

**An Assessment of Customer Attitudes Toward Local Grocery Stores: Evidence from
Sundarharaincha Municipality, Morang**

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Abstract

There has been a fast expansion of local grocery stores, which provide a variety of products for customers. Normally, such local grocery stores are owned or managed by a family and operate within a certain area. The main purpose of the research will be to find out customers' attitudes towards local groceries in Sundarharaincha. This is a descriptive type of research. The total population of the research includes all customers that come to the local grocery store. Simple random sampling technique has been used for selecting samples, which include 40 customers selected according to their age and gender. For data analysis, descriptive statistics will be used, which includes mean, standard deviation and percentage analysis, along with rank correlation. The result of this analysis suggests positive customer attitudes and satisfaction with the product quality, price, variety, store location, and service provided by the local grocery store. So, the local grocery store has maintained a good reputation due to its quality, pricing, and service. The analysis of Spearman's rank correlation shows a weak negative correlation between the actual and ideal ranks derived from theory. Different customers have different attitudes, perceptions, and levels of satisfaction towards local grocery stores. Understanding these differences and providing the service customers need is vital to the survival and growth of local grocery stores.

Keywords: Customer Attitude, Local, Grocery, Satisfaction

Introduction

Attitudes are often long-term judgments about people and objects, along with the emotional reactions they evoke. Personal ideas, convictions, and opinions about other people and things can also be expressed by attitudes. Simply put, a consumer is a person who consumes goods and services, spends money to obtain them, and uses them to satisfy their own needs is a customer. The local grocery store is a small-scale retail outlet that offers a wide selection of fresh produce, household essentials, and specialty items to meet the diverse demands and tastes of consumers (Blake et al., 2010).

According to Perner (n.d.), consumer attitude is essentially a combination of a consumer's beliefs, emotions, and inclinations toward a particular object in the marketing context. Attitude encompasses conduct, character, disposition, thoughts, and behavior patterns. It can have a positive or negative aspect and significantly impacts product purchases (Noel, 2009; Khan, 2012). Morris and Buller (2003) stated that local refers to products produced, processed, and retailed within a small geographic area. Attitudes are formed through experience and learning; attitudes influence buying behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Consumer attitudes toward a firm and its products greatly influence the firm's success or failure. The retail industry in Nepal is experiencing significant changes, with the emergence of organized retail and the dominance of unorganized players, such as Kirana stores.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a late-1980s psychological theory developed by Icek Ajzen. TPB postulates that human behavior is a function of three fundamental factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes reflect an individual's opinions about a behavior, based on personal values and previous experience. Subjective norms concern social pressures to perform or not perform a behavior based on what others expect and believe. Perceived behavioral control is a factor that influences an individual's intention to perform a behavior. The core components of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991) are:

Attitude (A): TPB describes attitude as an individual's specific evaluation of a behavior. For example, in appraising local grocery stores, attitude refers to customers' general perceptions of the shop environment, including assortment, quality, price, shop atmosphere, and service (Ajzen, 1991).

Subjective Norms (SN): Subjective norms refer to social pressure or influence that an individual feels from important others in his life when deciding whether to carry out a certain action or behavior. When buying goods at nearby neighborhood stores, such norms would include the influence of social, family, and friends on customers' purchasing behavior. This could encompass how social groups enable or disable the option to shop in local grocery stores (Ajzen, 1991).

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC): Perceived Behavioral Control involves the ease with which people perceive it is to carry out a particular behavior. In the case of local grocery shopping, this idea incorporates aspects such as the store's location, operating hours, parking availability, ease of movement within the store, and the overall shopping experience. All these factors contribute significantly to customers' perceptions of feeling in control while shopping at local grocery stores (Ajzen, 1991).

Applebaum (1951) argues that customers' buying attitudes are influenced by the needs and preferences of the consumers for whom the products are purchased. Aylott and Mitchell (1999) found in their study that staff behavior, along with the crowd and stress, is part of the decision process, alongside mainstream factors such as price, quality, and product. This concludes that consumer or customer satisfaction is an important factor when considering grocery shopping outlets. Uusitalo (2001) concluded that consumers focused on store layout, product variety, and convenience as the major factors rather than branding. Atulkar and Kesari (2014) provide information on customers' demographic profiles, family attributes, and income profiles, which play a major role in the selection of retail formats for product purchases. It concludes that, due to changing demographics, urbanization, and increased awareness driven by electronic media, especially the internet, customers have multiple options for modern retail outlets. The majority of customers are visiting organized formats for variety, easy availability, cleanliness, additional facilities for children, and convenient parking and restaurants. Wee et al. (2014) found that consumers' intention to purchase organic food was significantly influenced by perceptions of product safety, health, environmental factors, and animal welfare. Patnaik (2015) reported that consumers still preferred the experience they get from traditional stores, such as feeling the store's atmosphere, interacting with a salesperson, and seeking sensory stimulation. This might hinder the use of certain goods, such as groceries and apparel, as touch is the main

driver of shopping for these items. Dey (2017) noted that urbanization is a major influencing factor, acting as a change agent that is changing lifestyles. It will also affect customer perceptions. This study found that not all segments of society have the same choices available to them. Sarker and Rahman (2017) noted that customer purchasing decisions are influenced by cost, product variety, salesperson behavior, income level, product display, advertising, and familiarity with retailers. Dudziak et al. (2023) noted that demographic and psychological factors influence customers' attitudes towards local products.

Customers' attitudes towards local groceries are changing due to increased awareness and evolving lifestyles. Earlier, people used to buy groceries to fulfill their needs, but now they look for product quality, affordability, store location, staff behavior, and product variety. The study also found that customers' attitudes towards a local grocery depend on product quality, price, and variety. The main purpose of the study was to investigate customers' attitudes towards local grocery stores in Sundarharaincha.

In this study, the researcher has considered the following factor that determines customer attitude. Ajzen (1991) mentioned that customers' behavior in buying consumable products had certain priorities. His common priorities were product quality, price, location, product variety, and serviceability.

Methods and Materials

The research was conducted among customers who visit local grocery stores to examine their attitudes towards them in Sundarharaincha municipality, Morang district, Nepal. This paper used a descriptive-analytical research design and a quantitative research approach to investigate customers' attitudes towards local grocery stores. The descriptive aspect helped summarize the basic features of the collected data, and the analytical design enabled the examination of relationships among variables. A quantitative research approach was adopted in order to quantify the attitudes of the customers and perform a statistical analysis of the attitudes of the customers. The data source for the research report is primary data which have been obtained through a structured questionnaire. The questions in the questionnaire were closed ended questions on a 5-point Likert Scale where 1 indicated Strongly Disagree while 5 indicated Strongly Agree. Questionnaire development involved a literature survey of relevant theories pertaining to consumer attitudes and behavior including Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

The sample units for the survey include the customers of the local grocery store in Sundarharaincha, Morang, Nepal. Random sampling technique was used to choose the respondents where every customer had an equal chance of being selected in the study. A sample of 40 customers was used in the study. The respondents were all adult people aged 18 years and above who shop at the store regularly. ample size was deemed adequate because of the smaller geographical scope and the targeted population that was confined to the locality. Respondents were assured of anonymity as participation was on a voluntary basis. They were made aware of the purpose of the study and had the liberty to withdraw from it at any stage. Ethics in the study have been strictly adhered to.

In order to analyze data, MS Excel and IBM SPSS have been used for inputting and analyzing the gathered data. In the study, descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviation) has been performed to describe the answers of the respondents to each of the factors. Inferential analysis has been done using the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient to determine the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. The analysis helped to evaluate how to align the observed rankings with theoretical expectations. The data were presented in tabular form for clarity and to enhance understanding. The study's limited sample size may affect the generalizability of the findings to larger populations.

Results and Discussion

Results

The information and data collected through research are presented and analyzed through the following tables. Respondents were Sundarharaincha grocery store customers, selected at random for the survey. A short profile of the target respondent is prepared. Attributes such as respondents' age, gender, and consumption patterns are described here to build profiles of respondents.

Table 1

Analysis Based on Gender

Items	Category	Numbers of individuals
Gender	Male	20
	Female	20

The questionnaire was prepared to assess customers' attitudes towards the local grocery in Sundarharaincha. Respondents were given options for their age and gender. Of the 40 respondents, 50% were male, and 50% were female.

Table 2

Analysis Based on Age

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25	27	67.5%
	26-35	4	10%
	36-45	5	12.5%
	46 & above	4	10%

The study showed that 67.5% of respondents belonged to the age group of 18-25 years, 10% of respondents belonged to the age group of 26-35 years, 12.5% of the respondents to the age group of 36-45 years, and 10% of the respondents to the age group of 46 and above years. More than two-thirds of the respondents were under 25 years old.

Classification on the Basis of Consumption Pattern

How often do you shop at the local grocery store in Sundarharaincha?

Table 3

Analysis Based on Consumption Pattern

Shopping pattern	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Daily	5	12.5
2-3 times a week	25	62.5
Once a week	7	17.5
2-3 times a month	2	5
Rarely	1	2.5
Total	40	100

The study showed that 12.5% of respondents visit the local grocery daily, while 62.5% of respondents visit the local grocery 2-3 times a week, 17.5% of respondents visit the local grocery once a week, similarly 5% visit 2-3 times a month, and the remaining 2.5% of respondents visit the local grocery rarely. According to the study, most people visit the local grocery store 2 or 3 times a week, which means they do not buy products in bulk but instead shop regularly at set intervals for fresh items.

Attitudes of Customers

The attitudes of customers towards local grocery stores were measured through a 5-point Likert scale where Strongly Disagree (SD=1), Disagree (D=2), Neutral (N=3), Agree (A=4), and Strongly Agree (SA=5).

Table 4

Analysis of Customers' Attitude

Factors	Mean(M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Towards pricing	3.36	0.90
Towards product quality	3.40	0.75
Towards store location	3.56	1.87
Towards serviceability	3.56	0.97
Towards product variety	3.06	1.37

The study on customer attitudes towards local grocery stores revealed that respondents expressed relatively higher satisfaction with store location and serviceability ($M = 3.56$ and 0.97 , respectively), whereas product variety was relatively less satisfying ($M = 3.06$ and 1.37 , respectively). 'Customers' attitudes towards product quality and pricing were found to be moderately satisfactory ($M = 3.40$ & 3.36 , $SD = 0.75$ & 0.90 , respectively). Based on the results, customers' satisfaction with the store was high, but respondents showed variability in their responses. Regarding serviceability, the same degree of satisfaction with a lower standard deviation indicated a much better attitude. Similarly, the attitude towards product variety was low.

Although satisfaction was highest, the larger standard deviation of 1.87 suggests greater variability in customers' opinions about the store location. But the serviceability standard deviation of 0.97 indicates that respondents' satisfaction was more consistent. A lower mean satisfaction and a higher standard deviation in product variety indicate that customers were not fully satisfied.

Analysis of Correlation Coefficient between Dependent and Independent Variables

Furthermore, the research was analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient to assess the relationship between the ranks of the independent variables' means and the dependent variable, customer attitude.

Table 5

Rank Correlation Coefficient Between Dependent and Independent Variables

Factors	Mean	Actual Rank	Expected Rank	Difference(d)	d2
Product Quality	3.40	3	1	2	4
Pricing	3.36	4	2	2	4
Store Location	3.56	1.5	3	-1.5	2.25
Product Variety	3.06	5	4	1	1
Serviceability	3.56	1.5	5	-3.5	12.25
Total d2					23.5
Spearman's Rank Correlation (ρ)					-0.175

Spearman's rank correlation was calculated to assess the relationship between the independent variables (product quality, pricing, store location, product variety, and serviceability) and the dependent variable (customer attitude), with ranks based on the grand mean of responses. The expected (ideal) rank was assigned from a theoretical assumption. The rank correlation coefficient ($\rho = -0.175$) indicated a very weak negative association between the independent and dependent variables. This suggests that Ajzen's (1991) theoretical assumption was found to be inverse in this research.

Discussion

In this study, there was an effort made to analyze the attitude of customers toward local grocery stores focusing on variables like product quality, price, store location, serviceability, and product variety. Descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank correlation were utilized in order to determine the perception, satisfaction level, and the application of Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior. Positive results were observed in which the highest mean ($M = 3.56$) were attributed to store location and serviceability, indicating that consumers are very satisfied with the convenience and serviceability of the stores. This finding supports the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Similarly, Uusitalo (2001) found a direct relationship between shopping decisions and convenience and store-related attitudes. Service quality and staff behavior are important factors in satisfaction with grocery shopping (Aylott & Mitchell, 1999). Therefore, the finding confirms that positive attitudes towards local grocery stores are influenced by serviceability and location.

The findings further indicated that product quality ($M=3.40$) and pricing ($M=3.36$) were moderately satisfying. These results indicate that local grocery stores offer quality products with reasonable prices. Freshness, hygiene, and product reliability are considered factors in product quality when making a purchase, as noted by Kotler and Keller (2009). Similarly, Khan (2012) highlighted that customer show favorable attitudes towards product quality and service to meet their expectations. This study further indicates that customers have a positive attitude toward fair pricing for high-quality products offered by local grocery stores.

Among the five factors, product variety has the lowest mean score ($M=3.06$), suggesting that customers are comparatively less satisfied with the range of products offered by grocery stores. Although the mean score is not below 3, the level of dissatisfaction is not severe; the results indicate that customers expect more choices. The reason local grocery stores cannot offer a variety of products is that they are comparatively small and have limited space and investment to stock a wide selection. Atulkar and Kesari (2014) also concluded that customers prefer stores with a variety of products, enabling better product choice. Therefore, local grocery stores can improve customer satisfaction through increasing product variety based on changes in customer needs. In addition, the results of the study showed different levels of satisfaction while buying groceries since customers have various preferences based on their age, lifestyle, and other

factors. Moreover, the results provide evidence to prove that consumer attitudes are influenced by various factors, such as demographic and psychological variables (Dudziak et al., 2023). Thus, local grocery stores should be ready to change services based on customers' preferences.

This study has identified a very important result, which is the Spearman's Rank Correlation ($\rho = -0.175$), showing a very low level of the negative correlation between the theoretical ranking based on the Theory of Planned Behavior and the real ranking of the factors based on customers' feedback. This means that in Sundarharaincha, customers' preferences are not completely matching the theoretical findings. Ajzen (1991) stated that the price of the goods and quality are the main factors influencing customers' positive satisfaction, whereas the results of this study show that serviceability and store location matter the most. It may be attributed to differences in context variables such as the level of convenience, shopping habits, and relations with grocery store owners. Moreover, the findings show that attitude can change depending on market conditions, location, and local consumer psychology characteristics.

Overall, it can be concluded that the consumers from Sundarharaincha have positive attitudes towards local grocery stores. Store location and serviceability are the most significant factors influencing shoppers' satisfaction, followed by product quality and fairness of price. One area that could be improved to increase satisfaction is the product variety. It is advisable for local grocery stores to continue providing quality products at affordable prices, as consumer expectations for greater satisfaction are rising. This will help them retain customers and, therefore, increase their competitiveness in the retail market.

Conclusion

The study aims to determine customer attitudes towards the local grocery in Sundarharaincha. The results and findings were based on the questionnaire responses. The frequency, percentage, and mean of responses were used to assess their attitudes and satisfaction levels with the Local grocery. The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between customer attitudes and the services offered by the local grocery.

Apart from this, quality, price, service, variety of goods, and location are factors that affect customers' choice of a local grocery store. Based on the study, we concluded that customers are satisfied with the current prices, quality, and freshness at the local grocery store. Customers also look at the store's image before buying or visiting the grocery store. From the

results and analysis, it is concluded that customers who visit local grocery stores are mostly young. Most customers who visit the grocery store are satisfied and have a positive attitude towards it. Analyzing customers' attitudes in local grocery stores helps the store adopt new strategies to better satisfy them.

In the study, customer attitudes and satisfaction levels regarding various local grocery stores were analyzed, revealing that customers are delighted with prices, location, variety, serviceability, and the quality of goods. The quality of the products offered at the grocery store is well accepted by the customers. Most of the customers like the quality of the grocery products. Customers assume grocery products to be fresh and hygienic. So, customers are satisfied with the quality and services of the local grocery.

Based on the descriptive data analysis, the majority of respondents were satisfied with the quality and price of local groceries. Recognizing these variations and meeting the requirements of customers is very important in sustaining and growing the local grocery shop. So, it is important to constantly assess customer attitudes and satisfaction in order to get feedback about the products and services to improve upon them. Certain local grocery shops have been able to sustain a good reputation of their product quality and low costs. They need to continue doing so in the present environment and considering changes in customer needs. It is imperative that a local grocery shop fulfills the customers' demands when it comes to product quality. Pricing should be reasonable and competitive. It should conduct various promotional activities for customers and ensure proper training of the employees in customer service and other related aspects. Also, they need to consider the convenience of the current location of their store.

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