CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.0 Overview

In this chapter, total six main sections will be discussed. The first area point is introduction which is a cause of study. The second unit consists of the purpose and objectives of the study. The third unit deals with the hypotheses to be tested. The fourth unit of the chapter talks about the conduct of the study, describing an overview of the study undertaken. The second last unit will present the significance of the study followed by the outlines of thesis in the last section.

1.1 Introduction

Socio psychological research has built a strong foundation and provides framework for understanding the complex relationship between culture and human behaviour. One of the key finding of the field is that variation in the culture has vital impact on the way people evaluate the world and that these views ultimately affect their behaviour (Shweder 1991; Manstead 1997). In consensus with this recognition, the last two decades or so have witnessed an increasing amount of consumer behaviour research across cultures (Sojka and Tansuhaj 1995). More prominently, various studies on national and international ground have successfully established a strong link between cultures and various aspects of consumer behaviours. In the words of de Mooij (2004), “culture forms personality as the all-encompassing force which in turn is the key determinant of consumer behaviours. She had further clarified that culture and consumer behaviour are just like a rope, intimately knotted together and it is like an impossible task of “untying the rope”.

Since cultural background is believed to be the one of the most significant determinants of consumer behaviour, “a marketer with a defective knowledge of culture is doomed” (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard 1995, p. 145). Indeed, research by Bristow and Asquith
(1999), Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000), Chudry and Pallister (2002) and de Mooij and Hofstede (2002), to name a few, all found that there exist significant differences among consumers of different cultural backgrounds which requires different marketing strategy. From the managerial perspective, it is imperative to have a clear understanding of culture and its influence on consumers’ attitudes and behaviour is very much required for designing effective strategies for marketing to consumers of diverse cultural backgrounds. Because of differences in race, nationality, religious values, geography and customs, it becomes more difficult for marketers to apply the same marketing mix strategies for all consumer groups across the culture (Cui 1997). Cultural diversity requires marketers to understand the consumption and behavioural pattern of each consumers group including their basic demographics, media usage, store patronage and shopping behaviour and also require the knowledge of different marketing strategies to reach them. Failure to tailor their offerings to cultural variations would also result in the failure of marketing programmes directed to a specific market segment.

Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of the concept of culture and its marketing practicality, it is evident that empirical studies of consumer behaviour focusing on cultures influences are disproportionately under-represented. A survey of recently published articles showed that the preponderance of consumer research on culture has focused on either general values (Burgess and Steenkamp 1999; Gregory, Munch and Peterson 2002; Sun, Horn and Merritt 2004) or specific subcultural factors such as ethnicity (Kim and Kang 2001; Lindridge and Dibb 2003) and nationality (Cheron and Hayashi 2001; Moss and Vinten 2001) as the primary dimension or behavioural differentiation with far less attention is given to some other similar areas of influence.

Religion is a cultural based predicator which has drawn relatively very less attention of consumer behaviour researcher in contemporary consumer behaviour research. Though religion has paramount effect on international marketing decision, as recognised in many of the marketing text, (Griffin and Pustay 1996; Kotabe and Helsen 1998; Jain 1996; Cateora and Graham 1999; Terpstra and Sarathy 2000), religion, a construct possessing a potential research value in consumer behaviour research is relatively under-researched. As

Delener (1994) has pointed, “Although religion has been a significant force in the lives of many individuals, its role in consumer choice can be characterised as unclear or fuzzy” (p. 36). Religion and religiosity (i.e. the intensity of belief in specific values and ideals are held, practiced and become a symbol of identity) had received a very less research attention over the past twenty five years. If the study was conducted, the focus was on religious variation in consumer behaviour without its marketing implications. This is remarkable given the long recognition that religion plays an important role in moulding human attitudes and behaviours and the realisation that the current trend is towards the global resurgence of organised religiosity (Armstrong 2001; Arnould, Price and Zikhan 2004).

An analysis conducted by Cutler (1991) showed that papers on religion published in the academic marketing literature prior to 1990 were found very less in frequency and numbers and papers having religious focus are only thirty and only six of them were particularly identified as articles within the consumer behaviour discipline. There are certain problems which have deterred consumer researchers from conducting an extensive study on this topic. Some problems cited include the sensitivity of the subject (Hirschman 1983; Bailey and Sood 1993), measurement problem (Wilkes, Burnett and Howell 1986; Clark 1992), gender of participants (Khraim, Mohamad and Jantan 1999) and difficulties in methodology of obtaining valid and reliable data (Bailey and Sood 1993; Sood and Nasu 1995). Though these problems may be partly explained, why religion is marginalised as a research problem in the past consumer behaviour research, they provide strong motivation to some marketing scholars to uncover the potential of this construct in explaining consumption phenomena. Of the voluminous research that has been done (Hirschman 1983; McDaniel and Burnett 1990; Delener 1990a, 1990b, 1994; Sood and Nasu 1995; Fam, Waller and Erdogan 2004; Essoo and Dibb 2004), findings indicated that religion can be a significant factor in explaining media usage; purchase risk aversion; how advertising messages are perceived; consumption patterns; innovativeness; family decision-making; and selected retail store patronage behaviour.

A relatively very less use of religion as a potential segmentation variable and as for other marketing action variable is a result of current limited amount of empirical research. Without knowing the consistently changing nature of consumer demographic variables such discretionary income, employment status and chronological age, marketer very often
uses them to segment their target market (McDaniel and Burnett 1990). Even the frequent use of an ethnic-based approach to segment the market (Cui 1997), which has proven to be practical in a multicultural market, sometimes it can be proved impractical and misleading especially when the target population is broadly grouped according to their skin colour or continent of origin; without considering the fact that one ethnic group can actually have several different ethnic as well as religious subgroups (Venkatesh 1995; Chudry and Pallister 2002). Such reality makes it even more difficult to pin down the concept of ethnicity than in the case of the other concepts such as nationality race, and religion (Venkatesh 1995; Pirez and Stanton 2004). It, therefore, envisages that it is better to consider different subcultural groups as unique segments instead of grouping them broadly. So, it is evident from the preceding discussion that religion can better be used by marketers as a tool to achieve greater precision and effectiveness in market segmentation.

There are minimum three reasons appear to exist for studying the potential relationship between religion and consumer behaviour. First, religion is at the heart of life value which is often developed at an early age and therefore it plays a vital role in establishing consumption prescriptions and proscriptions for many individuals (Sheikh and Thomas 1994; Berkman, Lindquist and Sirgy 1997). Second, religion is the most basic element of the individual’s cognitive world. It is an inherent human value which guides to define the ways to do things (i.e. established practices) and to provide a series of tools and techniques for social behaviour (Delener 1994). As such, it is expected that individuals who are more religious are prone to translate their internal religious beliefs into external consumer behavioural activities. Thirdly, potentiality of religion as a socio-psychological segmentation variable lies with its stability over time and the observable nature of many of its element (Delener 1994, p. 38). The basic demographics indicators such as age and level of income which are in constant flux have limited behavioural implications, religion as a personal characteristic is more stable and might improve predictive value (McDaniel and Burnett 1990).

It can logically be assumed that it is practical for the marketer to define their target markets and direct efforts toward those target markets if diversity exists among the various religious segments. However, if there no behavioural and consumption related differences among the consumers across the diverse religious groups, more efficient marketing strategies can be developed by focusing on common needs across consumer segments.
Therefore, it is critical to understand whether religion influencing consumer shopping orientation; an antecedent of consumer shopping behaviour.

This research examines the influence of religion on consumer’s shopping orientation and is based on the proposition that adherence to a particular religious faith significantly influences shopping orientation among the consumer in Gujarat. Religious commitment, often termed religiosity, is intensity to which beliefs in specific religious values and ideals are held and practiced by an individual. This perspective is a key feature of this research looking into the influence of religion on shopping orientation. On the other hand, shopping orientation represents a cognitive and affective aspect of consumer behaviour and it is closely linked with various personality traits, similar to the concept of personality in psychology (Sproles and Kendall, 1986). In essence, it is suggested by sociologists that personality traits as one of the general factors that have a profound impact on various human behaviours.

Potentiality of religious variables as explanatory constructs of consumer behaviour as well as segmentation tools very attractive to marketing community, there is, indeed, a pressing need to study its application in predicting consumer behaviour. The study reported in this thesis will extend the current, scant knowledge base by empirically investigating the role played by religiosity in influencing aspects of consumer shopping orientation and behaviour. The aim is to contribute to current stock of understanding of this relationship as well as to provide a basis for further investigation in this promising research area.

1.2 Research objectives

Consumer behaviour is a study of human behaviour which emphasis the role of consumer in all phases of decision making. According to Engel et al. (1995), consumer behaviour includes all the activities which lead to the acquisition, consumption and disposition of a product or service. They further have the opinion that there exist external or environmental factors such as cultural norms and values that partially explain behavioural differences between different segments of consumers apart from internal factors such as motives, personality traits, emotions and attitudes.
In order to understand which external factors contribute to consumer activities, the consumer behaviour model should be segregated and studied in parts. The acquisition aspect of consumer activity that is to investigate the cultural influences on one aspect of consumer activities forms the basis of this thesis. More specifically, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of religion as a component of culture on shopping orientation as one specific facet of consumers’ acquisition behaviour. The objectives of studies are to assess the effects of religious affiliation and religiosity on shopping orientations.

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of religion and religiosity as a component of culture on consumer shopping orientation and behaviour. The specific objectives of the study are enumerated as below.

- To examine the influence of religiosity on shopping orientations of consumers in Gujarat
- To examine the influence of demographic variables on religiosity
- To assess whether strength of religiosity and shopping orientation differs among Muslims, Hindu Jain and Christians domiciles of Gujarat.

1.3 Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the current study, the following exploratory hypotheses are developed:

H1a: There is a significant difference in the use of information source among consumers affiliated with different religions.

H1b: There is a significant difference in shopping orientation among consumers affiliated with different religions.

H2a: There is a significant difference in the use of information source among consumers with different levels of religiosity.

H2b: There is significant difference in shopping orientation among consumers with different levels of religiosity.
H3a: There is no significant religious difference among consumers with different marital status

H3b: There is significant religious difference among consumers with different Age.

H3c: There is no significant difference in level of religiosity among consumers affiliated with different religions.

H3d: There is a significant religious difference among consumers with different Education.

H3e: There is no significant religious difference among consumers with different Occupation.

H3f: There is no significant religious difference among consumers with different area of Residence.

H3g: There is significant religious difference among consumers with different Income.

H3h: There is significant religious difference among consumers with different Gender.

H4a: Holding all other predictors constant, there is a significant impact of religious affiliation on use of information sources.

H4b: Holding all other predictors constant, there is a significant impact of religious affiliation on shopping orientation.

H5a: Holding all other predictors constant, there is a significant impact of consumer religiosity on use of information source.

H5b: Holding all other predictors constant, there is a significant impact of consumer religiosity on shopping orientation.

1.4 The Conduct of the Study

This four year study was actually started in 2011. Hypotheses are developed on the basis of detailed literature review for its testing. A structured questionnaire is prepared for use in the field survey. The questionnaire is prepared in two versions, Gujarati and English by using back translation procedure. After making revisions in the questionnaire on the basis of expert opinion and pilot testing, it is distributed to nine hundred respondents in Gujarat,
India. Gujarat is believed to be an appropriate for this study since the population of Gujarat a follower of four of the world’s major religions namely Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, and Christianity in sizeable numbers. From the fieldwork, seven hundred fifty usable questionnaires are secured for analysis. For the statistical data analysis SPSS programme version 20 is used. The main statistical techniques used in this study are analysis of variance (ANOVA), factor analysis, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and multiple linear regression analysis. These techniques explore the univariate and multivariate relationships among the data. The resulting information formed the basis for conclusions.

1.5 Significance of the study

From the viewpoint of consumer behaviour, consumption has been largely understood as a cultural phenomenon because consumption of material objects such as dress, food and housing often expresses behavioural patterns and characteristics of a particular culture. (McCracken 1990). The findings of Lee (2000), Ackennan and Tellis (2001), Kacen and Lee (2002) and Chung (1998), among others, have rightly investigated that consumers’ buying patterns are highly influenced by cultural values. Thus, cultural analysis should be considered as a logical starting point for the examination of consumer behaviour.

Though there is emerging interest is reflected in the marketing literature for the topic, unfortunately, the evidences on the study of religion and religiosity as cultural-based predictors explaining fundamental consumer behaviour are rarely found in the current consumer behaviour literature. Also the studies which were conducted, all of them are in United States where Judeo-Christian culture is predominant. This study is therefore undertaken as a first step in understanding from a cultural perspective the influence of religion and religiosity on consumer shopping orientation and behaviour in a Gujarat. Thus, the findings of this study further add knowledge in existing body of literature by explaining the influential role of religiosity as a construct in explaining consumer behaviour.

This study would have significant marketing implications apart from strengthening existing consumer behaviour literature. This study helps the marketer to determine whether religiosity is justifiable base for segmenting consumers. If religious profiles would be used
to identify larger market segments of the society, the marketing programmes and policies
could be developed by the strategists that would maximally enhance the importance values
of the consumers in each religious market. In addition, findings of this study should
contribute to niche marketing strategies by providing a framework within which religious
consumer groups in Gujarat may be better understood and targeted by local marketers. An
understanding of consumers’ religious background and its influences on their shopping
behaviours would be essential for international marketer to compare and leverage their
experience of countries when they enter for the first time in Gujarat.

1.6 Scope of the research

The selection of an appropriate shopping product is particularly important for this study
because it would exhibit the clear characteristics necessary to examine the research area.
The specified product category is desirable for studying marketplace behaviour, as it was
reported earlier that religion influences on consumption behaviour tend to varies by
product classes (Delener 1990a). Such product focus would facilitate the discussion and
consequently the marketing implications derived from the findings, which is more narrow
and definable to a specific product market.

However, considerable care is required for the selection of an appropriate product for this
research. Previous Research shows that for conducting such kind of research, products
chosen should not be bound to a particular culture and it should be purchased by all people
in the population. Literature on the similar kind of research shows that product chosen for
similar kind of research was limited to the purchase of a single, high-involvement product.
Delener (1990b) has used microwave oven, Delener (1994) has used an automobile,
Rodriguez (1993), Bailey and Sood (1993) and Sood and Nasu (1995) have used an
expensive radio set and Essoo and Dibb (2004) have used a television set while Mokhlis
(2006) has used apparel products.

In this study, the apparel shopping context is selected because consumption of this apparel
product is made irrespective of individual cultural backgrounds because of its high
visibility; it is believed that one’s ethnic identity is manifested by the apparel product
category (Jain 1989). Hence, if the influence of religious factors on shopping orientation
can be identified, it would be logical for us to assume that similar effects might be observed in consumer behaviour for other consumer products.

So this study is limited to influence of religiosity on shopping orientation of apparel products in Gujarat.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

To a brief outline the chapters is useful for understanding the organisation of the thesis. The thesis consists of eight different chapters which compile the total research work. This chapter talks about the background of the study and investigation of major themes within the context under examination. The remainder of this thesis is organised as follows.

Chapter Two is a literature review-I in which theoretical and conceptual framework of the study is discussed. In this chapter, conceptual foundation for religion, religious affiliation, religiosity, basic religions and their philosophy, shopping orientation and basic models of consumer behaviour which lays foundation of religion as a construct of study is discussed.

Chapter three presents literature review-II in which literature on religion and consumer behaviour was studied thoroughly. In this chapter, an attempt is made to address the following matters: the study of religion in the social sciences, the study of religion in marketing, religion and consumer behaviour, religious affiliation and consumer behaviour, religiosity and consumer behaviour, religiosity and consumer shopping orientation, and measurement of religion in consumer research.

Fourth chapter discusses step-by-step detailed procedural study of the research methodology used to obtain the necessary information for the conduct of this empirical study. The chapter is divided in five different sections as follows: choice of research approach, method of data collection, research instrument, sampling process, the conduct of fieldwork survey and ethical considerations.

Chapter five presents the main quantitative techniques used in this study. the choice of statistical software to analyse the survey data is presented in the first part, while in the second part the factors influencing the choice of statistical techniques are discussed. In the
next part of the chapter, three types of statistical analysis are discussed: univariate analysis of descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis in the form of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and exploratory factor analysis, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and multiple linear regression analysis are discussed in the form of multivariate data analysis techniques.

The empirical result of the study is presented Chapters six and seven. The sequence of the presentation of the chapters follows the sequence of the hypotheses developed in this study.

The writing of this thesis by summarising the earlier discussions and empirical findings are presented in the final chapter by the researcher and eventually the salient implications of this study are highlighted. The results are discussed in the context of consumer shopping orientation and research implications consumer behaviour theory and marketing practices. The limitation of the study in the form of various difficulties experienced by the researcher in conducting the study will then be discussed. At last, insights of for future research conclude the thesis.

Lastly, the questionnaire used in the study, descriptive statistics and diagnostic tests for multiple linear regression analysis is compiled in the appendices.
FIGURE 1.1 Presentation flow of the thesis