ABSTRACT

Today, with the emergence of large supermarket, hypermarket and various other formats like the departmental stores, the retailer is closer to the customer. Most stores have their own policies and decide how to influence shoppers. The reasons for the shift in power can be attributed to the fact that retail organizations are growing at a fast pace. The retailer today faces a knowledgeable and demanding consumer. Since this business exists to satisfy the needs of the consumers have often forced retail organizations to change formats and product offering. The study was carried out to measure the extent of customer’s satisfaction level towards retail store and to study customer’s opinion regarding the services rendered by the retail stores. The outcome of the study based on 150 consumers selected from Coimbatore City of Tamilnadu. The study pointed out that the Variable Gender, Marital Status and Occupation of the customers is the key factor that determines the satisfaction level towards retail store.

INTRODUCTION

Retailing occupies a pre-eminent position in the economies of all modern societies as it is often stated that the only constant in retailing is change and it is certainly true that the pace of development with in retailing appears to be accelerating. Retailing is the final step in the distribution of merchandise. It is the last link in the supply chain, which is connecting the bulk producer of commodities to the final consumers. The retail industry in India has always been highly fragmented with the majority of the stores being owed and run by families.

Retailing involves a direct interface with the customers and the coordination of business activities from end to end – right from the concept or design stage of a product or offering, to its delivery and post-delivery services to the customer. The industry has contributed the economic growth of many countries and is undoubtedly one of the fastest changing and dynamic industries in the world. The retail store has occupied a central role in retailing as the direct point of contact between retailer and consumer.

It is the place where the retailer can meet the customer’s requirement and ensure continued business. The store is also an important extension of the retailer’s image, and indicator of such things as price, quality and merchandise range. The major function of retail store is to provide basic storage and display for the merchandise offering, whether it is products or services or both. As the final link between consumers and manufacturers, retailers are a vital part of the business world. Retailers add value to products by making it easier for manufactures to sell and consumers to buy. It would be very costly and time consuming for you to locate, contact and make a purchase from the manufacturer every time you wanted to buy a candy bar, a sweater or a bar of soap. Similarly, it would be very costly for the manufactures of these products to locate and distribute them to consumers individually. By bringing multitudes of manufacturers and consumers together at a single point, retailers make it possible for products to be sold, and, consequently, business to be done. Retailers also provide services that make it less risky and more fun to buy products. They have salespeople on hand who can
answer questions, may offer credit, and display products so that consumers know what is available and can see it before buying.

V. Kumar, Denish Shah and Rajkumar Venkatesan (2006) have investigated the “Managing retailer profitability-one customer at a time!” they examine how customer lifetime value (CLV) can be computed at individual customer level in a retail setting to maximize profitability. The study finds that maximum positive impact to CLV occurs when the customer cross-purchases, shows multi-channel shopping behavior, stays longer with the firm, buys specific product categories and purchases more frequently with the firm.

Christopher Knee (2002) have identified the major issues “Learning from experience: five challenges for retailers” Starting from the experience of department stores, this paper examines five challenges for retailing in the future. These are retail branding, people, growth, customer-centeredness, and performance and measurement. These challenges constitute strategic choices for the future for retailers and each have specific operational consequences.

V. Seenu Srinivasan & Anand V.Bodapati (2006), in their research paper “The Impact of Feature Advertising on Customer Store Choice” says that heavily used competitive tactic in the grocery business is the weekly advertising of price reductions in newspaper inserts and store fliers. Store managers commonly believe that advertisements of price reductions and loss leaders help to build store traffic by diverting customers from competing store, thereby increasing store volume and profitability.

Marta Ortiz-Buonafina (1992) in their article “The Evolution of Retail Institutions: A Case Study of the Guatemalan Retail Sector” traces the evolution of the Guatemalan retail sector after implementation of import substitution policies. The retail sector's productivity and performance are evaluated in the context of economic growth and development. The model builds on the literature on retail productivity to identify workable measures of factors that affect productivity.

Stuart Van Auken, Subhash C. Lonial in the article “Relating Store Preferences for Departments to Overall Store Preferences” states the nature of the relationship between consumers' store preferences for each of a number of merchandise departments and overall store preferences was studied. The result revealed that consumer merchandise departments were not congruent with store preferences in an overall sense, while consumers' store preferences for non-specialty merchandise departments for the most part were. A number of strategic implications were revealed in addition to the validation of contextual store preference and the advancement of a theory of overall store preference formation.

Miguel I. Gómez, Edward W. McLaughlin and Dick R. Wittink (2004) in this article “Customer satisfaction and retail sales performance: an empirical investigation” they measure the links between store attribute perceptions and customer satisfaction, and between customer satisfaction and sales performance. Contributions of our study include the analysis of behavioral consequences of customer satisfaction in the food retail sector, the accommodation of complexities in the satisfaction-sales performance links based on an empirical model of first differences, and a discussion of how managers can employ the results for customer satisfaction policies.

Marta Ortiz-Buonafina (1992) in their article “The Evolution of Retail Institutions: A Case Study of the Guatemalan Retail Sector” traces the evolution of the Guatemalan retail sector after implementation of import substitution policies. The retail sector's productivity and performance are evaluated in the context of economic growth and development. The model builds on the literature on retail productivity to identify workable measures of factors that affect productivity.
Sudhakar G.P (2005) examines the trends in Indian retailing and tries to study the impact of the services rendered by chain stores in India. The finding of the study reveals that electronic commerce is still in its nascent stage. As supply chain and other internal communication lack integration, the customers are not able to get the benefit of lowered prices. The changes in demographic and westernization of lifestyle and culture only support the exponential growth of organised retailing while greater importance need to be given to store atmosphere to increase footfalls and customer loyalty.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study makes an attempt to seek solution to the questions raised in the statement of problems. Accordingly, the following objectives have been framed. 1. To explore socio economic profile of the customer. 2. To study customer’s opinion regarding the services rendered by the retail stores. 3. To study customers’ satisfaction level towards retail store and to suggest suitable measures to improve the satisfaction level of customers.

SAMPLING

Convenient Random sampling method has been adopted in choosing a sample. Coimbatore, popularly known as Manchester of South India, is situated in the western part of the state of Tamil Nadu. The data required for the study was collected through structured interview schedule. The sample consumers have been selected from 75 retail stores organization and 150 customers.

FRAME WORK OF ANALYSIS

The study is based on only primary data. Primary data has been collected from retail store organization and their customers using interview schedules. The collected data have been analyzed by using different statistical tools, such as Percentage Analysis, is used to have a general idea on the personal profile of the respondents and based on their opinion simple percentage was done, Chi-square analysis is used to test the independence of two attributes, ‘t’ - test is used for judging whether there is any significant difference between the means of two samples and Scaling Technique Five point scaling technique similar to likert scaling was used to determine the level of satisfaction of the respondents over various factors.

Socio Economic Profile of the Customers

The description about the Socio Economic profile of the sample customers are explained in the following paragraphs.

Table.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>No. of Customers (N = 150)</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>No. of Customers (N = 150)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of Purchase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>17 (11.30)</td>
<td>Once in a week</td>
<td>61 (40.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 35</td>
<td>47 (31.30)</td>
<td>Once in a month</td>
<td>43 (28.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 – 45</td>
<td>57 (18.00)</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>20 (13.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 – 55</td>
<td>44 (29.30)</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>26 (17.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 56</td>
<td>15 (10.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>69 (46.00)</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>96 (64.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>81 (54.00)</td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>54 (36.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear from the table.1, out of 150 customers, 57% of them are in the middle age group which ranges between 36 and 45 years and majority 54.00 % of them are Female customers. Around 35.50% of their educational level is only up to School level. 23.20 of the customers are alone in the Business people and 64.00 % of the customers are married. Of the total sample, 33.33 percentages of the customers Spouse / Children influence in purchase decision and 40.70% of the customers go for purchase once in a week. Out of the total number of customers 34.70 % of the customers earning ranges from Rs. 5,001 to Rs.10, 001 salary per month. From the total number of customers 64.00 % of the customers are purchase in convenience stores and 28.70 % of the retail customers have 3 members in their family.

Table.2
Attributes Associated With Level of Satisfaction

The selected socio, economic variables are compared with customers’ opinion regarding the factors affecting the level of satisfaction and to know about the association between them. The chi-square test has been applied to find out the association between the selected variables and the level of satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>15.591</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>1.254*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.737*</td>
<td>Monthly income</td>
<td>19.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Qualification</td>
<td>13.201</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>6.950*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here the selected socio-economic variables are compared with satisfaction level. Totally six variables have been tested in order to identify their association with the customers level of satisfaction. It is found that only three variables such as Gender, Marital status and Occupation are significantly associated with customers’ level of satisfaction.
Table 3 - Nature and Strength of Difference between Customers’ Opinion Regarding Services Rendered by the Retail Stores Based on Gender and Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>No. of Customers</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>22.66</td>
<td>3.592</td>
<td>0.883*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22.87</td>
<td>3.640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>23.01</td>
<td>3.879</td>
<td>0.349*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>22.49</td>
<td>3.347</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table 3 shows the results of Mean, Standard deviation and t-test. Based on the results of chi-square test three variables are associated with level of satisfaction are further analyzed, to know about the nature and strength of difference between customers’ opinion regarding services rendered by the retail stores based on gender and marital status and the magnitude of change of one variable over the other. The mean values of the overall gender groups vary between 22 and 24. The mean values of the male and female respondents are 23.01 and 22.49, which shows that male respondents have high level of opinion regarding the services of the retail store and the mean values of the overall groups vary between 22 and 23. The mean values of the married and unmarried respondents are 22.66 and 22.87, which shows that unmarried respondents have high level of opinion regarding the services of the retail store.

The ‘t’ test results states that at 5% level of significance, there is no significant difference between the Marital Status and Gender of the respondents regarding their opinion on services rendered by the retail store and hence the two hypothesis is accepted.

DETERMINANTS OF CUSTOMERS SATISFACTION LEVEL

Five point scaling technique similar to Likert scaling was used to determine the level of satisfaction of the respondents over various factors. Score 5 was given for highly satisfied, 4 for satisfied, 3 for moderate, 2 for dissatisfied and 1 for highly dissatisfied.

Table 4 - Customers’ satisfaction level towards retail stores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight(w) / Factors(F)</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store appearance</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating hour</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display of goods</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space allocated</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence of sales person</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper storage</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount on Purchases</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking space Provided</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient checkout</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place for entertainment</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information of new arrival</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promptness of home delivery</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services of sales person</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table states the ranks assigned to the factors, which influence the satisfaction level of customers towards retail store. Based on 5 point scaling technique the weights are assigned and the scores are computed. From the table it is noted that the factor “store appearance” has been ranked first with high score of 652, the factor display of goods has been ranked second with the score of 559, the factor operating hour has been ranked third with the score of 557, the factor promptness of home delivery has been ranked fourth with the score of 555 and so on and the factor place for entertainment for children has been ranked with the lowest score of 475.

FINDINGS

The study reveals that, the factors like Gender, Marital Status and Occupation of the individual and family are found to be associated with the level of satisfaction about retail purchase. To sum up Gender and Marital status is playing a major role in attaining the satisfaction level about service rendered by the retail stores.

Customers are having less awareness about the retail marketing. Retail industries have to realize the importance of awareness among the customers about retail marketing. It will be able to grab the needs of customers and will be helps to retain the customers.

SUGGESTIONS

- The Retail stores have to create better awareness among the customers about their products and services.
- The retail stores may think of providing customized services to the customers based on their Age, Gender and Marital Status.
- The performance of the retail store is based on several factors. One of the important factors is maintaining better relationship with supplier. The retailers have to make decision on several issues such as cost, deliver, quality etc., this will ensure better customer satisfaction by means of low price, better quality and quick delivery of goods.
- Innovation in products will bring more customers for retail business. Innovation in transport will be a better strategic approach in reducing the time taken for transport for retailer and getting quick delivery service to the customer.
- It is suggested that every retailers must be able to introduce all technological advancement including online retailing. It is not merely a shopping facility provided to consumers but more marketing strategy that is driven by technology impact.

CONCLUSION

Retailers are closer to the point of purchase and have access to a wealth of information on consumer shopping behaviour. As the world of retailing has moved from the age of customer satisfaction to customers delight, the organisation are remodeling their strategies around the customer needs with the aim of bringing him back and keeping him for life. Understanding their evolving needs, aspirations and life style is the underlying key to success for any retailer. As everything in the retail environment is subject to change, the retailers must constantly update their knowledge of the retail environment to survive. Retailers of all sizes must therefore be available on as many channels as possible so that their customers can have access to merchandise at any time in day or night. Hence the
retailers should concentrate on researching customer preference, innovative advertising and sales promotion so as to reach the customers effectively.

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1 Customer Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty towards Corporate Retail Store - [A Case Study of Big Bazaar Retail Store in Bangalore City]
Marri Sreenivasulu (1), Dr. Mamilla Rajasekhar (2) 1 Lecturer in Commerce, Govt. Degree College, Rayachoty, Kadapa district, AP. 2 Professor and Head, Dept. of Commerce, SV University, Tirupati, AP.Â So it is important for a marketing manager to introduce innovative customer loyalty programs for protecting the customers base line for Big Bazaar in Bangalore city. Keywords: Brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, corporate retailing sector, Big Bazaar I. Introduction to Corporate Retailing Retailing means selling products in small volumes directly to individuals and it is emerging as a sunrise industry in India. This led to the addition of entertainment and recreation facilities in stores to attract customers towards them. 1.2 INTRODUCTION TO BROOKEFIELDS Brookefields is the first of its kind retail project in the city of Coimbatore. With several anchor retail outlets, leading local, national and international brands, hypermarkets, food court, fine dining, family entertainment centre, multiplex, business centre, health club, hotel and parking - all under one roof, it is the ultimate shopping and entertainment experience. The mall promises something for everyone with its bewildering range of products.