

Re-inventing Household Shopping Patterns and Buying Roles: Exploring the “New Women” in Urban India

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Abstract: Financial independence, self-identity, and professional achievement, which were previously considered as the sole prerogative of men, are now desired by the women in urban India. The notions of feminism and women liberation has already touched them. This has led to a major shift in the role-structure of women, leading to emergence of the 'new women'. This is reflected in the market place in the form of a change in the purchase-behaviour pattern associated with a variety of goods and services. The paper analyses the increasing influence of the 'new women' in the purchase decision-making process for different category of products in Delhi. The study revealed that the 'new women' has altogether broken the stereotypical roles. This has strategic implications for marketers in terms of product-positioning and promotional strategies.

Keywords: New Women, Purchase Decisions, Buying Roles, Product Positioning.

Introduction

The new millennium witnessed the dawn of the “global village”, which brought about a worldwide structural shift in social, economic, political, and cultural spheres. South Asia, and specifically India, too experienced a transformation from its colonial and nationalist dialogue to a new discourse based on globalisation, liberalisation, and rise of the culture of consumerism.

The shift in the discourse is evidenced by the emergence of “new women” who are increasingly becoming active participants in negotiating their own lives vis-à-vis the global economy. Women, symbolised primarily as “mother”¹ during the nationalist era (pre-independence era), acquired a binary image as “daughters” and “working women”² in the post-colonial period (Kumar 1993). In the post liberalisation era, the bourgeois Indian women became the site for the production of a modern nationalist culture of consumption representing the rapid globalisation of the Indian society (Chatterjee 1989). The “new middle-class” women increasingly integrated with the global economy through greater participation in the workforce, and strived to establish themselves as the global consumer.

Education, status, and social class all became significant markers in the construction of this new identity of the “modern” women (Thapan 2004). This new image of women was shaped by discourses of development and modernisation, where the production of the global culture through its impact on everyday life (more so, in the urban context) was seen to drive women towards creating a new identity for themselves. This new imagery was not just confined to Indian women but was seen across the “third world women”, developing a new trend across the South Asian countries (Chowdhury 2010). The rise of a culture of consumerism amongst the new middle class encased within its fold, gendered symbolic codes reflected in associations with commodities (Fernandes 2000). This established a new image of urban

¹ Women were symbolised as ‘mother’ representing the nation who were seen as sufferers, bonded in shackles (Kumar, 1993). According to Partha Chatterjee (1989), “the Indian nationalist project was based on a powerful dichotomy between the “inner” and the “outer,” which translated into a set of binaries that were inevitably gendered: spiritual/material, home/world, inner/outer. By assuming a position of sympathy with the unfree and oppressed womanhood of India, the colonial mind was able to transform this figure of the Indian woman into a sign of the inherently oppressive and unfree nature of the entire cultural tradition of a country.”

² In the postcolonial discourse, the symbol of working women reflected the economic independence of women with a focus on her role as producers.

women as the educated, confident, self-dependent, and glamorous entities, free to pursue their career along with their familial roles while maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity.

Financial independence, self-identity, job satisfaction and professional achievement, which were previously considered as the sole prerogative of men, are now desired also by the women. Urban India is witnessing an emergence of feminism and women liberation coupled with new family categories, like nucleus family with both the spouses working; women-headed households or single-women. A shift in the role-structure of women in the family has been noticed in recent years which is also getting reflected in the market-place.

Significance of the Study

Purchase decision-making, which was predominantly conceptualised as a male-dominated activity, is today witnessing bigger role of women. This has been possible due to the rise of educated, independent women having more access to disposable income. The “new women” are gradually breaking away from their stereotypical roles along with increasing visibility of swapping in gender roles in purchase decision-making. While men also buy groceries; women now actively participate in the purchase of automobiles, electronics, and personal-care products³. Women, today also take part in major household decisions on family finance, and purchase of land and property. The changing milieu makes it imperative for the marketer to take cognizance of the ever more active role of “new women” to ensure product success through better product positioning, pricing, distribution, and promotion. The present study focuses on select product categories and

³ Traditionally, India had a very conservative attitude towards sex and its related personal-care products. Due to this sex taboo, “embarrassing” products like condoms, birth control pills, and pregnancy-test kits would be purchased by men.

analyses how the role of women in purchase decision-making is being influenced by the evolving emergence of the “new women”.

Two hypotheses were formulated –

H1: The difference in influence of women and men in purchase-decision-making is not significant.

H2: The buying roles of women belonging to diverse demographic groups is not significantly different.

Research Methodology

For the purpose of the study, secondary data sources included newspapers and other weekly and monthly magazines, journals, films, advertisements, and relevant websites. The qualitative data was collected by conducting an in-depth interview of men and women belonging to different strata of society. The quantitative data was collected with the help of a self-administered questionnaire from two hundred fifty respondents (men and women) in Delhi and the NCR, to study the purchase behaviour of women in urban India. The data was statistically analysed, and inferences were drawn. The secondary data sources included newspapers and magazines, journals, films, advertisements, and websites.

For the purpose of the primary study, eight category of products were identified – clothing, daily consumables, “embarrassing products used by females”⁴, groceries, toiletries and cosmetics, “embarrassing products used by males”⁵, financial products, and high-priced durables. For some of these products, such as high-priced durables, and financial products, men are

⁴ Products used by females and bought with an embarrassment and fear of being noticed by fellow customers, like, sanitary napkins, birth control pills, pregnancy test kits, and inner garments

⁵ Products used by men which are purchased by them with a little embarrassment like, male inner-garments, and condoms.

perceived as the decision-makers, as the products involve higher financial outlay, higher risk, and technicalities. On the other hand, traditionally, purchase of groceries, toiletries and cosmetics, and clothing falls in the domain of women as the home-makers. With retail revolution entering the Indian market, in the form of hyper-markets, online websites and home-delivery services, there is a radical change in purchase patterns and buying roles.

Review of literature: Understanding New Women

The present section discusses in detail – Who constitutes the “new woman”? What is her status in a household? How is she breaking the age-old gender-roles and image in media?

The New Woman

Changing demographics and lifestyle had led to a shift in the role of Indian women from being a traditional housemaker to an informed and financially independent individual, whose voice can no longer be suppressed. This new image of women may be referred to as the “new women” of the contemporary era, who are in contrast to their colonial counterparts. The term “New Woman” was coined by Grand (1894) more than a century ago. “New Woman” was conceptualised as those protesting against the oppressive structures of patriarchy, fighting for their rights at economic, political, social or personal level. The new women predominantly belonged to the middle class. During the same period, the term was further popularised by writers, novelists, and playwrights, like, Henry James, Henrik Ibsen, etc., who through their strong female characters or heroines presented them as pushing the limits set by the male-dominated society. Their work exhibited the emergence of feminists, educated, independent career women in Europe and the United States.

The new image of women is also highlighted in the multiple works of South Asian scholars like Thapan (2004), Chatterjee (1989), Chowdhury

(2010), Radhakrishnan (2009) and many others. They all talk about the “new liberal Indian women” who could participate in the modern economy, as both workers and consumers, while retaining their traditional roles and values. These women are educated and financially independent, and are also actively involved in decision-making and purchasing products for their own and family needs. An image of “new women” emerges in these works as consumers, who exercise control over their own lives, be it personal, social, or economic and who rules the market and takes a pivotal role as drivers of the global economy (Singhal 2016).

New Women and the Changes in Family Structure

Family as an institution has played a central role in an individual’s development in most South Asian countries. The twenty-first century recorded great changes of far-reaching importance in the family system under the influence of westernisation, industrialisation, modernisation, and greater population mobility across the subcontinent (Chowdhury 2013). These influences have brought about changes in the traditional gendered role of women being the nurturer and provider of emotional caretaking, while economic sustenance was considered the responsibility of the menfolk. The socio-structural changes within the family have been more visible in the urban context. This has led to the rise of individualistic orientation among the people, which is discernible regarding the breakdown of joint family and rise of nuclear family structures. The structural changes in a family have been further accentuated due to a surge in the disposable income, owing to the participation of women in the workforce, and influences of mass media, resulting in the penetration of a culture of consumerism.

Family’s Purchase Decision-Making and Buying Roles

Schiffman and Kanuk (1996) has identified eight distinct roles in the family decision-making process: influencers, gatekeepers, deciders, buyers, preparers, users, maintainers, and disposers. However, Kotler (2004) has classified the buying roles played in family’s purchase decision-making into five categories – initiator (who first suggests the idea of buying the product);

influencer (who provide information to other members about a product or service), decider (who takes the decision to shop or not), buyer (who make the actual purchase), and user (who use or consume the product). The family structure, culture, traditional values, and the type of the product decide which member will play which role, and many-a-times a member can play more than one role.

Roles Played by Husband and Wife in Family-Purchase-Decisions

In mid-1940s, not more than twenty percent of the women belonging to urban middle-class enjoyed the same position, privileges, and freedom as their husbands did. The husband-domination in major purchase decisions still continues to be prevalent among the many Indian households. Increase in purchasing power of women has led to major changes in the family consumption pattern in general and women in particular. A report commissioned by private equity fund Everstone Capital stated that the women will make India richer by twenty-five percent by the year 2025 (Panicker and Ahmed 2015). Women, nowadays, are educated, knowledgeable, informed as well as financially independent, which gives them an equal position with their male counterparts in decision-making, by comparing and scrutinising products before taking the final decision to purchase. In an interesting study on traditional role specialisation and purchase behaviour, Webster (1994) concluded that in comparison to wives, husbands exert more influence in the purchase of automobiles; less influence in deciding how much to spend on food; and equal influence in deciding about vacations and housing. Moreover, men tend to concern themselves with relatively important and functional product attributes, like, price; while women have led in social and emotional behaviour and hence, concentrates on relatively minor aesthetic product attributes, like, colour.

There are certain products like, apparels, bags, accessories which women use for their self-consumption, enhancing their confidence or personality. For these kinds of products, women are often the sole decision-makers (Panicker and Ahmed 2015). Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1968)

have identified four patterns of husband-wife influence in family consumption decisions – autonomic (when equal number of unilateral decisions are made by each spouse); husband dominated; wife dominated; and syncretic (when decisions are taken jointly by the spouses). According to Oustlund (1973), “husband dominance appears to be more likely when the husband is successful in his occupation. The wife’s influence increases with age and is generally greater if she is employed”. Blood and Wolfe (1960) found that dominance in household decision-making is directly related to cultural norms of the society. Also, the power to make household decisions is related to the resources husband and wives bring to the household. Hampel (1974) asserted that the “role structure in household decision behaviour is partially determined by education, occupational prestige, and wife’s employment”.

Stereotyping of Gender-roles in Media

Many firms make a common fallacy of perceiving their consumers devoid of gender differentiation. Since a majority of the marketers are men, the product design, services and their advertisements are positioned keeping in mind the male consumers. They fail to distinguish between the male versus female psychic in purchase decision-making. Kerin, et al. (1979), examined the portrayal of women in advertisements and concluded that the 1980's would exhibit a larger proportion of advertisements featuring women in work-related settings in parity occupations with men. They believed that though sex in advertising is expected to become more explicit; the use of women as sex objects will decline. Plakoyiannaki, et al. (2008), indicated that women are portrayed in a stereotypical way in online advertising; supporting the notion that sexism is prevalent in online advertisements worldwide. The portrayal of women across web pages varies considerably, with female-audience web pages embracing “decorative” female images; male-audience web pages promoting polarising depictions of women in "dependent" or "non-traditional" roles; and general-audience web pages using portrayals of women as housewives or equal to men.

Dholakia and Chiang (2003), explored whether consumers associate e-shoppers with any gender-specific stereotypes. Such stereotypes were expected because shopping is considered a "female-typed" activity whereas technology is considered to be in the male domain. Results suggested that the global stereotype, held by both male and female respondents, was that of a shopper as a woman. This stereotype reversed when the product purchased was technical and expensive (DVD player). In terms of personality attributions, the female shopper was seen to be less technical, less spontaneous, and more reliable and attributions regarding personal characteristics are not influenced significantly by product type, outlet type, or purchase purpose. Chang (2007), studied gender differences in processing strategies and elaboration thresholds. The study showed that comparative advertising encouraged a higher level of brand-evaluation involvement among men and led to greater purchase intentions. Putrevu (2004), explored how men and women respond to different types of print advertisements. The results show that women develop positive purchase intent if the advertisements are verbal, harmonious, complex, and category-oriented, whereas men base their purchase intent on the basis of advertisements that are comparative, simple, and attribute-oriented. In a study by Douglas (1977), magazine readership habits of working and non-working wives in the U.S. and France were analysed. No major differences emerged in the frequency and type of magazines read by working and non-working wives in either country. Thus emphasis on the magazines as the major advertising vehicle does not necessarily imply a lopsided emphasis on non-working wives, as might have been expected, due to potentially greater time pressures as a working wife.

Emerging Trends and Patterns Exhibited by Secondary Data

With increased urbanization, joint family structures were soon replaced by nuclear families. However, in last two decades, the urban India has witnessed a major change in family structures – from nuclear families to childless families, single parent family, and live-in families. The new form of

families, where either or both adults are working, were often termed as YUPPIE (Young Urban or Upwardly-mobile Professionals), and those without kids as DINK (Dual Income, No Kids). These changes have resulted in an increase in number of independent and confident women in urban India. The career-oriented women have become multi-taskers, playing multiple roles, and are hard-pressed for time. The newer family structures and increase in number of working women has given rise to newer household shopping patterns and a shift in buying roles. In order to understand the changes taking place in the status of women and their choices as a buyer, and the resultant changes in the market offerings the secondary data sources were explored and the findings are categorised under two major sections – single women in contemporary urban India; and advent of “new women”.

I. Single Women in Contemporary Urban India

Single women in urban India is developing as a target segment with a huge potential of developing as a market for different products because of the following reasons:

Increase in the Number of Single Women in India: The census data revealed that out of India’s three hundred fifty-three million women above the age of twenty, over seventy-three million women (twenty-one percent) are single; and there is a forty percent increase in the population of single women between 2001 and 2011 (Fernandes and Dhar 2015).

Single Women Exhibiting Independence and Choice: Fernandes and Dhar (2015) presented the findings of a research study which indicated that women are expressing their independence and choice with regard to remaining single, and pursuing their career and education. Also, the societal stigma attached with women being divorced, widowed, or unmarried is fast waning off. Interestingly, while in China, an insulting term, “Shengnu”⁶, is used to

⁶ A disparaging reference as “leftovers”, those women who remain unmarried and are over twenty-seven years of age.

disgrace unmarried women, India has no such slur. Ironically, while families do let daughters and single mothers live independently, society at large closes in with a spyglass and single Indian women continue to feel the gaze. Even as society learns to read single Indian woman in a new light, the affluent, self-made woman is hardest for them to understand. This does not match with the image the society have of the single women as they expect a widow to be sad, or a “spinster” to have warts. The new image of the single, happy woman has yet to make a lasting impression.

Changed Demographics Resulting in Newer Products: Marketers were fast in identifying gaps in the market and hence, came up with the following innovative products and schemes to cater to the needs of single women:

- Companies have come-up with a new product offering “half-BHKs, full convenience” for single working-women.
- Travel agencies or companies are offering all-women travel plans for single women.
- Cafés and restaurants are considering lone women or single women diners as their priority clients.
- Retirement homes are also considering single women as their prized customers.
- Radio taxi companies are ensuring safe travel for single women.
- Dating apps and singles networks are targeting the urban single women.

Media Reflecting the Changed Status and Image of Single Women: From being pitied in advertisements, television serials and movies, to being accepted as an independent individual, single women have travelled a long journey. Media is taking up serious issues associated with single women like, health services, safety and security, insurance, travel options, etc.

II. Advent of the “New Woman”

The “new women” not necessarily single, exercises control over their own lives, be it personal, social, or economic. Hence, this category includes singles (women are unmarried, divorced, separated, or widowed) and also the married ones with their own identities. The emergence of new women in modern urban India is characterized by their social status and position in the work place, family, social groups, as well as in their own eyes; the multiple roles they play in their life; and also with the new-found self, where they like to spend time, effort, and money on themselves. This has led to the introduction of several products and services in the market to cater to the need of new women, from toiletries and cosmetics, books and magazines, parlours and spa, healthcare and medicines, to dresses and health-drinks. For these women, shopping is viewed as a fun, hedonic, and joyful activity (Panicker 2015).

Media Portrayal of “New Women”: In India, the commercials and films portrayed women in stereotypical roles in the past – either as a mother, sister, wife/homemaker, teacher, secretary; or as a sex object in advertisements of condom, cigarette, liquor (thankfully, the commercial advertisement of the last two products are now banned in Indian media), and even for products like, automobile, and inner garments meant for men. The rise of “new women”, has witnessed a change in portrayal of women in media. For example, commercials are portraying women in authoritative positions (Airtel 3-G, and Ponds); as confident decision-makers (Skore Condom); and breaking the age-old gendered roles (Ariel - Share the Load campaign). Cinema is also contributing in this endeavor by showcasing strong female characters again indicating the rise of the “new women” (English Vinglish, Queen, Piku, Mardani, and Pink).

Recognizing “Self”: The new found self has urged the urban Indian women to take-out time from their busy routine to pamper themselves, and for that they are willing to spend time, effort, and money.

Interpretation of the results of primary data

The outcomes of the statistical analysis of the primary data are as follows:

Household Decision-Makers for Select Products

As mentioned earlier, data was collected from 250 respondents from Delhi and NCR. The purpose was to identify the decision-maker in each of the households for the eight select products. The analysis of data led to interesting outcomes as depicted in Table 1. In case of high-priced durables, in 98 households (39.2 percent), the decision-maker is man of the household, while in 92 households (36.8 percent) the man and woman took decisions jointly; and only in 52 households (20.8 percent) women were the sole decision makers. The male-domination in purchase-decision-making was also observed in case of “financial products” (57.2 percent). Interestingly, in 73 households (29.2 percent) the decision for such a product is taken by women and in 34 households (13.6 percent), they participated in joint purchase-decisions. Previously, men were the sole decision-maker for high-priced durables and financial products.

Table 1: *Household Decision-Makers for Eight Products*

Products	Number (Percentage)				
	Woman	Man	Joint	All Family Members	Total
Clothing	146 (58.4)	49 (19.6)	39 (15.6)	16 (6.4)	250
Daily consumables	106 (42.4)	93 (37.2)	47 (18.8)	4 (1.6)	250
Embarrassing products used by females	186 (74.4)	42 (16.8)	21 (08.4)	1 (0.4)	250
Groceries	97 (38.8)	89 (35.6)	62 (24.8)	2 (0.8)	250
Toiletries and Cosmetics	93 (37.2)	73 (29.2)	71 (28.4)	13 (5.2)	250
Financial products	73 (29.2)	143 (57.2)	34 (13.6)	0 (0.0)	250
Embarrassing products used by males	28 (11.2)	199 (79.6)	22 (08.8)	1 (0.4)	250
High priced durables	52 (20.8)	98 (39.2)	92 (36.8)	8 (3.2)	250

Though, the results indicated that women are the major decision-makers for products like, clothing (58.4 percent), groceries (38.8 percent), daily consumables (42.4 percent), and toiletries/ cosmetics (37.2 percent); it was observed that the participation of men in purchase of groceries, daily consumables, and toiletries-cosmetics, is also substantial, since they are either solely or jointly taking the purchase-decisions. With the rise of newer types of retail options like, online shopping, departmental stores and hypermarkets coupled with the changing demographics, men were found to be sharing the load of running the household.

When it comes to the embarrassing products, both men and women prefer to buy the product meant for them, personally. But in an urban city like, Delhi, results indicated some interchange in their role with men buying such products for women, and vice-versa; in addition to the joint purchase decision-making. Thus, it can be concluded that major role-reversals in purchased-decision-making has taken place in urban households.

Comparison of Purchase-Decisions-Making Roles of Women and Men

The t-test with mean and standard deviation was administered to test the first hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 2.

The t-values were significant for five products – clothing, embarrassing products used by females, embarrassing products used by males, financial products, and high-priced durables, showing a significant difference in relative influence of men and women in purchase-decision-making, and therefore, the null hypothesis, is rejected. Though for some products, women were found to be the major purchase-decision-maker, and for some other products, men were found to be the major influencers; a detailed analysis of Table 1 also indicated a rise in joint-decision making for most of the products. In other words, the gender specific influence dwindling in urban India.

Table 2: *Influence of Woman and Man*

Products		Woman	Man	t-values
		(N= 132)	(N=118)	
Clothing	Mean	3.83	3.37	7.39**
	S.D.	(0.51)	(0.47)	
Daily consumables	Mean	3.11	3.06	0.80
	S.D.	(0.51)	(0.47)	
Embarrassing products used by females	Mean	3.83	2.99	20.43**
	S.D.	(0.37)	(0.34)	
Groceries	Mean	3.29	3.21	1.35
	S.D.	(0.46)	(0.48)	
Toiletries and Cosmetics	Mean	3.37	3.28	1.49
	S.D.	(0.52)	(0.42)	
Financial products	Mean	2.94	3.89	13.63**
	S.D.	(0.62)	(0.46)	
Embarrassing products used by males	Mean	2.94	3.85	22.08**
	S.D.	(0.33)	(0.32)	
High priced durables	Mean	2.79	3.77	13.79**
	S.D.	(0.71)	(0.32)	

**Significant at 0.01 level

Understanding the Impact of Demographic Factors on Women as Purchase-Decision-Maker

The influence of demographic factors like, age, marital status, education, income, occupation, and location, on the purchase-decision-making role of women was studied by computing the F-ratios (ANOVA) for the eight products, as depicted in Table 3. Significant differences were found for seven products, except groceries, with respect to the different demographic variables. Thus, the second hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3: *Impact of Demographic Factors on Women as Purchase-Decision-Maker*

Products	F-Ratios					
	Age	Marital Status	Education	Income	Occupation	Location
Clothing	3.24*	5.32**	3.67*	3.62*	3.82*	1.56
Daily consumables	0.37	2.14	1.84	1.72	1.36	1.14
Emb. products used by females	3.21*	6.34**	4.46**	5.12**	5.23**	2.91*
Groceries	0.78	2.21	1.88	1.24	1.56	0.34
Toiletries and Cosmetics	2.45	2.10	2.89*	3.92*	2.98*	1.30
Emb. products used by males	2.82*	1.13	3.22*	3.11*	3.26*	2.89*
Financial products	2.78*	6.71**	4.43**	8.22**	7.14**	1.36
High priced durables	3.38*	8.44**	8.24**	8.12**	6.13**	1.98

*Significant at 0.05 level of significance. **Significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The decision-making influence of women of educated working-women with better financial standing were found to be greater than the less-educated non-working women with a weak financial standing. Single women of all age-group are proved to be major decision-makers; the influence of married women increases with age, or in the later stages of family life cycle. While, men are the major decision-makers in families having lower annual income; more joint decision-making takes place in families with higher annual income.

Conclusions of the study

On the basis of the review of literature, analysis of secondary and primary data, the following conclusions were drawn:

Increased Role of Media in Breaking the Stereotypical image of Women: Whether it is films, television serials, or advertisements, a change in

stereotypical image of women can be observed in recent years, with women being portrayed as achievers in unconventional occupations which were earlier the sole prerogative of males.

Influence of Demographic Factors: With the rise in the number of educated working women with better financial standing in urban India, a major change has been observed in their role as household purchase-decision-makers. They have become a major decision makers for household durables, financial and investment products.

Reversal in Roles: Gone are the days when a clear-cut distinction could be made products purchased by men and those by women. Since, women enjoy an equal footing as the men, in terms of education, job, and financial strength, a reversal in roles has been observed in household tasks as well as their purchase-decision-making roles. More and more men are now doing or helping out in household chores, and buy vegetables, groceries, toiletries; while women make purchase-decisions regarding in automobiles, electronic gadgets, and financial products.

Changing Household Structures Influencing Purchase-Decision-Making and Purchase-Patterns: Household structures have undergone substantial change in urban India over last two decades, and there is a rise in households with single women, and single mothers. With a rise in number of working women, a change in purchase pattern has also been observed. The young urban women are hard-pressed for time and hence they buy in bulk from departmental stores or hypermarkets or online sites; and prefer home deliveries.

Growing Confidence of Women as Purchase-Decision-Makers: Education, job, greater knowledge, and financial independence has given the urban women the confidence to take purchase-decisions even for expensive products.

Instant gratification: According to Bauman (2001), transience acquired “strategic edge” over durability. In a world saturated with uncertainties, focus is more on instant gratification. This is perceived not only in the value positions but also in the choice of products. Due to less emphasis on durability as a feature for choice of products, women are ready to take greater risk in product purchase based on their instinctive reasons. For example, a refrigerator’s life is predicted as not more than seven years.

Marketing implications of emergence of new women

The implications for the marketers in the light of emergence of new women are as follows:

Target Market Selection and Product Positioning

The gender-differences in choice of products is dwindling, and hence, the market desires neutral products. The marketer has to research in detail the preferences and purchase patterns of the new category of buyers, i.e., the “new women”, and position their product offering accordingly.

Product Designing, Branding and Packaging

The “new women” faces paucity of time, and hence desire new products catering to their needs, which are faster or ready to eat or serve, makes life easier. Moreover, they also desire products which will enhance their image in the society as an achiever having full control of their life. Coupled with that, they have a greater disposable income. Companies need to understand the desires of this new category of customers and brainstorm to develop new products to match those desires.

Branding the products meant for the “new women” is another tricky issue. The brand names should match the image desired by this category of buyer such as, achievers, confident, smart, etc. Since, this category of buyer generally buy products either from departmental store or from websites, packaging has a greater role to play, and hence, should be designed in such a way that it is attractive and informative.

Pricing Strategy

Psychological pricing may fail to attract the “new women” as they are smart and intelligent buyers and will not fall prey to such a strategy. Instead, genuine cash rebates and discounts, and longer payment terms will be more effective for regular household products. But for exclusive products higher prices will attract such buyers as it will give a better quality image to the product and improve the status of the buyer.

Promotional Strategy

Online advertisements and app-based marketing are gaining popularity among this category of buyers. Besides that the traditional medium of radio, television, and newspaper has not lost its charm. The media habits of the “new women” need to be monitored, and advertisements could be put accordingly, for example, as the working women listens to car-radios while commuting from and to office, advertisement on radio should be run in the mornings and evenings; and advertisements on television should be aired during late night programmes when they enjoy their leisure time watching the programmes. While they do not encourage salesmen and telemarketers disturbing them; they enjoy extra-benefit sales promotion schemes like, premiums and allowances.

Place or Distribution Strategy

Online marketing is becoming very popular among this category of buyers, as they prefer, doing online shopping comparing the products and prices before making the purchases. Hence, the company has to ensure online presence of their product, online order taking, and home deliveries. While buying from the physical store they prefer to buy from departmental stores and hypermarkets. Thus, the product should be stocked well in such type of stores.

Personalised Attention

The marketers should ensure that the company and the stores should have courteous and well-motivated sales staff who are always ready to give

personalised attention to the new category of female buyers. This category of target audience are better informed and seek more information and justification before making a purchase decision. Also, they look for an assurance that they have selected the best product as they may experience greater post-purchase dissonance, and hence, the company should ensure good after-sale service and invest in building a long term relationship with such customers.

Faster Order-processing and Providing Physical Evidences

The processes involved in delivering products or services have an impact on the way customers perceive the company. The firm should aim at providing a seamless order-taking and also at lessening the order-processing time. Websites should be user-friendly and informative. When it comes to services, extreme care should be taken by the marketer in creating the physical evidences for better services as women judge the quality of services on the basis of factors like décor, cleanliness, appearance of the staff, and so on.

Thus, to conclude, marketers should keep in mind that women are rapidly emerging as active participants in decision-making in while buying different products, especially, in urban India. The new market segment consisting of the “new women”, has a huge potential. Many firms have already started harnessing this opportunity. Women are valuable customers as they are loyal, believe in promoting positive word of mouth for commodities if they are satisfied, and also control a huge part of household expenditure. It is, therefore, imperative to understand women’s needs and distinguish them from their male counterparts. This would help in greater growth, loyalty, and market share for the producers.

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