3. Research Gap

Category Management Association of USA\textsuperscript{51}, stated that the fundamental objective of marketing is creating equity in the consumer’s mind in a way that they clearly attach the uniqueness of that product even to the extent that consumers must feel that the product as a trusted contributor to a more satisfying life, one that meets a perceived need in a superior manner. Therefore we drew the inference that category plays an important role and attitude towards category should be informative to study.

It was observed that most of the studies made in consumer behavior were predominantly in products than in services. From among the literature studied, a majority were around automobiles, followed by appliances and apparels. We therefore proposed to study in service sector.

Further, it was also identified that category attitude plays an important role in Services as brand equity has lesser importance for services than for tangible goods (Krishnan & Hartline, 2001). Or in other words, Attitude towards brand plays an important role for products, however, in services, attitude towards category is important. The importance goes beyond brand to service marketing contexts. From the extant of literature studied around consumer behavior in services a common observation of the recent times especially in past one decade, that we noticed was ‘attitude towards a particular category of services’ have been studied extensively, for example, attitude towards healthcare (Corbin et al., 2001), attitude towards banking (Howcroft, et al., 2002), attitude towards online shopping (Li & Zhang, 2002), attitude towards science (education) Osborne et al., 2003), attitude towards life insurance (Dahl, 2004, Yusuf et al., 2009), attitude towards internet service (Neger, 2009), attitude towards mobile operators (Oracle White Paper 2011), attitude towards airlines (Harcar & Yucelt, 2012) and so on.

\textsuperscript{51} http://www.cpgcatnet.org/page/196880/
Service marketers and researchers have realized that brand level marketing is seldom convincing as that is predominantly dependent on consumer intention to use a service at the first place (Dorsch et al., 2000). We therefore realized that attitude towards category is an important aspect for any service marketers especially as service is so different than products and consumers perceptions towards service vary (Shostack, 1977 and Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004). As per the classic papers of Nelson (1970) and Darby & Karni (1973), all services are predominantly experience and credence based than that of products. Experience attributes could be established only after purchase or during consumption and credence attributes are such that consumers would not be able to determine or evaluate even after purchase or consumption (Darby & Karni, 1973 and Krishnan & Hartline, 2001). Specific studies made in healthcare have brought this point clear that health care has high credence attributes (Shaffer & Sherrell, 1997). In general all financial services and insurance in particular have categorized as high-credence services (Crosby & Stephens, 1987; Krishnan & Hartline, 2001). Researchers have categorized higher education also as high credence services (Smith and Ennew, 2001). These characteristics of experience and credence based properties create difficulties in pre and even post purchase evaluation by consumers (Smith & Ennew, 2001). Literatures have mentioned that such specific characteristics of services influence consumer behavior, especially on buying behavior (Zeithaml et al., 2006). While going for a service consumers’ deal with high degree of uncertainty than deciding on tangible goods (Shostack, 1977; Mitchell & Greatorex, 1993; Bateson, 1995).

Most studies from the extant of literature we surveyed, have identified the attitude towards a particular category and left there, we therefore proposed to take up the study to further explore how attitude towards category influences other aspects of consumer behavior, for example the extent of information search in service. From the extant survey of literature made by us, it was
observed that there was a gap in consumer behavior studies, how the attitude towards category impacts the information search. There has not been any work done to establish the relationship between category attitude and extent of information search. Though in various aspects of consumer behavior information search has been studied extensively; and similarly consumer attitude towards brands, company, shopping product etc. have been studied, but the relationship between consumer’s attitude towards category and the extent of information search is far from settled. We attempted to address this gap through our research. We proposed to develop an attitude model based on consumer psychological approach to study the relationship between category attitude and extent of information search.