

Comparative study of the buying habits of rural and urban women consumers of Meghalaya

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ABSTRACT

The involvement and influence of the women in the family purchase is not only important for the welfare of the family, it has far reaching impact on life style and standard of living of the country. The present paper is an attempt to study the buying habits of both rural and urban women consumers of Meghalaya. It was found that among the rural women consumers 46% had a good habit while purchasing packaged food items, 43% had a poor habit while purchasing clothes, almost equal distribution *i.e.* 36% had a good and poor habits while buying cosmetics, 44% had an average habit while buying consumer durables. Among urban consumers 55% had a good habit while buying packaged food item, 45% had a good habit while buying clothes, 53% had good habit while buying cosmetics, 54% had a good habit while buying Consumer durables and 49% had average habit while buying general items.

Key words : Consumers, Consumer behaviour, Buying habits, Consumer durables

Buyer consumers behaviour is a comparatively recent area of study. It tries to understand and predict human action in consumers role as a buyer. It is the study of individuals, groups or organizations and process they use to select, secure, use and dispose of products, services, experiences or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and the society. In simple words it can be stated as the behaviour exhibited by people in planning, purchasing and using economic goods and services.

The study of consumers helps firms and organizations improve their marketing strategy by understanding issues such as, the psychology of how consumers think, feel, and select between different alternatives. The psychology of how the consumers are influenced by his or her environment, the behaviour of consumers while shopping or making other marketing decisions.

Limitations in consumer knowledge or information processing abilities influence decisions and marketing outcome. How consumer motivation and decision strategy differ between products that differ in their level of importance on interest that they entail for the consumer and how marketers can adopt and improve their marketing campaigns and marketing strategies to move effectively to reach the consumers. The current investigation has been undertaken with a view to ascertain the buying habits of the rural and urban women consumers of Meghalaya.

METHODOLOGY

A two stage stratified random sampling method was adopted in order to select representative samples for the purpose of the study. Out of the seven districts of

Meghalaya two districts were purposively selected for the study *i.e.* the districts of West Garo Hills and East Khasi Hills. The total sample size of the study was 200 of which 100 from urban households and another, 100 from rural households selected randomly for the study, Interview method was considered as an appropriate tool for the study so as to get complete and reliable information. The data were analyzed in percentage, buying habits were analyzed by calculating mean and standard deviation. It was measured on the basis of always: 3, sometimes: 2, Never: 1. On the basis of scores received, the buying habits were analyzed. Mean $\pm 1.96 \times S.E$ were computed and categorized into three groups good habit, average habit and poor habit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Buying habits of some consumers were discussed in terms of buying habits of food items, non food items like clothing, cosmetics and consumer durables.

Food items:

From Table 1 it was found that in rural areas of Meghalaya only 20% had a habit of preparing a shopping list always otherwise it was disappointing to note that about 39% sometimes prepared a shopping list and 41 % never prepared a shopping list. About 64% of the respondents reported that it was only sometimes they went to a particular shop and only 17% always bought from Cooperative Govt. Sales Centres and about 7% always bought from the wholesalers. The buying habits of urban consumers were quite different from their rural counterparts. It was seen that 59% of the urban

Table 1: Buying habits of food items of women consumers in rural and urban areas of Meghalaya

Statements	Always		Sometimes				Never					
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Prepare a shopping list	20	20	59	59	39	39	35	35	41	41	06	06
Going to a particular shop	15	15	44	44	64	64	52	52	21	21	04	04
Buying from Cooperative Govt. Sales Centre	17	17	12	12	28	28	59	59	55	55	29	29
Buying from wholesale	07	07	28	28	61	61	55	55	32	32	17	17
Checking the quality before making purchase	29	29	91	91	59	59	09	09	12	12	NIL	NIL
Buying food with quality seals	06	06	83	83	55	55	17	17	39	39	NIL	NIL
Read the labels for-												
1) Net content	24	24	73	73	54	54	27	27	22	22	NIL	NIL
2) Brand name	13	13	67	67	50	50	32	32	37	37	01	01
3) Manufacturing date	06	06	71	71	43	43	29	29	51	51	NIL	NIL
4) Expiry date	23	23	96	96	40	40	04	04	37	37	NIL	NIL
5) Price	76	76	90	90	18	18	10	10	06	06	NIL	NIL
Compare the price of the commodity	44	44	54	54	40	40	43	43	16	16	03	03

respondents always prepared a shopping list, 44% always went to a particular shop. But only 12% of the urban consumers reported that they always had a habit of buying from Cooperative Govt. Sales Centre and 28% always bought from wholesaler.

Regarding the habit of checking the quality before making purchase it was seen that only 29% of the rural consumers always checked it but in case of urban consumers 91% always used to check the quality before making purchase. It was disappointing to note that only 6% of the rural consumers always bought food with quality seals whereas among urban women 83% always used to buy food with quality seals.

There was quite a difference in the habit of reading labels also. It was seen that only 24% among the rural women whereas 73% among the urban women always used to read labels for net content. Similarly 13% among rural women always used to read labels for brand name. It was disappointing to note that only 6% of the rural consumers always used to read labels for manufacturing date whereas 71% of the urban consumers always used to read labels for manufacturing date. Regarding the habit of reading the expiry date, 23% always reported by the rural consumers and 96% always reported by the urban consumers. Majority of the consumers had a habit of reading labels for price, 76% always among the rural consumers and 90% always among the urban consumers. Das and Pathak (1998) reported that majority of the women consumers of Assam were found to be particular for buying food with quality seals (71.31%). Majority of the women consumers were found to be particular for checking expiry date (82.79%) and most of the women

consumers (65.57%) checked the name in case of packaged food.

Data regarding the buying habits of clothes in Meghalaya are presented in Table 2, which again shows a vast difference between the habits of rural and urban consumers. It is disappointing to note that among the rural consumers only 6% always planned clothing purchase in advance, only 1% always bought clothes from authorized shop, only 4% always bought clothes from whole sellers, whereas among the urban consumers 22% always planned clothing purchase in advance, 28% always bought clothes from a authorized shop, 71% always bought clothes from retail shops and only 9% always bought from whole sellers. Regarding the habit of checking the care and maintenance required for the materials, 18% always reported among the rural consumers and 59% always reported among the urban consumers. Only 14% of the rural consumers always checked the workmanship of the garment and 62% of the urban consumers always checked the workmanship of the garment. It was disappointing to note that only 1% always among the rural consumers used to examine the quality of clothing material by looking at the labels/tags and about 27% always among the urban consumers had a habit of examining the quality by looking at the labels/ tags. It was seen that 74% of the rural consumers sometimes used to purchase clothes that usually give long lasting satisfaction whereas among the urban consumers 82% always used to buy clothes that usually give long lasting satisfaction. It was appreciating to note that 59% always among the rural consumers used to keep eye in measurement and 79% always among the urban consumers used to keep eye in measurement. Das

Table 2: Buying habits of clothing items of women consumers in rural and urban areas of Meghalaya

Statements	Always		Sometimes				Never					
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Plan clothing purchase in advance	06	06	22	22	59	59	53	53	35	35	25	25
Buy clothes from a authorized shop	01	01	28	28	33	33	65	65	66	66	07	07
Buy clothes from retail shops	35	35	71	71	59	59	27	27	06	06	02	02
Buy clothes from wholesale market	04	04	09	09	36	36	57	57	60	60	34	34
Checking the care and maintenance required for the materials	18	18	59	59	41	41	34	34	41	41	07	07
Checking the workmanship of the garment	14	14	62	62	42	42	27	27	44	44	11	11
Examine the quality of clothing material:												
(1) By texture	09	09	76	76	59	59	22	22	32	32	02	02
(2) By looking at the labels/ tags	01	01	27	27	20	20	63	63	79	79	10	10
(3) Through experience	38	38	67	67	49	49	30	30	13	13	03	03
2. Economize clothing expenditure												
By purchasing from fair price shop	36	36	14	14	53	53	59	59	11	11	27	27
By purchasing from clearance shop	03	03	10	10	35	35	64	64	62	62	26	26
By purchasing from exhibition	NIL	NIL	12	12	43	43	69	69	57	57	19	19
By purchasing from off season sale	01	01	05	05	26	26	70	70	73	73	25	25
3. Buying readymade clothes	24	24	46	46	64	64	49	49	12	12	05	05
4. Purchasing clothes that usually give long lasting satisfaction	18	18	82	82	74	74	18	18	08	08	NIL	NIL
5. Comparing the prices of clothes in the market	23	23	52	52	65	65	45	45	12	12	03	03
6. Keep eye in measurement	59	59	79	79	39	39	13	13	02	02	08	08

and Pathak in (1998) reported that in case of checking workmanship of the garments, 80% of the respondents belonging to High socio-economic status always checked workmanship whereas 94 - 60% of Middle socio-economic status and 97.5% of Low socio-economic status always or sometimes checked the workmanship.

From Table 3 regarding the buying habits of cosmetics products in rural areas of Meghalaya, it was seen that only 14% always went to a particular shop, 19% always checked the quality before making a purchase. It was disappointing to note that only 9% always read net content, only 8% always read the brand name, 12% always read expiry date and again only 8% always read manufacturing date but regarding the price the rural

women reported that 59% always used to read the label for it. But only 63% sometimes bought cosmetic products of a particular brand. The urban women had an entirely different habit than their rural counterparts like 45% always used to go to a particular shop. Majority (94%) always checked the quality before making purchase. It was appreciating to note that all the women consumers always or sometimes used to read label for expiry date and price, almost majority 59% always and 35% sometimes used to read the net content, 67% always and 32% sometimes used to read the brand name and 90% always used to read the price. About 47% always had a habit of buying only a particular brand. A similar study by Bhagwati and Das (2004) on college students as

Table 3 : Buying habits of cosmetics of women consumers in rural and urban areas of Meghalaya

Statements	Always		Sometimes				Never					
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Going to a particular shop	14	14	45	45	59	59	49	49	27	27	06	06
Checking the quality before making purchase	19	19	94	94	73	73	06	06	08	08	NIL	NIL
Read the label for-												
(i) Net content	09	09	59	59	38	38	35	35	53	53	06	06
(ii) Brand name	08	08	67	67	56	56	32	32	36	36	01	01
(iii) Expiry date	12	12	96	96	43	43	04	04	45	45	NIL	NIL
(iv) Manufacturing date	08	08	68	68	26	26	29	29	66	66	03	03
(v) Price	69	69	90	90	26	26	10	10	05	05	NIL	NIL
Buying only of a particular brand	19	19	47	47	63	63	51	51	18	18	02	02

Table 4 : Buying habits of consumer durables of women consumers in rural and urban areas of Meghalaya

Statements	Always		Sometimes				Never					
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Buying on the basis of cash payment	51	51	91	91	43	43	09	09	06	06	NIL	NIL
Installment buying	07	07	04	04	72	72	77	77	21	21	19	19
Checking the I.S.I. Mark while buying consumer durables	01	01	70	70	20	20	15	15	79	79	15	15
Buying from reputed dealers	10	10	77	77	66	66	21	21	24	24	02	02
Seeing warranty/ guarantee cards	19	19	91	91	47	47	08	08	34	34	01	01
Buying consumer durable goods by availing loan from bank	01	01	02	02	06	06	60	60	93	93	38	38

consumers, revealed that a vast majority of the respondents read the label for expiry date (94.6%), price (89.3%), manufacturing date (88.0%) and brand name (87.3%) while buying cosmetics.

Regarding the buying habits of consumer durables which is being depicted in Table 4, show that in rural areas 51 % always bought on the basis of cash payment and only 7% reported that they bought always in installment basis whereas 91 % of the urban consumers always bought on basis of cash payment. One should always look for I.S.I. mark while purchasing consumers durables. Bureau of Indian Standards provides I.S.I. mark of certification to the products whose quality confirms to their standards. But it was disappointing to note that only 1 % always checked I.S.I. mark while buying consumer durables, among the rural consumers whereas 70% always among the urban consumers checked I.S.I. mark. Only 10% always bought from reputed dealers among the rural consumers, where as 77% always among the urban consumers. Regarding the habit of seeing the warranty/ guarantee cards among rural consumers, 19% always saw it and among urban consumers 91 % always saw the warranty/ guarantee cards.

It is in accordance with the study by Pathak and Borthakur (1992) who reported that a small portion of respondents which was 11 % checked I.S.I. mark in Assam.

In another study made by Seshadri (2006) it was

reported that consumers are vigilant and careful while buying durable time appliances but are not keen on entering into maintenance contract after the initial warranty period. Ninety four per cent indicated that they take sufficient precautions (through I.S.I. and Trade Mark) for ensuring safety to life and body while purchasing the product.

Though there have been many fatal incidents in India of consuming medicines after expiry date but still only 37% among the rural consumers reported that they always checked the manufacturing/ expiry date while buying medicines as clearly depicted in Table 5. Only 2% of the rural consumers always bought from reputed dealers while buying footwear and 2% always bought immediately when it is offered on reduction sale and 10% always bought commodity which was accompanied by free gifts though it was not required at that time. Where as among the urban consumers, 96% always checked the manufacturing, expiry date while buying medicines. It was appreciating to note that 94% of urban women always took delivery of sealed gas cylinders. Only 38% always bought footwear from reputed dealers. It is contrary to the finding of Das and Pathak (1998) that respondents belonging to High socio-economic status *i.e.* 93.33%, 75.68% of Middle socio-economic status and 37.5% of Low socio-economic status preferred to buy from reputed dealers while buying footwear. Only 11 % always among the urban women used to buy immediately when something

Table 5: General buying habits of rural and urban women consumers of Meghalaya

Statements	Always		Sometimes				Never					
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Checking manufacturing/expiry date while buying medicines	37	37	96	96	45	45	04	04	18	18	NIL	NIL
Buying from reputed dealers while buying foot wears	02	02	38	38	39	39	56	56	59	59	06	06
Taking delivery of sealed gas cylinder	07	07	94	94	10	10	06	06	02	02	NIL	NIL
Buying immediately when it was offered on reduction sale	02	02	11	11	28	28	56	56	70	70	33	33
Buying the commodity which is accompanied by free gift though it was not required at that time	10	10	15	15	38	38	62	62	52	52	23	23

was offered on reduction sale and only 15% always bought commodity which was accompanied by free gifts though it was not required at that time.

Table 6 : Distribution of respondents according to buying habits of different items (Rural consumers of Meghalaya)

Statements	f	%
1. Packaged food item		
Good habit (>23.1)	46	46
Average habit (23.1- 22.26)	23	23
Poor habit (<22.26)	31	31
2. Non food item		
Clothing		
Good habit (>31.8.3)	41	41
Average habit (31.83- 30.26)	16	16
Poor habit (<30.26)	43	43
Cosmetics		
Good habit (>15.12)	36	36
Average habit(15.12- 13.73)	28	28
Poor habit (<13.73)	36	36
Consumer durables		
Good habit (> 10.09)	35	35
Average habit (10.09- 9.43)	44	44
Poor habit (<9.43)	21	21
General buying habit		
Good habit (>9.95)	42	42
Average habit (9.95- 8.85)	27	27
Poor habit (<8.85)	31	31

The data were further analyzed to categorize them into good habit, average habit and poor habit. Table 6 illustrates that in case of rural consumers it was appreciating to note that 46% of them had a good habit regarding buying of packaged food item and about 31 % had a poor habit but in case of clothing 41 % had a good habit. There was an equal distribution of respondents who had good and poor habit (36%) while purchasing cosmetics. Forty four per cent of the rural consumers had an average habit while purchasing consumer durables.

Further analysis of Table 7 shows that among the urban consumers 55% had a good habit while purchasing packaged food item, 45% had a good habit while purchasing clothing, 53% had a good habit while purchasing cosmetics, 54% had a good habit while purchasing consumer durables and 32% had a good habit in general buying habit. It is in accordance with the study done by Bhagwati and Das (2004) in their study on buying habits of college students as consumers and illustrated that highest number of the respondents practiced good habit in all the cases is while buying food (48%) clothing

Table 7 : Distribution of respondents according to buying habits of different items (Urban consumers of Meghalaya)

Statements	f	%
1. Packaged food item		
Good habit (>31.65)	55	55
Average habit (31.65 - 30.67)	08	08
Poor habit (<30.67)	37	37
2. Non food items		
Clothing		
Good habit (>39.52)	45	45
Average habit (39.52 - 38.18)	23	23
Poor habit (<38.18)	32	32
Cosmetics		
Good habit (>21.81)	53	53
Average habit (21.81 - 20.98)	16	16
Poor habit (<20.98)	31	31
Consumer durables		
Good habit (> 14.72)	54	54
Average habit (14.72 - 14.15)	21	21
Poor habit (<14.15)	25	25
General buying habits		
Good habit (> 12.09)	32	32
Average habit (12.09 - 11.55)	49	49
Poor habit (<11.55)	19	19

(59%) and cosmetics (42%).

Conclusion:

If a comparison is being made between the rural and urban women consumers of Meghalaya, it was seen that the urban women consumers were far better than their rural counterparts but still the percentage showing the good habit while buying packaged food item, clothing, cosmetics and consumer durables was not so high. It can be concluded that the consumer should be trained to make a right decision about how and what he should buy. Consumers at the very first step towards a prudent buying must try to get a right value for their money. The consumers should make a right and prudent decision while buying a product. The decision making process should be rational, careful and with due consideration of alternatives. A consumer can be the king if he acts wisely.

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