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To study the consumer buying behaviour for non-durables: Influence of sources of information

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Abstract

Marketer and non-marketer dominated sources of information are revolution for consumer buying practices. These sources help the buyers to rationalize their purchase of products in terms of non-durable goods. Review of literature in this area had mainly focused on role of advertisement, their impact on children buying practices, impact of sales promotion, impact of sources during purchase of durable goods etc. However, not much emphasize had been laid on the extent of influence of both marketer and non-marketer dominated sources of information with complete focus on non-durable goods. Also, Middle income group had found to be the real demand base for manufactured products. Therefore, this income group had been selected as the target group for the present study. Keeping these aspects in view, the present study was planned with the specific objectives "To study Consumer Buying Behaviour for Non-Durables: "Influence of Sources of Information" For the purpose of data collection, survey technique using an interview schedule was used. Total sample of 600 middle income group families of South Delhi was considered to be adequate for conducting the study. Results had indicated that maximum number of respondents had used "Advertisement" – (a Marketer Dominated Source of Information) for the purchase of selected toiletries. Whereas, Reference Group including family, friends, relatives – (non-marketer dominated source of information), was used after advertisement, for the selected toiletries. Further, scrutiny of the data had indicated that Television advertising was found to be the most popular media used by the respondents for the purchase of non-durables followed by newspaper, magazine and internet advertising. Though studies had shown that advertising and sales promotion go hand in hand, but still Sales promotion was found to be on third rank. Price-pack was the most preferred promotional scheme by the respondents followed by free samples. "New & Reviews, Programme & Happening" and "Publicity and Public Relation" were ranked, fourth and fifth respectively. Investigator further, analysed the data, to study the specific kind of publicity and public relation used by the respondents as a source of information. Majority of the respondents used news as a source of information followed by publications and identity media. Hence, in the present study, it was inferred that for the purchase of selected non-durables, advertising influenced the consumers the most, followed by the reference group, whereas publicity and public relation influenced the least while purchasing non-durables.

Keywords: Marketer & non-marketer dominated sources, durables goods, non-durable goods

1. Introduction

Consumer behavior refers to the mental and emotional processes as well as the observable behavior of consumers during searching, purchasing and post consumption of a product or a service. Consumer behavior involves study of how people buy, what they buy, when they buy and why they buy. It blends the elements of psychology, sociology, socio-psychology, anthropology and economics. It also tries to assess the influence of groups such as family, friends, reference groups and society in general, on the consumers (Wikipedia, 2008).

Buying behaviour is influenced by various factors, such as personal, family or situational. The total process of acquisition of products is done through various related sub-decisions, either taken individually or involving other family members. Frequency of purchase, time of purchase, place of purchase, quantity of purchase etc. depict the buying behaviour of the individual. Youn & Faber (2000) ^[14] found that the emotions strongly influence the buying behaviour. Supporting it, Babin (2001) ^[3] in his study found that in stores, consumers purchasing intentions and spending cash were largely influenced by emotions.

Consumers move from one stage to another, in order to arrive at a final purchase decision. According to Brown (2005) ^[6], "Buying decisions involve many factors that most consumers

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are not even aware of them". In every purchase, five steps are involved: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and finally post purchase behavior. Even the simplest purchases can include any or all of these steps".

The five-stage Model completely works under the great influence of the various sources of information. Consumer decision-making involves much more than merely making a blind selection of one brand from an available number of brands. Because more than one person is involved in the process, the dynamic decision-making is complicated by different roles played by each member of the family at each stage of the decision process

Index of Industrial Production (IIP) had witnessed consumer non-durables higher growth in February 2008. Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) had also found that, the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector to be the fourth largest sector in the economy with a total market size/capitalization in excess of Rs. 60,000 crore. This growth in industry sector, increased GDP and increased consumption, is mainly due to large middle-class population of India and their rising level of affluence. The main target of, manufacturers is the middle income group. For whom, manufacturers use various sources of information to influence their purchase. These sources of information are the endeavor of presenting a set of messages to a target market through multiples cues and media. While, on the other side of the coin an individual, a family or a consumer, also rely upon these multiple tools or sources of information to obtain information regarding the product.

The sources of information which influence the purchase of consumer were categorized under two heads. The sources of information which influence the purchases of consumer are Marketer-dominated and Non-marketer dominated (Shrivastav and Khandani, 2002) ^[12]. Marketer-dominated sources of information, which includes Advertisement, Sales promotion, Publicity and Public relations that are delivered through mass media and Sales force that is delivered personally. Non-marketer dominated sources of information, includes News, Reviews, Programmes and Happenings that are delivered through mass media and Reference group (family, friends, neighbours, relatives and opinion leaders) that are delivered personally.

But generally, consumers are unorganized, unspecialized, and largely untrained. This makes it difficult for consumers to identify and use reliable sources of information when purchasing goods and services. Satisfaction occurs when customer's expectations are met or exceeded and purchase decision is reinforced (Assael, 1993) ^[2]. Consumer dissatisfaction on the other hand leads to negative attitude towards the product. Satisfied Customers Tell Three Friends, Angry Customers Tell 3,000 (Pete B., 2008) ^[10].

Therefore it was found important and interesting to study this area in detail with the following specific objectives:-

To identify the non-durable goods most commonly purchased by the middle class families.

To analyse the buying practices of consumers with regard to non-durable goods.

To get a feedback on the post purchase behaviour of the respondents regarding the sources of information both marketer and non-marketer.

Methods and Materials

Inclusion Criteria of the subject

They must belong to the Middle income group.

The families should have purchased atleast two durables in

the last five years, from the list of durables identified for the present study.

Respondents should be the main decision maker, for the purchase of either selected durable and non-durable goods or both may be either husband or wife *or* both husband and wife *or* husband, wife and children.

Selection of Non-durable goods

In order to fulfill the first objective of the study i.e., to identify the most commonly used non-durable goods by middle class families, review of literature had indicated, that among various FMCG products, toiletries had registered a 15% growth in 1999-2000 (CII). Therefore, as per the Indian Demographic Survey Report 2000 – NCAER, a list of Consumable products (1999) was obtained, which highlighted the market sale of the products. From this list, five top-most toiletries which had maximum sale in the past five years were selected. The selected non-durables (Toiletries) were:

1. Toilet Soap
2. Tooth Paste
3. Washing Powder
4. Washing Cake
5. Shampoo

Locale of Research

The study was conducted in the metropolitan city of Delhi. For collecting information, South Delhi was selected as the locale, for the following reasons:

1. Easy to identify and accessibility of large number of middle income group families.
2. Easy accessibility of the area to the researcher.

Sample Selection and Sample Size

For sample selection, a list of MIG colonies of South Delhi was obtained from Delhi Development Authority (DDA). From the list, 10 colonies were selected by lottery system. In order to select the families from each colony, a list of residents was obtained from the Resident welfare association. Random sampling was done for each colony, to select 60 families who fulfill the inclusion criteria. Hence, a total sample of 600 middle income group families of South Delhi, were interviewed for the study.

Development of Tool for the study

In order to elicit detailed and accurate information, on "Consumer Buying Behaviour for Non-Durables: Influence of Sources of Information", an interview schedule was developed. A structured interview schedule, comprising of both close-ended and open-ended questions was formulated.

Results

Personal Profile of the Respondents

Personal profile of the respondents included their age, education and occupation, family size, family stage, family type, professional status of women and monthly expenditure of the family. Out of the total sample of 600, **age** of the respondents ranged between 25 to 72 years with highest percentage (68.7%) in the age group of 25 to 40 yrs.

As far as education level of the respondents was concerned, it was found that the sample was well educated with 42% having post graduate degree. The sample respondents were from different types of occupations, with majority (83.5%) in service, and around 13% of them were running their own business.

An attempt was further made to analyze the family size, stages of family life cycle and type of family. Family size of the respondents ranged between 2 to 8 members. It was found that around 47% of the respondents had small families. As far as the stage of family life cycle was concerned, it was found that nearly two-third of the respondents were in the expanding stage of their family life cycle.

Analysis of the professional status of women indicated that 40% of them were working with nearly 60% nonworking. Monthly expenditure of the respondents ranged from Rs. 26000-59000, and nearly half of the respondents were found spending between Rs. 260001 to Rs. 37000.

This discussion highlights that the sample was young and educated and were mainly were in service. They had small size family, majority were in expanding stage and were staying in the nuclear families. In most of the cases women’s were non-working.

Buying Behaviour for the Purchase of Non-Durables

As it has already been mentioned that the non-durable items selected for the purpose of the study were five toiletries such as:

- Tooth paste

- Toilet Soap
- Washing Powder
- Washing Cake
- Shampoo

It was of interest to note that there was no variation found amongst the different toiletries and the same buying practices were followed for all of them. Therefore, the common results for all the toiletries are presented for the purpose of discussion.

Frequency of Purchase of Non-Durables

As far as frequency of purchase of non-durables was concerned, many studies had shown that non-durable goods are required daily or for frequent use by the families, therefore consumers buy these goods at least once a month. In the present investigation, it was found that majority (91%) of the respondents purchased all the selected toiletries monthly (Fig. 1). While very few of them purchased the toiletries, either quarterly or occasionally. Further, not much difference was found in the frequency of purchase among the various toiletries including tooth paste, toilet soap, washing powder, washing cake and shampoo.

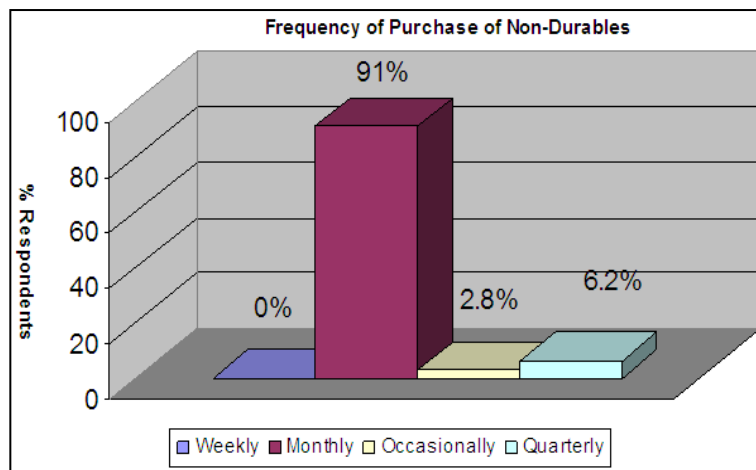


Fig 1: Frequency of purchase of non-durables

Outlets Preferred For the Purchase of Non-Durables

There are various outlets from where consumer can purchase toiletries. In order to get a clear picture of the outlets preferred by the sample respondents of the present study, they were asked to rank their order of preferences of various outlets for

the purchase of non-durables. Rating was converted into scores by giving weightage ranging from 5 to 1, for ranks of first to fifth. Finally, the cumulative scores of these were added up separately for each non-durable item and thus, the outlets preferred for their purchase was analyzed.

Table 1: Outlets Preferred For the Purchase of Non-Durables (N=600)

S. No.	Type of Outlets	Tooth Paste		Toilet Soap		Washing Powder		Washing Cake		Shampoo	
		Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
1	Departmental stores	1160	2 nd	1160	2 nd	1160	2 nd	1160	2 nd	1160	2 nd
2	Retail shop	60	1 st	60	1 st	60	1 st	60	1 st	60	1 st
3	WholeSale Market	30	4 th	30	4 th	30	4 th	30	4 th	30	4 th
4	Food Chain	650	3 rd	650	3 rd	650	3 rd	650	3 rd	650	3 rd

Dommermuth and Udell (1996) showed that higher the price of the product, greater the tendency to shop in more retail outlets. Scrutiny of the results of the present study had indicated that the respondents visited retail shop the most and thus, ranked it first. Convenient location and customer intimacy were the reasons cited by the respondents for visiting this outlet. Departmental store was ranked second as all the items on display in this store are categorized and kept in a systematic manner on the counters. Therefore, sample respondents believed that such kind of systematic segregation

of products saved their time during the purchase. Food chains viz. Reliance Fresh, Food Bazar, Spencer, Subhiksha etc., were the places where consumer got everything under one roof and therefore, food chains was the third preference of the respondents for the purchase of selected toiletries. (Table 1) There were few reasons cited by the respondents for visiting these outlets which were convenient shopping, availability of good quality products, reasonable price, availability of preferred brands, vast variety, Fresh stock of items, free home delivery and store loyalty.

Mode of Payment for the Purchase of Non-Durables

Retail survey of owners and managers (2005) had conducted the research with cash-handling businesses, which revealed that cash was their preferred method of payment, followed by debit cards.

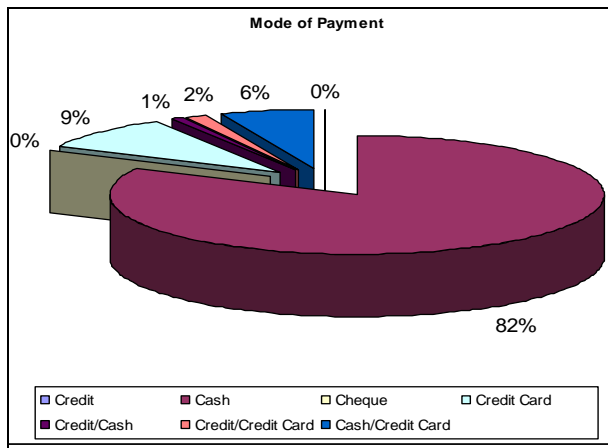


Fig 2: Mode of payment for the purchase of Non-durables

Analysis of the results had indicated that majority (82.5%) of the respondents preferred cash as their mode of payment. This may be because the purchase of toiletries did not require large amount and therefore, paying by cash was the most convenient method used by the sample. On the other hand, only few respondents preferred credit card or combination of cash and credit card as modes of payment, for the purchase of selected toiletries. Further, scrutiny of the data had revealed that not even a single respondent had preferred payment by cheque while purchasing non-durable items as purchase of toiletries did not involve a large amount, thus, cash was the convenient method used by the respondents as the mode of payment.

Decision Maker for the Purchase of Non-Durables

Decision making is “the thought process of selecting a logical choice from among the available options.” Consumers must weigh the positives and negatives of each option and consider all the alternatives. For effective decision making, a person must be able to forecast the outcome of each option and determine which option is the best for that particular situation.

Table 2: Decision Maker for the Purchase of Non-Durables (N=600)

S. No.	Decision Maker	Tooth Paste	Toilet Soap	Washing Powder	Washing Cake	Shampoo
1	Husband	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
2	Wife	262 (43.7)	262 (43.7)	262 (43.7)	262 (43.7)	262 (43.7)
3	Husband and wife	219 (36.5)	219 (36.5)	219 (36.5)	219 (36.5)	219 (36.5)
4	Children	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
5	Wife & Children	32 (5.3)	32 (5.3)	32 (5.3)	32 (5.3)	32 (5.3)
6	Husband & Child	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
7	Husband, Wife & Children	87 (14.5)	87 (14.5)	87 (14.5)	87 (14.5)	87 (14.5)

As one of the objective of the present study was to find out the purchasing practices of respondents with regard to non-durable items, an attempt was made to gather information in this regard. The results had revealed that for the purchase of all the toiletries, the major decision maker was the wife (43.7%) as most of them were non-working. As these toiletries are frequently purchased items and thus it is the women who could afford to spare time to purchase these items. Further, as the purchase of toiletries involves small transaction, so, wives could easily manage their purchase alone.

Interestingly, analysis of the present study had revealed an interesting finding, that in none of the cases, husband alone or

children alone or both husband and children together took the decision for the purchase of selected toiletries. It was also observed that they took the decision jointly with the wife. (Table– 2)

Pattern of the Purchase for Non-Durables

There are various brands available in the market for non-durables (toiletries). Few consumers stick to one brand of toiletries for many years, while, some of them keep trying different brands available in the market. In his study showed that seasonal sale, discount offers, exhibition, off-season, window display were few factors which influence brand loyalty.

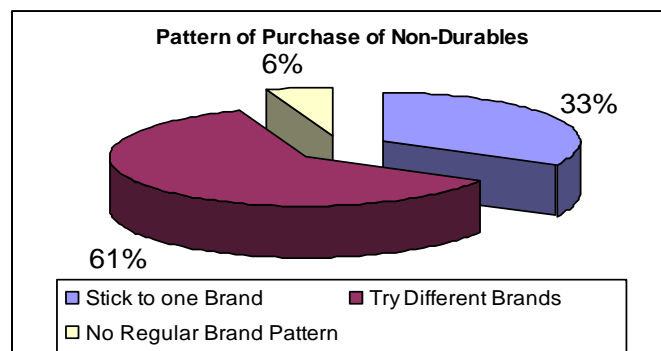


Fig. 3: Pattern of the purchase for non-durables

Scrutiny of the data in the present study had shown that only one-third of the respondents, were brand loyal and were found sticking to the brand they were using for years. On the other

hand majority (61%) of the respondents tried different brands of toiletries available in the market because of the various promotional schemes offered by the manufacturer

Factors Preferred For the Purchase of Non-Durables

There could be various factors which guide the consumer to follow a particular pattern of purchase with regard to the brand chosen. Investigator made an attempt to study these factors even for non-durables.

For data analysis, respondents were asked to rank the order of factors preferred by them for the purchase of non-durables. Rating was converted into scores by giving weightage ranging from 7 to 1, for ranks of first to seventh. Finally, the cumulative score of these were added up, separately for each non-durable and thus, the factors preferred for the purchase of non-durables were analyzed. Table 3 reveals the preferred factor of consumers for selecting a particular brand of toiletries.

Analysis of the data on this aspect had shown that "Good quality" of the brand purchased, was the most preferential reason for the purchase of all the selected toiletries. This may be because the selected toiletries were for personal use or for

washing clothes, therefore, the respondents did not want to make any compromise on the quality as poor quality of the toiletries may harm their skin or may spoil their clothing. Price of the product was ranked second, followed by the past experience regarding the use of a particular brand of toiletries used by them was ranked 3rd. Wherein past experience was ranked at 7th place in case of durables as durables are not frequently purchased items. Manufacturer's reliability and variety available were ranked 4th and 5th respectively, whereas, easy availability of the toiletries were ranked 6th. (Table: 3)

These findings had indicated that the respondents of the present investigation were quality conscious, besides considering the price of the toiletries. Further, they were selecting the products on the basis of their past experience and reliability of the manufacturer. Easy availability of the product in the market and its economical use were not given much priorities while selecting the products.

Table 3: Factors Preferred For the Purchase of Non-Durables (N=600)

S. No	Factors	Tooth Paste		Toilet Soap		Washing Powder		Washing Cake		Shampoo	
		Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
1	Reasonable Price	2699	2 nd	2699	2 nd	2699	2 nd	2699	2 nd	2699	2 nd
2	Good quality	3201	1 st	3201	1 st	3201	1 st	3201	1 st	3201	1 st
3	Variety	1676	5 th	1676	5 th	1676	5 th	1676	5 th	1676	5 th
4	Easy availability	1556	6 th	1556	6 th	1556	6 th	1556	6 th	1556	6 th
5	Past experience	2157	3 rd	2157	3 rd	2157	3 rd	2157	3 rd	2157	3 rd
6	Manufacturer 's reliability	1935	4 th	1935	4 th	1935	4 th	1935	4 th	1935	4 th

Sources of Information Used For the Purchase of Non-Durables

Indian consumers rely on a mix of media for information. An article reported that traditional sources such as newspapers (67% for national and 76% for local) and television (72% for major network or cable and 64% for local) as well as nontraditional sources such as search engines (67%) and word of mouth (51% for advice from family/friends) were the top

choices (Ketchum online magazine, 2007) [15]. This mix media used by Indian consumers influenced their purchase with regards to goods and services available in the market.

As one of the objective of the present study was to find out the various sources of information used by the sample respondents while purchasing non-durables, thus, an attempt was made to gather information on this aspect.

Table 4: Sources of Information Used For the Purchase of Non-Durables (N=600)

S. No.	Sources of information	Tooth Paste		Toilet Soap		Washing Powder		Washing Cake		Shampoo	
		Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
1	Advertising	3019	1 st	3019	1 st	3019	1 st	3019	1 st	3019	1 st
2	Sales promotion	1854	3 rd	1854	3 rd	1854	3 rd	1854	3 rd	1854	3 rd
3	Publicity & Public Relation	1203	5 th	1203	5 th	1203	5 th	1203	5 th	1203	5 th
4	Sales Force	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	News and Reviews Programs/ Happening	1535	4 th	1535	4 th	1535	4 th	1535	4 th	1535	4 th
6	Reference Group	2633	2 nd	2633	2 nd	2633	2 nd	2633	2 nd	2633	2 nd

Respondents in the present study were asked to rank the enlisted marketer and non-marketer dominated sources of information according to their preferences of use. Each source of information was scored separately and later cumulative score was used for the analysis.

Analysis of the results had shown that maximum number of respondents had used "Advertising" as the Marketer Dominated Source of Information for the purchase of selected toiletries and thus, they ranked it first. This may be because advertising has its own charm, instantaneous transmission capability and universality of appeal and also the toiletries belong to FMCG category with innumerate varieties available in the market. The advertising therefore, is a good source and a powerful tool of providing information to the consumers regarding the price, the use and method of instruction to be followed for the product etc.

The above discussion had clearly indicated that advertisement was used the most by the sample respondents for the purchase

of non-durables. Thus the investigator was further interested to get detailed information on the specific type of advertisement media used by the respondents while selecting these non-durables. Results had shown that television advertising was most popular among the respondents.

Further, Reference Group including family, friends, relatives i.e. the non-marketer dominated source of information, was used after advertising, for the selected toiletries, and thus, was ranked second. Though studies had shown that advertising and sales promotion go hand in hand, but still Sales promotion was found to be on third rank in order of use as the sources of information for the purchase of

As far as "News & Reviews, Programme & Happening" and "Publicity and Public Relation" were concerned, respondents did not find much information for toiletries through these sources of information. Therefore, they were ranked, fourth and fifth respectively.

Further, as majority of the respondents were well educated,

therefore, they might not have believed much in sales force as the source of information. They did not find it as a very reliable source of information for the purchase of toiletries. The trend followed was same for all the toiletries including tooth paste, toilet soap, washing powder, washing cake and shampoo with no difference amongst them.

Feedback on the Post Purchase Behaviour of the Respondents Regarding the Sources of Information

As the last objective of the study was to get a feedback on the post-purchase behavior of the respondents for the sources of information, an attempt was made to get the information in this regard.

Table 5: Feedback on the post purchase behaviour of the respondents regarding the sources of information

S. No.	Action Taken	Non-Durables	
		Yes	No
1	I bought the product again.	218(36.4)	382(63.6)
2	I got loyal for the brand	252(42)	348(58)
3	I made positive publicity.	179(29.8)	421(70.2)

In the present investigation it could be inferred that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the information they got from both marketer and non-marketer dominated sources of information for the purchase of non-durables.

Further, respondents were asked whether they did repeat purchase, got brand loyal and did the positive publicity for the product after getting satisfaction from the sources of information. It was found that only 29.8% of the respondents did positive publicity, while 42% of the respondents were brand loyal. As no respondent was found dissatisfied therefore, no action was taken against the products/brands bought by them.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the respondents of the present study were young, educated and were mainly in service. On studying their buying behavior with regard to the purchase of selected non-durables i.e. toiletries, it could be concluded that the respondents had mostly done monthly purchases for the selected toiletries, mainly from the retail shop, may be because of convenient location and customer intimacy. In majority of the cases wives alone took the purchase decision. Payment was made through cash. Respondents kept trying different brands available in the market. As toiletries are frequently purchased items, used daily and are not that expensive, thus, the respondents could take chance to try different brands. But at the same time respondents were also quality and price conscious.

Advertising was found to be the most used source of information, may be because it has its own charm, instantaneous transmission capability and universality of appeal and also the toiletries belong to FMCG category with innumerate variety available, the advertising therefore, is a good source and a powerful tool of providing information to the consumers regarding the price, the use and method of instruction to be followed for the product etc.

Further, it was also seen that the respondents were attracted to the incentives or rewards offered by the company only to some extent, as they were more concerned about the quality of the product and were not lured much by such discount-offers.

Further, on analyzing the feedback of respondents on the post-purchase behaviour of, it could be inferred that majority of the

respondents were satisfied with the information they got from these sources of information. But they were not participating in any kind of publicity for the product purchased by them.

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