Can Indian Online Fruits and Vegetables Companies Break the Jinx of Orthodox Shopping?

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ABSTRACT

The authors attempted to understand the consumer behavior of fruit and vegetable shoppers in India and identify whether companies offering convenience can break the jinx of orthodox/habitual shopping. The important motivators for online shoppers and orthodox shoppers are identified which was followed by a survey from India’s two major cities, Delhi NCR and Pune. The authors observe that online shoppers are mostly driven by convenience in terms of travel time savings, to avoid crowds, queuing, home delivery, avoiding driving/traffic situations, whereas orthodox shoppers are driven by freshness and quality of fruits and vegetables and give more importance in having a personal touch while purchasing. Orthodox shoppers do get hassled with crowding, queuing, but still they stick to their habitual buying behavior and do not go to the option of online shopping.

KEYWORDS
Consumer Behavior, Convenience, Drivers, Fruits & Vegetables, Online Shoppers, Orthodox Shoppers

INTRODUCTION

In India, most people are habitual of eating traditional home cooked food and fresh fruits. Food is considered auspicious and blessing of Devi Annapurna “Goddess of food and cooking”. “Annapurna” is made up of two Sanskrit words i.e. Anna and Purna. “Anna” means food and “Purna” means complete. In India, food is worshipped and wasting food is considered as sin.

In most of the households, food is cooked at least twice a day if not more and people like to eat seasonal vegetables and fruits on daily basis. Thus, fruits and vegetables are being purchased on a regular basis i.e. at least 2-3 times in a week, if not on daily basis as they are perishable items and mostly people have become habitual with the mode and place of shopping. Considering that the market size for fruits and vegetables in India is huge, it is little surprising that there is very little work done by marketers as well as academia to understand the consumer behavior of such shoppers. One possible reason for this can be that such shopping is mostly done in fruits and vegetable markets, which does not have presence of corporate houses and is highly unorganized.

However, in last 10-15 years, with the amount of changes that Indian society is witnessing and with the advent of e-shopping, some corporate houses have attempted to supply the fruits and vegetables at home on a click i.e. through online shopping. Many online portals for fruits and vegetables have come up in India especially in major cities to cater to the changing needs and lifestyle of semi urban and urban youth and their numbers are increasing at a neck break speed. India is the second largest

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producer of fruits and vegetables in the world after China, thus procuring fresh fruits and vegetables at a reasonable price is not at all a challenge for these online companies, and they have big potential and growing market in front of them to cater. These online portals are delivering fruits and vegetables at a customer’s doorstep at their convenience. These portals are claiming to offer fresh and hygienic fruits and vegetables at very competitive prices, and they furthermore make the rates attractive by offering various deals and schemes. They are targeting the urban, young, working-class people living in big cities where life is hectic, and time is precious. These companies are trying to break the age-old habitual practice of buying fruits and vegetables by going to the vegetable market/Shop/weekly mandi by offering convenience and value for money. However, despite all these efforts, these companies are struggling in Indian market and finding it tough to make their presence in spite of offering lot of convenience and lucrative deals. But certainly, this market has got huge potential and business prospects, provided they can successfully capture the nerve of the customers.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In the context established above, it is very important for companies dealing in online shopping of fruits and vegetables to understand the behavior of consumers and find what motivates a orthodox/habitual shopper to physically visit the weekly market/shopping mart to buy and what are the key drivers that are motivating online shoppers to buy fruits and vegetables from online portals. The orthodox/habitual shoppers in defined as someone who visits a shop or store or vegetable market or mandi to buy fruits and vegetables in person. The study is also an attempt to understand, what satisfactions online shoppers and orthodox shoppers are deriving when they buy fruits and vegetables and what sacrifices they are making in the process of their shopping. This may help the online companies to understand the consumer behavior of shoppers of fruits and vegetables and identify how they can break the jinx of orthodox shopping behavior by offering convenience to Indian consumers.

Literature Review

In the last decade, online shopping has changed the face of shopping in India. More and more people are making online shopping as their preferred way to shop. Companies have realized the power of internet and they are changing their marketing strategy accordingly to tap the huge available market.

Social interaction is a major reason people to go for shopping (Dawson et al., 1990). Dawson et al., (1990) indicates that store shopping is an opportunity for the shoppers to spend time with their friends or family members. Shoppers also derive pleasure from the social activities meanwhile shopping (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003; Ramus and Neilsen, 2005). On the other hand, online shoppers prefer technology interface, which enables them to conveniently browse products without the intervention of the sales person or others (Joerding and Meissner, 1998). Aylott and Mitchell (1998) suggested that it saves them from crowding and queuing. Crowding and queuing creates frustration as customers have to stand in a queue. Convenience is related to the forms of non-monetary costs like time, stress and effort and psychological strain (Aylott and Mitchell, 1998). Non-monetary costs represent compromises perceived by consumers when they are shopping. Time costs, search costs, crowding, queuing and psychological costs often enter into the assessment of whether to buy or re-buy a service and may sometimes become more important concerns than monetary price (Priya Chetty, 2010).

Morganosky and Cude (2000), Rajias (2002) and Picot-Coupey et al. (2009) in their respective studies states that convenience and time saving are the two major reasons for the consumers to purchase groceries online. Online shopping prefers to save non-monetary costs with greater convenience as consumers can shop from anywhere at any time without making a physical trip to the stores.

Sinha (2003) identified two major clusters of shoppers in India, first cluster is fun shoppers, who enjoy shopping and are involved shoppers, whereas second cluster is work shoppers, who consider shopping as a task. He indicates that the Indian shoppers are mostly looking for emotional value than deriving functional value from shopping. He points that shopping is considered as a routine task and
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