1.1 INTRODUCTION

Consumer behaviour can be defined as the sum total of how individuals and groups recognize and determine their needs and how they purchase and experiences goods and services to meet those needs. It includes “what-where-why-when-and-how” of the purchase and experience process. The consumer buying process is a complex matter as many internal and external factors have an impact on the buying decisions of consumers. Consumers do not spend much time thinking about the purchase of low value products which are bought on impulse. Manufacturers of such products will need to implement strategies that encourage consumers to buy on impulse from them instead of their competitors. When consumers purchase high value products or non impulse products, they often go through a set process. It may be argued that academics in the field of `consumer behaviour' have the best basis to examine durable goods ownership, because they can draw on the insights from many disciplines.

Consumer behaviour is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by various factors such as income, occupation, education, lifestyle and geographical location. To use a single factor to understand rural consumer behaviour would be misleading. Also, the assumption of urban marketers that the rural consumer is no different from his urban counterpart is a mistake that has led to many a failure in rural marketing.

Consumer behaviour refers to the interaction between price changes of products and consumer demand too (http://www.bized.ac.uk/fme). It reflects in their search for different products of different level of their involvement required to purchase & consume. High involvement only requires in those products, which are of high price, complex features, large difference between options, high perceived risk, reflect the self-concept of the buyer.
The consumption patterns, tastes and needs of the rural consumers are entirely
different from that of urban consumers. While it is evident that urban Indian has adapted
much faster than the rural consumer due to higher exposure of media and changing life
style, the rural consumers are not far behind (Vidyavathi 2008). Hence the buying
behaviour of rural consumers has become a hot topic for discussion because rural India,
in recent days, is enthusiastically consuming everything from shampoo to motor cycles
and this “rural predilection” is being considered as one of the significant topics of market
analysis (Arpita Khare 2010).

The rural sector, which encompasses about 70 percent of the total population, has
an important role to play in the overall development of the country. Rural India is now
undergoing a sea change resulting from the multi-pronged activities undertaken for
overall development of villages. There is an indication of increasing prosperity in rural
India. Prosperity in the rural areas has opened up new opportunities. It leads to certain
definite increase in the demand for durable and non-durable goods. Also significant
changes have been noticed in the buying and consumption pattern of the rural
consumers, imbibing new ideas, attitude and way of life. As a result of the green
revolution, there is a socio-economic revolution taking place in Indian villages since the
last three decades. Increasing knowledge of fertilizers, water resources, pesticides, better
quality seeds, modern farm equipments and methods of farming have made the villages
far better. The per capita income of the farmers is on the increase and the manner in
which they spend their disposable income has also changed. The rural market is not
passive. It is vibrant and growing at a faster pace. It will soon outstrip the urban
market if this pace of development continues.

Prosperity in rural areas is very much reflected in the buying and consumption
habits of rural folks. Their inclination to spend on the modern gadgets has
increased as a result of their increase in their purchasing power. This necessitates an
appraisal of the rural marketing environment which is an outgrowth of various socio-
economic and cultural forces. For evolving an appropriate marketing strategy,
understanding the rural environment is quite essential. Recently attempts were
made to define the distinct differences between the urban and rural markets on the basis of the various socio-economic factors (Rajendra Kumar 2004).

Rural consumers are influenced by rationality, personal experience and the level of utility that is derived from the consumption, etc. Their buying behaviour is influenced by experience of their own friends, relatives and family members. Above all, quality of the product and its easy availability are the primary and vital determinants of the consumer buying behaviour. The techniques of bombarding product messages have a limited influence. Rural consumers are very much attached to and influenced by touch and feel aspect of any promotional activity (Shivaraj B. 2006).

Last few years have witnessed of growing demands for different consumer products (Chunawalla, 2000). Increase in demand is a result of increase in income of the people and increase in discretionary income too (Arora, 1995). A rise in discretionary income results usually in an increased spending by consumer on those items that raise their living standards, Moreover, a trend for people to utilize their income for more comforts and facilities is also developing. Intense competition among the marketers of consumer durables (Sontaki, 1999) and the increasing awareness of consumers about their own needs, is making a major difference in marketing of consumer durables (Kumar, 1998). In the context of the above scenario, it is interesting to study how the human beings i.e. consumers, satisfy their different non-basic needs. Moreover, it is interesting to study, why they buy a particular product, how they buy it, when they buy it, from where do they buy it, etc (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1995). A study (Radhakrishanan, 1990) has found that “many things that were considered as luxuries till about ten years ago have become necessities for most people today.”

Kanyakumari district in the state of Tamilnadu is purposely selected for the present study since the district happens to be the birth place and it is familiar to the researcher. This district takes its name from the town of Kanyakumari at the southern tip of India. The district included four taluks of Vilavancode, Kalkulam, Thovalai and Agasteeswaram with a total area of 1684 square kilometers. As of 2011 census the
district had a population of 1,863,174 and 83% of the district is urbanized. Nagercoil is the administrative headquarters of this district. It ranks first in literacy among other districts in Tamilnadu.

1.2 RURAL CONSUMERS IN INDIA

In the initial years the focus was on the easily accessible, well developed urban market. Soon there was proliferation of brands and intense competition resulting in the near saturation of the urban market. This forced companies to go in for greener pasture that is new markets. All eyes turned to the world most promising potential market of 742 million rural consumers, who had yet to taste the fruit of modernity.

1.2.1. Illusion about rural consumers

- The belief that rural people do not buy branded products.
- The belief that rural customer buy cheap products. In reality they seek value for their money.
- The belief that rural market is homogenous mass. In fact it is fascinatingly heterogeneous.

The census of India defines rural as any habitation with a population density of less than 400 per square kilometers where at least 75% of male working population is engaged in agriculture & where there exists no municipality.

Rural consumers are fundamentally different from their urban counterparts and different rural geographies display considerable heterogeneity calling for rural specific and region specific strategies e.g. a farmer in rural Punjab is much more progressive than his counterpart in Bihar. A farmer in Karnataka is far more educated than one in Rajasthan & so on. An urban individual is free to take independent purchase decision. In a village, because of strong social structure, including caste consideration and low literacy level, community decision making it quite common. Companies face many challenges in tackling the rural markets. Marketing is all about “Getting to know your
customer”. But this cardinal principle largely ignored, most corporate in rural markets find that success has eluded them.

About 285 millions live in urban India whereas 792 million resides in rural areas. 72% of India’s population resides in its 600000 villages. Many companies like Godrej, Samsung and L.G etc. have already furrows into rural households but still wants to capture the market in a different dream. For quite sometime now, the life of the rural India has been the subject of animated discussions in the corporate suites, with the urban markets getting saturated for several categories of consumer goods and with rising rural income.

Rural consumers are fundamentally socially, literally, psychologically and physiologically different from their urban counterparts. Rural consumers buy only inexpensive products. There is mass consumption among them regarding a particular product or brand since they are homogeneous at the village or regional level. In rural market, since the women have very little contact with the market, the male makes the purchase decision. The community decision-making is quite common in a rural market because of strong caste and social structures and low literacy levels. Rural consumers generally feel inhibited and ill-equipped to buy confidently, since they have only lesser exposure to the product quality, service support and company credentials. Rural consumers are illiterate as per the census definition, but he is not unintelligent. The brand awareness, preference and loyalty among the rural consumers are comparatively less than their urban counterparts. The degree of brand loyalty varies among the rural consumer according to the nature of products. If the rural consumers are loyal to one brand, it is very difficult to change.
1.2.2 Buying behavior factors

To understand the buying behaviour of rural consumers, we must go to the factors that influence their buying behaviour. The factors include:

1. Socio-economic environment of the consumer
2. Cultural environment
3. Geographic location
4. Education/literacy level
5. Occupation
6. Exposure to urban lifestyles
7. Exposure to media.
8. Purpose of purchasing the products.
9. Usage of products
10. Influence made by others in making purchase.
11. Marketers effort to reach out the rural markets

Some of these points are discussed below:

1.2.2.1 Cultural environment

Culture and tradition influence perception and buying behaviour. For example, the preference in respect of color, size and shape is often the result of cultural factors. Rural consumers’ perception of products is strongly influenced by cultural factors.

1.2.2.2 Geographic locations

Rural consumer behaviour is also influenced by the geographic location of the consumers. For example, nearness to feeder towns and industrial projects influence the buying behaviour of consumers in the respective clusters of villages. We are discussing this aspect in detail in the section on market segmentation in rural markets. To cite one more example of how geographic location affects buying behaviour, we can point out the fact that the lack of electricity in many rural households acts as a barrier to the purchase of certain consumer durables.
1.2.2.3 Exposure to urban lifestyles

Extent of exposure of rural consumers to urban lifestyles also influences their buying behaviour. An increased exposure and interaction with urban communities has been the trend in recent years.

1.2.2.4 The way the consumer uses the products

The situation in which the consumers utilize the product also influences their buying. The example of lack of electricity affecting buying behaviour illustrates this point as well. Lack of electricity automatically increases the purchase of batteries by rural consumers. Similarly, since rural consumers cannot use washing powders/detergent powders that much, as they wash their clothes in streams or ponds, they go in more for washing bars and detergent cakes.

1.2.2.5 Places of purchase

Buying behaviour of rural consumer also varies depending on the place of purchase. Different segments of rural buyers buy their requirements from different places/outlets. Some buy from the village shopkeepers; some from village markets/fairs; others buy from the town that serves as the feeder to the rural area. It is also seen that the same buyer buys different requirements from different laces.

1.2.2.6 Influence made by others in making purchase

Involvement of others in the purchase in the purchase decision is yet another relevant factor in this regard. There has been a change here in recent years. In the past, the head of the family used to make the purchase decision all by himself. In contrast, the involvement of the other members of the family in the purchase decision has been growing in recent years. An increase in literacy coupled with greater access to information has resulted in this development. The marketer has to reckon the role of the influencers while sizing up the buying behaviour of rural consumers.
1.2.2.7 Marketer’s efforts to reach out the rural market

In recent years, many corporate companies have been trying hard to develop a market for their products in the rural areas, investing substantially in these areas. This has brought about some change in the way buyers purchase different products. Developmental marketing has created discriminating buyers and hitherto unknown demand in the rural market.

1.3 DURABLE GOODS

A category of consumer goods, durables are products that do not have to be purchased frequently. Some examples of durables are appliances, home and office furnishings, lawn and garden equipment, consumer electronics, toy makers, small tool manufacturers, sporting goods, photographic equipment, and jewelry. A durable goods or a hard good is a good which does not quickly wear out, or more specifically, it yields services or utility over time rather than being completely used up when used once. Most goods are therefore durable goods to a certain degree. Perfectly durable goods never wear out. As an example, a rubber band is not very durable. Durable goods are typically characterized by long inter purchase times—the time between two successive purchases.

Highly durable goods such as refrigerators, cars, or mobile phones usually continue to be useful for three or more years of use, and hence durable goods are typically characterized by long periods between successive purchases. These durable goods are referred to as Consumer Durables and examples of consumer durable goods include cars, household goods (home appliances, consumer electronics, furniture, etc.), sports equipment, and toys. As the second purchase for durable goods lags time difference, generally they are sold on a higher margin.

The Consumer Durables industry consists of durable goods and appliances for domestic use such as televisions, refrigerators, air conditioners and washing machines. Instruments such as cell phones and kitchen appliances like microwave ovens are also included in this category. This sector has been witnessing significant growth in recent
years, helped by several drivers such as the emerging retail boom, real estate and housing demand, greater disposable income and an overall increase in the level of affluence of a significant section of the population. The industry is represented by major international and local players such as BPL, Videocon, Voltas, Blue Star, MIRC Electronics, Titan, Whirlpool, etc.

1.3.1 Future of consumer durable goods industry in India

In the last 10 years, a huge growth has taken place in the consumer durables retail market. Taking the present situation into account, one can see that the demand for consumer durables has been increasing. The increase in demand for consumer durables is due to the increase in disposable income levels in families, since most families are based on a double income these days. The rise in the levels of family income has transformed the visage of the Indian lifestyle which means that most of the companies view India as a prime destination for consumer durables retail. Most of the consumer durables retail market comprise of television sets, audio systems, VCD players, washing machines, microwave ovens, air conditioners, toasters, juicer-mixer-grinders and so on. Though Indian consumer durables have been increasing in demand within the domestic market, it has a tough competition from international consumer durables companies such as Sony, Samsung, LG and Philips.

Indian consumer durables industry in the retail sector stands at US$ 4.5 billion, among consumer durables retail goods, flat-screen television and frost-free refrigerators have been in huge demand in recent times. In 2005 alone, 9 million TV sets and more than 4 million refrigerators are sold in India. The performance of the consumer durables retail is critical to the growth of the retail industry of India. There are new ventures forayed into by the big Indian companies. Such steps in the consumer durables retail sector would definitely facilitate the need for foreign direct investment. However, some international retailers have already started investing in the Indian consumer durables market, such as Metro, Spa International and Dairy Farm. Among Indian companies, Pantaloons is looking forward to start its saga of consumer durables retail. The commodities would constitute color televisions, washing machines, refrigerators and
microwave ovens. The chain of goods will be available in big bazaar, which is owned by pantaloons. It is quite a challenge to maintain the consumer durables retail market in India because of the unprecedented challenges that are attached with it. However, the consumer durables retail markets in India are here to stay because of the new age tastes of the modern consumer in India.

This industry consists of durable goods used for domestic purposes such as televisions, washing machines, refrigerators, microwave ovens, mobile phones etc. The growth in the consumer durables sector has been driven primarily by factors such as the boom in the real estate & housing industry, higher disposable income, emergence of the retail industry in a big way coupled with rising affluence levels of a considerable section of the population. As per the survey conducted by FICCI on the Indian consumer durables industry, a shift in consumer preferences towards higher-end, technologically advanced branded products has been quite discernable. This shift can be explained by narrowing differentials between the prices of branded and unbranded products added with the high quality of after sales service provided by the branded players. The shift has also been triggered by the availability of foreign brand products in India owing to lower import duties coupled with other liberal measures as introduced by the government.

1.4 CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

After purchasing the product, the consumer will experience some level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The consumer will also engage in post purchase action and product uses of interest to the marketer. The consumers satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product will influence subsequent behaviour, if the consumer is satisfied, then he/she will exhibit a higher probability of purchasing the product on the next occasion. The satisfied consumer will also tend to say good things about the product and the company to others. The post purchase behaviour is depending upon the extent of consumers set of experience stored in memory, how well they select products and stores and the type of feedback they received. Understanding consumer needs and buying processes is essential for building, effective marketing strategies. By understanding how buyers go
through problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, the purchase
decision and post purchase behaviour, the marketers can identify the effective
marketing strategy.

The post purchase evaluation involves comparison between the expectations and
actual performance of the product or brand. There are three possibilities at this stage.
First, there is no discrepancy between expectations and actual performance. It leaves
the consumer with neutral feelings. Second, performance exceeds expectations, in this
situation consumer feels satisfied. Third, performance falls below expectations, this
leaves the consumer dissatisfied (Ernet, Woodruff and Jenkins 1987). The interaction
between expectations and actual product performance produces either satisfaction or
dissatisfaction. However, there does not appear to be merely a direct relationship
between the level of expectations and the level of satisfaction. Instead, a modifying
variable known as “disconfirmation of expectations” is thought to be a significant
mediator of this situation. The disconfirmation can be of two varieties: A positive
disconfirmation occurs when what is received is better than expected and a negative
disconfirmation occurs when things turnout worse than anticipated. Thus, any
situation in which the consumer’s judgment is proven wrong is a disconfirmation
(Benison 1980). The desire to study the behaviour of consumers after the purchase has
been made is a true marketing, orientation, identification with the consumers and seeing
things from their perspective. Purchases are purposive and motivated. post purchase
behaviour indicates to what extent these purchase activity gives an indication as to
whether the customer are going to again patronize a firm in future, and also
whether they will be in a mood to recommend a product to potential customers.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Importance of the study

The study focuses mainly on the rural consumer behaviour towards selected
Durable Goods in the Kanyakumari district. In current trend it is necessary for the
companies to read the pulse of the rural consumers and their purchase behaviour. It is
important to assess the marketing strategies and its effects, efforts put on by the companies concentrating the rural market. This study highlights the pre-purchase, at the time of purchase and post-purchase behavior of rural consumers.

1.5.2 Statement of the problem

Today in India it is herculean task assigned to the companies for marketing the goods. Developing countries like India constitute most of its population in rural sector. It is very important for a developing country to concentrate on rural marketing to improve its economy. Companies face lot of problems in marketing the goods in rural sector due to communication, literacy rate, and low income of the consumers, awareness about the product and awareness about the brands. In the recent past, rural India has been witnessing tremendous change, particularly in the standard of living and life styles. At present the consumers are more dynamic. Their taste, needs and preferences are changing as per the current scenario. The consumer now looks for product differentiation and the convenience offered. The consumer has certain expectation from branded items in terms of its quality, price and packaging. Consumers’ awareness has increased by making advertisements in large scale. Appropriate planning for marketing in rural sector channelizes technology, infrastructure, needs of consumers, and dimensions of behavioural dimensions which leads to attain better improvement in economy.

The consumers are finding various problems in selecting their durable goods. It is identified that there is a need for research work in the field of consumer behaviour of Durable goods in the rural areas of Kanyakumari District. The research deals with questions like.

- What are the factors that influence the rural consumer in the purchase of durable goods?
- What is the awareness level of rural consumer towards durable goods?
- What is the satisfaction level of rural consumers towards durable goods?
- What are the problems faced by the rural consumers in pre-purchasing and post-purchase of durable goods?
1.5.3 Scope of the study

The study aims at analyzing rural consumer behaviour in Kanyakumari district. The scope of the study has been limited to certain buying behavioural aspects of expectation before purchasing (pre purchase), decision making in purchase namely information search, awareness about product, interest towards products, product evaluation, brand preference, factors influencing purchase, consciousness of price and quality, post purchase behaviour. The study broadly aims at examining perceptions of the consumers mainly in terms of the information gathered sources of information, location where the purchase is made and the ultimate purchase decision. Hence the researcher has selected six durable products for the present study. The products chosen for the research are Television, Refrigerator, Washing machine, Grinder, Pressure cooker and Mixie. The products selected for the study has been done on the basis of products available for entertainment, house hold usage and cooking.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to understand changing consumer behaviour towards durable goods. In this context, the present study has been conducted with the following objectives:

- To study the awareness level of rural consumers towards durable goods.
- To study the attributes of the different durable products while selecting.
- To identify the factors of need of recognition and search of information of rural consumers.
- To ascertain the evaluation of alternatives and brand awareness and brand knowledge of rural consumers in Kanyakumari district.
- To assess the perception level of pre purchase and post purchase behaviour of rural Consumers.
- To ascertain the influence of rural consumers’ demographics over factors of need of recognition, evaluation of alternative and post purchase behaviour.
- To identify the factors predicting post purchase behaviour and brand loyalty of rural consumers.
1.7 HYPOTHESES/ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

a. The attributes/factors that determine the selection of brand/model of durable products differ significantly.
b. There is significant association between respondent’s demographics and classification based on Need recognition.
c. There is significant influence of rural consumer’s demographics on Need recognition.
d. Opinion on sources of information does not differ significantly.
e. There is significant association between respondent’s demographics and classification based on Evaluation of alternatives.
f. There is significant influence of rural consumer’s demographics on Evaluation of alternatives.
g. Opinion of rural consumers on Brand awareness differ significantly.
h. Opinion of rural consumers on Brand knowledge differ significantly.
i. There is significant relationship between Brand awareness and Brand knowledge.
j. All the factors of outlet and interior atmosphere of outlets do not carry equal importance.
k. There is significant association between respondent’s demographics and classification based on Post purchase behaviour.
l. There is significant influence of rural consumer’s demographics on Post purchase behaviour.
m. Opinion of rural consumers on Brand loyalty differs significantly.
n. Brand awareness, Brand Knowledge, Consumer grievance handling, Brand Image, and Advertisement and Promotion serves as significant predictors for Brand loyalty.
o. The model fitted for Brand Loyalty of rural consumers towards durable goods is not good.
p. Opinion of rural consumers on unfair trade practices differ significantly.
1.8 PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Kanyakumari is the southernmost district of Tamilnadu. The district lies between 77° 15' and 77° 36' of the eastern longitudes and 8° 03' and 8° 35' of the northern Latitudes. The District is bound by Tirunelveli District on the North and the east. The South Eastern boundary is the Gulf of Mannar. On the South and the South West, the boundaries are the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. On the West and North West it is bound by Kerala. Surrounded by majestic hills and the plains bordered by colourful sea-shores, fringed with coconut trees and paddy fields, here and there are few elevated patches of red cliffs with undulating valleys and plains between the mountainous terrain and the sea - coast, so closely interwoven with Temples and Churches and other edifices lies the district, 'Kanyakumari'. With an area of 1672 sq.km., it occupies 1.29% of the total extent of Tamilnadu.

Their culture, religion, aptitude, habits, beliefs, talents etc have a bearing on how the district presents itself to others. Tamil and Malayalam are the main languages of this district. Hindus and Christians form a sizeable percentage of the population of the district and there are a number of Muslims dominated belts in the district. Rice is the staple food of the rich and poor alike in the district. Some among the poorer section also use tapioca. Beverages like tea and coffee are widely spread even in to the rural area of the district.

The District has a favourable agro-climatic condition, which is suitable for growing a number of crops. The proximity of equator, its topography and other climate factors favour the growth of various crops. The paddy varieties grown in the second crop season in Thovalai and Agasteeswaram taluks are grown during the first crop season in Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks. This shows that there is distinct variation in the climatic conditions prevailing within the district. Unlike other district in Tamilnadu, it has a rainfall both during the South West and the North East monsoons. The South West monsoon period starts from the month of June and ends in September, While the North East monsoon period starts from October and ends in the middle of December.
As per census conducted in 2011 the population of Kanyakumari district was 1,870,374, out of which males and females were 926,345 and 944,029 respectively. As per 2011 census, 17.67\% population of Kanniyakumari districts lives in rural areas of villages. The total Kanniyakumari district population living in rural areas is 330,572 of which males and females are 164,938 and 165,634 respectively.

Average literacy rate in Kanniyakumari district as per census 2011 is 91.96 \% of which males and females are 93.92 \% and 90.06 \% literates respectively. It ranks first in literacy among other districts in Tamilnadu. In actual number 1,279,358 people are literate in urban region of which males and females are 644,109 and 635,249 respectively. Literacy rate in rural areas of Kanniyakumari district is 90.76 \% as per census data 2011. Gender wise, male and female literacy stood at 92.39 and 89.16 percent respectively. In total, 269,380 people were literate of which males and females were 136,432 and 132,948 respectively.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is an outline of research study which indicates that what researcher will do from writing the hypothesis and its operational implications to the final analysis of data. A research design is the arrangement of conditions for data collection and analysis of data in a manner that aim to combine relevance to research purpose with economy in research procedure. Research design constitutes decision regarding what, why, where, when and how concerning an inquiry or a research study. Overall research design may be divided into the following parts: Research design, data collection and interview schedule, sampling plan, data analysis used in the study.

1.9.1 Sampling plan and data collection

The Kanyakumari district rural consumers are selected as a suitable setting to test the proposed research model. Mainly the focus is on buying behaviour of consumer towards durable goods. The main reasons for selecting this topic are (i) Consumers using durable goods are more (ii) Number of consumers –dealers’ contacts in the industry are high.
The methodology of the study is based on the primary, as well as secondary data. The study depends mainly on the primary data collected through a interview schedule to record the opinions of the respondents. This study falls under both analytical and descriptive type and proportionate random sampling is adopted to obtain the responses from the rural consumers of Kanyakumari District. A pilot study was conducted to know the pulse of the rural consumers before commencing the main survey. The secondary data are collected from books, reports, magazines, publications, news papers, periodicals, research papers, articles from journals and company reports. Literature from the research journals were taken to have an insight of the research problem so that the gap in this research was identified and hypotheses was formed. Last but not the least Literature from Websites was also reviewed.

1.9.2 Products selected for the study

The products that have been selected in the study are used by the consumers in day to day basis. The researcher took initiatives and selected 60 respondents in the study area to know what are the durable products they are using regularly, how much they are important and what brands they are using and how much their awareness levels are. Hence the researcher concluded that the products chosen are used regularly by the consumers and are due to the availability of multiple brands in Kanyakumari district.

1.9.3 Research instrument

An interview schedule is prepared to collect the responses from the rural consumers. The questionnaire consist of dichotomous variable to measure the awareness level of the rural consumers and five-point Likert scaling questions to measure the attitude towards the products, pre purchase behaviour, behaviour at the time of purchase and post purchase behaviour. Categorical type variables are used to study the profile of the respondents and information pertaining to the consumer behaviour of rural consumers.
1.9.4 Pre testing /Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted by taking 60 rural consumers as respondents covering all the nine blocks of Kanyakumari. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by Chronbach’s Alpha coefficient which stood at 0.823 (82.3%) shows good reliability. None of the variables have behaved drastically and the researcher has conducted the main study without removing any of the variables in the interview schedule.

1.9.5 Sampling design and sample size

Nine blocks in the Kanyakumari districts were included in the study. Simple Random sampling method was adopted to select the rural consumers of kanyakumari district. Five villages from each block were selected and from each village a proportionate of 15 consumers were selected to constitute a sample size of 675. Each and every consumer is important for the study and 675 interview schedules were distributed in the selected rural areas. All the responses given by the selected rural consumers were recorded and considered for the research.

1.9.6 Reliability and validity of the study

1.9.6.1 Reliability

Reliability of an instrument refers to the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of variables (Hair et al. 2006). It is extent to which an experiment tests or any measuring procedures yield, the same result on repeated attempts. Reliability was estimated through internal consistency method which is applied to measure the consistency among the variables in a summated scale. In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha reliability of co-efficient was applied based on the primary data collected through the instrument from the respondents. The reliability for various factors of the study and the details are displayed in the table 1.1.
Table 1.1
Reliability measures for the study

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Factors for selecting Brand/Model</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Factors for selecting Brand/Model</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
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<td>Washing machine</td>
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<td>Pressure cooker</td>
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<td>Mixie</td>
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<td>Grinder</td>
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<td>Utility and Affordability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Overall reliability (Need Recognition)</td>
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<td>Information Sources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Public sources</td>
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<td>0.81</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commercial sources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Overall reliability (Information Sources)</td>
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<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Evaluation of alternatives</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purchase decision</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merchandise properties</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall reliability (Evaluation of alternatives)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Brand Awareness</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Brand Knowledge</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Post purchase behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consumer grievance handling</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advertisement and Promotion</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand Equity</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Brand Loyalty</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Overall reliability (Post purchase behaviour)</td>
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<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Brand loyalty</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Unfair trade practices</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall reliability of the Study</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data
1.9.6.1 Validity

Both Face and Content validities were established in the study. The face validity was done by the investigator and the content validity was established by the experts in the field of investigation. Face validity, it appears to measure whatever the author had in mind, namely, what he thought he was measuring (Gavvett & Woodworth, 2008). The rationale behind content validity is that to examine the extent to which a measuring instrument provides adequate coverage of the topic under study (Kothari, 1985).

1.9.6 Statistical Tools used

- One-sample t-test
- Friedman test for k-related samples
- Independent samples t-test
- One way Analysis of variance
- Chi-square analysis
- Bi-variate correlation
- Factor analysis
- Cluster analysis
- Multiple regression
- Structural equation modeling

1.9.7 Statistical package used

The validity, reliability and analysis of the data in this study were analysed using Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS v 16.0). Analysis of Moment Structure (SPSS AMOS v.16) was used to perform structural equation modeling.
1.9.8 Study Period
The period of the study is from 2011 to 2013

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is limited to Kanyakumari district.
- The study covers all divisions located in Kanyakumari district.
- The study is limited to the 675 consumers in Kanyakumari district.
- The study covers only the durable goods in use by the respondents of the present study.

1.10 CHAPTERISATION

Chapter I presents introduction about rural consumer behaviour and its important factors. It also presents importance of the study, scope, research methodology, limitations and chapter scheme.

Chapter II reviews previous research and studies on rural consumer behaviour before purchase, at the time of purchase and post-purchase. In this chapter the research gaps and its consolidation for the present research work with previous studies are identified.

Chapter III expresses an elaborate account of conceptual framework of consumer behaviour explores the analysis based on purchase and Post purchase behaviour of rural consumers.

Chapter IV explores the analysis based on awareness, Pre purchase behaviour, Purchase and Post purchase behaviour of rural consumers.

Chapter V deals with the summary of findings, suggestions based on findings and conclusion.
1.11 SUMMARY

An understanding of consumer behaviour is essential in formulating the marketing strategies. However, information about rural consumers is limited and hazy due to lack of right competence, partial approach and limited knowledge and bias of the corporate managers. The model of consumer behaviour comprises stimuli both internal and external, which include self, socio-cultural, technological, economic and political factors. Evidently, buyer characteristics like age and life-cycle stage, occupation economic situation, life style and personality and psychological factors such as perception, cognition, belief and attitudes and motivation influence purchase. More importantly post purchase behavior shows the pulse of the consumers towards the durable products and it helps the companies to improve the products. However, certain differences are found between rural and urban consumers owing to the limited information sources and limited evaluation capabilities.
1.12 REFERENCES

1. http://www.bized.ac.uk/fme


