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Digitalisation: Opportunities and Challenges for Business

Volume 2

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Effective Utilization of Marketing Strategies by Independent Textile Retailers in Post Pandemic Scenario

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Abstract. Retailing is a process of selling merchandise or some sort of service directly to large set of customers. Retailers enable the customers to purchase products of their choice in shops located in close proximity and assume a prominent role in the distribution channel. Small scale retailers are those retailers who have lesser scale of operation and restricted to a small segment of the market. Stocking large variety of customary stuff in small quantities is the operational mode of a small scale retailer. Retailing occupies an important role in the economic growth of any country. The Indian retail sector is characterized by small retailers who are mostly unorganized. This sector is a mix up of opportunities and obstacles. The success of the small stores more depend on their relationship with the customers and the adoption of suitable marketing strategies.

Keywords: Retailers · Customer · Distribution · Channel

1 Introduction

Retailing is a process of selling merchandise or some sort of service directly to large set of customers. Retailers enable the customers to purchase products of their choice in shops located in close proximity and assume a prominent role in the distribution channel. Personal relationship by the retailer with the customers who reside in the close proximity helps them to understand their varied tastes and stock products accordingly. This relationship paves way for understanding the problems of manufacturers and customers who are on the extreme ends of the supply chain.

Retailers support wholesalers and manufacturers in many ways like storage of goods, communication of customer desires and transportation of goods. On the other hand, they help customers by providing small and convenient packages, act as advisor and educate about uses of a product.

Small scale retailers are those retailers who have lesser scale of operation and restricted to a small segment of the market. Stocking large variety of customary stuff in small quantities is the operational mode of a small scale retailer.

Transformation in every industry is evident as time and preference changes. This has become more evident in this post pandemic situation. Retailing is not an exception to the change. Gone are the days where the role of manufacturer is mere manufacturing the product and retailer to sell the produced merchandise. More than merchandising, understanding the choice of customer has become more important.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Retailing occupies an important role in the economic growth of any country. The Indian retail sector is characterized by small retailers who are mostly unorganized. This sector is a mix up of opportunities and obstacles. Every sector in retail throws a different set of problems to small retailers against large retailers and textile sector is no exception for it. Large scale retailers are relatively successful than small retailers in every aspect of business like accomplishment of apt marketing strategies, purchasing, finance etc. Independent textile retailers suffer from operational issues, merchandising, raising of funds etc.

Further rigid competition from large scale textile retailers makes the existence of independent textile retailers as a question in some parts of the country. The success of small scale retailers solely depends on how they perform in the market place at a given point of time. Hence the study attempts to point out the issues and challenges in marketing of independent textile retailers in the post pandemic scenario.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Objectives framed for the study are as follows:

- To study the factors influencing the effective utilization of marketing strategies by independent textile retailers.
- To measure perception of independent textile retailers regarding challenges faced in their business.

1.3 Research Methodology

1.3.1 Area of the Study

Coimbatore named as “Manchester of South India” is chosen to study the effectiveness of marketing strategies adopted by independent textile retailers.

1.3.2 Sources of Data

Primary data is collected from 250 independent textile retailers and secondary data from printed and online published sources.

1.3.3 Sampling Design

For the purpose of the study, 250 respondents were selected using convenience sampling method.

1.3.4 Tools for Analysis

The following statistical tools are used in this study in tune with the objectives.

- Percentage analysis
- Average score analysis
- Factor analysis

1.4 Limitations of the Study

- Data were collected from 250 textile retailers and the study has been confined to Coimbatore city only.

1.5 Review of Literature

Study by Wesley Niemann, Karabo Mannya, Theuns Kotzé (2018) [1] identifies the global sourcing has increased as buyers searched for new markets that offered better pricing, quality, variety and delivery lead times than their local markets. However, the increase in global sourcing has also exposed businesses to many supply risks. Small clothing and textile retailers need to proactively identify and manage global sourcing risk using the identified approaches in order to reduce and mitigate potential supply disruptions.

A study by Madhurima Deb (2014) [2] identifies that a central role in retailer customer long-term relationships is played by customer-level attributes along with store-level attributes. Proper knowledge of factors and continuous efforts leads to retain a customer and have a lasting relationship.

Vikram Gahlawat & Pankaj Kumar (2014) [3] in their article discuss about selecting and training employees cautiously. Since people are the driving force in maintaining personal touch with the customers, special attention should be given to human resource management.

The choice of apparel shoppers in India and the influencing factors which drives them in decision making was studied by Rituparna Basu, et al. (2014) [4] Factor analysis was used to measure the results and it was found that five store attributes influences the decision of the buyers. The shoppers expressed their interest towards organized retail stores and expected the stores to have multi brands rather than a single brand.

Khare Arpita (2014) [5] opined that most Indian consumers prefer to shop with small retailers. The factors which attract the consumers towards small retailers are service, personal relationship and store facilities. There is a difference in preference pattern between the young and the aged customers. The study concludes that the service and the personal relationship help the small retailers to compete with the organized retail sector to an extent.

A comparative study of consumer preferences between online and offline purchases was conducted by Sunil (2013) [6] The study points out certain factors like advancement in information technology, accessibility to internet, use of smart phones and banking services have improved the scope for e-tailing. This increases customer choice of products

and even accessibility to international markets is made possible. This gives a competitive advantage to online stores and poses a threat to traditional stores. On the contrast, physical stores also have some competitive advantage like physical feel of the product, lower price, product assortment and easy information about the products (Tables 1 and 2).

1.6 Findings

Table 1. Table showing the Percentage Analysis: Allocation of respondents based on the agreeability

| Statements | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|--|----------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| Marketing of textile products is not a difficult task | 47 (18.8) | 136 (54.4) | 20 (8.0) | 47 (18.8) | - | 250 (100) |
| Customer response towards textile products is encouraging | 28 (11.2) | 149 (59.6) | 47 (18.8) | 26 (10.4) | - | 250 (100) |
| Sales during festivals give us more earnings | 59 (23.6) | 132 (52.8) | 35 (14.0) | 24 (9.6) | - | 250 (100) |
| Suppliers deliver the material promptly (punctual) and thus support us | 19 (7.6) | 120 (48) | 76 (30.4) | 35 (14.0) | - | 250 (100) |
| Sales persons involvement towards selling the goods | 39 (15.6) | 98 (39.2) | 67 (26.8) | 30 (12.0) | 16 (6.4) | 250 (100) |
| Offers given to the customers make them to buy | 40 (16.0) | 96 (38.4) | 78 (31.2) | 28 (11.2) | 8 (3.2) | 250 (100) |

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

| Statements | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|---|----------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| Sales persons relationship with customers are very pleasant (cordial) | 28 (11.2) | 112 (44.8) | 73 (29.2) | 29 (11.6) | 8 (3.2) | 250 (100) |
| We take sufficient steps to compete with big shops | 28 (11.2) | 96 (38.4) | 82 (32.8) | 25 (10.0) | 19 (7.6) | 250 (100) |
| Returns in this business is satisfactory | 55 (22.0) | 132 (52.8) | 34 (13.6) | 25 (10.0) | 4 (1.6) | 250 (100) |
| The customers always expect the products to be durable | 47 (18.8) | 110 (44.0) | 55 (22.0) | 26 (10.4) | 12 (4.8) | 250 (100) |
| Facilities given in the shop for the customers and sales persons are quite satisfactory | 36 (14.4) | 125 (50.0) | 55 (22.0) | 30 (12.0) | 4 (1.6) | 250 (100) |
| Competition with the nearby shops make me to think differently | 44 (17.6) | 116 (46.4) | 53 (21.2) | 37 (14.8) | | 250 (100) |
| Customers react positively towards advertising for textile products | 43 (17.2) | 101 (40.4) | 59 (23.6) | 40 (16.0) | 7 (2.8) | 250 (100) |
| Customers are satisfied with the pricing of products sold | 27 (10.8) | 96 (38.4) | 96 (38.4) | 24 (9.6) | 7 (2.8) | 250 (100) |

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

| Statements | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|--|----------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| The price of textile product is reasonable | 27 (10.8) | 106 (42.4) | 56 (22.4) | 50 (20.0) | 11 (4.4) | 250 (100) |

Note: values given in brackets are in percentage.

Table 2. Table showing the Average score – Organizational factors and level of agreeability on the various aspects relating to retailers

| Organizational Factors | F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 | F5 | F6 | F7 | F8 | F9 | F10 | F11 | F12 | F13 | F14 | F15 | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|------|-------------|------|------|-------------|------|------|-------------|------|------|------|-------------|------|------|
| Nature of business | Sole trading | 4.06 | 3.68 | 3.97 | 3.38 | 3.34 | 3.50 | 3.48 | 3.39 | 3.94 | 3.94 | 3.75 | 3.91 | 3.89 | 3.48 | 3.23 |
| | Partnership | 4.06 | 3.97 | 3.94 | 3.69 | 3.63 | 3.31 | 3.37 | 3.06 | 3.83 | 3.32 | 3.60 | 3.52 | 3.36 | 3.08 | 3.09 |
| Experience in business (years) | Less than 5 | 4.24 | 4.00 | 4.18 | 3.76 | 3.43 | 3.25 | 3.13 | 3.49 | 4.09 | 3.67 | 3.67 | 4.00 | 4.12 | 3.82 | 3.52 |
| | 5 – 10 | 3.78 | 3.93 | 4.15 | 3.71 | 3.93 | 3.64 | 3.56 | 3.42 | 3.85 | 4.08 | 3.93 | 4.07 | 3.64 | 3.35 | 3.35 |
| | 10 – 15 | 4.05 | 3.70 | 3.77 | 3.44 | 3.44 | 3.36 | 3.52 | 2.80 | 3.74 | 3.71 | 3.42 | 3.58 | 3.55 | 2.91 | 2.82 |
| | 15 years and above | 4.00 | 3.32 | 3.74 | 2.97 | 2.97 | 3.55 | 3.55 | 3.23 | 3.90 | 3.34 | 3.65 | 3.39 | 3.28 | 3.07 | 2.97 |
| Initial capital | Own capital | 4.03 | 3.86 | 3.96 | 3.55 | 3.32 | 3.20 | 3.40 | 3.40 | 3.87 | 3.91 | 3.64 | 3.83 | 3.82 | 3.51 | 3.24 |
| | Borrowed capital | 4.22 | 3.67 | 3.76 | 3.01 | 3.13 | 3.31 | 3.10 | 2.91 | 3.73 | 3.59 | 3.61 | 3.55 | 3.19 | 2.97 | 2.71 |
| | Both | 3.82 | 3.58 | 4.15 | 3.79 | 3.91 | 4.00 | 3.82 | 3.24 | 4.12 | 3.39 | 3.73 | 3.82 | 3.82 | 3.21 | 3.45 |
| Source of borrowing | Banks | 4.11 | 3.53 | 3.81 | 3.40 | 3.34 | 3.84 | 3.70 | 3.23 | 4.16 | 3.57 | 3.75 | 3.81 | 3.36 | 3.07 | 2.99 |
| | Financial institutions | 4.09 | 3.82 | 3.91 | 3.51 | 3.60 | 2.93 | 2.89 | 2.53 | 3.42 | 3.38 | 3.29 | 3.38 | 3.31 | 3.18 | 3.18 |
| | Friends and Relatives | 3.78 | 3.65 | 4.00 | 3.04 | 3.57 | 3.57 | 3.48 | 3.09 | 3.83 | 3.48 | 3.57 | 3.65 | 4.00 | 3.30 | 3.39 |
| Organizational Factors | F1 | F2 | F3 | F4 | F5 | F6 | F7 | F8 | F9 | F10 | F11 | F12 | F13 | F14 | F15 | |
| Number of sales persons | Upto 3 | 4.00 | 3.95 | 4.09 | 3.67 | 3.51 | 3.33 | 3.33 | 3.23 | 3.93 | 3.98 | 3.74 | 3.91 | 3.86 | 3.81 | 3.72 |
| | 4 – 6 | 4.05 | 3.58 | 3.89 | 3.30 | 3.40 | 3.21 | 3.60 | 3.51 | 3.91 | 3.70 | 3.68 | 3.83 | 3.44 | 3.23 | 2.95 |
| | 7 – 9 | 4.18 | 4.07 | 4.20 | 3.70 | 3.77 | 3.57 | 3.47 | 2.88 | 3.93 | 3.60 | 3.60 | 3.73 | 3.65 | 2.98 | 2.75 |
| Working hours of the shop | 10 and above | 3.65 | 2.61 | 3.04 | 2.70 | 2.35 | 4.35 | 3.13 | 3.13 | 3.65 | 2.87 | 3.39 | 2.96 | 3.65 | 2.35 | 2.87 |
| | Upto 8 | 4.05 | 4.00 | 4.13 | 3.40 | 3.78 | 3.65 | 3.94 | 3.54 | 3.87 | 4.00 | 3.84 | 3.68 | 3.66 | 3.53 | 3.22 |
| | 8 – 10 | 4.04 | 3.93 | 4.13 | 3.65 | 3.56 | 3.34 | 3.18 | 3.13 | 3.92 | 3.71 | 3.77 | 3.96 | 3.75 | 3.57 | 3.36 |
| | 10 – 12 | 3.87 | 3.14 | 3.65 | 3.11 | 3.11 | 3.62 | 3.40 | 3.02 | 3.75 | 3.43 | 3.59 | 3.33 | 3.56 | 2.70 | 2.67 |

Note: F1 –F15 indicates the factors of agreeability

It is observed from the table 78 that majority of the respondents irrespective of their organizational classification have high level of agreeability towards marketing of textile products is not a difficult task (F1), followed by sales during festivals give us more earnings (F3), customer response towards textile products is encouraging (F2) and so on. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents have high level of agreeability towards marketing of textile products is not a difficult task (F1), followed by sales

during festivals give us more earnings (F3), customer response towards textile products is encouraging (F2) and so on (Table 3).

Table 3. Table showing the Factor Analysis - Level of agreeability towards the various aspects relating to small scale retailers

| Agreeability factors | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Suppliers deliver the material promptly (punctual) and thus support us | 0.613 | - | - | - |
| Sales persons involvement towards selling the goods | 0.644 | - | - | - |
| Offers given to the customers make them to buy | 0.529 | - | - | - |
| Sales persons relationship with customers are very pleasant (cordial) | 0.597 | - | - | - |
| Returns in this business is satisfactory | 0.667 | - | - | - |
| The customers always expect the products to be durable | 0.623 | - | - | - |
| Facilities given in the shop for the customers and sales persons are quite satisfactory | 0.750 | - | - | - |
| Competition with the nearby shops make me to think differently | 0.610 | - | - | - |
| Customers are satisfied with the pricing of products sold | 0.747 | - | - | - |
| The price of textile product is reasonable | 0.693 | - | - | - |
| Marketing of textile products is not a difficult task | - | 0.574 | - | - |
| Sales during festivals give us more earnings | - | - | 0.671 | - |
| We take sufficient steps to compete with big shops | - | - | 0.657 | - |
| Customer response towards textile products is encouraging | - | - | - | 0.686 |
| Customers react positively towards advertising for textile products | - | - | - | 0.647 |

It is concluded that the various aspects considered are classified under 4 factors such as functional factors, marketing oriented factors, sales oriented factors and customer oriented factors with an important aspect supplier delivering the material promptly, marketing of textile products is not a difficult task, steps taken to compete with big shops and customer response towards textile products is encouraging.

1.7 Recommendations

- Success in India's retail market is not an effortless task and is achievable with the combination of the following recommendations.

- Store ambience: Store ambience should be improved by adopting various techniques for product display, planning the store space and assortment. As store ambience carries store image in customer's minds, the ambience should be concentrated.
- Training the employees: Selling in retail is much about personal feel and relationship more than buying a product. The employees should be trained in such a way so that they have complete knowledge of the store and are able to convince the customers with their requirements.
- Retention of customers: Cost of acquiring a new customer is higher than retaining an old customer. Moreover in case of physical store a returning customer is a good sign that shows the customer's taste and preference is understood by the retailer.
- Role of retailers association: Association with registered associations, fellow retailers will give a complete knowledge about the banking procedures, Government schemes, exhibitions and current trends in the market.
- Supply Chain Management: Managing supply chain is very essential for every business without mention to the scale of business. The small retailers with already limited resources should keep the supply chain as short as possible to reduce cost.

1.8 Conclusion

India has become a level playing ground for retailers all over the globe. The present study concludes that the retailers in textile products are moderate in implementation of marketing strategies and practices. Even though the problems are highly perceived by the retailers, there is a higher opportunity for textile products in retailing. The challenges in marketing of textile products are higher among small and medium retailers when compared to large retailers. Adoption to the upcoming changes is very important for the survival of small retailers in the market. The small retail organizations / retailers are put into the task of attracting new consumers and retaining the present customers. The success of the small stores more depends on their relationship with the customers and the adoption of suitable marketing strategies.

1.9 Future Research

The present study is an attempt to identify the effective utilization of marketing strategies by independent textile retailers in Post pandemic scenario. Further research can be done including all forms of retailing, promotion strategies of retailers and not only textile other areas of retailing can be considered.

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