CHAPTER – I

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
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"Brand Loyalty for fertilizers – A comparative Study of Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli Districts", confirms in principle to explorative research. An explorative research calls for three types of analysis – an economic survey, a diagnosis, and a prognosis.

3.1. An Economic Survey

An economic survey means getting the necessary information for theoretical as well as analytical purposes, of the research study. This may be census survey information or sample survey information. A census survey is resorted to when the population under consideration is limited in size and void of complications, because, a careful investigation of every item of the population will be well neigh impossible in the event of the population being heterogeneous and unwieldy. In the case of the present study, census survey is not undertaken because the population under investigation is not only heterogeneous in nature, but also quite unwieldy in size as it is found spread within the whole of Kanyakumari as well as Tirunelveli Districts of the Tamil Nadu State.
A sample survey, on the other hand, requires a careful analytical study of a few items of the population chosen as samples. The samples may be obtained by following different individual methods or a combination of the available methods. As far as the present study is concerned, the following two-stage process has been followed.

3.1.1 Selection of the Study Area

The area selected for the study are the two southern districts of the Tamilnadu State, namely, Kanyakumari district, and Tirunelveli district. The researcher selected these areas, on account of the personal knowledge and also the direct access he has with the people belonging to these areas. These areas contain the two major types of population from whom information need to be collected, namely, the dealers in fertilizers, and the farmers who use chemical fertilizers. The dealers are those who sell the chemical fertilizers of a particular brand after obtaining dealership from a company.

There are many reasons for the above mentioned areas for the study. Firstly, the selected area is convenient for data collection. Secondly, since the study is a comparative one, two adjacent areas of study will give more comparable data than any two different areas, if
selected. Thirdly, use of chemical fertilizer at down south, where there is no chemical fertilizer industry functioning, may give a real picture about the use of chemical fertilizers. And lastly, as the two district population are more exposed to education, whether chemical fertilizer use and its impact affects the brand loyalty, can also be brought forth.

3.1.2. Selection of Samples

A preliminary investigation has been conducted in the two Districts. With the help of locals, samples were selected, primarily to identify the paddy cultivating farmers, and also the dealers for different brands of fertilizers. The investigator identified a variety of farmers in the two districts. They are: Paddy cultivating farmers; Tapiaco cultivating farmers, Rubber planters, Coconut grove owners; Vast fallow dry land owners; Vegetables cultivators; Banana Cultivators; Arecanut Cultivators; Cotton Cultivators; Different types of Grams Cultivators; Tomato Cultivators; Sugar cane cultivators; Corn Cultivators, Tobacco cultivators; Medicinal plants cultivators; and rain fed land cultivators.

Of these, only paddy cultivators have been identified as they account for a total of 4,877 farmers in Kanyakumari district and 3,176 farmers in Tirunelveli district. Out of this population, 50 samples each on
a convenient basis has been selected from each District, to form the total of 100 farmers from both the districts.

Further, a detailed preliminary investigation has been made as to the dealers in different brands of chemical fertilizers, namely, SPIC, FACT, IPL, MFL, Vijay, Parry, Stanes, and Kothari. These are the brands of fertilizers used by the paddy farmers in both the districts. However, it is to be noted that the brand ‘Kothari’ has been in use only in Kanyakumari District. Kanyakumari has a total of 251 dealers and the Tirunelveli district has 326 dealers.

Of these different brand dealers, 50 samples from each district of Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli has been selected, on a convenient basis, to form a total of 100 dealer respondents.

Two different sets of schedules have been prepared, and pilot tested. Certain major modifications have been made in the schedules, mainly based on the pilot study reports. The data has been collected directly and personally by the researcher by visiting the individual shops as well as the paddy farmers. After creating proper rapport with the respondents, the schedules have been administrated. The data collected
have been checked every day, and have been tabulated and entered in the computers, for analysis.

3.2. Diagnosis

Diagnosis is to mean the identification of the problems of the population under study. It requires a lot of statistical information about the different factors of the samples in relation to the determinants of Brand loyalty. The data obtained from the survey serves the purpose. The diagnosis of the problem of the study enabled the researcher to involve in the prognosis.

3.3. Prognosis

Prognosis is actually a statistical projection. In the present study, the impact of the different factors responsible for the Brand loyalty towards a particular brand over a period of varying years among paddy farmers as well as fertilizer dealers have been examined.

Thus, the present exploratory research involves the above three important stages of analysis. This, further, requires a lot of primary and secondary information.
3.3.1. Primary information

Primary data are nothing but the first hand information about a phenomenon. For the present study, a personal investigation has been made with the help of carefully prepared schedules, one for farmers, and the other for fertilizer dealers. As far as this study is concerned, the information obtained as primary data has been found sufficient.

3.3.2. Secondary Information:

Secondary information occupy on important place in every research of this nature. Secondary information are those obtained from the published articles, journals, booklets, pamphlets and/or administrative reports concerned with the research problem under study, from time to time. It is these information which gives meaning and significance, to any research. Any researcher will find it difficult to make headway in his/her study in the event of his/her failure to get adequate secondary information. Hence, the comprehensive study of all the secondary information sources relevant to Brand Loyalty, have been made. In addition to books journals and research reports, a large number of web sites are also have been searched surfaced and briefs made.
3.4. Techniques of Analysis:

The data collected through the use of carefully prepared schedule are logically sequenced for a mathematical and statistical treatment. The study, “Brand Loyalty for Fertilizers – A Comparative study of Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts”, is a combination of qualitative and quantitative nature. However, the researcher feels it necessary to have more quantitative analysis for reaching specific conclusion and for meaningful suggestions. Therefore, the qualitative informations collected have been quantified, whenever possible, without affecting its originality. Thus, available quantitative informations have been processed with the help of the following statistical tools of analysis take recourse in the course of the study. They are:

3.4.1. Percentages:

To study the profile characteristics of farmers and dealers, to study the factors influencing brand preferences, and for arriving at comparative analytical conclusions, it is always necessary to have a common ground of analysis. This common ground, throughout the study, is established with the application of percentages.
3.4.2. Averages:

The profile characteristics of the respondents have been average for having the comparative analysis.

3.4.3. Standard deviations:

The standard measure of deviations among variables, for having a meaningful comparison and conclusion, standard deviation for each and every profile characteristic features, have been calculated.

3.4.4. Multiple Regression Analysis:

Brand loyalty has been regressed with another four independent variables, namely, price per bag, quality of the product, amount spent on advertisement, average number of contacts with the peer group, and good package. The use of computer has been made, so that meaningful results obtained to draw valuable conclusions.

3.4.5 Tables

All the collected information written in the textual form would give only a historical account. For easy understanding and clarity, all the data collected relating to the determinant factors and their relationship with Brand loyalty have been presented through simple tables, at the appropriate places of relevance.
3.5. Conceptualisation of variables:

A large number of qualitative as well as quantitative variables and informations have been gathered. For easy analysis, the following conceptualization process has been followed.

Age is conceptualized in the number of years completed by a respondent, at the time of interview.

Education is conceptualised as the minimum number of years needed to complete the programme.

In order to quantify the gender, the male is given a score one and the female zero. Thus, the gender is conceptualised as a binary valuable.

In order to quantify the major occupation, farming is given a score of one, and zero score to others. Thus, occupation of the respondents is conceptualised as a binary valuable.

In order to conceptualise the position of cooperative societies on farming, a question was asked whether the respondent has at any time availed loan from the society. If the reply is ‘Yes’, the score one was given and score zero given if the reply is ‘No’.
In order to quantify the land holdings, it is conceptualised with the actual area of land held by the respondent.

Further, the various reasons expressed as the factors leading to brand preferences in the two districts are identified as: Availability of preferred brand, Technical guidance received from the dealers, Price, Availability of credit, Quality of the product, Peer group influence, Discount and subsidy, Efficiency in handling, advertisement, and the availability of the particular brand of their choice when needed.

3.6. Hypothesis

To draw meaningful conclusions based on collected information analysis, the following hypotheses have been proposed. They are:

1. The farmer behaviour is not consistent in relation to the different brands of fertilizers.

2. Brand loyalty towards fertilizer brands does not have a bearing on the quality of the product.

With the help of the above research methodology and the hypotheses, the present study on “Brand loyalty for fertilizers – A comparative study of Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts” has been carried out, analysis made, and final conclusions reached.