ABSTRACT.

Key words: Retailing, Consumer attitudes, Government retail outlets, Co-operative retail outlets, Private retail outlets, Performance of outlets, Major problems and challenges, All zones, Zones, ownership, Residence-Urban/Rural.

A Retailer or retail store is any business enterprise whose sales volume comes primarily from retailing. Retailing includes all activities involved in selling goods or services to the final consumers for personal, non-business use. The retailing in Kerala is concerned, the government and co-operative sector is very strong enough with the private sector to meet the requirements of consumers. The public distribution system headed with Kerala state civil supplies corporation (Supplyco) and Co-operative sector with all consumer co-operative stores, Neethi stores (Associated with primary agricultural credit societies-PACS) and The Kerala State Co-operatives Consumers’ Federation Ltd has gained enormous consumer support in recent years. The private retail outlets with various retail format especially supermarkets also catering the requirements of crores of consumers in Kerala. The meaning of attitude is the feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this. Here the study entitled “Retail Marketing in Kerala-Performance, Attitudes and Challenges” is to assess the attitude level of consumers of Kerala over these three formats and also how far the various retail outlets can provide over the key variables that may constitute the attitudes together with an assessment over major problems and challenges in retailing. The zonal and Urban/Rural analysis is also made. The scheme of the study consists of eight chapters. Chapter one deals with the statement of the problem, objectives, hypothesis, and review of literature, methodology, scope and limitation of the study. An overview of retailing is given in the second chapter. The analysis of consumer attitudes towards government, co-operative and private retail outlets is given in the third chapter and the performance of government, co-operative and private retail outlets on the key variables that constitute consumer attitudes and major problems and challenges in the retailing in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter deals with zone wise analysis-consumer and retail outlets. The sixth chapter explains the residence wise analysis-consumer and retail outlets. The seventh chapter concluded the major findings of the study. The last chapter (Eighth) presents the summary, suggestions and conclusions of the study.
The sampling is based on multistage sampling. In the first stage we divide the entire state into three zones namely south central and north zone and two districts from each zone is selected. From the each district a sample of 100 consumers and 18 super markets/retail outlets (6 from each category-Government/Co-operative/Private retail outlets) is selected. So a total 600 consumers and 108 retail outlets are surveyed for the study.

The important factors contributed by the consumers with the help of mean percentage score for the purchase from government sector is discounts offered (77.52) followed by Lowest price in the area (75.96) and Reliability (65.13). The important factors contributed by the consumers with the help of mean percentage score for the purchase from Co-operative sector is Reliability (77.45), Store has the lowest prices in the area (74.22) and Discounts offered (72.86). The important factors contributed by the consumers with the help of mean percentage score for the purchase from private sector is Wide Variety/Choice (85.09), Sales man’s Service (84.95), Convenience in shopping (84.7), Display Models or Structures (83.91) and Computerized Billing (83.3).

The important factors contributed by the consumers with the help of mean percentage score for the purchase from government sector in the case of retail sectors is as follows- The most purchased sector from government outlets is Oils-Coconut/Palm etc (74.22), Spices (70.55) and Cereals/Rice/wheat. Etc (66.67). The important factors contributed by the consumers with the help of mean percentage score for the purchase from co-operative sector in the case of retail sectors is as follows- The most purchased sector from co-operative outlets is Oils-Coconut/Palm etc (72.37), Toiletries & Laundry (72.14), Condiments- Sauce, Jam (72.05) and Cereals/Rice/Wheat. etc (71.03). The important factors contributed by the consumers with the help of mean percentage score for the purchase from private sector in the case of retail sectors are as follows- The most purchased sector from private outlets is Personal Care (77.92), Toiletries & Laundry (76.17), Pickles (75.4), Chips/Snacks/Nuts (75.4), Paper Products (75.05) and Packaged drinks/Mineral water (74.99).

The retail sector wise analysis is concerned the private sector bags the consumers in majority sectors. The consumers are interested in purchasing in the nearby shops and value of products purchased corners around Rs.1000. The father or mother is the main purchaser of the family and majority of purchasing is in the evening or in other words the time immediately after their work. The duration of purchase of consumers comes around 30 minutes in majority cases and majority are purchasing on monthly basis. The majority of people are purchasing products from the
private sector (54.2 %) followed by government sector (36.3 %) and co-operative sector (9.5 %)
but at the same time Supplyco retail formats is the most preferred one and have the highest mean
(5.763) and second position goes to private supermarkets. The co-operative stores have got
fourth position and the co-operative way of retailing is one of the good and proved methods to
satisfy the consumer needs especially at the village level. It is found from the study that there is
significant difference among the consumer’s attitudes towards government, co-operative and
private retail outlet and it is also found that there is significant difference among the consumer’s
attitudes towards government, co-operative and private retail outlets in the three zones of Kerala.
The study also reveals that there is significant difference among the two residences
(Urban/Rural) towards government, co-operative and private retail outlets.
The majority of the outlets are operating in the urban area and 80 % of the outlets are only
maintaining the employees at the level of maximum 10 persons. The majority (88 %) of the retail
outlet’s floor area is about less than 1500 Sq.ft and the service system (84.3 %) adopted is self
service system. The discounts offered is in the range of 1-10 % (43.5 %) and 11-20 % (56.5 %).
The huge majority of the outlets are providing the computerized billing facility and offering up
to 10 hours of shopping. Almost all retail outlets are attaching rate tags and price stickers and
number of billing points comes around 2-4 billing points in majority cases. The less than one out
of five outlets are only providing safety measures against fire and less than one out of twenty
outlets have safety measures against theft. The promotions offered by the government, co-
operative outlets are comparatively very less compared to the private sector. The one out of five
private retail outlets are actively engaged in the hardcore promotions.
It is concluded that consumers in Kerala likes government retail outlets but because of lack of
benefits and facilities, purchase is from the private retail outlets (majority cases) it is mainly
because of restricted supply of products and lack of choice and availability that may seen in the
government sector. So it is highly essential that government sector should imbibe good models
and methods from private sector and at the same time private sector should incorporate the
reasons of love towards government sector in their outlets-such as: affordable prices and
reliability in the operations. It is also concluded that to meet the price inflations, hoardings, black
marketing, cheating with duplicate and substandard products etc - A Public-Private partnership
model may be established in the retail sector, with high coverage all over Kerala, without
restrictions in the quantity and quality, together with empathy towards problems of consumers.