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CONTINUITY OR CHANGE: A STUDY ON CONSUMERS GROCERY PURCHASING HABITS

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Abstract: *Retailers create value for customers by performing various functions such as providing an assortment of products and services, breaking bulk, holding inventory, and they are the final link in the distribution channel linking manufacturers to the customers. Customers product needs can be met through various channels i.e. traditional retail shops, modern retail shops, cooperative arrangements, direct sales, and online shopping. Retail in India has witnessed new types of shops opened; formats changed, and shops closed. Large domestic players who entered the grocery retail segment with ambitious plans had to slow down, take a rethink and change. Traditional retailers are facing stiff competition where modern retailers have opened shops. A Quota Sample of 559 Households of Low, Medium, and High income groups was studied through the Survey method, in Thane City. This helped to gather insights into consumer's reasons for switching / changing types of shops. Data collected was analyzed statistically to understand the extent of shift in consumers purchasing amongst Traditional and Modern shops.*

Keywords: *Grocery purchasing, consumer behaviour, traditional & modern retail*

Introduction :

Consumer's food purchasing patterns are changing because of retail businesses offering scrambled merchandise i.e. a mix of unrelated products. Food retailers carry nonfood items, or discount stores carry food items to appeal to a broader group of consumers by providing one stop shopping. New retail formats have emerged and consumers, manufacturers, and retailers all have had an impact on this progression. Consumers have a variety of retail formats to choose from e.g. supermarkets, hypermarkets, and neighborhood convenience shops. How do consumers respond to such changes? Do they alter their purchase behaviour?

Review of Literature :

Consumers have a wide variety of retail formats to choose to shop at. Kenhove et al. (1999) found that store choice is differentiated by the nature of the task. They studied the store choice decision across various tasks as described by the respondents, such as urgent purchase, large quantities, difficult job, regular purchase and get ideas. Studies have found that distance, low prices, quality of products sold and atmosphere tended to be the chief variables that explained which grocery stores were chosen by consumers (Hortman et. al 1990). Nonetheless, when price gaps between formats become very large, price may begin to drive the decision of where to shop (Kahn and McAlister 1997). Organized retail is in its infancy in India but developing fast. The next 5 to 10 years are critical for its scaling up to have a visible impact on the back end operations of retailers.

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Government and business need to work together to ensure that this opportunity is not lost but is used in a manner that benefits most stakeholders in the chain from retail to tail (Thomas Reardon, T and Gulati, A (February 2008). As supermarkets spread in Asia and their sales expand much faster than GDP growth, they can draw on a rapidly growing, consolidating and modernising processing and milling sector in cereals, dairy, meats and condiments/sauces. However, fresh produce retailing, still in its incipience, puts strains on traditional produce supply chains because of its speed (Reardon, 2011). The rapid transformation of the global value chain for agriculture has sparked a supermarket revolution. This has been welcomed as an instrument that can help address rural poverty where it is most stubbornly embedded. Various studies have highlighted the positive welfare effect on producers who successfully integrate into the modern retail value chain, but these have neglected the negative effect on the producers who are left behind in the transformation (Chang, Han-Hsin, Caprio, Alisa Di and Sahara, Sahara 2015). The economic equality among ethnic groups of Turkey was the driving force to live in peace for centuries and that the buying behaviors of these ethnic groups varied. Food and beverage type products were found to be a mean for recognizing other cultures (Velioğlu et al. viewed on 1st October,2016).

Retail business in India is changing at a fast pace. It is necessary to study the changes in the Indian context. The objective of this research is to study changes in patronage patterns related to grocery shops.

Methodology :

This paper is based on the data collected for the researchers Ph.D. thesis: An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City, 2013. The study was conducted in Thane City (W) where both traditional and modern retail are available to consumers. Traditional retail is available in the form of Kirana Shops and Wet Markets and Modern retail is available in Supermarket, Hypermarket and Standalone formats. A railway line divides the city into Thane East and Thane West. Modern retail shops are situated only in the West and consumers living in the West have both Traditional and Modern shops for shopping choices. Hence this study restricts itself to Thane West only. The Wards / Areas studied in Thane West were Vartaknagar, Majiwada, Manpada, Wagle Estate & Rayladevi, Uthalsar, and Naupada.

Respondents were selected directly from housing societies in which they live. Housing societies in Thane are of different types – formed on the basis of community / occupation basis. Societies had been identified generally as:

1. Government / Company colonies

2. MHADA Built housing colonies

3. Private housing societies of different income levels.

A Quota sample using the Economic criterion of Family Income of the respondents was drawn from the different housing colonies in Thane West. A Survey of 559 Households was carried out using a Questionnaire Cum Interview Schedule to collect data. Households were categorized into Low, Medium and High income groups. The unit of study was not the individual but the Household.

Results and Discussion :

An attempt is made to study the change that had occurred due to the arrival of modern shops on the grocery scene. To gauge the continuity on the part of households the time since they are patronizing one type of shop was studied. The longer the period they are patronizing one type of shop the more the continuity.

Period of Patronizing – Continuity: Out of the households studied those patronizing shops periodwise are divided equally between upto 5 years (41.7%) and between 5 and 15 years (41.3%). If those patronizing above 15 years (17.0%) is added to the latter, it becomes quite significant **(58.3%).** The trend is generally that people want to continue **(See Table 4.1).** In fact, there are households who have been patronizing shops between 20 and 30 years (7.2%). Such persons do not change easily **(See Table 4.2).**

Table 4.1

Period Since Patronising Current Shop

Sr	Period	N	%
1	Upto 5 Years	233	**41.7**
2	5 yrs 1 m - 15 yrs	231	**41.3**
3	Above 15 yrs	95	**17.0**
4	Total	559	**100**

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Table 4.2

Period Since Patronising Current Shop

(Detailed Break-Up)

Sr	Period	N	%
1	< 1 Year	38	**6.8**
2	1 yr 1m - 5 yrs	195	**34.9**
3	5 yrs 1m - 10 yrs	166	**29.7**
4	10 yrs 1m - 15 yrs	65	**11.6**
5	15 yrs 1m - 20 yrs	46	**8.2**
6	20 yrs 1m - 30 yrs	40	**7.2**
7	30 yrs 1m - 35 yrs	4	**.7**
8	Above 35 yrs	5	**.9**
9	Total	559	**100**

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Continuity (Reasons for Patronizing): Quality (43.3%) dominates followed by Wholesale prices (28.8%) then near (28.1%) and Reasonable prices (28.1%) are among the specific reasons for continued patronization of shops. Family tradition and trust are also featured as a reason to patronize a particular shop albeit by fewer number of respondents **(See Table 4.3).**

Table 4.3
Reasons For Patronising Particular Shops

		N	%
I	**Product / Shop Related**	**N**	**%**
1	Quality	242	**43.3**
2	Variety	63	11.3
3	Cleaned Food Grains	55	9.8
	Total (Av %)		21.5
II	**Economic**	**N**	**%**
4	Wholesale Prices	161	**28.8**
5	Reasonable Prices	157	**28.1**
6	Discounts / Offers / Loyalty Schemes & Programs	103	18.4
7	Buy On Credit	27	4.8
	Total (Av %)		20.0
III	**Convenience**	**N**	**%**
8	Near / Convenient	157	**28.1**
9	All Shopping Under One Roof	91	16.3
10	Home Delivery	86	15.4
11	Display / Touch & Feel Product / Self Service	33	5.9
	Total (Av %)		16.4
IV	**Social**	**N**	**%**
12	Family Tradition / Trust	40	7.2
	Total (Av %)		7.2

*Out of 559 for each Sub Advantage

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Traditional shops are patronized more (45.3%). Modern shops alone stand at 21.5%. The saving grace for Modern shops are the 33.3% households who shop at both Traditional and Modern shops **(See Tables 4.4 & 4.5).**

Table 4.4

Current Patronised Shop Type

Sr		N	%
1	Traditional Shops	253	45.3
2	Mixed - Traditional & Modern	186	33.3
3	Modern Shops	120	21.5
4	Total	559	100

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Table 4.5

Current Patronised Shop Type (Detailed)

Sr		N	%
1	Kirana Alone	61	10.9
2	Wholesale Alone	100	17.9
3	KiranaSupermarket Alone	47	8.4
4	Kirana / KiranaSupermarket / Wholesale	45	8.1
5	Modern Alone	120	21.5
6	Modern / Kirana / KiranaSupermarket	84	15.0
7	Modern + Wholesale	102	18.2
8	Total	559	100

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Out of the Six ward / areas of Thane West, in two (Manpada and Majiwada), modern stores boast overwhelming patronization (86.5 & 85.1%), whereas in only one area (Uthalsar) traditional stores seem to be holding the fort (69.2%). The remaining three areas exhibit a seesaw battle **(See Table 4.6).**

Table 4.6

Consumers Shopping / Not Shopping at Modern Retail Shops - Area wise

		Shop At Modern Shops		Do Not Shop At Modern Shops		Total
Sr.	Areas	N	%	N	%	N
1	Manpada	83	86.5%	13	13.5%	96
2	Majiwada	40	85.1%	7	14.9%	47
3	Wagle / Rayla Devi	36	49.3%	37	50.7%	73
4	Naupada	41	48.2%	44	51.8%	85
5	Vartak Nagar	86	44.6%	107	55.4%	193
6	Uthalsar	20	30.8%	45	69.2%	65
	Total	* 306	.(54.7%)	* 253	.(45.3%)	559

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Among Modern Shops: The Leader of the Pack - One modern shop out of seven in Thane stands out where more than half go to shop **(52.0%).** This shop has two outlets, one in Manpada area of Thane and the other is in the adjoining suburb of Mumbai, Mulund. It has been noticed that those who prefer modern shops, will go to its Mulund branch rather than go to other Modern shops in Thane **(See Table 4.7).**

Table 4.7

Respondents Shopping At Modern Shops

Sr.	Modern Shops	N	%
1	DMart (Manpada, Mulund)	159	52.0
2	Star Bazar (Vartak Nagar-Naupada)	63	20.6
3	Combination	27	8.8
4	Big Bazar (Manpada, Mulund)	22	7.2
5	Reliance Fresh (Manpada, Naupada)	17	5.6
6	More (Manpada-Majiwada)	12	3.9
7	Hyper City (Majiwada)	5	1.6
8	EasyDay (Manpada)	1	.3
9	Total	306	100
10	Do Not Shop At Modern Shops	* 253	* 45.3

* Out of 559

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Thus it is clear that when consumers choose to patronize a shop distance to the shop is not a consideration. The modern shop, which is patronized by as many as **52.0%**, does not get this patronization from those living in the area in which it is situated, alone. In Manpada, there are as many as five Modern shops, but this modern shop takes the Lion's share, **78.3% (See Table 4.8).** Patronization, whether of Traditional shops (earlier) or Modern shops (now), it is not without any purpose. Consumers are very selective in deciding which modern shop they go to when they shift from Traditional to Modern shops.

It is interesting to note that some consumers choose to shop at a combination of modern shops i.e. one or more shops. This could possibly be variety seeking or deal / discount prone behaviour.

Table 4.8

Area wise Patronisation of Modern Shops

		1		2		3		4		5		6			
	Areas	Manpada		Majiwada		Vartak Nagar		Naupada		Uthalsar		Wagle / Rayla Devi		Total	
Sr.	Modern Shops	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Dmart (Manpada, Mulund)	65	78.3%	20	50.0%	49	57.0%	11	26.8%	8	40.0%	6	16.7%	159	52.0%
2	Star Bazar (Vartak Nagar-Naupada)	1	1.2%	1	2.5%	20	23.3%	22	53.7%	3	15.0%	16	44.4%	63	20.6%
3	Combination	6	7.2%	5	12.5%	8	9.3%	2	4.9%	0	0.0%	6	16.7%	27	8.8%
4	Big Bazar (Manpada, Mulund)	2	2.4%	4	10.0%	4	4.7%	1	2.4%	5	25.0%	6	16.7%	22	7.2%
5	Reliance Fresh (Manpada, Naupada)	3	3.6%	0	0.0%	3	3.5%	5	12.2%	4	20.0%	2	5.6%	17	5.6%
6	More (Manpada-Majiwada)	3	3.6%	7	17.5%	2	2.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	12	3.9%
7	HyperCity (Majiwada)	3	3.6%	2	5.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	1.6%
8	EasyDay (Manpada)	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	.3%
9	Total: Shop At Modern	83	100%	40	100%	86	100%	41	100%	20	100%	36	100%	306	100%
10	Do Not Shop At Modern (*Out of 559)	13	13.5%	7	14.9%	107	55.4%	44	51.8%	45	69.2%	37	50.7%	* 253	45.30%
11	Total	96		47		193		85		65		73		559	

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

A sizeable number of consumers have shifted their patronage 43.5%. But what is curious to note is that all change is not flowing from Traditional to Modern. A reverse change, albeit a very small percentage, is those consumers who have switched from Modern shops to Traditional shops 1.8% **(See Table 4.9).** This should serve as a cautionary note to Modern shops to not take their consumers for granted.

Table 4.9

Shift in Shopping Pattern: From Earlier To Current

Sr	Shift	N	%
1	No Change	306	54.7
2	Changed Modern To Traditional	10	1.8
3	Changed Traditional To Modern	243	43.5
4	Total	559	100

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

If we take a dichotomous view of change, from Traditional to Modern, it gives the impression that 43.5% of a shift has taken place from Traditional shops to Modern shops. But viewing the change on a continuum – From Traditional – Mixed – Modern – shows that change is really a transition stage (read Traditional & Modern - Both Mixed), of 43.5% who shifted from Traditional to Modern 31.5% have shifted partially and only 12% have shifted to Modern shops completely **(See Table 4.10).**

Table 4.10

Shift In Shopping Pattern: From Earlier To Current

		Shop Type				
		Earlier		Current		Shift
		N	%	N	%	%
1	Kirana Alone	193	34.5	58	10.4	-24.2
2	Wholesale Alone	196	35.1	100	17.9	-17.2
3	KiranaSupermarket Alone	63	11.3	47	8.4	-2.9
4	Kirana / KiranaSupermarket / Wholesale	41	7.3	45	8.1	0.7
5	Traditional (1 + 2 + 3 + 4)	493	88.2	250	44.7	-43.5
6	Modern / Kirana / KiranaSupermarket	7	1.3	87	15.6	14.3
7	Modern + Wholesale	6	1.1	102	18.2	17.2
8	Mixed (T + M)	13	2.3	189	33.8	31.5
9	Modern Alone	53	9.5	120	21.5	12.0
10	Total	559	100	559	100	

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Majiwada proves to be the exception where 96.3% have moved from Traditional shops to Modern ones **(See Table 4.11).**

Table 4.11

Area Wise Shift From Traditional To Modern & Vice-Versa

		Traditional	Mixed (T & M)			Modern			
		Modern To Traditional	Modern To Mixed		Traditional To Mixed	To Modern	M To T	T To M	Total
1	Vartak Nagar	4	2		52	23	6 7.4% 60.0%	75 92.6% 30.9%	81 100% 32.0%
2	Manpada	1	0		31	26	1 1.7% 10.0%	57 98.3% 23.5%	58 100% 22.9%
3	Majiwada	0	1		10	16	1 3.7% 10.0%	26 96.3% 10.7%	27 100% 10.7%
4	Uthalsar	1	0		19	1	1 4.8% 10.0%	20 95.2% 8.2%	21 100% 8.3%
5	Naupada	0	0		34	6	0 0.0% 0.0%	40 100.0% 16.5%	40 100% 15.8%
6	Wagle / Rayla Devi	0	1		22	3	1 3.8% 10.0%	25 96.2% 10.3%	26 100% 10.3%
7	Total	6	4		168	75	10 4.0% 100%	243 96.2% 100%	253 100% 100%

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Change: It is also clear that people don't believe in continuity for the sake of continuity (Family Tradition getting only **7.2% See Table 4.3**). They are for continuity for definite reasons. Understanding the reasons behind consumers patronizing a particular type of shop can help Retailers better their offerings.

Out of 559 households, **253** have shifted. Treating 10 who shifted from Modern to Mixed (4) and Traditional (6) as reverse migration, out of the remaining **243, 168** made partial shift and **75** made complete shift. What reasons made them do it? Respondents were asked to state reason(s) behind their decision to shift from one shop type to the other. Hence, the responses received are more than the number of respondents.

The reasons given by respondents can be considered as 20 positive and 22 negative. These can be further classified into five broad reasons:

A. Economic; B. Product-related; C. Convenience-related; D. Service-related; and

E. Social / Feel-good Factor

Table 4.12

Reasons for Switching / Changing Type of Shops

Sr	Reasons	Sr	Positive (Pull)	Sr	Negative (Push)	R % Pull	R % Push
1	Economic	1	Schemes	1	Shop Keeper Fudging Accounts	172	7
		2	Promotions	2	Cheating on Price		
		3	Offers				
		4	Discounts				
		5	Better Deals				
2	Product - Related	6	Variety	3	Poor Quality	145	14
		7	New Products	4	Spoilt Grocery		
		8	Brands	5	Old Stock		
				6	Items Not Cleaned		
				7	Not Packed		
				8	Not Available		
				9	Non-Veg Not Available		
3	Convenience	9	Credit Card Accepted	10	Credit Card / Sodexo Coupons Not Accepted	164	16
		10	One Stop Shopping	11	Shop Overcrowded		
		11	Self Service	12	Parking Problems		
				13	No Transport Available		
				14	Long Queues at Payment Counter		
				15	Computers Conking Out		
				16	Bag Check In		
				17	Packing Bags Not Provided		
				18	Parking Charges		
4	Service - Related	12	Home Delivery	19	Rude Behaviour	69	12
		13	Phone Order	20	Indifferent Attitude		
		14	Parking Available				
		15	Sales Return				
5	Social / Feel Good Factor	16	Display,	21	Not Clean	73	5
		17	Touch,				
		18	Feel Product Factor				
		19	Fun, Entertainment, Family Outing				
		20	Hygienic, Clean				
6	Total					623 *	54 *

* Responses as Respondents offered more than one reason

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Under each category the responses received from respondents are overwhelmingly more in favour of pull factors, the highest being under Economic head (172), followed by

Convenience (164). Newspapers are filled with advertisements of Modern shops offering discounts, schemes, promotions and offers. The highest number of responses under the push factor is also mentioned under Convenience **(16)**, followed by **14** under Product-related category **(See Table 4.12).**

Shift Factors: It would be in order to state, out of **253** households who changed, how many were influenced by the pull factor and how many by the push factor. The data reveals that pull factors have decisive influence **(219)** as compared to push factors **(34).** This means behind the shift of a large majority there are reasons, which are positive in nature. This also means people will shift not only because of current unsatisfactory conditions but also because whatever is offered to them are more satisfactory and / or rewarding **(See Table 4.13).**

Table 4.13

Reasons For Switching / Changing Shops

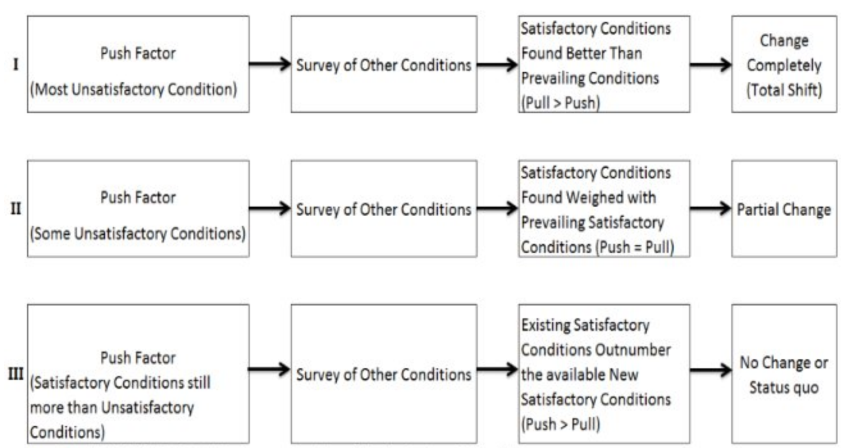
Sr	Shift Factors	N	%
1	Pull Factors	219	86.6
2	Push Factors	34	13.4
3	Total (Changed Shops)	253	100

Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Push factors are negative which make a situation unbearable and drives customers away. Pull factors are positive which bring customers towards conditions that are better. It is a combination of both push and pull factors that result in either a change or status quo **(See Diagram 4.1).**

Diagram 4.1

Interplay Between Push & Pull Factors Leading to Change or Status quo



Source: Durge, Y. (2013) An Analytical Study of Urban Consumers' Expectations of Retail Store Environment in Thane City.

Environmental Theory of Retail Development applied to India:

Amongst the various theories of Retailing the environmental approach holds that new or evolved forms of retailing are manifestations of changes in the economic, social, demographic, political, legal and / or technological environments (Meloche et al., 1988). Environmental theories highlight the ways in which organizations adapt to changes in the political, economic, social, and technological (PEST) factors.

Traditional retail like the Kirana grocery shops in India are past the maturity stage in the retail life cycle. Yet they are ubiquitous even today. But Traditional retailers face an increase in competition from Modern retailers as consumers have better choices and are exercising these choices. Change is taking place, albeit slowly, with consumers moving on a continuum from Traditional to Mixed to Modern retail. This will result in a decrease in the size of pie for Traditional retailers. A chunk of their business is defecting to Modern retail. In order to stem this tide Traditional retailer will have to work towards reducing the push factors driving consumers away from them. Modern retailers have to keep in mind that they cannot afford to take the consumers for granted given that reverse migration from Modern to Traditional retail can also occur as shown in some cases. As Modern retail proliferates into the hinterland in India, which it is bound to given time Traditional retailers will face an increased struggle to retain their share of the consumers spending pie. Traditional retailers need to move away from their old mindsets and change. This will ensure their survival.

Conclusion :

Though there are some key variables that all shoppers consider in choosing stores, the relative importance of the different factors does vary for different groups of consumers (Kahn and McAlister 1997). Demographics make a difference in consumer preferences (Hartman et. al 1990). With changing demographics, increasing disposable income and urbanization in India consumer expectations are changing. Fulfilment of Economic, Product-related, Convenience-related, Service-related, and social / Feel-good Factors is essential to retain customers who expect it. Retailers who understand consumers and are willing to change to meet consumer's expectations will thrive.

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