The Influence of Consumers Past Use Experience on Consumer Attitude: A Comparative Study between Metro and Nonmetro City

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Abstract

Present study is an attempt to measure the impact of consumer's past use experience on attitude formation along with a comparative study between metro and non metro cities consumers in India. Since, Metro and non-metro customers are different in their consumer behaviour in many ways. Linear regression and z-test was used to measure the impact of these attributes on consumer attitude and difference in metro and non-metro customers respectively.

Study identified eight different antecedents of consumer past use experience through literature and then developed a simple model of consumer past use experience for the study. The result revealed that consumer past use experience in formation of positive consumer attitude found high in metro city as compare to non-metro city. Regression result between consumer attitude and consumer past use experience clearly explained that the higher level of consumer reference provide higher level of positive consumer attitude among customers of both the metro and non-metro city. Marketers have to understand the various components of consumer past use experience in order to enjoy the substantial competitive and economic advantages.

Keywords: Consumer learning, Price sensitivity, Buying behaviour, Trust, Word-of-mouth communication.

Introduction

In the present era every marketer is try to develop the best product for their target customers but it is not gives the surety of the success, every company still makes mistakes in meeting the expectations of today's customers, who tend to be more demanding and less loyal than ever before. Marketers are under intense pressures to increase market share, improve margins and differentiate their products in the marketplace. However the most influential part of all these process is consumers' past experience. Every customer linked their previous experience of product, service, brand and other marketing dimensions with current purchasing. Thus, it becomes an important phenomenon for the research (Wulf *et al.*, 2001; Gronroos, 2000; Doney and Cannon, 1997). Consumer have different attitude towards new products and those of which they use earlier. At the time of purchasing the product consumers attitude towards that particular product are affected by their previous experience with that product or service. Consumer past use experience is purely the attitude play at the time of repurchasing of particular product. Many studies indicating that the accumulation of use experience is an important determinant of consumer attitude (Ghen and Liu, 2004, Doney and Cannon, 1997). Smith and Park (1992) stated that products can be divided into (a) product use experience and (b) product availability for visual evaluation. They found that when products were characterized under product experience, consumers were tending to utilize their experience of the corebrand during product quality evaluation on frequency, actual purchase behaviour and satisfaction after use. Jun et al. (1999) concluded that utilizing experience when

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evaluating a high-tech brand is helpful to enhancing attitude towards products. This conclusion clearly states the utility of previous experience in forming attitude. As such, this study first try to find out the factors affecting consumers past experience, its impact on consumer attitude and comparative study of understanding the same in metro and non metro customers. Metro and nonmetro customers are different in their consumer behaviour in many ways this should be justify by various previous research. Joshi and Mishra (2011) find that awareness level of the respondents is higher in the metros as compared to the non-metros in India. Datt & Sundharam (1990) explain the similar phenomenon which justifying the results of this study. They explain, one of the serious problems facing India's economy is the sharp and growing regional Imbalances among India's metro and non-metro regions in terms of per capita income, poverty, availability of infrastructure and socioeconomic development. Thus, the aim of this research is

- 1. To find out the factors affecting consumer's past use experience.
- 2. To measure the impact of past use experience on consumer attitude.
- 3. To find out the difference in degree of past use experience and its impact on consumer attitude in metro city and non-metro city.

Theoretical Framework

Past use experience become more important when products are not available for the physical evaluation for the customer. For example in online purchasing, previous experiences play a prominent role. Huang et al. (2011) finds in their research that attitude toward online auctions, perceived behavioural control and past related experiences significantly and positively influence the intention to purchase on online auctions, whereas subjective norm does not have such influence. Additionally, past related experiences have a positive effect on perceived behavioural control. Similarly if we have examine the previous research on satisfaction and service quality has shown that customers' past experience with a firm can influence their affective and behavioural responses to the present meet. Many researchers have shown that past satisfaction has a significant impact on current satisfaction (LaBarbera and Mazursky, 1983). Similarly, Bolton and Drew (1991) found

that prior attitudes have a direct impact on current customer attitudes (i.e. overall quality). In the similar arena, Zeithaml *et al.* (1996) showed that previous service quality has a significant influence on customer loyalty, switching intentions, and complaint intentions across several different service and product situations.

Literature also clears that past experience are not only an important determinant of services but also affect product and market. Many researchers suggest that previous information or experience provides underlying reasons for repeat purchase or brand switching decisions (Inman and Zeelenberg, 2002). Whenever consumers are going to purchase either services or product their previous experiences play a vital role in repeat purchasing. In Hoch's (1996) opinion, product experience credibly influences consumer behaviour because a consumer's personal experience with a product subtly affects their beliefs and 'draws the consumer in'

There are various theories as well as models of consumer attitude in the past such as theory of planned behaviour and theory of reasoned action which were not involving the past experience as an indicator of consumer attitude. Moreover, Ajzen's (1991) model did not include past behaviour as a predictor. However, Klein's (1998) model proposed that prior experience with internet shopping is a noteworthy predictor of behaviour. In attempting to integrate such past findings, this research integrated the TPB with the effects of past related experiences, including past online shopping experience (Ranganathan and Jha, 2007) on the intention to purchase via online auctions. The results are potentially valuable to managers interested in selling their products via online auctions by helping to ensure their offerings are more congruent with the determinants of customer choice.

Consumers Past-Use Experience: An Exploration through Literature

For developing consumers past use experience model it is important to identify factors which affect consumer past use experience. Based on literature following are some of the factors on which risk aversion is dependent.

Customer emotion has been regarded as a principal element in understanding perceptions of past experiences. When customers assess a specific consumption experience, they often draw on their current emotional state (Isen and Shalker, 1982). Since emotion constitutes a primary source of human motivation and exerts substantial influence on the thought processes (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991), a positive emotion is likely to lead to a positive reaction and less critical thinking when making judgments (Barger and Grandey, 2006).

Inertia is described as a condition where repurchasing behaviors occur on the basis of situational cues, and it reflects a non-conscious process (Huang and Yu, 1999). It clearly seems that repurchasing behaviour is depending upon situational cues but these situational cues are generated from some similar kind of past behaviour. Inertia is also characterized as a habitual attachment that is to a large extent unemotional and convenience driven (Gounaris and Stathakopoulos, 2004). Inert customers are used to avoid making new purchasing decisions (White and Yanamandram, 2004), avoid learning new service routines and practices, and avoid making price comparisons (Pitta et al., 2006). Verhoef (2003) found that past behaviours explain the largest part of the variance in customer loyalty. Actually, past behaviours in the relationship might represent the inertia effect (Rust et al., 2000), and it strengthen that inertia is one of the important variable to understand past experience with respect to consumer attitude.

Word of mouth is an oral communication passing through the individuals. This is one of the greatest tools used by the marketer. The impact of this toll is either negative as well as positive. If customer is satisfied or dissatisfied, he passes the information to the others and it help in formation of experience with the product whether this experience gain by the personal experience or through the word of mouth. Hess (2008) found that an excellent firm reputation (compared to average) leads to greater repurchase intentions and lower negative word of mouth intentions. Nikbin et al. (2011) conclude in their research that customers past experience with the firm influence their behavioural responses, thus when the customers perceive that their service provider is progressive, innovative, flexible, customer oriented, pleasant and trustworthy, their repurchase intention and positive word of mouth will increase.

Customer's emotions are also play an important role in forming the experience with the product and services

because it is the general phenomenon of psychology that if you are experiencing positive emotions than you are seeing the better side of the coin. Gardner (1985) suggest customers who experience positive emotions tend to see the bright side of things and are more willing to return. Such customers return in order to experience positive emotions linked to hedonic values (Jang and Namkung, 2009). Furthermore, Nyer (1997) found people in positive emotions are more willing to engage in positive word of mouth, while Baker *et al.* (1992) reported customers experiencing more positive emotions are more willing to make a purchase.

Consumers encountered various experiences in dealing with products and services, but in terms of learning there is a different scenario because consumers did not learn every experience in dealing with product and services. A multitude of studies has inspected how individual consumers learn what to consume (Keillor *et al.*, 1996). Many of these studies are based on the establishment of social learning theory, which proposes that individuals learn general behaviours and attitudes from past experiences. Previous research has established that these learning experiences may be vicarious, indicating that consumers learn or model behaviours, values, attitudes, and skills through the observation of other individuals, or through observations of electronic or print media (Bandura, 1977).

Price sensitivity is the degree to which the price of a product affects consumers purchasing behaviours. The degree of price sensitivity varies from product to product and from consumer to consumer. There are various studies who may confirm that price sensitivity is the strong determinant of consumers past experience because consumers are highly affected by price (Anderson, 1996). These studies confirm that a relationship exists between consumers' post-purchase experience and subsequent price-sensitivity, and whether before or after, purchase experience will affect price sensitivity. However there is another group of thinkers who believes that with experience of a product, the consumer becomes more knowledgeable as to its quality and value (Zeithaml, 1988) consequently when a consumer better understands the value of the product, they are more sensitive to changes in value (e.g. if the price were to increase), which may affect the intention to purchase (Reicheld, 1996).

Subjective norm is the perceived social pressure to engage or not to engage in behaviour. Drawing an analogy to the expectancy-value model of attitude, it is assumed that subjective norm is determined by the total set of accessible normative beliefs concerning the expectations of important referents. So, it helps in measuring the impact of society on individual's behaviour. The subjective norm is intended to measure the social influences on a person's behaviour i.e., family members expectations (Ha, 1998). Therefore including the subjective norm in measures of repeat purchase should lead to more accurate estimates of consumer repurchase behaviour (Ha, 1998). Indeed the opinions of family and friends are reported to influence an individual's attitude, intentions and behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

'Trust' indicates a depth and a sense of assurance that is based on strong but not logically conclusive evidence, or based on the character, ability, or truth that someone or something has shown over time or across situations. Trust makes for a sense of being safe or of being free of fear, enough so that one's focus can be on other matters because that matter is taken care of. Scholars studying consumers' behaviour often use trust as the surrounding concept that mediates the relationship between a consumer loyalty (Wiener and Mowen, 1986). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) state that beliefs about reliability, safety and honesty are all important facets of trust that people incorporate in their operationalization of trust.

Research Methodology

For measuring the influence of consumer past use experience (CPUE) on consumer attitude and comparison of the same in metro and non-metro consumers a theoretical model is organized. Methodology for achieving the research objectives can be broadly explained by understanding theoretical model, framing hypotheses; sample and sample profile; tool and design of the study. A detailed description of all these are as follows:

Conceptual model of Consumer past use experience

It is very important for any research to conceptualize the thought and therefore, a conceptual or theoretical model is generated for conducting the study. In this model, eight variables of consumer past use experience are drawn from marketing dimension through extensive literature survey by the researchers. These eight variables have straight impact on CPUE, explained in theoretical framework. Literature clearly reveals that these eight variables are antecedents of consumer past use experience. Figure-1 demonstrates this proposed model of measuring Consumer past use experience.

Research Question and formation of Hypotheses

In the light of existing literature, the following research questions are framed:

- 1. There exists a different degree of impact of consumer past use experience on consumer attitude in metro and non-metro city.
- Consumer past use experience is influencing consumer attitude in both in metro and non-metro city.

For measuring the statistical significant difference between impacts of consumer past use experience on consumer attitude, main hypothesis was constructed. In addition to this, one hypothesis was constructed to measure the linear impact of consumer past use experience on consumer attitude level of metro consumers. Additionally, one hypothesis was also constructed to measure the linear impact of consumer past use experience on consumer attitude level of nonmetro consumers. These three hypotheses are as follows: H₁: There is no significant difference in the degree of consumer past use experience in metro and non-metro city.

H₂: Consumer past use experience has no significant linear impact on consumer attitude of metro city.

 ${\rm H}_{\rm 3}$: Consumer past use experience has no significant linear impact on consumer attitude of non-metro city.

Sample and sample profile

Subject of the present study were the consumer visited to various shops and malls in metro and non metro city. Sample drawn for metro city constitutes the consumers of National capital region of India i.e. New Delhi and sample drawn for non-metro city non-metro city constitutes the consumers of Gwalior and Mathura region of India. Convenient (Non Probability) sampling technique is used. Individual respondent was the sampling element.

Sample Profile

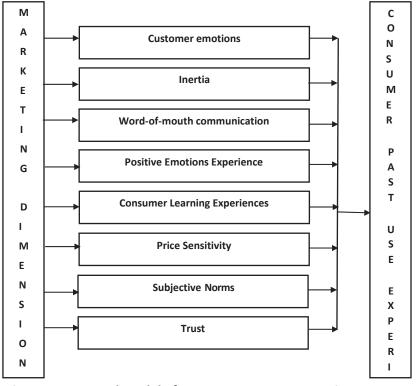
Subjects of the present study were selected from the various stores and malls of metro and non-metro city. Total 250 subjects were selected from each metro and non-metro city and given the same questionnaire, in which, respondents indicated their opinion about marketing dimension in both the city (i.e. metro and non-metro city). Questions are shown in appendix.

Tool

It has already been discussed that the present study is focused on the measurement of degree of difference in the influence of consumer past use experience on consumer attitude level of a metro and non-metro consumers. Consumer past use experience is measured through eight independent variables. These eight variables were collected through extensive literature survey. Based on the literature, each question in the questionnaire was constructed and each question explained each variable. These variables was measured using a five point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' with 'neither agree nor disagree' as the middle point. Internal consistency of the scale was checked and Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.77.

Content validity technique was used to check the validity of the scale adopted for the study. Researchers systematically evaluated how well the content of a scale represents the measurement test at hand. Due to the subjective nature of this technique we also used a more sophisticated technique referred to as criterion validity.

For measuring the difference between means of metro and non-metro consumers, z-test for two populations was employed. Z-test was applied on summated score of the data collected through the scale. In addition, for measuring the linear impact of consumer past use experience on consumer attitude in metro and nonmetro city, simple regression technique was employed.





Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis was done using MS Excel software. Analysis was done using three steps: z-test (at 5% level of significance) for comparing means of two population; regression for measuring linear impact of consumer past use experience on consumer attitude in metro and nonmetro city. Z-test result is presented in table 1 and regression results are presented from table-2 to table-7. Following section focuses on these 7 tables and their statistical interpretation:

Table 1: z-test for comparing two means (consumer past-use experience) in Metro and Non metro city

	Consumer Past-use Experience (Metro city)	Consumer Past-use Experience (Non-metro city)		
Mean	30.268 29.184			
Known Variance	9.68	8.24		
Observations	250	250		
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0			
Z	4.048836914			
P(Z<=z) two-tail	5.14728E-05			
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985			

For finding out the significant difference in means of metro and non-metro city in terms of consumer past-use experience z-test between two populations is applied. Calculated z value is coming as 4.05 which falls in the rejection region (at 5% level of significance). This indicates rejection of null hypothesis and acceptance of alternative hypothesis in case of H₁. Hence, null hypothesis of no difference is rejected and alternative hypothesis of significant difference is accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between degrees of consumer past-use experience (at 95% confidence level) between metro and non-metro city. Sample result clearly exhibit that mean of metro city is slightly higher than non-metro city. Hence, it can be significantly concluded that influence of consumer pastuse experience on consumer attitude level in metro city are slightly better (mean=30.27) than non-metro city (mean=29.18).

Table 2: Regression Statistics for ConsumerAttitude and Consumer Past-useExperience in Metro city

Regression Statistics			
Multiple R 0.98807532			
R Square	0.976292837		
Adjusted R Square	0.976197244		
Standard Error	0.480083209		
Observations	250		

	Degree of freedom	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F Stat	Significance F*
Regression	1	2353.884988	2353.884988	10212.97351	1.565E-203
Residual	248	57.15901216	0.230479888		
Total	249	2411.044			

Table 3: ANOVA table for Consumer Attitude and Consumer Past-use Experience in Metro city

*F stands for F-test

Table 4: t-value and p-value for the regression result between Consumer Attitude and Consumer Past-use Experience (CPE) in Metro city

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	-1.14218594	0.312289158	-3.65746268	0.000311059
CPE	10.39246491	0.102835358	101.0592574	1.565E-203

Regression analysis is statistical procedure for analyzing associative relationships between dependent variables and independent variable (Malhotra & Dash, 2010). Since our one of the objectives is to find out the impact of consumer past use experience (CPUE) on consumer attitude. Therefore, researchers established two hypotheses H2 and H3. Our eight variables representing CPUE explored through the literature are the Independent variables and consumer attitude is the dependent variable for the regression analysis in order to find out the impact of CPUE on consumer attitude.

Table 2 exhibits the regression statistics for consumer attitude and (CPUE) in Metro city. R2 (coefficient of determination) demonstrates the strength of association between eight variables of CPUE (independent variables) and consumer attitude (dependent variable). In other words, R2 signifies the proportion of the total variation in dependent variable (CPUE) by the variation in Independent variable (COPUE) by the variation in Independent variable (Consumer attitude). R² value is coming as 97.6% which is an indication of strong predictor model because 97.6% of the total variation in CPUE is accounted for by the variation in consumer attitude in metro city. Standard error is relatively low indicates the

small amount of variation or scatter around the regression line. Table 3 exhibited that F-value, while developing a regression model to predict the consumer attitude with the help of the eight independent variable (CPUE), we need to focus on few measures. Total variation (Sum of Squares Total) can be partitioned into two parts: The first part of variation, which can be attributed to the relationship between independent variable and independent variables, is referred to as explained variation or regression sum of squares. The second part of the variation, which is unexplained can be attributed to factors other than the relationship between independent and dependent variables and is referred to as error sum of squares (Bajpai, 2011). Table 4 exhibits t-value and pvalue for testing the slope of the regression model. Significant p-value corresponding to t-value is an indication of linear relationship between dependent (consumer attitude) and independent variable (Consumer Past-use Experience) in metro city. Here significant F value and P-value are less than 0.05 rejects the hypothesis (H₂) and exhibits overall significance of regression model. Hence, there is a significant impact of CPUE on consumer attitude in metro city.

Regression Statistics			
Multiple R	0.969032413		
R Square	0.939023817		
Adjusted R Square	0.938777945		
Standard Error	0.710221556		
Observations	250		

Table 5: Regression Statistics for Consumer Attitude and Consumer Past-use Experience in Non-metro city

Table 6: ANOVA table for Consumer Attitude and Consumer Past-use Experience in Non-metro city

	Degree of freedom	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F Stat	Significance F*
Regression	1	1926.441165	1926.441165	3819.16174	1.1959E-152
Residual	248	125.0948353	0.504414659		
Total	249	2051.536			

*F stands for F-test

Table 7: t-value and p-value for the regression result between Consumer Attitude and Consumer Past-use Experience (CPE) in Non-metro city

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	6.015882328	0.37757387	15.93299431	7.76828E-40
CPE	8.013322382	0.129666739	61.79936682	1.1959E-152

Table 5 exhibits regression statistics for Consumer Attitude and Consumer Past-use Experience in Nonmetro city. R² value is coming as 93.9% which is an indication of strong predictor model because 93.9% of the total variation in CPUE is accounted for by the variation in consumer attitude in non-metro city. Standard error is relatively low indicates the small amount of variation or scatter around the regression line. Table 6 shows that Fvalue is significant which exhibits overall significance of regression model. Table 7 exhibits t-value and p-value for testing the slope of the regression model. Significant pvalue corresponding to t-value is an indication of linear relationship between dependent (consumer attitude) and independent variable (Consumer Past-use Experience) in non-metro city. Here significant F value and P-value are less than 0.05 rejects the hypothesis (H_2) and exhibits overall significance of regression model. Hence,

there is a significant impact of CPUE on consumer attitude in non-metro city.

Discussion and Implications of the Study

Based on the previous researches regarding consumers past use experience, this study shows the clear link and its precise degree between consumers' past use experience and their attitude, which helps readers deeply understand the relationship between these fields.

The Findings support the view points that: positive past use experience of consumers leads to positive consumer attitude. Consumers purchase decision or repurchase decision are highly affected by past use experience. Table 2, 3, 4 and Table 5, 6, 7 exhibits the result of regression (linear) between consumer attitude and consumer past use experience in buying decision for metro and nonmetro city. Regressions results between consumer attitude and consumer past use experience in purchasing decision clearly explain that the higher degree of positive past use experience provide higher level of positive consumer attitude among customers of both the metro and non-metro city. This outcome complies with Doney and Cannon (1997), Klein's (1998) model for internet shopping, Anderson and Narus, (1990). Doney and Cannon (1997) did their study in service marketing, they explain that customers tend to behave and make purchasing decision depending on their previous consuming experiences. Similarly Klein (1998) Model suggests that prior experience with internet shopping is a significant predictor of Consumer attitude and Anderson and Narus, (1990) did their study over the customer expectations. This study add to these previous study through the precise degree of impact between past use experience and consumer attitude. Tsur (2007), explain that when consumers are not fully aware of the value of a good, they use their experience to estimate its value. Their past experience is selective if it only contains transactions that were carried out but not potential transactions that were not implemented. This statement clearly shows the importance of past experience in buying decision. In addition, Wu Li-Wei (2011) finds past-use experience as a zone of tolerance in consumer. This zone of tolerance is differing in metro and non- metro customers. The results show that a wider level of the zone of tolerance strengthens the positive effect of inertia on customer loyalty, while also reducing the positive effect of satisfaction. The results also indicate that the negative moderating effect of the zone of tolerance on the relationship between satisfaction and customer loyalty will reduce as alternative attractiveness increases. In contrast, the positive moderating effect of the zone of tolerance on the relationship between inertia and customer loyalty will reduce as alternative attractiveness increases. The important variables in order to exploit past use experience are customer satisfaction, consumer inertia, word-of-mouth communication, positive emotion experiences, learning experiences, price sensitivity, subjective norms and trust.

Considering the work of Berman & Thelen, (2004), single marketing strategy may not be applicable to every

multichannel retailer due to the diversity in prior in-store shopping experience and attitude. Therefore, this study measures the degree of impact of past use experience in purchasing and repurchasing decision. Since the consumers of metro and non-metro consumers are different so as their social and psychological variables. The degree of impact of past use experience in purchasing or repurchasing decision was found different in metro and non-metro cities. This result reveals from Table 1, which clearly shows that impact of consumer past use experience in buying decision is high in metro city as compared to non-metro city. The reason can be explained as degree of awareness and education makes the consumer more attentive in terms of purchasing is high in metro regions.

Conclusion

Retaining customers has become a major objective of any marketing organization. Marketers are adopted various strategies for the same. Consumers positive experience with the consumption of the product are considered to be essential for building long-term relationship with customers in order to achieve mutual benefits of all parties. Therefore, this study was conducted to exam the impact of consumer's past use experience on attitude. The findings of the survey can be summarized as below:

- Customer's emotion, inertia, word-of-mouth, consumer learning, positive emotion experience, price sensitivity, subjective norms and trust are the important variable in formation of consumer past use experience.
- The impact of consumer past use experience in buying decision is high in metro city as compared to non-metro city.
- Consumer past use experience is undoubtedly a prerequisite of consumer attitude towards buying decision.

Limitations of the study

Though we have taken all possible steps to provide the findings in a holistic way but as a natural phenomenon of any research present study is also not free from some limitations. A list of limitations observed on the present study is given as below:

1) The purpose of this research was to study the impact of consumer past-use experience on attitude

formation and comparative study of the same between metro and non-.metro cities. Due to time constraint we could not have catered more metro and non-metro cities. Therefore, the results of this study are not confirmatory as such but rather they give an idea in order to formulating the marketing policies.

- 2) The literature review for this study concentrated on the theoretical fields of consumer attitude and consumer psychology in general. Based on literature in these fields, a research framework was constructed. This laid a question that consumer display different attitude to the different types of product and services.
- Sampling technique used is this research is convenient sampling technique, which is nonprobability sampling technique and therefore not providing a true picture of the population.
- 4) The analysis of difference in consumer attitude in metro and non-metro city and linear impact as well are based on eight variables extracted from the literature. So, the results are based on these eight variables only.
- 5) For analyzing the data, the statistical design used in this research gives the broader picture of the results. Results indicate the degree of difference between consumer attitude of metro and non-metro consumers and linear impact of the various variables under study on consumer attitude. Study is not providing the comprehensive picture of the data.
- Another major limitation based on sampling that this research was conducted on limited size of population.

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Appendix

- *i.* Emotions play a prominent role in my purchasing.
- *ii.* My purchasing is depending upon some situational cues based on my past experience.
- *iii.* I am sharing my marketing experiences with others.
- *iv.* More positive emotion an individual's attitude towards the brand of the product, the greater their intention to repurchase the brand.
- v. I learn purchasing behavior, attitude and skills through the observation of other individuals
- vi. I am a price sensitive person
- vii. My attitude, intentions and behaviour are influenced by family and friends
- viii. My attitude to purchase depends upon the trustworthiness of the brand.