LEVERAGING CONSUMER EXPERIENCE WITH THE CRITICAL CHOICE OF RETAIL OUTLETS- AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Personal selling efforts became highly essential for selling products in competitive markets. Most companies take a customer-oriented approach to personal selling. They train salespeople to identify customer needs and to find solutions. This approach assumes that customer needs provide sales opportunities, which customers appreciate good suggestions, and that customers will be loyal to salespeople who have their long-term interests at heart. The problem-solver salesperson fits better with the marketing concept than does a hard-sell salesperson or the glad-handling extrovert. Buyer's today want solutions, not smiles; results, not razzle-dazzle. They want salespeople who listen to their concerns, understand their needs, and respond with the right products and services. The sales force serves as a critical link between a company and its customers. In many cases, salespeople serve both masters-the seller and the buyer.

KEY WORDS: *Personal selling, problem-solver salesperson, razzle-dazzle. .*

INTRODUCTION

Approaching the right potential customers is crucial to selling success. As one expert puts it: "If the sale force starts chasing anyone who is breathing and seems to have a budget, you risk accumulating a roster of expensive-to-serve, hard-to-satisfy customers who never respond to whatever value proposition you have". Personal selling efforts became highly essential for selling products in competitive markets. This led to the emergence and development of modern day salesmanship which aimed at winning the confidence of the prospective consumers through persuasion. In other words, the modern salesman informs about the qualities, uses and other characteristics of the products and services, demonstrates and displays their positive points so as to create interest in the minds of the buyers. The interest is turned into a need and the same is converted into a sale. Thus, salesmanship in modern days is more of skill or art of persuading customers to achieve favorable results. It is no longer restricted to selling alone. Rather, it is an act of providing satisfaction to the consumers through the process of selling.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Though advertising play greater role, personal selling cannot be neglected as it persuade the customers personally by a single salesperson or by a group. Thus the personal presentation by the sales force helps the business not only to reach the target but also to build customer relationship.

In spite of advanced marketing techniques sales force play important role in showing personal care, attention, emotional touch etc which are essential in marketing. Hence this study reveals few unknown aspects of personal selling results in consumer buying experience.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the customer's existing practice of purchase / availing services in retail outlet
2. To validate the reasons for choosing a particular retail shop to visit.
3. To study whether Personal factors are influencing or any other factors influencing the purchase decision.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scott, Donal, and Deborah Brown (2002) studied the infusion of technology in to personal selling process. It was

found out that communication technology was used a lot more by sales people. E-mail was used by 73 percent of the sample to communicate with customers. This high percentage of usage of communication technology was because of the simplicity of the technology. Cell phones, fax machines, and e-mail were used by one-half of the samples. Fax machines were used more than cell phones or e-mail for placing orders. The result shows that technology has penetrated deeply into sales. **Dhruv Grewal, Michael Levy and Greg Marshall (2005)** focused to study and examine whether the Internet enable and limit successful selling. The study observed that a limitation of internet retailing was lack of trust, lack of trial, fear related to loss of privacy and security. Internet enablers for retail personal selling – access to information, accessibility to customer, higher economies of scale, information collection. They summarized that personal relationship are likely to be important and salespeople are more likely to perform a consultative role. The Internet is useful for developing and maintaining a one-to-one relationship with customers primarily through personalized e-mail and promotions. Internet communications can be effectively used with frequent purchase / loyalty programs to promote benefits and to alert customers to special promotions. This creates a strong value–added to the relationship which enables the personal seller to create loyalty and retain customers.

Preis, Michael (2007) examined the impact of value system types on buyer- seller relationships. It was found out that interpersonal satisfaction (i.e. satisfaction with the relationship between the buyer and seller) was contingent on the salespersons trust worthiness, problem solving capabilities etc.. It was concluded that interpersonal satisfaction and repurchase intention were higher in cases where dominant value systems of the buyers and sellers were similar.

Trocchia, Philip and Swinder Janda (2012) investigated about why consumers purchase products and service that they do not ever use or consume. The result showed that several motivations are there for purchase and that too "salesperson influence" motivation. The study revealed that customers bought the item because they felt that they where influenced to do so by salespeople.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was taken in Coimbatore city in the state of Tamil Nadu. The study involves primary data which were collected from 500 customers who purchase from different textile shops and 60 retailers who run textile shops in the city. Convenient random sampling method has been followed for the study.

The scope of the study is confined to Coimbatore city only and the data were collected from 500 customers who purchase from different textile shops.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Personal factors and customer's purchase decision
Table 1: *Average Rank: Personal factors and customer's purchase decision

Personal Factors	Reasons		Quality of the Product	Brand name of the product	Reputation of the shop	Salesmen's response	others
Age (Years)	< 25	AR	1.67	2.11	2.8	3.56	4.68
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	25-45	AR	1.58	2.08	2.8	3.7	4.44
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	45 - 65	AR	1.46	2.16	2.65	3.8	4.79
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	>=60	AR	1.92	2.67	1.83	3.58	5
		FR	2	3	1	4	5
Gender	Male	AR	1.52	2.09	2.8	3.7	4.61
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	Female	AR	1.62	2.16	2.65	3.72	4.56
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
Education	No formal education	AR	1.8	2.3	2.3	3.6	5
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	School Level	AR	1.64	2.1	2.78	3.67	4.48
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	College Level	AR	1.52	2.15	2.73	3.72	4.56
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	Professionally Qualified	AR	1.59	2.06	2.75	3.7	4.72
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
Occupational status	Agriculture	AR	1.57	2.05	2.48	3.9	5
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	Business	AR	1.54	2.14	2.76	3.69	4.58
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	Employed	AR	1.6	2.01	2.8	3.67	4.75
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	Professionals	AR	1.67	2.2	2.61	3.8	4.17
		FR	1	2	3	4	5

Income (Rs.)	< 5,000	AR	2.07	1.98	2.61	3.48	4.45
		FR	2	1	3	4	5
	5,000-10,000	AR	1.53	2.16	2.69	3.75	4.63
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	10,000-15,000	AR	1.42	2.1	2.85	3.76	4.59
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	15,000-20,000	AR	1.69	2.04	2.7	3.7	4.52
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	>=20,000	AR	1.42	2.3	2.7	3.65	4.71
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
Family size	1	AR	1.5	2.14	2.64	3.71	5
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	2	AR	1.45	2.24	2.94	3.58	4
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	3	AR	1.53	2.12	2.75	3.72	4.69
		FR	1	2	3	4	5
	>=4	AR	1.62	2.09	2.68	3.73	4.61
		FR	1	2	3	4	5

Average Rank (AR) and Final Rank (FR) of the different category of the respondents on their priorities towards their purchase decision.

It is found from the Table 1, that the respondents irrespective of their personal classification have given top priority (Rank 1) for the quality of the product followed by brand names, reputation of the shop.

It s concluded that the respondents irrespective of their personal categories in which they belong have given top priority to quality of the product as a high priority in making purchase decision.

Personal factors and reasons for visiting particular shop

Table 2 : *Average Rank: Personal factors and reasons for visiting particular shop

Personal Factors		Sources	Reputation of the shop	Salesperson service	Better Quality	Cheaper Rates	Varieties	Shopping facilities	Others
Age (Years)	< 25	AR	3.21	3.57	2	3.59	3.63	5.42	6.86
		FR	2	3	1	4	5	6	7
	25-45	AR	3.23	3.54	2.3	3.89	3.82	5.3	6.04
		FR	2	3	1	5	4	6	7
	45 – 65	AR	2.4	3.86	2.08	4.02	3.71	5.14	6.79
		FR	2	4	1	5	3	6	7
	>=60	AR	3.25	3.13	2	3.33	3.67	4	7
		FR	3	2	1	4	5	6	7
Gender	Male	AR	2.82	3.57	2.25	3.97	3.77	5.18	6.3
		FR	2	3	1	5	4	6	7
	Female	AR	3.26	3.69	2.12	3.77	3.75	5.33	6.63
		FR	2	3	1	5	4	6	7
Education	No formal education	AR	3.33	3.83	1.67	4	3	5	
		FR	3	4	1	5	2	6	
	School Level	AR	2.8	3.35	2.06	3.88	3.74	5.28	
		FR	2	3	1	4	5	6	
	College Level	AR	2.91	3.63	2.1	3.9	3.91	5.31	6.39
		FR	2	3	1	4	5	6	7
	Professionally Qualified	AR	3.34	3.78	2.58	3.81	3.44	5.08	6
		FR	2	4	1	5	3	6	7
Occupational status	Agriculture	AR	2.64	3.36	1.5	4.88	3.38	5.13	5.8
		FR	2	3	1	5	4	6	7
	Business	AR	3.08	3.66	2.24	3.93	3.86	5.18	6.59
		FR	2	3	1	5	4	6	7
	Employed	AR	2.78	3.59	2.39	3.53	3.64	5.43	6.14
		FR	2	4	1	3	5	6	7
	Professionals	AR	3.03	3.5	1.79	3.74	3.37	5.44	6.6
		FR	2	4	1	5	3	6	7

Income	< 5,000	AR	3.24	3.64	2.18	3.82	4.23	5.5	6.13
		FR	2	3	1	4	5	6	7
	5,000-10,000	AR	2.9	3.47	2.06	3.81	3.69	5.55	7
		FR	2	3	1	5	4	6	7
	10,000-15,000	AR	3.01	3.7	2.33	3.97	3.8	5.03	5.81
		FR	2	3	1	5	4	6	7
	15,000-20,000	AR	3.19	3.6	2.16	3.88	3.59	5.11	7
		FR	2	4	1	5	3	6	7
	>=20,000	AR	2.72	3.76	2.15	3.85	3.73	5.23	7
		FR	2	4	1	5	3	6	7
Family size	1	AR	2.91	3.55	1.63	3.75	3.38	5	7
		FR	2	4	1	5	3	6	7
	2	AR	2.36	3.07	2.3	3.87	3.93	5.55	7
		FR	2	3	1	4	5	6	7
	3	AR	3	3.62	2.32	3.97	3.83	5.16	6.18
		FR	2	3	1	5	4	6	7
	>=4	AR	3.21	3.8	2.13	3.84	3.7	5.23	6.48
		FR	2	4	1	5	3	6	7

*Average Rank (AR) and Final Rank (FR) for the different categories of the respondents on their priorities towards their reasons for visiting a particular shop.

It is found from the Table 2, that the respondents irrespective of their personal classification have given top priority (Rank 1)

for the better quality followed by reputation of the shop, brand name of the product as the reasons for visiting a particular shop.

It is concluded that the respondents irrespective of their personal categories in which they belong have given top priority to better quality as the high priority for visiting particular shop.

Factor influencing purchase decision
Table 3: Results of Kruskall Wallis Test – Personal factors and the factor influencing the purchase decision

Personal Factor	Factors influencing the purchase decision				
	Quality of the product	Brand name of the product	Reputation of the shop	Salesmen's response	Others
Age	6.449	5.95	**13.341***	4.96	4.327
Gender	2.361	0.417	**4.434***	0.158	1.172
Educational Qualification	3.404	0.962	2.834	0.11	1.685
Occupational Status	1.444	1.796	4.146	3.719	3.344
Monthly Income	**22.643***	6.789	4.934	7.185	1.655
Family size	1.817	1.394	6.242	1.429	3.902

Note: *- Significant (p value = 0.05)

Hypothesis : There is no significant difference between the different category of the respondents on the priority of the factor that influence the purchase decision.

It is found from the Table 3, that the hypothesis is rejected (Significant) in three cases and in other cases the hypothesis is accepted (Not Significant).

It is concluded that there exists significant difference between the personal characteristics of responds in respect of age and gender towards reputation of the shop and also there exists significant difference in the priority of the respondents in respect of the monthly income towards the quality of the product.

Factors that effects the consumer behaviour for visiting a particular shop:

Table 4 : Results of Kruskall Wallis Test – Personal factors and the reasons for visiting particular shop

Personal Factor	Reasons for visiting particular shop						
	Reputation of the shop	Salesmen service	Better quality	Cheaper rates	Varieties	Shopping Facilities	Others
Age	**13.657***	2.815	1.229	2.225	0.329	2.888	2.845
Gender	**5.256***	0.461	0.655	0.895	0.003	1.594	0.114
EducationalQ ualification	4.321	2.25	**8.969***	0.584	4.909	1.561	2.315
Occupational Status	2.165	0.636	6.673	7.601	4.013	2.425	1.371
Monthly Income	1.697	1.162	1.082	0.435	3.557	4.706	9.157
Family size	**8.448***	6.673	4.053	0.797	1.602	2.874	2.896

Note: *- Significant (p value = 0.05)

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the different category of the respondents on the priority for reasons visiting particular shop.

It is found from the Table 4, that the hypothesis is rejected (Significant) in four cases and in rest of the cases the hypothesis is accepted. (Not Significant).

It is concluded that there exists significant difference between the personal characteristics of respondents in respect of age, gender and family size towards reputation of the shop and also there exists significant difference between the priority of the respondents in respect of educational qualification towards better quality.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The age, occupational status and monthly income of the respondents have significant influence on frequency of visit to the cloth store. The educational qualification and monthly income of the respondents have significant influence on the mode of purchase. The age, gender, occupational status, monthly income and family size of the respondents have significant influence on accompanying persons in the recently made purchase. The age and family size of the respondent have significant influence on decision maker in respondent's family relating to purchase.

The personal factors have no significant influence on visiting particular shop for purchase. The monthly income of the respondents has significant influence on annual expenditure for clothes. The respondents irrespective of their personal categories in which they belong have given top priority to quality of the product as a high priority in making their purchase decision.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals the significant difference exists between the personal characteristics of responds in respect of age and gender towards reputation of the shop and also there exists significant difference in the priority of the respondents in respect of the monthly income towards the quality of the product. Significant difference exists between the personal characteristics of respondents in respect of age, gender and family size towards reputation of the shop and also there exists significant difference between the priorities of the respondents in respect of educational qualification towards better quality. The respondents irrespective of their personal categories in which they belong have given top priority to better quality as the high priority for visiting particular shop.

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