

Consumer Sentiments towards Marketing: Analyzing the impact of Age

Vipin Choudhary¹, Vikas Chauhan², Rupal Chowdhary³ and
Gaurav Vyas⁴

¹ Associate Professor, Prestige Institute of Management and Research,
Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

² Research Scholar, Prestige Institute of Management and Research,
Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

³ Senior Assistant Professor, Prestige Institute of Management and Research,
Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

⁴ Alumnus, Prestige Institute of Management and Research,
Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

Abstract

Consumer sentiment towards marketing is an important for business decision makers and it is an imperative factor to success of any organization. Understand the consumers' sentiments towards marketing and make efforts to bring it towards the positive is a basic need of marketers. This study is intended to understand the consumers' sentiments towards marketing practices in India and it also find the influence of age on it. The study measured the sentiments through four dimensions of marketing such as product, price, promotion and place/ retail scales overall as well as separate dimensions. The findings of the study revealed that the consumers have the very less positive or near neutral sentiments towards marketing practices on in overall marketing scale and as separate dimensions wise price scale found towards the negative sentiments. The study also shows that the age has no effect on sentiments. The study is given valuable insights and implications for marketers.

Keywords: *Consumer Sentiment, Marketing Practices, Marketing Dimensions*

1. Introduction

The concept of consumer sentiment refers to the general feelings that consumers have for marketing and the market place (Kanta et al. 2013). Consumer

sentiments retain two different meanings in marketing literature, the first meaning arose out of Katona's (1974 & 1975) work on psychological economics and the development of indices reflecting consumer's optimism and pessimism to forecast changes in demand in economy, these measures are appropriately referred to as measure of consumer confidence. The second meaning of consumer sentiments, which is the focus of this research arose in 1970 when marketers and policy makers were developing other measures to reflect consumer attitudes towards market place, with a view to understand levels of consumerist activity. In the second sense consumer sentiments were designed not to judge future economic condition, but to provide global measures that would reflect consumer attitude towards price level product quality, service offered and information in the market place. The dictionary meaning of sentiment is emotion or feeling. Consumer sentiment is a learned experience that is formed when consumer experience something (concrete or abstract), evaluate it on the basis of available information and according to his or her perception of it, forms a specific predisposition, it can be assumed to affect consumer behavior, which could be response that could be either favorable or unfavorable.

Opinion is what a person thinks about something. When it is compared to fact, it is usually seen as less

valid and based on observations and information gathered in a "non-scientific" way. The public opinion is the aggregate of individual attitudes or beliefs held by the population.

There is constant interaction between the firm, its market and the variable in the business environment. The dynamic interaction ensures that changes in environment continuously exert an influence on consumer sentiment and how consumers perceive marketing of product and services. The measurement of consumer sentiment has been of interest to academic and commercial researcher for many years. Here attempts have been made to measure consumer sentiments over product, advertising, price and retailing at micro rather than macro level, because marketing effectiveness have traditionally been measured and managed at micro level.

Present study trying to explore the consumers' sentiments towards marketing practices and it also investigate the effect of their age with the help of the standard scale given by Gaski and Etzel (1986). The study mainly divided into seven sections. First and second sections deals with introduction and related literature respectively, third shows the specific objectives of the study, fourth consists research methodology, the fifth deals with results and discussion both and last two sections provide the implications and conclude the study respectively.

2. Review of literature

Gaski & Etzel (1986) found that the marketing practices have improved. The marketing public relation efforts were paying off. Environmental circumstances had changed in the way it produces less consumer hostility towards marketing. Some evolution has taken place in consumer sentiments so that consumers are less inclined to blame marketing for their problem. Perhaps the measure simply reflects the general improvement in national mood that appears to prevail. They also identified that male and female respondents were significantly different, apparently there is a gender gap between man and woman in terms of their attitude towards marketing, with Man more hostile, it may be due to greater participation of man (husband) in family purchases of high ticket items, relative to their non participation in low price package goods purchase decision. It offers several advantages over previous work, it is comprehensive, validated and it is continuing.

Gaski & Etzel (2005) investigated that response rate ranged from 1987 to 2001 U.S. Consumer sentiments towards marketing is seen to have improved over past two decades, evidently the institutions of marketing have enhance the quality of its consumer impacting output, it has cultivated the better public relation with the consumer populace.

Facing the consuming public whose cognition ,attitude, expectation, preference or tolerance have evolved over the year to allow greater compatibility, with marketing conduct and product, perhaps consumer have lowered their standard and have become more reasonable or are less demanding. In other way marketing performance relative to consumer expectation appears to have changed.

Boshoff and Eeden (2001) South African consumers' sentiments towards marketing were investigated. It compared result with previous studies done in 1990 and 1994.it was found that African consumer attitude towards marketing is slightly negative. Pricing practices were seen to be unfair and unreasonable, advertising was also viewed skeptically but retailing returns a positive index. Index decreased during 1990 to 1994 and improved dramatically during 1994 to 1999.in comparison to previous study it was established that demographic factor has no significant effect on consumer sentiment. Current study of 2001 reveals that there is improvement in overall index, which is primarily due to considerable increase in price and retail indices. The product and advertising index have remained relatively stable over the period and low values of indices reveal that still there is certain amount of skepticism, with regard to credibility of product, advertising and product quality. None of the demographic variable has a significant influence on the overall four dependent variable i.e. 4Ps of marketing.

Watchravesringkan and Punyapiroje (2011) conducted a study for understanding of hypermarket retailers' marketing efforts by exploring consumers' attitudes toward marketing practices in Thailand. They were adapted measures from the Index of Consumer Sentiment toward marketing and consumers' attitudes toward marketing. The results showed that Thai consumers displayed different attitudes toward retail services, positive advertising, and fair price, they expressed similar attitudes toward business provisions and product quality across samples.

Kanta et al. (2013) investigated the Sentiment of the consumers' towards marketing practices. They considered the four P's of marketing designed by McCarthy for measuring the sentiment and they measured four variables of Product, place, promotion and place/retail scale. They found positive feeling towards the marketing practices in Andhra Pradesh India and they have also observed that there is no significant difference in consumer sentiment towards marketing between various age groups.

Ferdous and Towfique (2008) investigated the overall attitudes of consumers in Bangladesh toward marketing. They were also tested the associations between consumer attitudes toward marketing, satisfaction with marketing mix and perception of

government regulation. The study found that the Bangladeshi consumers are aggregately more unfavorable towards marketing practices in comparison to transitional countries and less unfavorable in comparison to developed ones. They were also found some significant gender differences in terms of advertising and retailing. The sentiments of female respondents were more unfavorable towards advertising and retailing in comparison to their male counterparts.

3. Objectives of the study:

- To determine the consumers' sentiments towards marketing practices.
- To investigate the effect of consumers' age on their sentiment towards marketing practices.

4. Hypothesis

- **H0:** There is no significant difference among various age groups of consumers in their sentiments toward marketing practices (product, price, promotion and place/retail).

5. Research methodology:

5.1. The study:

The present study is descriptive in nature and undertaken to measure consumer sentiments towards marketing practices and it is based on the survey method.

5.2. The sample:

The sample of the study was collected from 180 respondents belonging of Indore city (MP). A non probability convenient sampling will be used for collection of primary data. The demographic profile of respondents is given in table 1.

Table 1: Showing demographic profile

Demographic variable	Freq.	Per. %
Age		
18-35	65	36.1
36-45	58	32.2
46 & above	57	31.6
Gender		
Male	100	55.6
Female	80	44.4
Family income (Rs)		
<600000	145	80.5
600000-1200000	29	16.1
>1200000	6	3.3

5.3. Tools for Data Collection:

Primary data will be collected through a standard scale to measure consumer sentiments toward marketing developed by Gaski and Etzel (1986). All the items were measured on a five-point likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

6. Data Analysis:

Tools such as Overall Mean and ANOVA were used to analyze the data. Prior to data analysis, the reliabilities of scale were ensured through Cronbach's alpha (See table 2) which was found 0.701 for 20 items, which is equal or higher than 0.7 that means it's a good consistency (Hair et al. 1998). The Z value of skewness and kurtosis indicate that the data is normally distributed among different age groups as both the values lies between ± 1.96 and the levene's test statistics confirms the equality of variances as it is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. (See table 3).

Table 2: showing reliability statistics

N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
20	.701

Table 3: showing normality & equality of variances

Age groups	Z value	Levene's test
18-35 (Young)	Skewness- 0.75 Kurtosis- -0.18	.212 (Sig. 0.809)
36-45 (Middle)	Skewness- -0.42 Kurtosis- 0.30	
46 & above (Old)	Skewness- 1.71 Kurtosis- 0.52	

7. Results & discussion

H0 is hypothesized as there is no significant difference among various age groups of consumers in their sentiments toward marketing practices. Through the analysis we found homogenous opinion on consumer sentiment towards marketing. Influence of different age groups on consumer sentiment towards marketing practices is insignificant. (F = 1.72, p = .181). So that, we failed to reject H0. Further the ANOVA was applied on various dimensions of marketing like product, price, and promotion and place/retail age wise and it was insignificant with product (F = .84, p = .430), promotion (F = 1.34, p = .263) and retailing (F =

.125, $p = .882$).where it was found significant with price ($F = 4.42$, $p = .013$).

Table 4: Showing ANOVA Results

Marketing scale	Demographic variable	ANOVA		
		Mean	F value	Sig.
	Age groups			
Overall scale	18-35 (Young)	3.28	1.72	.181
	36-45 (Middle)	3.17		
	46 & above (Old)	3.27		
Product Scale	18-35 (Young)	3.51	.84	.430
	36-45 (Middle)	3.40		
	46 & above (Old)	3.48		
Price scale	18-35 (Young)	2.84	4.42	.013
	36-45 (Middle)	2.72		
	46 & above (Old)	3.06		
Promotion scale	18-35 (Young)	3.38	1.34	.263
	36-45 (Middle)	3.21		
	46 & above (Old)	3.22		
Place/retail scale	18-35 (Young)	3.38	.125	.882
	36-45 (Middle)	3.34		
	46 & above (Old)	3.31		

Overall the study found that the consumers are showing very less positive sentiments or we can say near the neutral point towards marketing practices adopted by marketers and the results also shows that all the scales of marketing dimensions are found at near the neutral point and even price scale found towards the negative sentiments among various age groups of consumers.

The hypothesis testing reveals that the age has no significant effect on consumer sentiments towards the overall marketing practices and it is found near the neutral sentiments on marketing practices. (Mean: young- 3.28, middle age- 3.17 and old- 3.27). This finding is supported by Kanta et al. (2013).

Moving further, the findings of the study shows that among all the four dimensions of marketing product, promotion and retailing scale found similar and near the neutral sentiments for different age groups and the dimensions like price found to have significant influence of age that is, the middle aged consumers have more negative sentiments for pricing practices than the younger and old age consumers. The possible reason of it the middle aged consumers are more conscious about price because they have financial responsibilities to other family members.

8. Implication:

The result of the study reveals that there is still scope for the organizations in strategizing the marketing activities to obtain the positive sentiment. Changes in external forces, translate into changes in consumer demand for product and services, not only these forces bring changes in consumer demand, but also contribute to change in consumer perception and attitude. The organizations need to design the marketing activities to increase the trust in consumer towards the marketing activities. The companies should put efforts in making consumer to feel that the firms are giving respect to their rights.

The study can help marketers to keep in mind the various factors such as quality of product, fair advertising, reasonable price and adequate retailing facility which are necessary in improving overall profitability of an organization.

The study will be very useful for devising proper marketing strategies for new products and they should more focus on pricing practices or strategies to improve positive sentiments. Pricing is an important part in consumer perception and attitude. while choosing a product or service a customer chooses a product which is fair and not overpriced, in this study we found negative sentiments towards pricing practices therefore managers should need to formulate the strategies to enhance the positive sentiment in consumers for pricing.

9. Conclusion

The sentiments of consumers' towards marketing practices are very noteworthy for the marketers. The marketers need to adopt these kinds of studies every so often to understand the sentiment and feeling or attitude of the consumer towards the marketing practices. Present study is an attempt to research on consumer sentiments towards marketing practices adopted by marketers with the help of standard scale given by Gaski and Etzel in 1986 and analyzing the data with the help of SPSS software by performing tests like ANOVA and interpreting the results of this analysis. In this study we have measured the demographic variables such as age with consumer's sentiments towards marketing practices. The findings showed that age has not shown the potential to influence the consumers' sentiments towards marketing. All the age groups have the same sentiments but it is a matter of concern that the sentiments of all age groups have found near the neutral and towards the negative sentiments. Further, the analysis provides the evidence that the middle aged consumers have more negative sentiments for pricing practices than the younger age and old age consumers.

Furthermore studies of this kind can give valuable insights for effective decision making and designing the marketing activities. The study reveals the scale at which the marketers need to put efforts to enhance positive consumer sentiment.

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