ABSTRACT

India’s consumer market in recent years has witnessed an economic boom. All sectors of society including the families not just aspire but are driven to buy goods and services to improve their standard of living. There is an enhanced level of confidence among consumers to voice their preferences and make informed decisions.

“Why people buy” specific products and brands has become a phenomenon that needs to be explored through a systematic research. At the same time the ‘decision-making process’ that precedes and determines the final product choice will immensely strengthen the dynamic relationship between the market and the consumer.

Keeping this in context a study entitled Motivations and Management practices of Families in the Acquisition and Use of Consumer durables: An Appraisal was carried out. The prime objective of this research was to have an insight into the expressed and unspoken needs and motivations as triggers in the acquisition and use of consumer durables by the sample families also the management process they adopted in doing so. A comprehensive consumer orientation therefore, will be of great value.

A sample size of 150 families was purposely drawn from the non-teaching staff of Delhi University, North campus, residing in two room tenements, all married with at least one child, in the salary range of Rs. 20,000 to 40,000/-, having purchased any one consumer good for Rs. 2,000 and above during 2007-10.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed supported by other projective techniques to collect the basic as well as comprehensive qualitative data. Women formed the key respondents with their husbands and other family members supplementing information.

The data was analyzed, tabulated and suitably interpreted as per the study objectives. Maslow’s popular ‘Hierarchy of Human Needs’ model was suitably modified and adapted with for analyzing and interpreting the inherent motivations of the sample in choosing a given consumer durable.

A non-parametric Chi-square statistical analysis was used to study (in the null form) the relationship between the selected demographic variables of the sample and the acquisition pattern.

Highlights of the Study:
- The average age of the female head was 41 years and that of the male was 44 years.
- About 97% of women were housewives, educated below class XII.
- Nearly three-fourth of the families had a monthly income between Rs.30,000-40,000.
- Almost 90% of the families were nuclear and about 75% of them had 2-3 children.
- The sample as a group appeared homogenous in their buyer behavior and primary motivations as reflected in the pattern of ownership of mobile phone, TV, refrigerator and dessert cooler by all. Safety of the family members, particularly children was
uppermost in their minds and hence the need for the mobile phone. Computer was considered a necessity for children’s education and knowledge.

- Surprisingly time and labour saving device like a washing machine was considered more useful than a kitchen machine with juicer grinder attachment which was found cumbersome to use.
- Although woman’s role was confined to being an initiator, influencer and user, many of the decisions in the pre and post purchase stage were jointly taken by the husband and wife. Established MNC brands were preferred over the local ones while choosing high cost items like a washing machine, microwave oven and T.V. Budget was invariably a major constraint the families had to work within.
- The families relied mostly on close friends, relatives and comrades than on market driven ads for seeking relevant information prior to purchase and preferred to shop from nearby markets and that too paying by cash. They were averse to impulsive buying and buying on credit too.
- Awareness about Standardization marks, consumer rights, laws and redressal systems was quiet low, however women watched the “Jago Grahak Jago” campaign on the TV with interest.

Women seemed to have abundant traditional wisdom and homemaking skills. They effortlessly adopted conservation practices relating to energy both human and electrical. Greater consumer awareness and education of women will not only boost their personal confidence but also make them a great force to reckon with in the consumer market space. Their motivational insights and the buyer behaviour will take customers and the market to an altogether new level of mutual trust and clientele.