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Why do shoppers stop at Shoppers Stop?

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Abstract

Retailing as an industry is expanding in India by leaps every year creating new stores, novel store formats and hundreds of jobs. Amid closing of many stores of multi-brand retail chains, it is important to understand shoppers' behavior at the leading chain Shoppers Stop. This study is undertaken primarily with this objective. The study uses different statistical techniques to segment different consumers into three groups of students, career beginners and working professionals. The article examines these consumer segments critically for their purchase patterns on different dimensions. It also compares buying behaviors of consumers of Shoppers Stop with those of competition. The study provides a novel view of shopper behavior in terms of her life stage in the context of retail sales. Marketers will realize the effect of life stages on consumer and will design product offerings accordingly. Across all segments, shoppers suggested having more variety at Shoppers Stop for which new private label brands are required. The study finds critical points of differentiation of Shopper Stop and specific areas of improvements. The article examines multiple marketing implications of the study. Future studies can validate this study with different composition of sample size. Future research can also focus on validating reasons for consumers' shifting loyalty from Shoppers Stop. Future research can compare consumer behavior of online and offline multi-product stores.

Keywords: *Shoppers Stop, Consumer life stage, Multi product retail*

Introduction

The Indian retail industry has emerged as one of the most dynamic and fast-paced industries due to the entry of several new players. It accounts for over 10 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and around 8 per cent of the employment. India is the world's fifth-largest global destination in the retail space. India's retail market is expected to nearly double to US$ 1 trillion by 2020 from US$ 600 billion in 2015, driven by income growth, urbanization and attitudinal shifts. While the overall retail market is expected to grow at 12 per cent per annum, modern trade would expand twice as fast at 20 per cent per annum and traditional trade at 10 per cent. The overall growth will be driven by key demographic changes. There exists tremendous potential for organized retail in India as the level of interest shown by major corporate sector has increased manifold over the last few years. Large conglomerates like the TATA's, ITC, the RPG group, the Piramals and the Rahejas have invested heavily into large format retail stores. Organised retailing for some of these business groups is a logical extension of their businesses. Also textile and garments companies like Raymond, Madura Garments and Arvind Denims have successfully employed forward integration by opening up exclusive outlets for their branded garments. The shopping habits and preferences of consumers are changing and more consumers, especially from the metropolitan cities incline towards retail chains which offer a vast assortment of merchandise under one roof.

Marketplaces in urban demographic settings attract a large number of buyers and sellers, which can be termed as market thickness. The growth of market share for specialised retailers and large departmental stores depends on the size of the consumer segment in a given urban population. A great deal of research focuses on how consumers shop, but the rationale behind their chosen behaviors remains somewhat underserved. The total concept and idea of shopping has undergone a vast drawing change in terms of format and consumer buying behavior, ushering in a revolution in shopping in India. Modern retailing has entered into India as is observed in the form of sprawling shopping centers, multi-storied malls and the huge complexes that offer shopping, entertainment and food all under one roof. Given the complexity of modern retail stores, shoppers must be selective in processing information. They usually have a limited amount of time available, and must decide which departments to visit, categories to shop, and specific brands and items to examine based on their shopping plans and level of engagement with the merchandise (among other factors). For marketers to be successful in this environment, they need to understand how shoppers allocate their attention across the available products and displays in the store, and identify the factors that drive shopper engagement and interest. This new focus on measuring shopper behavior has fueled several recent research trends.

Extant literature shows that retailing can take many forms, both store and non-store forms. Most retailing is conducted in stores such as Multi chain retails, department stores and in some traditional open markets. Whatever the form, the consumer is called upon to make a choice. Thus, consumer decision making involves not only the choice of product and brand but also the choice of retail outlet (Jobber, 2009). The evolving nature of retailing and its various forms; and the consequent competitiveness in the sector has frequently held the interest of scholars. Thus, Kaufman and Lane(1996); Frasquet, Gil and Molle (2001) and Parikh (2006) observe that today’s global retail environment is rapidly changing more than ever before as it is typified by growing competition from both domestic and foreign companies, a rise in mergers and acquisitions, and more classy and demanding consumers who have great expectations related to their consumption experiences. Changes in consumers' natural and social environments; and technology have a huge impact on their buying and shopping behavior. These lifestyle changes largely determine what consumers buy, when they buy and how and where they buy (Arnould, Price & Zinkhan 2002; North & Kotze 2004; Schiffman & Kanuk 2004).

Multi product retail chains have become almost like a norm of today's shopping. Consumers consider these retail chains for buying variety of product categories like apparels, home décor products, handbags, cosmetics, jewelry, shoes, and many other accessories. There are different Indian players like Shoppers Stop, Lifestyle, Westside, and Pantaloons operating in this channel. With the entry of foreign players like Zara and H&M, this distribution channel is getting good attention from the Indian metro consumer. Organized retail sector is growing rapidly and consumers are shifting to shopping in organized retail stores. Shopping habits of Indian consumers are changing due to their growing disposable income, relative increase in the younger population, and the change in attitudes towards shopping. There are unlimited prospects in the Indian economy for high growth in the organized retail sector. The Indian organized retail industry has the competence to grow with the rising affluence of the Indian middle class due to their growing disposable income (CII- AT Kearney, 2006). The last decade saw a great boom in the organized retail industry in India which is attributed to the changing demographics, international brands foraying in India, infrastructure developments, credit availability, usage of latest technology and a world class shopping experience (Choudhary and Tripathi, 2012).

Outline of the article

The next section of article reviews the extant literature on retail shopping behaviour followed by the research gaps identified for the current study. The research methodology used is detailed thereafter. The data analysis using factor analysis, cluster analysis, discriminant analysis and cross tabulation is done, which is followed by the discussion of the data analysis results. After the discussion, the conclusion and implications are recorded. The final section includes limitations of the current study and several avenues of future research.

Review of Literature

Studies concerning retail patronage and store choice have followed many directions. Retail shopping behaviour is predicted by means of objective variables like distance (location), traffic patterns and store size (Leszczyc, Sinha & Timmermans, 2000; Achen, 2005; Biba, Rosiers, Theriault, & Villeneuve, 2006). A second line of research employs consumer variables to predict store patronage. Sirgy, Grewal, & Mangleburg, (2000), in their study model relationships among store environment (including store atmospherics), store patron image, shoppers' self-concept, self-congruity, functional congruity, and retail patronage. While Koo (2003) examines inter-relationships among store image, store satisfaction and store loyalty. In their study, Poovalingam and Docrat (2011) confirms the significance of the various situational influences, namely, the physical surroundings, the social surroundings, time, task definition and antecedent states as they impact on choice of shopping centres. Also, store attributes or store image which are fundamentally the marketing mix of the retailer (Morschett, Swoboda & Foscht, 2005; Ghosh 1990) have been presented as store choice criteria (Mittal & Mittal, 2008). Though store choice and patronage have been widely studied across the world, Mittal and Mittal (2008) posit that most of these studies have been in the developed retail markets of the west. Unfortunately, studies in the retail sectors of the under-developed countries have been scarce.

Loyalty can be examined from the relationship between consumer's attitude toward a product, brand, service, Multi chain retail or store, seller and the consumer's patronage behaviour (Dick and Basu, 1994). Loyalty means the stability of repurchase of a certain brand, and to become a patron of a certain retailer or service supplier (Jones and Reynolds, 2006). Store loyalty is summarized as the dependence which is developed by the consumer upon a store that merchandises many brands. This attitude includes the place in which shopping is done rather than brands or product loyalty. Such a case occurs due to differences that the distribution phase provides rather than the product features. Thus, such a difference can be means of the service, price, or the closeness to the consumer (Salis, 2004). Several studies have been done to determine the factors that influence store loyalty. Some of these studies examined factors affecting patronage attitudes (Arnold et al, 1996; Duman & Yagci, 2006). There are also studies on the factors that impact store loyalty (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000; Oderken-Schroder et al., 2001; Huddleston et al., 2004; Merrilees et al., 2007). In some studies, the relationship between store image and loyalty was examined (Akdogun et al. 2005; Atakan & Burnaz, 2007). Also some studies examined the relationship between store image and store choice and loyalty (Gilmore et al., 2001; Koo, 2003; Thang & Tan, 2003).

Research suggests that quality, price, availability of new products and product value are the product attributes that influence consumer attitude (Miranda, Konya & Havrila, 2005). Similarly, in another study, Yilmaz et al., (2007) found that for consumers, the location of the shopping mall, product, price and quality, physical appearance, attitude of store staff were important factors shaping consumer outlet selection preferences. Yalcin (2005) posit that such demographic factors as age, occupation and number of children affect Multi chain retail loyalty. In their own study, Akinci et al. (2007) found that the most important factors that affect multi product retail patronage are pricing, quality and waiting time at the cashier. Again, Polat and Kulter (2007) found that the factors which determine consumers' market and Multi chain retail choices include product diversity, product quality, inner atmosphere and appearance, quick shopping facility, attitude and interest of staff, and prices of goods. In another study by Duman and Yagci (2006), it was discovered that consumers' patronage intentions are affected by value perception, product quality perception, service quality perception, discount perception and comparable price perception. Yeniceri and Erten (2008) investigated the impact of trust and commitment on store loyalty. The quality of retailer service is generally assessed by consumers to include the appearance of staff and

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their attentiveness, kindness, politeness, staff level of experience, safe shopping environment etc (Cronin et al., 2000). In addition to the foregoing, special discounts and promotion were found to increase consumers' interest toward the Multi chain retail (Grewal et al., 1998a). These discounts and promotions are considered as a financial sacrifice by the business which attracts consumers. This perception has been determined to affect patronage behaviour. It was seen that consumers who think that they have profit due to discounts promotions displayed more loyalty to the store (Grace & O'Cass, 2005). Another factor that affects consumers' preferences is the quality of the products offered by the retailer. While evaluating the quality of the products that they purchase, consumers use some cues. In another instance, perception of value and satisfaction were found to affect consumers' attitude and store loyalty and intention to purchase (Grace & O'Cass, 2005).

The present study aims to understand the purchase behavior of consumers shopping at Shoppers Stop. It also identifies the factors which influence the purchase behavior of consumers in terms of products, service, store layout and other cues.

Research Gap and Research Problem

Shopping orientation intends to capture the shoppers' motivations, their desired shopping experiences, and the goals they seek when they shop. Previous research also found that shopping orientation influences consumer behaviors in terms of different preferences for information sources, store choices, and store attributes (Gutman and Mills, 1982; Lumpkin, 1985; Shim and Kotsiopulos, 1993). Consumer today has immense choice to buy her choice of merchandize across different stores. Multi-brand retail store format is one of very successful store formats in the retail sector. Shopping orientation would be very useful to understand ever-changing demands and demographic information of multi-channel shoppers due to social, economic, and cultural changes in the modern society. The existing Indian players have widened their operations to smaller cities with the burgeoning Indian middle class that is demanding latest products in these cities. Understanding behavior of consumers in a multi-product retail chain becomes very interesting especially in the presence of online channels and new entrants in the sector. While the largest company in this sector Lifestyle International is expanding, the poster boy of Indian multi-brand retail format, Shoppers Stop is closing many of its stores (Jacob & Malviya, 2012; Tyagi, 2017). Amid news of posting losses in recent quarters and shifting focus to online presence by Shoppers Stop (ET-Bureau, 2016; ET-Bureau, 2017; PTI 2017; Srinivasan, 2017), it becomes all the more important to understand the behavior of shoppers at Shoppers Stop so that it can rebound in this rapidly changing industry sector.

Objectives of the study

In this research, we analyzed the buying behavior of consumers of the leading multi-product retail chain Shoppers Stop. We also analyzed factors that distinguish whether the consumer will prefer Shoppers Stop over other multi-product retail chains. The objectives of this study are to:

1. Segment consumers of multi-brand retail stores

to understand consumer behavior

2. Analyze differences in consumers at Shoppers Stop and competition

This study will help in analyzing buying behavior of different consumer segments of Shoppers Stop and in comparing consumer profile of Shoppers stop and its competition. It will also help in finding key points of differentiation and areas of improvements for Shoppers Stop in terms of managerial implications of this research.

Research methodology

We conducted a survey on the buying behavior of the consumers of multi-product retail stores. The target audience included shoppers from Delhi. Questionnaire included three sections with first section focusing on demographic variables, second section focusing on how consumers behave, and last section focusing on which in-store factors influence buying behavior of consumers. We explored opinions, of consumers of Shoppers Stop and competition, about different products, their preferences, and their suggestions to retail store for improving their satisfaction. Following information captures their buying behavior at a multi-brand retail store like Shoppers Stop –

1. Attractors in product categories- apparels, accessories, shoes & bags, cosmetics, jewelry, and others.
2. Attractors in buying occasions- festivals, and gifting.
3. Influencers in their buying decision- advertisements, price, quality, store promotion, family, friends, brands, past experience and others.
4. Shopping companions - friends or different family members or they go alone.
5. Ranking of six important store attributes - exchange and return policy, staff behavior, billing facility, parking facility, location of store, and store layout.

The options for above close-ended questions were found important in a preliminary qualitative study involving focus group discussions and face to face interviews with such consumers. Primary data was collected through an online survey conducted in the Delhi. The questionnaire was sent to 150 respondents, out of which we received 120 responses (Response Rate: 80%). Out of the 120 responses, 29 responses were not complete resulting in 91 valid and complete responses.

Data Examination

Respondents included 51% females and 85% consumers of Shoppers Stop. 70% of Shoppers Stop visitors (and 65% of non-visitors) were from 18-25 years age group. This was followed by 19% of visitors (and 14% of non-visitors) in 25-35 years age group. This data was further analyzed using relevant bivariate and multivariate analysis techniques in MS excel 2010 and SPSS 20. Techniques used were factor analysis, cluster analysis, discriminant analysis and cross tabulation.

Data analysis

Factor analysis was used to find factors that influence and attract shoppers at multi-brand retail stores. Cluster analysis was done to find different segments of consumers based on the importance that they give to different attributes of a multi brand retail store. Discriminant analysis was also done to find relation between different consumer groups and the factors responsible for influencing and attracting shoppers. Cross tabulation was used for two purposes. Firstly, to find how visitors of Shoppers Stop differ from non-visitors. Secondly, to find out relative differences among different consumer groups on different dimensions of analysis.

Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor analysis is done to reduce the number of variables that influence and attract different shoppers. For this, all 17 variables related to influencers and attractors (captured through points 1, 2, and 3 listed in section on Research methodology) are first tested for reliability before doing factor analysis.

Reliability Analysis: The present study uses cronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency reliability. The reliability of the scale is found to be acceptable with cronbach's alpha > 0.6 (Malhotra & Dash, 2016, p 291) as shown in

Table I.

Table I: Scale Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.633	.616	17

This scale is then subjected to Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation with kaiser normalization (PCA) in SPSS 20. It was analyzed for appropriateness of factor analysis using Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. The null hypothesis that the population correlation matrix is an identity matrix, is rejected by Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The approximate Chi-square statistic is 226.342 with 136 degrees of freedom, which is significant at 0.05 level. The value of KMO statistic (0.572) is also large (> 0.5). Thus factor analysis is an appropriate analysis technique here (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). PCA is used to find out components or factors (referred to collectively as "*factors*" hereafter in this paper) that account for large amounts of overall variance.

Table II: Factor Analysis - Rotated component matrix[a]

	Component						
	Traditional Shopping	Price Seeking	Connoisseur Shopping	Ads oriented buying	Experienced Apparel buying	Brand Conscious Gifting	Contemporary Shopping

	Component						
	Traditional Shopping	Price Seeking	Connoisseur Shopping	Ads oriented buying	Experienced Apparel buying	Brand Conscious Gifting	Contemporary Shopping
ShoeBag_Att	Excellent						
Acces_Att	Excellent						
Fam_influenced	Good						
Fest_Att	Good			Fair			
Cosme_Att	Fair						
Price_influenced		Excellent					
StoreProm_influenced		Excellent					
Others_Att			Excellent				
Jewel_Att			Good				
Qual_influenced			Fair				Fair
Other_Influenced				V. Good			
Ads_influenced				V. Good			
Appar_Att					Excellent		
PastEx_influenced					Good		
Gift_Att						Excellent	
Brand_influenced						Fair	
Friend_influenced							Excellent

	Component						
	Traditional Shopping	Price Seeking	Connoisseur Shopping	Ads oriented buying	Experienced Apparel buying	Brand Conscious Gifting	Contemporary Shopping

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 34 iterations.

Total variance explained by the factor solution is 64.14%, which is more than 50%. Communality is sum of squared component loadings and represents amount of variance accounted by all components in that variable (Gorsuch, 1983). It is also suggested (Streiner, 1994) that solution should explain at least half of each variable's variance, so the communality for each variable should be 0.5 or higher. It is suggested (Floyd & Widaman, 1995) that in case variable communalities are low, variables with relatively weak factor loadings on all factors can be eliminated to improve the overall factor solution. Communality of variable PastExperience_influencer was slightly less at 0.484 but it was retained in the scale. The component solution so obtained was rotated using varimax rotation method and the rotated component matrix was obtained.

Determination of factors is done by utilizing procedures (Bryant & Yarnold, 1995) (Brown, 2009) of percent of cumulative variance (Total variance explained > 50%), Kaiser's Stopping Rule (Eigen value > = 1), Scree Test (Factors shown above the Scree), and number of non-trivial factors (factors with high loadings from over one variable). All these methods yielded a seven factor solution. For analyzing number of non-trivial factors, factor loading of variables can be categorized as excellent, very good, good, fair, & poor if factor loadings are more than 0.71, 0.63, 0.55, 0.45, & 0.32 respectively (Comrey & Lee, 1992). Ignoring poor loadings, the factor solution can be represented as shown in Table II for mentioned components. The factors are named as per variables that they represent.

The seven factors identified along with their items are listed in Table III.

Table III: Factor Descriptions

Traditional Shopping	Buy Shoes, Bags, Accessories, Cosmetics and Fragrances; Influenced by Family; Buy more during festivals
Price Seeking	Influenced by Price and Store Promotions
Connoisseur Shopping	Attracted by Jewellery, Home decor products and other

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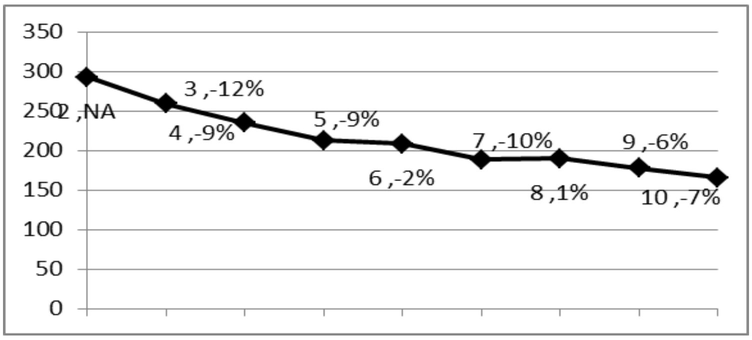
	products; Influenced by Quality
Ads oriented buying	Influenced by Ads and other reasons; Buy more during festivals
Experienced Apparel buying	Buy Apparels; Influenced by past experience
Brand Conscious Gifting	Buy for gifting; Influenced by Brands
Contemporary Shopping	Attracted to Quality; Influenced by friends

Cluster Analysis

The cluster analysis is done to segment consumers in different groups where consumers in each group are similar to each other but are different to consumers of other groups (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2017). The original data was rank data with reducing ranks from one to six for these six attributes. Therefore, the data for cluster analysis was reverse coded so that higher values represent higher importance given by consumers. In this study, consumers are grouped based on importance that they attach to different attributes of a multi brand retail store. For this, the data is subjected to hierarchical clustering as well as non-hierarchical clustering. In the hierarchical clustering, the squared Euclidean distance is used to measure the similarity. Agglomerative clustering with Ward's linkage method is used. The number of clusters is determined as three using the difference between successive coefficients in the agglomeration schedule (Nargundkar, 2015).

Figure 1: Elbow method for determining clusters



Using elbow method in k-means non-hierarchical clustering using, the number of appropriate clusters is revalidated as three (Christopher, Prabhakar & Hinrich, 2009). In elbow method, the sum of squared distance of all members from their respective cluster centroids is plotted for each k i.e. number of clusters and the elbow in the graph determines the appropriate number of clusters. The graph in figure 1 clearly validates that the appropriate number of clusters is three in this case.

Table IV: Final Cluster Centers

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Exchange and Return Policy	1.73	**4.86**	**5.43**
Location of Store	3.88	**4.52**	3.9
Parking Facility	2.85	4.39	1.48
Billing Facility	3.65	3.16	2.62
Staff Behavior	**4.15**	2.77	2.81
Store Layout	**4.73**	1.3	**4.76**

Using elbow method in k-means non-hierarchical clustering using, the number of appropriate clusters is revalidated as three (Christopher, Prabhakar & Hinrich, 2009). In elbow method, the sum of squared distance of all members from their respective cluster centroids is plotted for each k i.e. number of clusters and the elbow in the graph determines the appropriate number of clusters. The graph in figure 1 clearly validates that the appropriate number of clusters is three in this case.

Table IV shows final cluster centers for the cluster analysis. The minimum and maximum score for each attribute are 1 and 6 respectively. Top two important attributes (marked bold in Table IV) for each cluster are included in

Table V along with their nomenclature based on demographic characteristics of the predominant consumers present.

Table V: Cluster wise top two important store attributes

Cluster Description	Most important attribute	Second most important attribute
Cluster 1- Career beginners	Store Layout	Staff Behavior
Cluster 2- Working professionals	Exchange and Return Policy	Location of Store
Cluster 3- Students	Exchange and Return Policy	Store Layout

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Discriminant Analysis

Discriminant analysis is done to understand relation of different consumer groups with the factors responsible for influencing and attracting consumers. As shown in Table VI, the Wilks' Lambda comes out to be non-significant indicating that the discriminant function does not discriminate significantly (Malhotra & Dash, 2014). This means that we cannot proceed further with discriminant analysis for this data set.

This in turn means that the factors responsible for influencing and attracting different consumer groups do not discriminate among different consumer groups.

Table VI: Canonical Discriminant Function - Wilks' Lambda

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1 through 2	.820	16.893	14	.262
2	.917	7.321	6	.292

Cross Tabulation

The cross tabulation is done for understanding differences between consumers on two dimensions. First dimension is whether consumers shop at Shoppers Stop or not. The second is their grouping as per the cluster analysis. For cross tabulation in both categories, the comparison is done with the sample average unless otherwise mentioned. The comparison is done by examining column percentages and chi-square tests of significance, wherever necessary. The interpretation of cross tabulation is included in the next section.

Top of mind awareness

Brand Recall for different brands was done as part of this research by asking consumers directly. This helps in understanding top of mind awareness in different product categories sold at multi-brand retail stores. Following are top two brands that consumers recalled in different categories –

Apparels: Levis and Biba

Shoes: Nike and Adidas

Handbags: Tommy Hilfiger and Baggit

Cosmetics: Lakme and MAC

Fragrances: Calvin Klein and Burberry

Almost all of above brands are international brands except Biba, which is a home grown brand.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, first the interpretation of analysis of whole data is presented followed by the interpretation of differences between shoppers and non-shoppers of Shoppers Stop. This is followed by interpretation of differences among different consumer groups as done using cluster analysis and cross tabulation.

Seven factors were found to be important for the whole data. These were Traditional Shopping, Price Seeking, Connoisseur Shopping, Ads oriented buying, Experienced Apparel buying, Brand Conscious Gifting, and Contemporary Shopping. Discriminant function does not discriminate

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significantly between three consumer groups on the basis of these seven factors. Therefore, these factors although important for overall group could not be used to find differences among these consumer segments.

In general, results show that family members accompany about 50% of visitors and also influence 50% shoppers in final decision making. Friends are next most significant sets of people (with 2 out of 5 visitors) accompanying shoppers in the store and influencing them in decision making (2 out of 5 shoppers). Thus, those accompanying shoppers have greater influence on their decision making.

Irrespective of the age, females spent a considerable amount of time shopping as compared to the male counter parts. These attributes were identified as important for respondents while shopping at a retail store - Variety (60%), Quality (47%), Consumer Satisfaction (45%), and Offers & Promotions (43%). Shopper's Stop has variety of products for a particular brand but does not have all major brands under its Umbrella. Brands like Zara, Jack and Jones, AND etc. have their standalone shops which is the reason why most of the respondents had mentioned Variety as one of the lacking attributes for Shopper's Stop. The data shows that ads seldom influence these buyers but all are influenced by in-store promotions greatly.

Results show that a consumer mostly visits multi product retail chains for apparels and accessories. The consumer visits Shoppers Stop due to three important factors - quality, in-store promotions and brand name. Consumer still prefers to buy in a physical store over online stores. Consumer purchase behavior changes positively with price of the product and availability of products. Consumer purchase behavior changes negatively due to poor quality of products.

Comparing shoppers of Shoppers Stop and Competition

There is hardly any difference between shoppers of Shoppers Stop and those of competition in terms of age group (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.094), occupation (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.910) and gender (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.592). There are no differences between two groups in terms of buying for festivals (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.285) or gifting (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.180). Both groups are similar in buying apparels (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.534), cosmetics (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.557), shoes and handbags (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.583). Both groups do not differ in terms of being influenced by advertisements (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.297), price (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.189), product quality (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.123), in-store promotions (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.260), past experiences (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.326).

Table VII: Differences in shoppers of Shoppers Stop and Competition

Shoppers at	Shoppers Stop	Competition
Income Group (per month)	Rs 15000 – Rs 25000	Less than Rs 15000
% consumers who spent 30 minutes or less	16%	00%

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Shoppers at	Shoppers Stop	Competition
% consumers who spent Rs 1000 – Rs 3000	38%	50%
% consumers who spent Rs 3000 – Rs 5000	34%	22%
Mostly go with	Friends	Family
% who shop alone (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.028)	25%	00%
% who get influenced by brands (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.011)	51%	14%
% who buy accessories (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.031)	44%	14%
% who buy jewelry (Sig. of chi sq. = 0.044)	08%	29%

Both groups differ on several other aspects including income level and other buying preferences like money spent per visit and time spent per visit. Shoppers Stop has more representation from income group of Rs 15000-25000 whereas competition has more representation from income group of less than Rs 15000. In terms of percentage of shoppers who spend more than 30 minutes per visit, 84% shoppers of Shoppers Stop compare fairly ok with 100% shoppers of competition. Shoppers Stop has less consumers at 38% who spent between Rs 1000 – Rs 3000 compared with 50% of competition whereas Shoppers Stop has more consumers at 34% who spent between Rs 3000 – Rs 5000 compared with 22% of competition. Thus, even though % of consumers who spend between broad range of Rs 1000 – Rs 5000 are almost same at Shoppers Stop and competition, more consumers spend money in higher category (Rs 3000-Rs 5000) at Shoppers Stop than those at competition.

Most shoppers of Shoppers Stop prefer to go with friends whereas more non-shoppers prefer to go with family. Accordingly, more shoppers get influenced by friends whereas more non-shoppers get more influenced by family. Shoppers of Shoppers Stop get influenced by brands whereas non-shoppers do not get influenced by brands. About half of shoppers of Shoppers Stop buy accessories whereas very few non-shoppers buy accessories. In comparison to non-shoppers, very few shoppers of Shoppers Stop buy jewelry. Table VII shows all these differences between shoppers of Shoppers Stop and Competition.

In terms of features of a multi-brand retail store, different attributes received highest importance by shoppers of Shoppers Stop and those of competition. Compared with competition's consumers, Shoppers Stop consumers rated Exchange and return policy, Staff behavior and Billing facility are more important. Conversely, competition's consumers rated store layout and location of store as more important. There was not much difference in their rating of parking facility.

Table VIII: Importance of store attributes for shopppers of Shoppers Stop and Competition

Shoppers at	Shoppers Stop	Competition
Exchange and return policy	**43%**	07%
Staff behavior	10%	00%
Billing facility	08%	00%
Parking facility	09%	14%
Location of store	14%	**36%**
Store layout	16%	**43%**

Consumer Profile

Profile of Shoppers Stop consumer- On the basis of above, we can describe a shopper at Shoppers Stop in income group of Rs 15000 – Rs 25000 per month, spending mostly over 30 minutes at Shoppers Stop. This shopper shops mostly with friends (and sometimes alone) at Shoppers Stop to buy goods worth Rs 1000 – Rs 5000 per visit. This person gets influenced by brands and favors buying accessories over buying jewelry. Most of these shoppers to go to Shoppers stop due to its exchange and return policy and some due to store layout and location of store.

Profile of Competition consumer- Similarly, we can describe a shopper at competition in income group of less than Rs 15000 per month, spending always over 30 minutes. This shopper shops with family and buys goods mostly worth Rs 1000 – Rs 3000 per visit. This person is not influenced by brands and favors buying jewelry over buying accessories. Most of these shoppers go to competition primarily due to store layout, and location of store.

Segmenting consumers based on cluster analysis

Compared with the sample average, more consumers in cluster 1 and 3 are women and more in cluster 2 are men. Occupation wise, cluster 1 represents the sample characteristics whereas cluster 2 has more salaried and business people. compared with the sample average. In terms of monthly income, cluster 1 has more shoppers from income groups of Rs 15,000-25,000 & Rs 25,000-50,000 whereas cluster 2 has more shoppers from income groups of Rs 50,000-75,000, Rs 75,000-100,000 and above Rs 100,000. Cluster 3 has most people in the income group of less than Rs 15,000. Cluster 1 and 2 do not differ much in terms of age groups but the cluster 3 has more consumers in age group of 18-25 years. These demographic characteristics can

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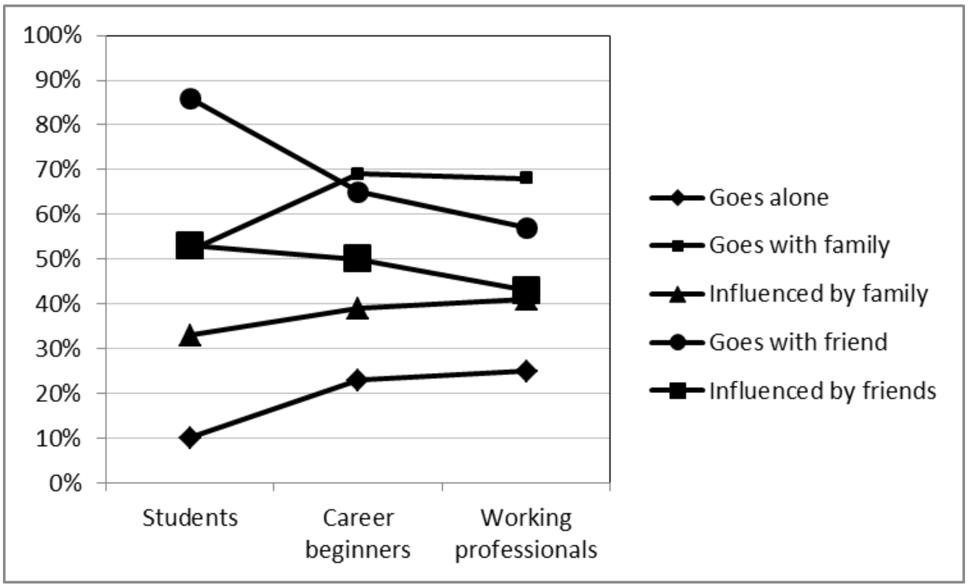
indicate the professional life stage of predominant consumer group. On the basis of professional life stage of predominant consumer group, these clusters are named as Career beginners (Cluster 1), Working professionals (Cluster 2) and Students (Cluster 3). Remaining interpretation uses these terms for these three consumer segments.

More students (cluster 3) shop at their multi-brand retail store either "once in 3 months" or "less than once in 3 months". The career beginners (cluster 1) shop mostly once in 3 months whereas working professionals (cluster 2) shop mostly either "once in a week" or "once in a month". More students and career beginners spend between Rs 1000-3000 per visit whereas more working professionals spend between Rs 3000-5000 per visit. Similarly, more students and career beginners spend between 30 minutes to 1 hour in a buying visit whereas more working professionals spend between 1 hour and 3 hours per visit.

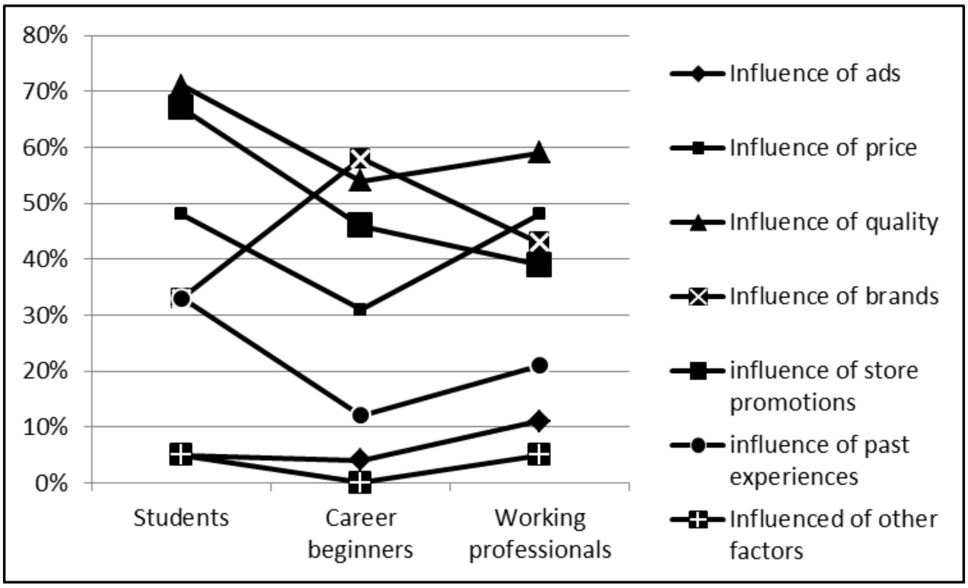
Shopping companion & companion influence – As shown in Figure 2, only 10% students go alone whereas for career beginners and working professionals, this is 23% and 25% respectively. Most students go with their friends whereas only half of working professionals go with friends. Conversely, more working professionals go with family as compared to students. Accordingly, more students get influenced by friends and more working professionals get influenced by family. This is expected as students get less time once they move to professional life and try to shop more with family than with friends gradually.

Figure 2: Shopping companion & companion influence



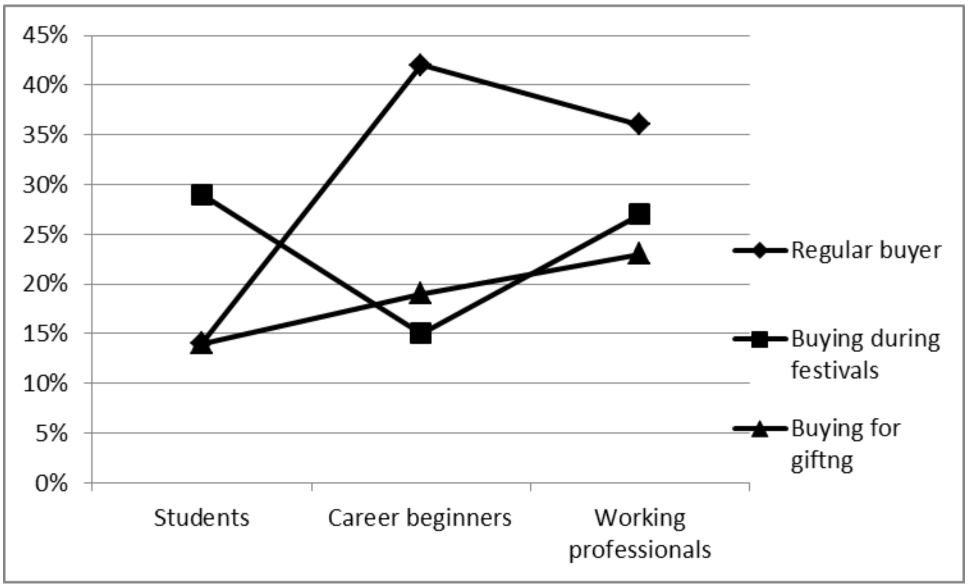
Influencers of buying decisions- As life stage progresses from students to working professionals, the influences of price, quality, past experiences, and other factors first reduce and then increase. The influence of brand follows opposite pattern. This is explained as due to shifting priorities in these life stages. Career beginners have to put extra efforts in establishing themselves in new jobs, they would rely more on strong brands rather than assess products on price, quality and past experiences. As shown in Figure 3, the influences of ads and in-store promotions also follow opposite patterns. The influence of ads increases from student life stage to working professionals life stage whereas influence of in-store promotions reduces due to more maturity and deliberate thinking of working professionals as compared to students.

Figure 3: Influencers of buying decisions



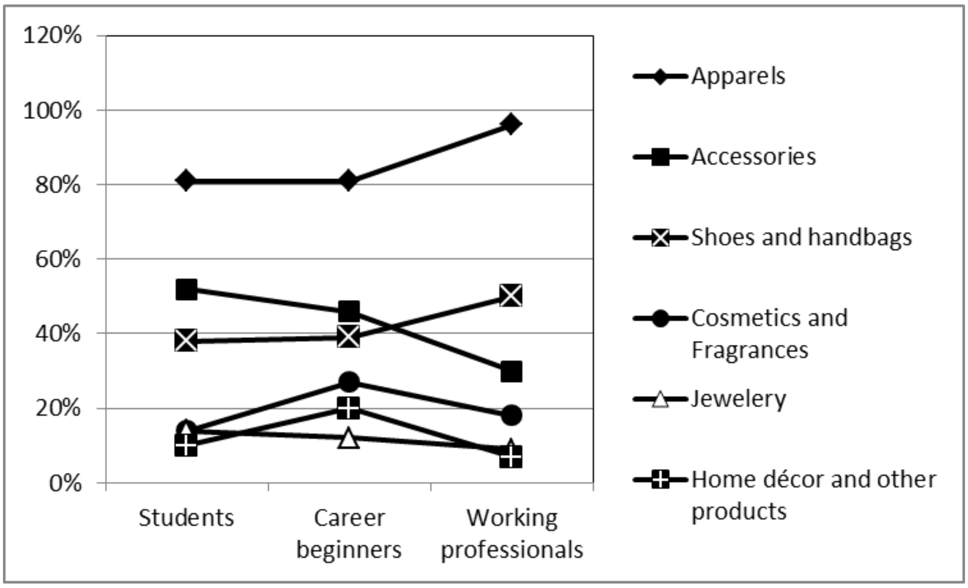
Buying occasions – The graph in Figure 4 shows different buying occasions when these three consumer groups shop in a multi-brand retail store like Shoppers Stop. As a student begins career, his regular buying at multi-brand retail store increases due to sudden increase in disposable income and then reduces with increase in familial and social responsibilities. Due to same reasons, the buying during festivals first reduces on entering the professional life but later increases with more mature life stage when focus shifts to greater responsibilities.

Figure 4: Buying occasions



Merchandise bought – As shown in Figure 5, the purchase of apparels, shoes and handbags increase at multi-brand retail stores as one becomes a matured working professional whereas use of accessories and jewellery reduces in the working professional life stage. As one enters the career, one starts to buy more cosmetics, fragrances, home décor and other products from multi-brand retail stores but consumers reduce buying these at a multi-brand retail store as they establish themselves in their professions.

Figure 5: Merchandise bought



Consumer suggestions -Top two suggestions that consumers gave to improve experience at Shoppers' Stop were-

1. Adding more variety: This is the suggestion given by over 40% of each consumer segment.
2. Giving better offers and discounts: This is the second highest suggestion given by student segment (21%) and working professionals (14%).
3. Better layout: This is the second highest suggestion by career beginners segment (10%).

Implications for Marketing Managers

This research highlights different factors that influence consumers of multi-product retail stores. The research also categorizes consumers into three prominent groups based on their life stage as students, career beginners and working professionals. Understanding retail consumers based on their life stage has several important implications for the marketers. These primarily relate to changes in store design, preferred store attributes and types of products required for succeeding in multi-product retail. Marketers need to design specific attributes of their stores for catering to specific consumer segments.

As shown in

Table V, the exchange and return policy is the most important store attribute for students and working professionals. As shown in Figure 3, influence of quality and price on students and working professionals is higher than that on career beginners therefore exchange and return policy emerged as the most important store attribute for these two consumer segments. Working professionals consider location of the store as second most important attribute, may be in terms of how close the store is to their home to office route in order to save time and energy.

Store layout is a very important attribute for students and career beginners, especially for career beginners. Career beginners who just start their profession focus more on their new career, have paucity of time, and thus consider store layout as very important attribute followed by behavior of the staff at the multi-brand retail store. This segment of consumer may be adjusting to their new life stage in terms of new job and increased responsibility. Therefore, the implication for marketers is to create such store layout so that these consumer segments can purchase their preferred products easily and comfortably. Shopper's Stop is a prominent multi-brand retail chain, which is favored by consumers in different age groups throughout their life stages. This may not be generalized for all stores but may be improved by conducting appropriate market-basket analyses for different stores.

The brand recall across categories included all multi national brands except one local brand Biba. This may imply that consumers get attracted to a multi-brand retail store due to foreign brands. In absence of actual sales data, we may not conclusively say if foreign brands have higher sales. But it seems that home grown brands also have some scope in such stores. Across segments, consumers have suggested

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to add more variety despite so many international brands already present at Shoppers Stop. One method for this can be to build private label brands that career beginner segment can easily relate to if brand is developed properly. These career beginner consumers consider brand strength for their purchases and do not give high importance to price and quality. Private labels can also appeal to working professionals who devote large amount to time to purchase high value items and prefer to buy during festivals. Therefore, Shoppers Stop can build more private labels in its range of offerings. Recently, this was realized at the company level also and the Shoppers Stop plans to build more private labels (Srinivasan, 2017). This research gives support to this strategy. This study also helps in finding important points of differentiation for Shoppers Stop in this fast changing industry. It also outlines certain key areas of improvement for the company.

Key points of differentiation of Shoppers Stop

The study helps us in categorizing points of differentiation (POD) for Shoppers Stop as follows-

Points of differentiation (POD)	Effect of POD	Possible Reasons of the effect
Time spent by consumers by some consumers is less than 30 minutes	Positive	This may be either due to clarity in consumers' mind about their purchase or due to ease of consumer decision making at Shoppers Stop or due to both.
Equal proportion of consumers spending Rs 3000 – 5000 and Rs 1000 – 3000 per visit compared to competition	Positive	This may be due to ease of decision-making. On combining this with segment analysis, it becomes clear that higher spending is mainly by working professionals.
25% consumers go alone	Positive	When shoppers go alone, they are already clear about their choices and may take less time in decision making thereby reducing load on store personnel attention.
25% consumers go alone	Negative	When shoppers go alone and are already clear about their choices, it may become difficult to influence them in store to buy more expensive or profitable products. Further research is required to conclude if this is positive or negative for the Shoppers Stop.

Points of differentiation (POD)	Effect of POD	Possible Reasons of the effect
51% consumers get influenced by brands	Positive	When shoppers are clear about their brand choice, they take less time in making choice and this results in more consumers actually buying from the store.
51% consumers get influenced by brands	Negative	When shoppers are clear about their brand choice, it becomes difficult to influence them in store towards more expensive or profitable brands. Further research is required to conclude if this is positive or negative for the Shoppers Stop.
44% buy accessories	Positive	Shoppers Stop can promote their range of clothing accessories to attract more consumers.
8% buy jewelry	Negative	Either consumers do not come to buy jewelry or they do not find good jewelry at Shoppers Stop. This also requires further investigation.
Exchange and return policy	Positive	This is the highest rated attribute of Shoppers Stop consumers. This may be used in their promotions.
Location of store and Store layout	Positive	If Shoppers Stop promotes these two attributes, competition shoppers may also try Shoppers Stop as these are highly important for them.

Key areas of improvements for Shoppers Stop

Location of store and Store layout: These two attributes are rated important by all shoppers (Table VIII) but for shoppers of competition, these are highest rated attributes. If Shoppers Stop promotes these two attributes, competition shoppers may also try Shoppers Stop and may become loyal due to their exchange and return policy.

Targeting working professionals: Working professionals spend time between one and three hours per visit and spend in higher category of Rs 3000- Rs 5000 per visit as compared to students and career beginners who spend less than one hour and spend between Rs 1000- Rs 3000. Shoppers Stop can try to attract more working professionals highlighting excellent exchange and return policy and location of store.

Adding more variety and improving store layout: The highest rated consumer suggestion to Shoppers

Stop for improvement is to add more variety. This is followed by having better offers and discounts, and improving store layout. Adding variety in this fast changing industry may be a challenging task especially because the store needs to be highly certain that the added variety does not reduce inventory turnover. In this industry, it is difficult to satisfy the consumer by creating novel offers and discounts but the company must always try to be better than competition. The suggestion for improving store layout is significant especially if we note that for shoppers at competition, store layout is the most important attribute. It may imply that those consumers who are dissatisfied from Shoppers Stop may switch over to competition. In absence of conclusive data, we may not be certain about it. This issue also needs future investigation.

Overall, results have important implications for marketers especially in metro cities, to design their stores and product offerings as per life stage of consumers. The study provides important insights about the consumer preferences towards multi-brand retail stores especially Shopper's Stop. Shopper's Stop need to focus on bringing more variety in their apparels section by adding a few more famous brands like Jack and Jones, AND, and Zara, if possible. Banerjee & Saha (2012) also corroborate that apparel section in particular has great opportunity of growth in Indian organized retail industry. Shoppers Stop has been able to sustain its business due to their Omni-channel presence and variety in products but there is more room for improvement in this aspect as per the study.

Conclusion

The study provides a life stage view of consumer purchasing behavior at a prominent multi-brand retail chain in India. It showcases that a consumer's purchasing behavior and preferences of buying at a multi-brand retail store change as per her life stage. In student life, a consumer has ample time to shop with friends and evaluate a product's quality, price and past buying experience but has limited money to spend on expensive merchandise. The consumer goes to such stores mostly during festivals and gets highly influenced by in-store promotions. When the consumer enter profession, she is faced with paucity of time and becomes a more regular shopper at multi-brand retail stores as she can get multiple brands under one roof and therefore relies on a brand's strength for validation of her purchase decision rather than evaluating product's quality and price. The effect of in-store promotions reduces as consumer gives more weightage to brand now. As the consumer becomes more mature and established in her profession handling more responsibilities, she again tries to evaluate quality and price and relies less on brand strength. The consumer again comes more during festivals but increases purchases for gifting purposes. This view of consumer life stage gives another tool to marketers to redesign their offerings for different segments of consumers.

Limitations and future scope of research

The prominent limitation of this study is sample size. Even though these are similar to those of other published studies, a larger sample would improve the analysis. Therefore, future studies can undertake similar studies with larger sample size. Sampling method chosen in this study was convenience sampling and thus the sample may not be representative of the population. Future studies can chose probability sampling methods to ensure the population representation. In terms of geographic location, the present study focuses on consumers based in Delhi. Therefore, future research can widen the scope to include consumers from other cities as well. The same will enable to compare the consumer behaviour based on geographic location. On similar lines, future studies can be conducted on consumers of several multi-brand retail chains and compare factors which influence the purchase decision across different such chains. The same comparison can be extended in future to be across different locations. Future studies can focus on comparing consumer behavior and shopping experience of multi-product retail chain with online multi-product store.

Future research is required to understand why 25% consumers shop alone at Shoppers Stop. This would help in improving advertising and in-store promotion by the store. Similarly, over half of consumers get influenced by brands so future research can investigate how to utilize this for increasing the per visit spending of the consumer. Similarly, another issue that needs investigation is buying of jewelry by very few consumers at Shoppers Stop as compared to those at competition. Another important issue that warrants further research is if Shoppers Stop consumers have switched to competition for better store layout as this is an important area of improvement conveyed by consumers and is coincidentally the most important attribute of consumers of competition.

Validation of the current research findings with other cultures is also worthy of future study. The moderating impacts of different products or service categories, as well as the impact of new channels of internet access (such as smart phones), are avenues that merit attention as well. Nowadays, consumers buy from multi-brand retail chains through offline as well as online channels. Current research did not include the online shopping experience of consumers of multi-brand retail chains like Shoppers Stop. Future studies can be conducted to understand online behavior of these shoppers and to identify the factors which changes as one moves from a physical to a digital store. Future studies may also evaluate and compare offline and online purchase behavior of consumers and their satisfaction with these modes of interactions. Future studies should consider other types of retail formats such as malls, departmental store and superstores and compare the results for improving business performance.

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