many attributes. The extent of information that is optimal to enable consumers to form associations or to differentiate the product as against that of competitors could be investigated through future study in this area.
CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are derived:

The study concluded that the sample respondents, consulted for this study, appear to be more dependable and loyal to the brands of durables that they possess now. Company’s advertisement, reputations, price, and quality of the durables are some of the major factors influenced their durable purchase. Friends and relative advice, dealer recommendation and credit facility also played a vital role in their durable purchase. Newspaper advertisement and television advertisements are considered as effective media of advertisement.

The study concluded that comparative ad has become very popular among the general public. The sample respondents appear to be well aware of comparative ad given in print media. Their durable purchase decisions were mostly based on contents of comparative ad. There is no exaggeration in the claims made in the comparative ads. The mudslinging in the comparative ad is within tolerable limit. The contents of comparative ad is considered highly informative and useful. The comparative ad not only motivates the consumers but also helps them in taking proper purchase decision. The consumers, who have purchased durables based on the contents of comparative ad., appear to have new life style and be relieved from the tension of choosing right brand of durables. The sample respondents, irrespective of the groups they belong to, that is sex – wise, marital status wise, income wise, occupation wise, education wise and family size wise, seem to have similar views on all dimensions of impact of comparative ad except negative effects. Most of the sample respondents consider negative effects as a black mark in comparative ad.

The study also concluded that the product wise impact of comparative ad is noteworthy. The majority of the sample respondents are found to have
television, washing machine, and refrigerator of those companies, which use comparative ads as their tools to popularize their products. The users of comparatively advertised television, washing machine and refrigerator appear to be more benefited than users of other televisions, washing machines and refrigerators.

From the foregoing research study, it is clear that comparative ads are considered superior to traditional (non-comparative) ads and boon to the consuming public. It will not be a matter of exaggeration to say that comparative advertising could work as an excellent strategy which would greatly help save time, cost and efforts involved in buying and would make the whole buying process a pleasurable exercise.