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DESHOPPING & CUSTOMER SERVICE- “AN ANALYSIS ON
HOW TO MINIMIZE OR REDUCE THE DESHOPPING
BEHAVIOUR WHILE MAINTAINING THE STANDARD OF
CUSTOMER SERVICE IN ORGANIZED RETAIL”

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: At present time retailers are focusing more on customer service and trying to be more customer centric organization. But there is also other dark side of retail which cannot be ignore

by retailer in longer run. Unethical consumer buying behaviour named as deshopping is one of the fastest growing consumer behaviour in today's retail environment. Current study examines deshopping from both retailers and customer's perspective, applied theory of planned behaviour along with how to reduce deshopping behaviour while maintaining the standard of customer service.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A questionnaire survey will be fill by 100 female respondents who usually preferred Indian ethnic wear to know about the deshopping behaviour and an interview will also conduct with retail employees who are working at the front end in an organised retail store who interact with shoppers/deshoppers on the daily basis. The agenda behind questionnaire is to get know about the deshopping behaviour from customer's point of view and behind interview agenda is to understand the deshopping behaviour from retail employee's perspective.

Findings: Findings demonstrate the use of TPB in qualitative technique, understand deshopping from retailers and customers perspective. Individual questionnaire's result helps in order to understand the buying behaviour, frequency of buying and returning new product, reasons of return/exchange the product, to understand that how many respondents are involved in deshopping behaviour and what is the reason behind the same, factors that inspire an individual to behave as like deshoppers, timing and store's selection where they can easily perform deshopping behaviour etc.

Originality: This is the first paper where researcher demonstrate the deshopping behaviour from both retailer and customer's perspective along with the approach of customer service. This paper also identify the key variables which influence the consumer's behaviour to behave as like deshoppers.

Research Implications: This research will be helpful for retailer to understand the consumer buying behaviour with respect to deshopping and will also help them to make certain policies which will reduce the consumer's deshopping behaviour while making the standard of customer service with the approach of customer's centric organization. It will also allow retailers to look at their profitability and its maximization.

Limitations: Current study focused on garment, ladies ethnics wear brands only. Future study can be conduct in other industry as well to know the consumer's unethical buying behaviour.

Introduction:

Deshopping "*the act of purchasing a product and then return it after they have fulfilled the purpose of the customer*". For instance purchasing a suit for interview and then return it or ask for refund/credit note/exchange after fulfilling the purpose. Deshopping is the scenario when customer service is not the service failure. Liberal return policy is also one of the factors and it has increased growth in return goods. Returned goods is an unpleasant fact for retailer, increase the additional cost for companies, reverse logistics and product loss.

Liberal return policy plays an important role in retail industry. Retailers are using return policy as a competitive business strategy to provide additional value to their customers in the form of easy returns. But in current scenario customers are taking it in wrong way and abusing the system by making fraud returns and negative attitude. This behaviour comes under unethical

consumer buying behaviour and in retail it is named as Deshopping. Deshopping is an unpleasant act and increase the reverse logistic cost to company, product loss etc. (Rogers and Tibben-Lembke, 2001).

According to IBEF report, "India finished on top of the Global Retail Development Index in 2017. Moreover, it is expected to increase further by 60% to touch \$1.1B by 2020". Indian retail industry is one of the fastest growing industry as many new players are coming in the market and it contribute around more than 10% on India's GDP and 8% of the employment (IBEF report). Indian retail market, online retail and luxury retail market is increasing at a very fast pace therefore it is very important to address the problems that retailers are facing on every day and affecting the profitability and growth of the retailers.

Deshopping is one of the major problem that retailers are facing and therefore it is important to address the deshopping issue and provide the effective solution to retailers regarding the same.

Literature Review: King (2003) examined the customer deshopping behaviour by using the theory of planned behaviour where researcher analyse the human behaviour using variables of theory of planned behaviour. Researcher developed a model which predicts the Deshopping behaviour which includes the variables such as attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, actual control and intentions. As per the researcher all these variables affect the behaviour of customers and influence them to behave as like deshoppers. In retail marketing literature, deshopping considered as abuse of return policy (Rahman et al, 2016).

Devries & Backbier (1994) suggested that theory of planned behaviour can be utilise in other study as well to understand the undesirable human behaviour such as quitting cigarette smoking and alcohol, and condom use and safe sex (Boldero et al, 1992).

Piron & Young (2000) demonstrate that in apparels 18% of people committed return fraud. King et al. (2006) & Haris (2008) in another research said that it was 50% of women and 90% of people who involved in return fraud respectively.

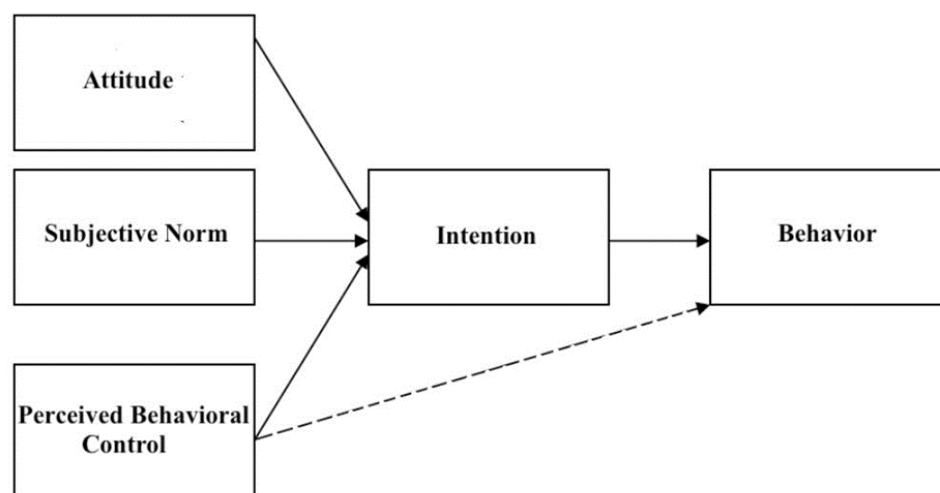
Whenever any consumer used any product it ideally define or represent their own self-image therefore the uses of any product increase the pressure and risk which is directly proportional to the status of the consumers (Mitchell and McGoldrick, 1996). Therefore whenever pressure and risk come, consumer wants to reduce it and at this phase return policy take place and sometimes it leads to the Deshopping or unethical consumer buying behaviour.

Customer satisfaction is also an important area to consider as most of the retailers used it as their business strategy and if tightening return policy may also affect their business and satisfaction level of customers. Hanna and Wozniak (2001) mentioned in their study that less satisfied customer generally engage in negative communication towards brand image. Less

satisfied customers always engage with negative word of mouth publicity and it creates a negative brand image in the market. Earlier study demonstrate that 94% retailers are also aware about the Deshopping behaviour and they feel unprotected with respect to these kind of shoppers (King and Dennis 2006).

Deshopping behaviour previously also investigated by many researcher via different ways. Most of the findings related to attitudes, behaviour, and young people who are strongly associated with deshopping. Deshopping behaviour is not limited to men or women but it effect both the gender. In previous research, Piron & Young (2000) demonstrate that deshopping is concerned both genders and findings demonstrates that as compared to men, women deshopped four times more as men did.

Theory of planned behaviour: The theory of planned behaviour is used to analyse the deshopping behaviour (Ajzen 1991). Questionnaire made on the basis of theory of planned behaviour and survey was conducted with 100 customers. All the respondents are female shoppers who are the regular shoppers of ethnic wear.



Source: The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991)

Theory of planned behaviour explained that in order to know the intention to perform a behaviour is strongly influenced by the various factors such as attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Individual's attitude towards a behaviour represents the assessment of the behaviour and its results. Subjective norms represents that other people are important to the respondent in order to approve or disapprove the behaviour. Perceived behaviour control justify either the ease of difficulty in order to performing a behaviour. Theory of planned behaviour successfully used in previous study in order to control undesirable behaviour.

Research Gap: Maximum research on Deshopping conducted out of India therefore it will be more useful to extend the other parts of countries to get know about the factors that either the findings are universally same or it varies according to the geographically, culture values etc. The research is

going to address the gap in India about deshopping behaviour in women ethnic wear market where researcher tries to identify the factors which influenced customers to behave like deshoppers and from retailers perspective as well as like how to reduce Deshopping behaviour while making the customer engagement and signature customer service experience at organised retail stores.

Methodology: A questionnaire survey was filled by 100 female respondents who usually preferred Indian ethnic wear to know about the deshopping behaviour and an interview was also conducted with retail employees who are working at the front end in an organised retail store who interact with shoppers/deshoppers on the daily basis.

The agenda behind questionnaire is to get know about the deshopping behaviour from customer’s point of view and behind interview agenda is to understand the deshopping behaviour from retail employee’s perspective.

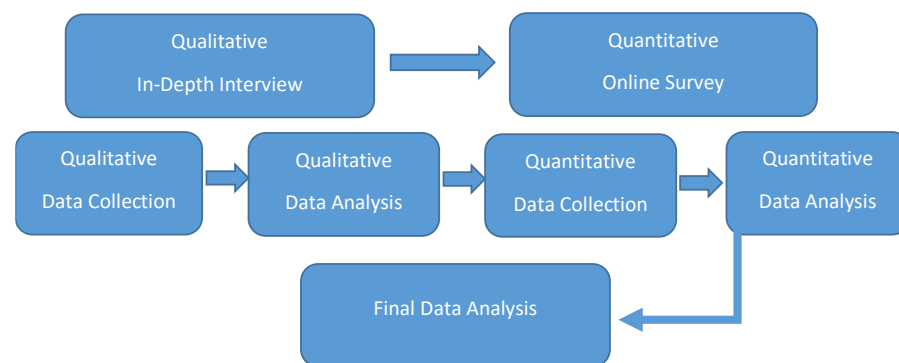


Figure: Exploratory research design

Interview Results: Interview was conducted with store managers and sales executives of leading and starts ups of Indian ethnic wear brands such as Biba, Fab India, W, Aurelia and Ayaani (A new start up). All these people are working at the front end and everyday facing the new challenge in retail. Here in researcher demonstrate the brands wise interviews outcomes that helpful for researcher to understand the consumer buying behaviour in depth:

Biba: One of the market leader in women ethnic wear market also facing the same issue in terms of unethical consumer buying behaviour.

- **Exchange policy:** Customer can exchange the product within 15 days from any Biba stores across the India with original bill invoice and product price tag.
- There is no refund if customer didn’t like to product s/he can take credit note which will be applicable for 2 months and customers can redeem the same from any Biba store.
- **Deshopping/Unethical buying behaviour/Fraud:** Biba is well known for its high quality, innovative products design and collection. As per the interview high expensive products coming more for exchange where customers generally ask for exchange/credit note. As per the interviewees customer came for exchange of used products because

customers purchased high expensive products and its general attitude that women didn't like to wear one party dress in any other party. That's why instead to block the money customers used the products one time and then came for exchange to purchase casual/ semiformal dress to whom they can use frequently.

- **Employees Action:** As per the company customer can exchange the product but the condition is it should be unused. As per the respondents customers generally not able to agree on the same and if employee say no for exchange customers start to behave in a negative way and try to make psychological pressure on employee to put complaint on customers care and other social media sites.

Ayaani: Ayaani is one of the starting ethnic wear brand in Delhi/NCR.

- **Exchange Policy:** Customer can exchange the product within days from any store with original bill invoice and product price tag. There is no refund/credit note.
- **Deshopping/Unethical buying behaviour/Fraud:** Deshopping behaviour also faced by Ayaani as well but here the good thing is employees are authorised to take decision on the spot and if employee feel that product is used so only s/he can decide whether exchange the product or not. And if employee say no for exchange, management didn't take any call on the same whether customer make customer complaint or not. Due to this very less cases are coming in Ayaani of deshopping.

Fab India: One of the leading international ethnic wear brand in the market.

- **Exchange policy:** Customer can exchange the product within 30 days from any store with tag and bill.
- **Deshopping/Unethical buying behaviour/Fraud:** Fab India also facing the same issue i.e. deshopping is happening frequently in Fab India. But still here final decision is taken by store manager if s/he allow for exchange than store team can. But if store manager says no than team can't exchange the product. Generally if store manager says no for exchange customer put complaint at customer care and then final decision taken by management.

Aurelia: A value based ethnic wear brand by W.

- **Exchange policy:** Customer can exchange the product within 14 days with tags and bill. There is no exchange and credit note only exchange is possible.
- **Deshopping/Unethical buying behaviour/Fraud:** Aurelia is also facing the same i.e. deshopping. According to the employee of Aurelia they also caught people during deshopping and customers not able to agree on the same. When employee says no for exchange, customers put complaint on customer care and company is not ready to listen any excuse in against customer and in order to maintain standard of customer service higher management took decision to give exchange to customer.

W: One of the leading and main competitor of BIBA, W is a leading Indian ethnic wear brand.

- **Exchange policy:** Customer can exchange the product within 14 days with tags and bill. There is no exchange and credit note only exchange is possible.
- **Deshopping/Unethical buying behaviour/Fraud:** W is also facing the deshopping issue as per the employee they can't do anything in this matter except exchange the product. If they say no for exchange customers simply put complaint on customer care and in order to minimize the complaint against store, store manager allow for exchange. As it comes under job security and if number of complaint increase company didn't take time to take any action against store manager.

Analysis of Questionnaires Result: The above mentioned interview results shown that how frequently different brands are facing the deshopping. Researcher also tried to understand the deshopping behaviour from the customer's point of view in order to gain more insights about the deshopping behaviour by designing few questionnaire which is related to their buying behaviour using the theory of planned behaviour.

Individual questionnaire's result shown in below section which helps in order to understand the buying behaviour, frequency of buying and returning new product, reasons of return/exchange the product, to understand that how many respondents are involved in deshopping behaviour and what is the reason behind the same, factors that inspire an individual to behave as like deshoppers, timing and store's selection where they can easily perform deshopping behaviour etc.

Findings and Analysis: Individual questionnaire result shown in below section:

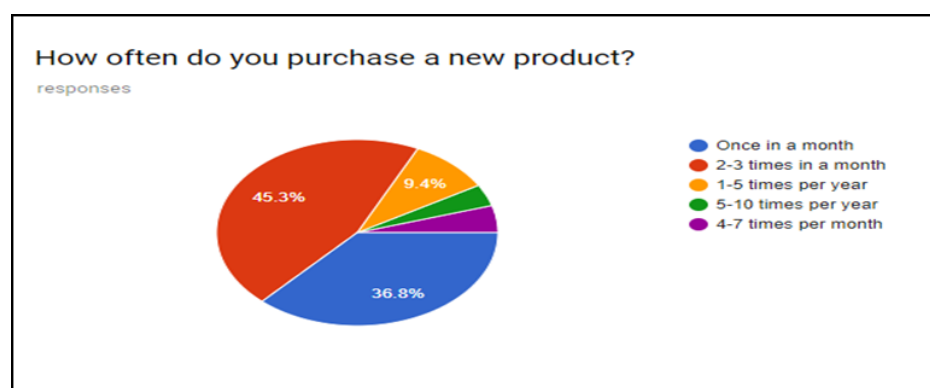


Fig1: Purchase Frequency of New Product

Result represented the responses of customers that how often s/he purchase a new product. Result shown that 45.3% customers are there who shopped 2-3 times in a month, 36.8% are there who shopped once in a month and 9.4% are there who shopped 1 to 5 times per year.

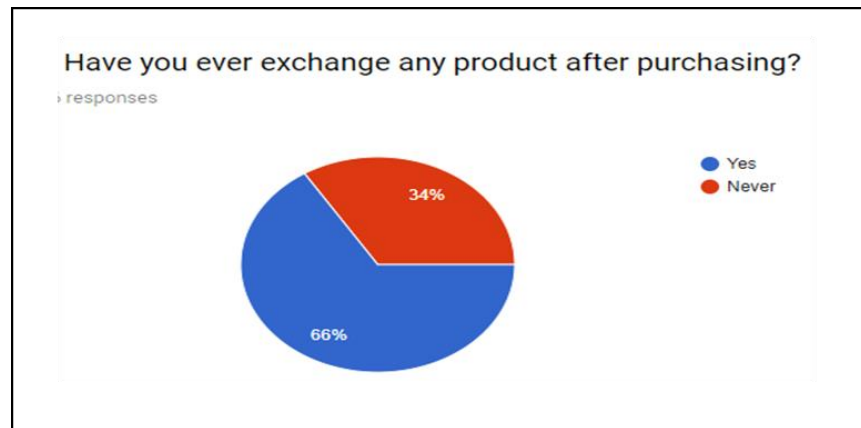


Fig2: Product Exchange Behaviour

Result represented the responses of customers that have they ever exchange any product after purchasing or not. Results shown that 66% customers are there who exchanged the product after shopped where as 34 % are these who didn't exchange the product.

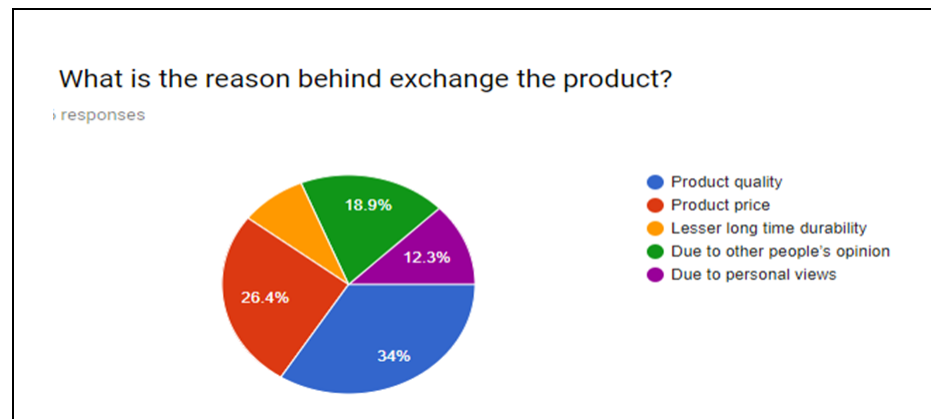


Fig3: Reason behind Exchange the Product

Result represented that what is the reason behind exchange the product. It shown that 34% customer are there who exchanged the product due to the product quality, 26.4% are there who exchange the product due to the product price, 18.9% are there who exchange due to the other people's opinion, 12.3% are due to personal views and 8.4% due to the lesser long time durability.

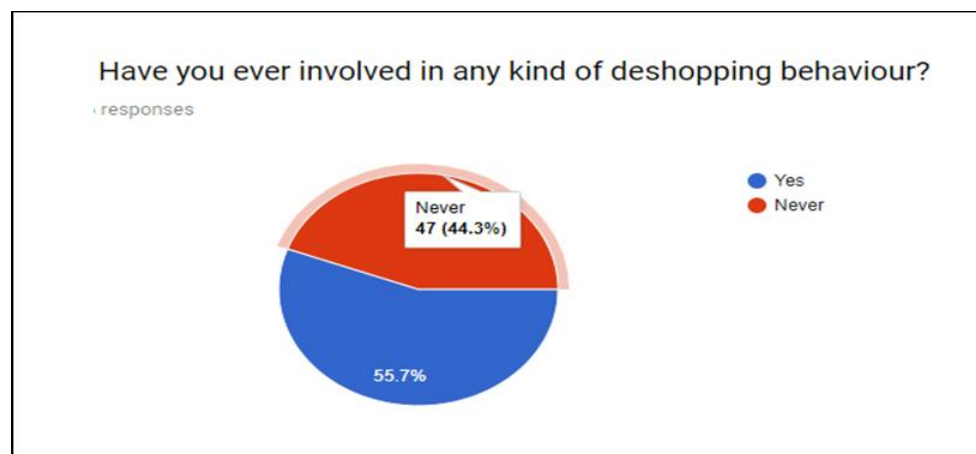


Fig4: Involvement in Deshopping Behaviour

Result represented that have customers involved in any kind of dshopping behaviour or not. Result shown that 55.7% customers are there who involved in deshopping behaviour whereas 44.3% are who never involved in deshopping behaviour.

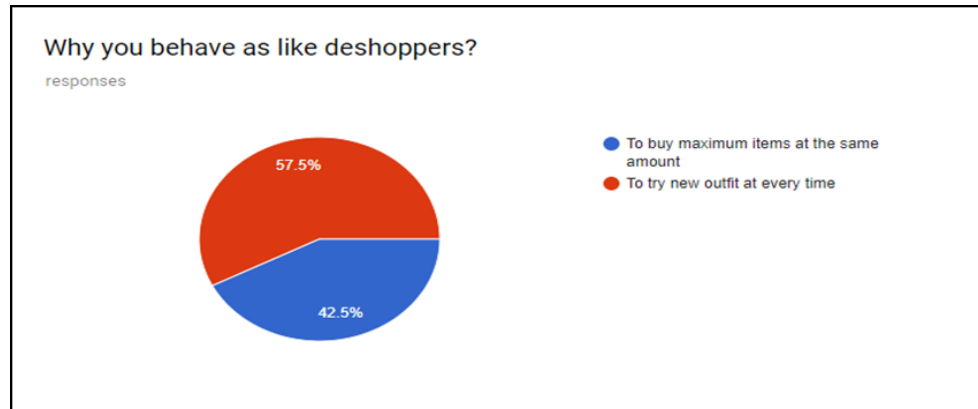


Fig5: Reasons behind Behave like Deshoppers

Results represented the behaviour of customers that why they behave as like deshoppers. It shown that 57.5% customers are there who behave as like deshoppers due to try new outfit at every time where as 42.5% are there who deshopped in order to buy maximum items at the same amount.

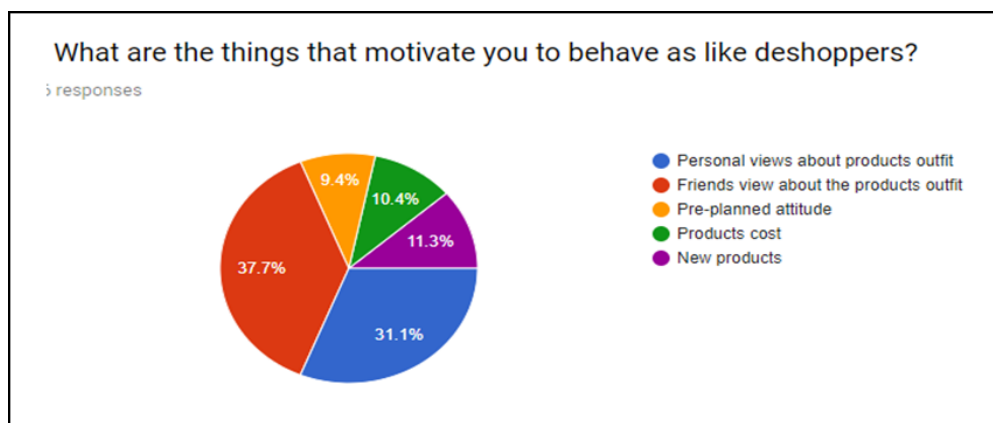


Fig6: Motivation Factors behind Deshoppers

Result represented that what are the things that motivate customers to behave as like deshoppers. Result shown that 37.7% customers are there who behaved like deshoppers due to friends view about the product outfit, 31.1% due to personal views about the product outfit, 11.3% due to new product, 10.4% due to product cost and 9.4% due to pre-planned attitude.

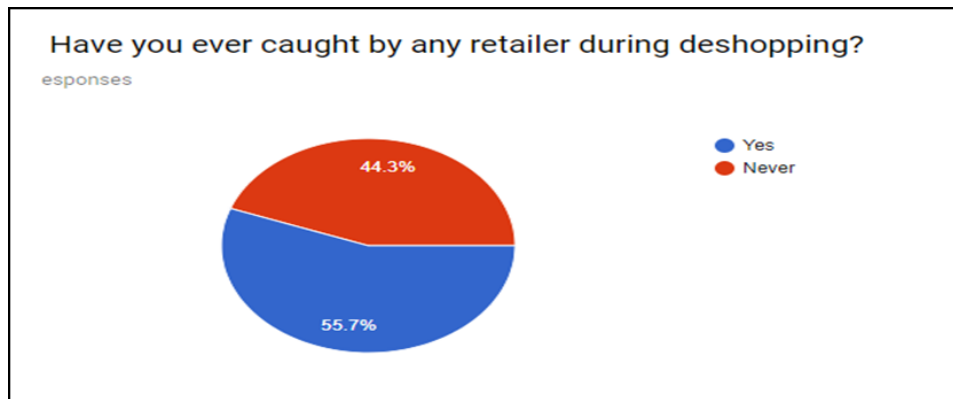


Fig7: Caught by Retailer during Deshopping

Result represented the output of deshopping behaviour of customers that have they ever caught by any retailer during the deshopping behaviour or not. Result shown that 55.7% customers are there who caught by retailer at the time of deshopping where as 44.3% are there who never caught by any retailer at the time of deshopping behaviour.

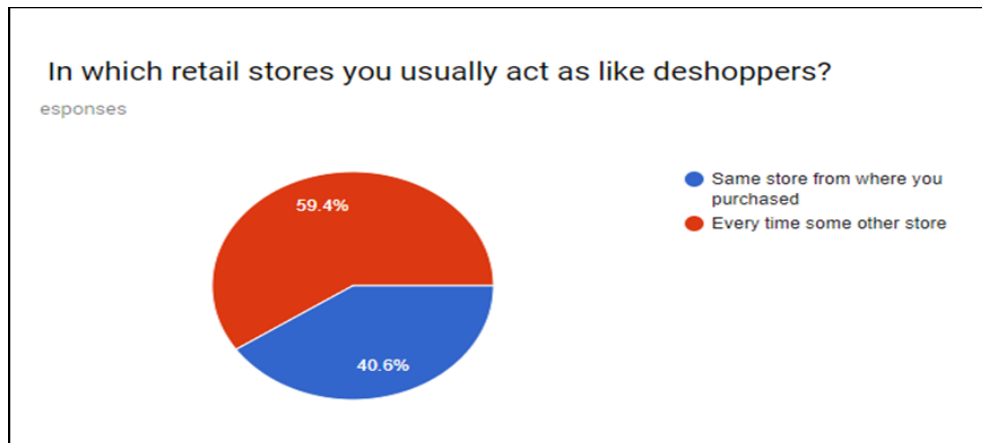


Fig8: Store's Preference during Deshopping

Here results represented that what is the customer's retail stores choice at the time of deshopping behaviour. Result shown that 59.4% customers are there who always choose every time some other store to act as like deshoppers where as 40.6% are there who always choose same store at the time of deshopping from where customers shopped



Fig9: Store’s Preference during Deshopping

Result represented that what is the customer’s preference at the store to whom they want to target or want to interact at the time of deshopping in the store. Result shown that 46.2% customers are there who target store manager firstly at the time of deshopping, 35.8% customers are there who firstly interact with experienced sales executive and 17.9% customers are there who interact with less experienced sales executive.

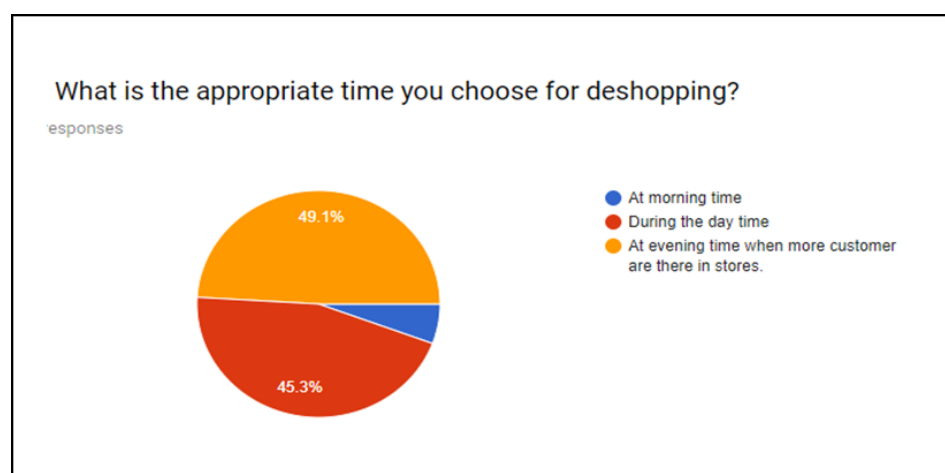


Fig10: Appropriate time for Deshopping

Result represented that as per the customer’s point of view what is the appropriate time that customer’s choose for deshopping. Result shown that 49.1% customer are there who choose evening time for deshopping when more customers are there in the stores, 45.3% customers are there who deshopped at the day time where as 5.6% customers are there who choose morning time in order to behave as like deshoppers.

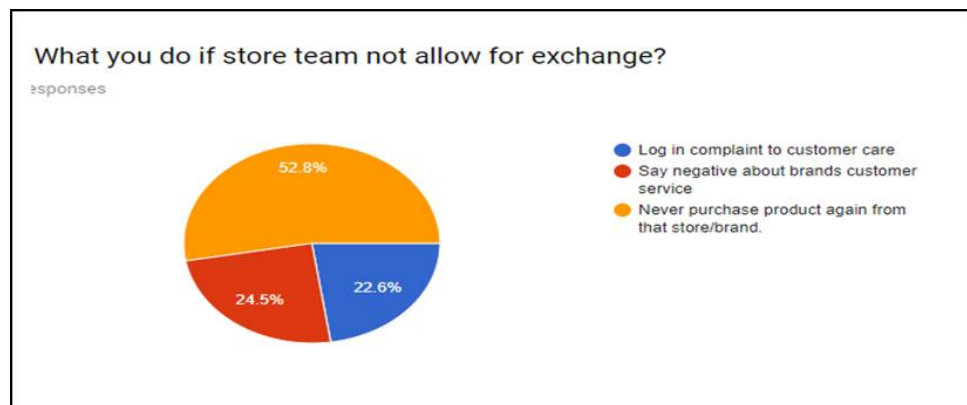


Fig11: Customer Behaviour if Store Team not allowed for Exchange

Result represented the output of store's team behaviour that means what customers do if store team didn't allow for customers to exchange the product. Result shown that 52.8% customers are there who never purchase product again from that store/brand of store team not allow for exchange, 24.5% customers are there who start to say negative word of mouth about brand's customer service and 22.6% log in complaint about the bad customer service in customer care.

Deshopping Result Analysis Using Pie Chart Data: From the questionnaire's results shown in above section, it has been found that most of the customer who involved in deshopping behaviour always came at the evening time when a lot of customers are there. In this way stores team didn't get enough time to check the product and in order to minimize the sales loss store's team maximum time approve for exchange. But if sometimes store team say no for exchange, customer start shouting in front of other customer and decided never to come back at that store for shopping. It also has been observed that customer maximum time go to different stores for exchange the product.

It also observed that those customer who caught at the time of deshopping, they never act in the same way. Most of the customers who involved in deshopping behaviour they highly influenced by their social group including friends and family members followed by personal attitude and norms. Other important finding is, the main motive behind the deshopping behaviour is to try every time new outfit at the same amount.

Recommended Solutions: Deshopping is identified as the unpleasant act for the retailer and due to the liberal return policy retailers can't reduce the same. In order to gain the competitive advantage, profit in business, retailers must have to train their stores team in order to identify the deshoppers by analysing the condition of product at the time of exchange as like its original packaging, price tag along with the original invoice of the garment etc.

Here researcher proposed a model (mentioned in diagram 2) with respect to deshopping behaviour. Three things are much important for retailer to take care in order to minimizing deshopping behaviour.

Managerial Skills: Store team must get compete training regarding customer service process and how to handle customer's grievance. At the time of

deshopping, it's very much important for retailer to handle customer query in an effective way because it is that phase where store team somewhat also knew that it is unethical behaviour performing by customers. Therefore instead of reacting at that phase, store team must respond in an effective and professional way.

Cognitive Thinking, Leads to Change: In order to reduce deshopping behaviour retailers must have to create a psychological change in the mind of customers. Although it totally depends upon the bond of trust between retailer and loyal customer. Retailers must have to create some kind of positive quotes story in the stores which affect the cognitive stage of customers and helps them to behave as like good customers.

Technical Concern: Retailer must have to provide training to their store team regarding the technical concern as like how to check product quality, how to identify either the product is used or not, an authority to take decision, a quality check department for better result etc. Instead of showing sales offer clearly, retailer must have to show return policy in an effective way because post sales service and a clear communication must be clear at the time of purchasing as it is more important in order to reduce deshopping behaviour and maintain the standard of customer service.

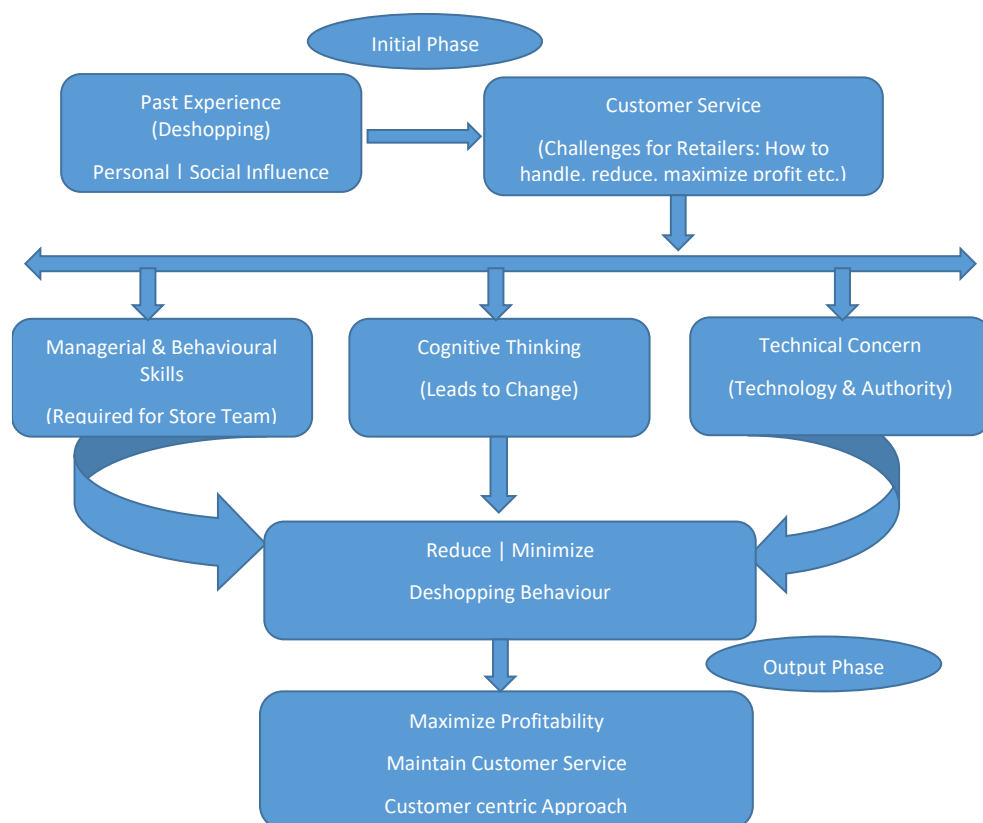


Diagram 2: Proposed model for reducing/minimizing deshopping behaviour while maintaining the standard of customer service and customer centric approach

Limitations and Future Research: Our paper has several limitation that creates so many opportunity for future research. For example in this research,

researcher focused only on Indian ladies ethnic wear brand and future research can extend this research in others brands as like westerns wear of ladies/men/kids etc. Other limitation is this research is only conducted in Delhi/NCR, future research can extend this research to other cities of the country.

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