

Research Paper :

Buying habits of women consumers of Assam

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Accepted : October, 2009

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ABSTRACT

The present study emphasizes the buying habits of women consumers. A total of 120 women consumers were selected of which 36 belonged to low income group, 38 belonged to middle income group and 46 belonged to high income group. It was observed that 60% of the respondents preferred to buy groceries from retail shop. Quality was an important factor considered while buying. Most of the consumers had a habit of checking manufacturing date, maximum retail price, expiry date and brand name.

Key words : Buying habits, Consumers, Women consumers

Present day market is consumer market. In the present economy, women consumers are gradually increasing. 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.

Many consumers are not properly informed as buyers, unfamiliar with trade practices, ignorant of the market system and unorganized to make representation. They lack the basic economic knowledge regarding the market and their role as consumers in affecting price and the working of the economic system. Basically they lack knowledge of source of reliable information. Mostly the consumers are influenced by many factors in their decision making. These factors are advertisement, habit, custom, fashion etc. They are also influenced by their peer groups, family members, neighbours etc.

The home becomes the primary unit of consumption where housewives are the primary consumer buyers and invariably performed a vital economic role. Her influence in each family decision, buying practices and her reaction to malpractices in market can bring tremendous change. This paper is an attempt to analyse the buying habits of Assam.

METHODOLOGY

A two stage stratified random sampling method was adopted in order to select representative samples for the purpose of the study. The municipality area of Jorhat was divided into four parts *i.e.* North East, North West, South East, South West considering Jorhat Court as a centre. For selection of households, a list of wards along with number of houses were collected and from each part,

one ward was selected randomly and from each ward 5% of the household constituted the total size of the sample. A total of about 120 women consumers were selected of which 36 belonged to low income group, 38 belonged to middle income group and 46 belonged to high income group. Interview method was considered as an appropriate tool for the present study to get complete and reliable information. The data were analyzed in terms of simple frequency and percentage etc.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

With growing economic and social development urbanization and modernization, the market is flooded with variety of goods so it is difficult for a consumer to choose a better product. Since habit influences the choice of consumer, it is important to know the buying habits of the women consumers.

Preference of shopping centre:

Mostly (60%) of the respondents preferred to buy groceries from retail shop irrespective of the income group. Only 35.83 per cent preferred to buy from a nearby shop. Only 3.33 per cent and 0.83 per cent bought from whole seller and consumers cooperative, respectively (Table 1).

Further scrutiny revealed that 82.83 per cent of the respondents had a habit of buying from a particular shop. It is supported by Kishtwaria (1998) in a study on buying practices of 120 males and females of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh revealed that all the respondents had preference for selecting a shopping centre. The most stated reasons for buying from a particular shop was nearness to house (14.96%) such that the things are easily

Table 1 : Distribution of respondents according to preference of shopping centre

Shopping centre	LIG N ₁ = 36		MIG N ₂ = 38		HIG N ₃ = 46		Total N = 120	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Local retail shop	21	58.33	12	31.58	10	21.74	43	35.83
Consumer cooperative	-	-	1	2.63	-	-	1	0.83
Retail shop	15	41.67	22	57.89	35	76.09	72	60.00
Wholeseller	-	-	3	7.89	1	2.17	4	3.33

bought by any members of the family at any time when needed. Good quality (19.16%), reliability (12.49%), credit facility (20.76%) which are very common among low income group, used for a long time (3.32%) available in one shop (19.09%) and cheap rate (2.49%).

Fig.1 represents the habit and different reasons of buying from a particular shop. The most stated reasons given by low income group were available in one shop (0.83 %), used for a long time (0.83 %), nearness to house (13.3%) and credit facility (16.6%). Similarly, the reasons given by middle income group respondents were available in one shop (1.66%), used for a long time (1.66%), nearness to house (1.66%), credit facility (4.16%), cheaper rate (1.66%), good quality (6.66%), reliability (3.33%) and the various reasons stated by high income group respondents were available in one shop (16.6%) used for a long time (0.83%), cheaper price (0.83%), good quality (12.5%) and reliability.

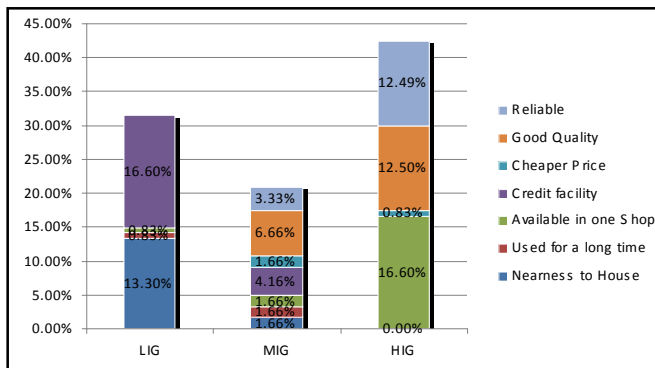


Fig. 1 : Habit and reasons of buying from a particular shop

(3.33%) and the various reasons stated by high income group respondents were available in one shop (16.6%) used for a long time (0.83%), cheaper price (0.83%), good quality (12.5%) and reliability.

Factors influencing the buying habit:

Regarding the factors which were mostly considered while buying it was found that the quality and price were given more importance than other factors (Table 2). In low income group, majority (86.11%) gave importance to price. It is supported by Grover and Gupta (1993) who found that price of a commodity was the most important factor followed by other considerations as quality.

But in case of high income group women, quality was given more importance. About (60.87%) respondents in the high income group gave importance to quality. About 30% of the respondents gave importance to both price and quality.

Influence of branding on consumers buying habits:

In the present age of consumer oriented marketing approach, packaging, labelling and branding have gained unique importance. Consumers look for the characteristics such as safety, hygiene, environmental friendliness, quality and continuity of supply etc. under the keen market competition for the products in the market.

About 62.5 % of the respondents preferred branded packet products. This finding is supported by Ogilvy and Mathur (2001) who stated that 67% of the respondents would only consider established brands when buying basic foodstuffs.

Fig. 2 represents the preference of brand for basic foodstuffs. The most stated foodstuff for which the respondents were not willing to change the brand was edible oil (60.83%). About 35.83% and 35.00% stated that they would like to stick for branded wheat, flour and maida. Similarly about 21.66% preferred salt of a

Table 2 : Percentage distributions of respondents according to the factors considered while buying

Factors	LIG N ₁ = 36		MIG N ₂ = 38		HIG N ₃ = 46		Total N = 120	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Quality	3	8.33	15	39.47	28	60.87	46	38.33
Price	31	86.11	6	15.79	1	2.17	38	31.67
Both quality and price	2	5.56	17	44.74	17	36.95	36	30.00
Friends influence	-	-	10	26.31	18	39.13	28	23.33
Advertisement	-	-	6	15.78	13	28.26	19	15.83

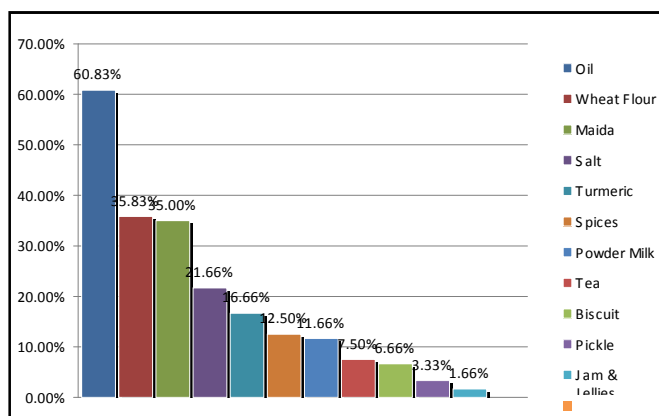


Fig. 2 : Preference of brand for basic foodstuffs

particular brand as well as turmeric was reported by 16.66% of the respondents followed by 12.50% for spices

The reasons for the preference of particular brand were identified (Table 3) by the respondents as better quality (53.33%), reasonable price (3.33%), long term use (7.50%), reliability (15.00%) and nutritional aspects (10.83%).

Thus it is apparent from Table 3 that high income group women consumers gave more importance to quality, reliability and nutritional aspects rather than price. Similarly, in the middle income group women, consumers gave more importance to quality than reliability, nutritional aspects and long term use. In low income group also,

women consumers gave importance to quality than price and long term use.

Habit of checking label:

About 66.67 per cent were bothered to check labels of which 91.30 per cent belonged to high income group, 86.84 per cent belonged to middle income group and 13.89 per cent belonged to low income group.

Table 4 reveals that the women consumers mostly had a habit of checking maximum retail price (66.67%), expiry date (66.67%), manufacturing date (64.17%), brand name (63.33%) irrespective of the income group. It was mostly observed that people were alert regarding manufacturing and expiry date due to so many fatal incidents in India after consumption of foodstuffs whose expiry date was over.

Only a few per cent of the women consumers had a habit of checking the grading (4.17%) and batch no. (6.67%). It was mostly due to the fact that people were not at all aware of the importance of batch no. and grading.

The low income group women consumers did not bother to check net content, taxes, grading, ingredients and batch no. They had a habit of reading only manufacturing date (8.33%), expiry date (13.89%), maximum retail price (13.89%) and brand name (8.33%)(Table 4).

Grover and Gupta (1993) revealed that while

Table 3 : Reasons for preference of brand

Reasons stated	LIG N ₁ = 36		MIG N ₂ = 38		HIG N ₃ = 46		Total N = 120	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Better quality	6	16.67	21	55.26	37	80.43	64	53.33
Reasonable price	1	2.78	-	-	3	6.52	4	3.33
Long term use	1	2.78	2	5.26	6	13.04	9	7.50
Reliable	-	-	3	7.89	15	32.61	18	15.00
Nutritional aspects	-	-	3	7.89	10	21.74	13	10.83

Table 4: Percentage distribution of respondents having a habit of checking different items in labels

Items	LIG N ₁ = 36		MIG N ₂ = 38		HIG N ₃ = 46		Total N = 120	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Manufacturing date	3	8.33	32	84.21	42	91.30	77	64.17
Expiry date	5	13.89	33	86.84	42	91.30	80	66.67
Net content	-	-	9	23.68	24	52.17	33	27.50
Maximum retail price	5	13.89	33	86.84	42	91.30	80	66.67
Taxes	-	-	6	15.79	16	34.78	22	18.33
Brand name	3	8.33	31	81.58	42	91.30	76	63.33
Grading	-	-	-	-	5	10.87	5	4.17
Ingredients used	-	-	7	18.42	20	43.48	27	22.50
Batch no.	-	-	1	2.63	7	15.22	8	6.67

purchasing packaged commodities, most of the consumers (in low socio-economic stratum) generally enquired and checked the price and manufacturer or brand name while other information as date of manufacture, expiry date and net weight was not given much attention.

Conclusion:

It was observed that there is a need to make the consumers develop good buying habits especially among the low income group consumers who mostly consider price as an important factor while buying and very less number of them go for branded products. Most of the consumers had a habit of checking the manufacturing date, expiry date and maximum retail price but it was disappointing to note that consumers don't check the grading, batch no. Very few of them have a habit of checking taxes and ingredients used.

A desirable change in this situation can be achieved by increasing the awareness especially of women consumers since they play an important role as consumers, buyers and invariably perform a vital economic role.

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