Chapter 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
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*The illusion that times that were are better than those that are, has probably prevailed all ages.*

- Horace Greeley

INTRODUCTION

Research Methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. In this Chapter therefore, the various steps that have been adopted in studying the problem have been cited.

PROBLEM FORMULATION

The task of formulating a research problem, follows a sequential pattern. The problem is stated in a general way, the ambiguities are resolved, thinking and rethinking process results in a more specific formulation of the problem so that it may be a realistic one in terms of the available data and resources and is also analytically meaningful.

**Problem Defined.** The number of imitated products is growing in Indian market due to less attention of consumers towards originality of the products. The extent of deception of consumers due to imitated products is tremendous in size and volume. The national brands of products such as Lux, Liril, Parle-G, Nirma, VIP, KODAK etc. are enjoying good market. The turnover of the reputed companies owing these brands is in terms of crore of rupees in a year, but the local manufacturers, small scale industries and regional firms having similar types of the goods, when they are launching in the market have to face tremendous competition from the national brands and are unable to capture larger share of the market. Hence, they are taking the goodwill of reputed companies by producing products duplicating in terms of packaging, branding and
logos and in terms of quality and quantity also to some extent. Consumer having low education level and from low income group are generally attracted towards these imitated products.

Keeping an eye on the imitated products which will be increasing in the forthcoming years to a great extent and going out of control and also the quantum of cheating the consumers, which will be growing to a high volume due to frauds by traders, hence the topic of research "A study of consumers' response to brand imitation" is of great interest to the marketers.

The Research Process

- Idea Generation
- Identification of research problem and formulation
- Research Objectives
- Conception of Hypothesis
- Research design
- Methods of Data collection and Collection of Data
- Data Analysis
- Conclusions & Suggestions
- Preparation & Presentation of Research Report

Figure 5.1
To simplify further the problem the product category which is to be included is also taken. It is generally seen that product which are consumed or used daily i.e. convenience product particularly eatables effects the consumer’s directly. They can cause bodily harm to the consumers. Thus, consumers response will be with respect to grocery items. Cosmetics are used directly that’s why they are also taken. Since, imitation of these product exist in various forms i.e. either with same brand name or with same packaging etc., the likelihood of confusion among the various imitated and original will also be noted. Further the intermediaries and the business houses will also be taken into account.

**RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY**

Since, imitation are causing enormous harm to the entire community viz. business, government and consumers, it’s essential to study how business is taking it, whether it is posing any problem to them, if Yes, How they are taking it? What they are doing? and How they will face it in the future? etc.

Also, since every product is targeted towards the consumers, they are the ultimate users, it’s very essential to study their buying behaviour also, i.e. how they purchase? Who did the purchasing? What factors they take into consideration while purchasing? Whether consumers are confused among brands if imitation exist? etc.

Thus, the study will throw light not only on the various factors but will provide platform to both the manufacturing and marketing companies and the consumers to protect themselves from the losses/harm that are likely as a result of the imitated products.

**HYPOTHESIS**

The present study is based on the following hypothesis:

- Consumer is confused among different original and copied (imitated) brands.
- The purchase of imitator’s is dependent on the consumer’s income.
- The purchase of imitator’s is affected by whether the information given on the package is read or not.
- The imitation is more in brand name.
- Retailers are stocking innovative product due to better image of the product and imitative product due to lower price and higher margin.
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In the light of the above background, this study presumed that the imitated product exists but since the response of consumer and business towards it is not known, the following are the research objectives:

I Primary objectives

(i) Examine Consumers purchase pattern and response w.r.t. grocery products.
(ii) To test the presence of confusion by means of a tachistoscopic experiment.
(iii) To develop an efficient strategy/remedial measures against the imitation.

II Secondary Objectives

(i) To study the perception of consumer towards imitated brands.
(ii) To find the priorities of consumer while purchasing imitated brands
(iii) To study the demography of consumer purchasing imitated and innovative brands.
(iv) To study the retailer’s perception of the imitated brands.
(v) To build the profile of retailer’s stocking imitated and innovative brands.
(vi) To study the companies perception of the imitated brands.
(vii) To build the profile of companies facing the problem of imitation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

[Diagram of research design with steps:

- Sample Selection
- Determining Sources of Information
- Questionnaire Construction
- Interview Schedule
- Data Collection

Respondents:
Retailers: 77 in numbers
Executives: 25 in numbers
Consumers: 190 in numbers

Respondents:
Retailers (Grocery Shoppers)
Executives (Office bearers of Organisation)
Consumers (Different Income Group)

Figure 5.2]
Types of Information needed

I From Consumers
(i) Where, What, Who, When, Why, Which etc. of the purchase?
(ii) Products where particular brand is asked for.
(iii) Factors influencing purchase decision of imitated/innovative products of each segment of society and their priorities.
(iv) Awareness about imitated products.
(v) Impact of different factors such as income, education and environment of each individual on imitated products.

II From Retailer's / Grocer's
(i) Retailer's opinion about the imitated products.
(ii) Type of retailer's who stocked imitated products.
(iii) Type of products where brands are imitated.

III From Company
(i) Type of company's facing the problem of imitation.
(ii) Response to imitation and their future course of action.

Sources of Information
Keeping the above mentioned information, the study aimed at taking fresh information and secondary information i.e. the information that already exists, into account. In other words some data has to be collected for the first time i.e. primary data and some data from journals, magazines, newspapers and internet etc. i.e. secondary data.

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<th>Primary Information</th>
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Nature of Information
Cross-Sectional Information collected from consumers belonging to different socio-economic segments is cross-classified to check whether opinions vary in different cross-section of the people, same holds for retailer's and companie's (executives).
Form of Information

A structured questionnaire was administered on respondents and observation method was used in the early phase.

Information Sources

Secondary Data sources

Books, Journals, Magazines, Newspapers, Internet etc.

Standardised marketing data sources

Reports of research organisation, Conference proceedings etc.

Primary Data sources

Personal interview, Informal discussion and Observation

Figure 5.3

SAMPLING PLAN

The sampling plan is essential as it affects the cost of the research and the time taken to complete the data collection. The number of subjects needed for any survey or study depends on the questions being asked, the critical effect size and the statistical power desired.

As, it is said that "One hand is not sufficient enough for clapping," likewise the study of brand imitation is not enough through consumers only. Executives and retailers also form a part of the sample. Therefore in the study different subjects and sample size have been used.

I Subjects

Consumer's of different income group; retailer's and company's executives

II Sampling Unit

Household, Grocery Shops and Companies

III Sample size

(i) For Retailers Survey

A total of 80 grocery shoppers (retailers), screened on the basis of phase-II (Details given in procedure) participated. Three respondents who were not reluctant to reveal the information were deleted from the study therefore the
usable sample size was 77, with respondents from the centre and out-skirts of the city.

(ii) For Executive Survey
A total 100 executives were contacted but responses were received only from 28 executives (Through E-Mail, Mail questionnaire and Personal interview combined). The executives selected were from manufacturing and marketing companies of all types. Though the sample is small but is representative as most of the responses were from FMCG companies from where responses were sought. Also since unlike consumers, executives are experts, the sample size is justified because whatever they divulge will be exactly what is happening practically in the market. Three questionnaires have been eliminated due to inconsistent and incomplete responses that left a total of 25 respondents.

(iii) For consumer’s Survey
Of the 200 respondents, 10 were eliminated due to inconsistent and incomplete responses, that left a total of 190 respondents. The sample was evenly split between the various income groups. The sample selected was from each and every corner of the city with emphasis on locality where retailers stocking imitated exist.

IV Sampling Method
Non-Probability Sampling- Purposive (Convenience) Sampling.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION (PROCEDURE)
The entire data was collected in Five different phases:

♦ Phase I: (Preliminary Investigation)

In this phase various products/brands were searched and their package/container were kept. The brands were such that most of the subjects would have same degree of familiarity with them and also a number of imitator or ‘Look-alike’ package exist for these brands. The packages of these brands were used for studying brand confusion (Phase V). Further in this phase observation method is also used to find the retailer’s who stocked imitated brands.
**Phase II : (Preliminary Experience Survey)**

In this phase some retailers, company's executives, spurious brand manufacturer and consumers were contacted. The reason, was to get an idea of variables required for constructing the questionnaire. The retailer's were the same as identified in phase I. However the response from the executives were not encouraging.

**Phase III : (Retailer’s Survey)**

In this phase, the Personal interviews were conducted through a structured questionnaire. An English version was used for respondents. However, the questionnaire was filled and translated (in Hindi) by the researcher if required. The respondents were told the purpose of the survey was to learn about retailer's perception of imitated brands. They were asked whether they stocked imitated only or innovative only or both and the reasons thereof. Since it is a sensitive question for the retailer's, they were usually reluctant to answer. So sometimes observation method was also used. Respondents were then asked to judge imitated products in terms of price, quality, pack size, margin, availability and harmful/usefulness (measured 1= less to 5 = High).

The respondents were then asked if they were aware of damages caused by imitation, penal action against imitation. Lastly, respondents were asked to provide information about consumer’s who visit their shop. Each questionnaire took 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

**Phase IV : (Executive Survey)**

In this phase, the data was collected by:

(i) *E-mail (Internet)*

(ii) *Mail Questionnaire*

(iii) *Personal Interview*

An English version of questionnaire was used for respondents. Office editing was done. The open ended questions were changed to closed ended questions for analysis (categorization done). The respondents were told the purpose of the survey was to learn about companies views on brand imitation. They were asked about the company's business, sales, product profile and awareness about imitation. Respondents were asked about areas in which imitation is possible and prevailing and to rank area in which imitation is more.
The respondents were then asked about how they promote their product, whether they had launched campaigns against imitator and has warned them. They were also asked about legal measures company has adopted or could be taken to curb imitation and their future course of action. The personal interview took about 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

**Phase V: (Consumer Survey)**

In this phase, the personal interviews were conducted through a structured questionnaire. An English version was used for respondents. However, the questionnaire was filled and translated (in Hindi) by the researcher if required. The respondents were told the purpose of the survey was to learn about consumer’s opinion of imitated brands. They were also told the meaning of branded, unbranded and imitated brands.

They were asked where they purchase from, what they mostly purchase, who did the purchasing mostly and the frequency of purchase. They were further asked to rank the factors taken into consideration while purchasing, whether they read the information given on the package and verify the authenticity of the brand and the products where they insist for a particular brand.

Respondents were then shown the various packages/photographs of the original and imitated brands (Tachistoscopic tests) for 1, 3 and 8 seconds respectively and were asked whether they have seen the original or the imitated brands. Researcher himself has recorded the responses. Help of field supervisor was taken to strictly observe the time and to maintain the reliability stop watch with a bell was used.

The respondents were then asked about whether they feel that imitation is a crime and the manufacturer/marketer be punished or not. Lastly, respondents were asked to provide demographic information. Each questionnaire took about 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

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**Phases for Data Collection**

- **PHASE III** (Retailer's Survey)
- **PHASE-I** (Preliminary Investigation)
- **PHASE-II** (Preliminary Experience Survey)
- **PHASE-IV** (Executive Survey)
- **PHASE-V** (Consumer Survey)

**Figure 5.4**

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Relevance of the Tachistoscopic Methodology:

Why is the tachistoscopic method relevant for studying brand confusion? Certainly it does not simulate the purchase situation of all products: it is more appropriate for fast-moving consumer goods. Here, the products are presented with a packaging that bears the specific signs of the brand (name, logo, colours, graphics). Sometimes the design of the packaging itself is a brand asset, as for the classic Coca Cola bottle or the round orange-like Orangina bottle. In the context of fast-moving consumer goods much routinization exists: many brand-loyal consumers rely on visual cues to locate their brand among others in the shelves and pick it in a split second without checking whether they got the right brand.

The notion of a hurried, low-involved consumer scanning the shelves is hard to reproduce in a natural setting. The best approximation is to create a situation where consumer attention is controlled and limited through the use of a tachistoscope (also named T-scope). This tool projects a brand, a trademark or a packaging for a very brief periods of time. After each exposure, respondents are asked to state what they saw or believed to have seen.

In the United States, T-Scope evidence has already been used sparsely in courtrooms as an indication of likelihood of confusion. To identify who were the major package infringers, respondents were shown pictures of the imitating private labels during a fraction of second (Smith, Snyder, Swire, Donegan and Ross, 1983).

Certainly, the tachistoscopic methodology does not get at the important issues of comprehension and inference, not does it tap the attributions consumers make on the basis of the similarity of package. However, it can assess validly the likelihood of in-store perceptual confusion, as most brand purchases are based on routinized processes, thus limited attention to the package of the picked-up brand. More importantly, it is a methodology that matches the courtroom standards of valid evidence and the legal definition of confusion in USA. And more generally, it addresses the misled decoding of the stimulus or the brand by the consumer - that which creates the likelihood of confusion at the behavioural level.
REFERENCES


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