

## MIGRATION AND CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: A STUDY OF BALASORE DISTRICT IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

*In an attempt to understand the association between migration and consumer behavior, a primary survey based on 84 sample households was conducted in Balasore district of Orissa in India. It was well evident from the current study that not only migration was associated with the household article possession differential but also by one way or the other it could bring lots of changes in the perception, attitude and behavior of the individuals, related to consumption and marketing.*

**Keywords:** migration, migrant, household, possession, consumption

### INTRODUCTION

Demography has advanced to a great analytical sophistication and keeping in view of the changing societal needs, many new specialized fields have come out over the years. One such upcoming area is the consumer demographics. Generally, consumer behavior refers to actions a person takes in purchasing and using goods and services, including the mental and social processes that come before and after these actions. There are various marketing-mix, psychological, situational and socio-cultural factors influencing the buying decision of an individual as well as of a household and shape someone as a separate consumer than others. [Amurag, 2007] in his e-article "Consumer Behavior and Buying Decision Making" has pointed out that marketing in India is growing through an indefinable phase and so also the changing role of consumer in making decision and the way in which the new generation of Indian consumer behaves. The characteristics of Indian families are changing under the influence of external factors such as liberalization and

media explosion. Indian families are presently in a state of flux, shifting from being strictly hierarchical to more egalitarian in character. And the process of migration definitely has a big role to play in such transition.

[Lee and Green, 1991], has stated that whilst most of the major consumer behavior, motivation and consumption theories have been developed and tested in the Western world, relatively little attention has been devoted to investigate their validity in other cultural settings. And more to it looking at the issue from a demographic angle is a certainly an under-discussed area, at least in the developing eastern world. Three decades back, [Lloyd, 1977] had stated that although 'Migration' and 'Consumer Behavior' have received attention as separate topics in literature, the interrelationship between them has got very little attention, and probably the statement still hold true even today, at least for a country like India. Various studies have suggested that migration certainly has some contribution on consumer choice; but very little research has been done on this issue [Jamal, 2003; Molotch, 2002; Hardill et al., 2002]. Such studies would be useful not only in the field of population science, as it could attempt to find out and analyze different demographic processes going on in the society, which have a close link with the processes related to marketing and consumption, but also for the business organizations, as understanding the customers and the principles of consumer behavior is a must in order to be successful at marketing any product or service.

It is definitely not easy to understand a consumer just by looking at the broad characteristics like age, sex, religion etc. In fact, as pointed out by [Garg, 2007], to understand customers' needs today, first of all there is a need to understand their lifestyles, opinions and attitudes. Consumer behaviour has been continuously changing all over the globe. In recent time not only the options have become plenty, but also the attitude towards marketing has changed a lot. In the words of, [Hawkins et al., 1998], a consumer today may generally choose to buy most products either at a relatively high price, frequently with a significant amount of service, in a specialty store, or with lower service in a discount store. For many consumers, price becomes less important than convenience, availability, service, and time. Different segments of consumer show different behavior towards marketing. However, according to a study carried out by [Ordonez and Quezada, 2003] for Lopez Supermarket, high quality and reasonable price, friendly service and convenient location were the important factors behind the selection of primary store for marketing. It also stressed on the fact that that family composition and cultural segmentation affect the marketing behavior. According to [Sinha et al., 2002], store choice is primarily a cognitive process, a decision that a shopper is fairly involved in and it is important for a store to understand this behavior for developing marketing strategy to attract and keep its clientele. They found convenience, merchandise, ambience and service as the major factors affecting primary store choice of Indian consumers. Similarly, in a study of food store custo-

mers, [Watkins, 1976] found Price, Cleanliness, location, Quick Service, Hours Open, Products Available and Employee Attitude as the important factors motivating the customers to select a particular store.

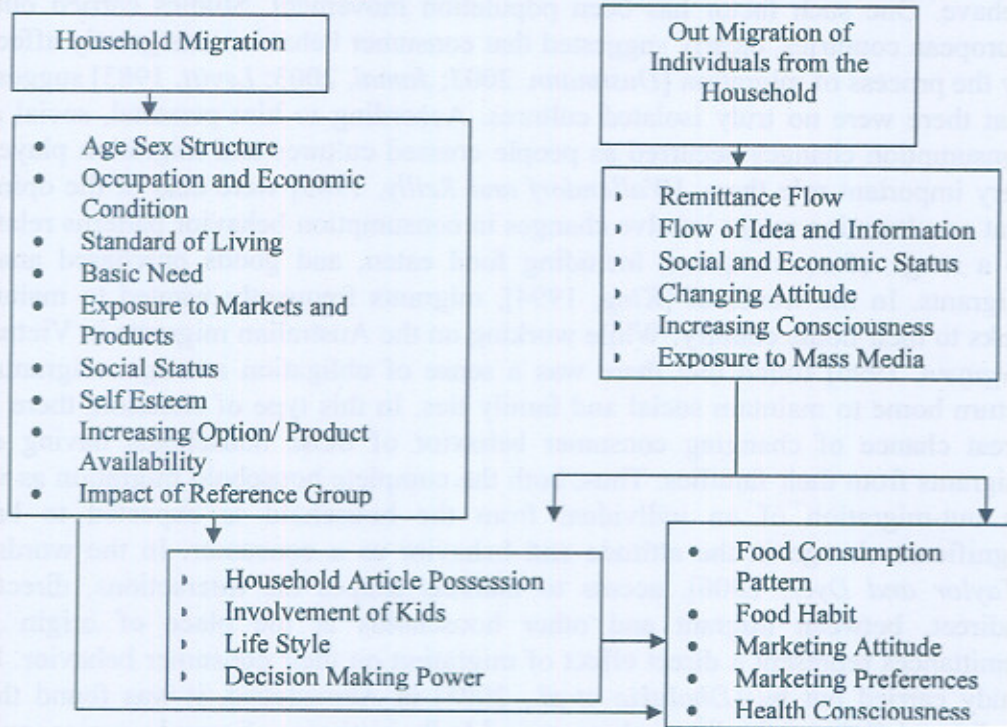
There are many factors, which decide the way a particular consumer behave. One such factor has been population movement. Studies carried out in European countries, clearly suggested that consumer behavior was greatly affected by the process of migration [Dustmann, 2003; Jamal, 2003; Levitt, 1983] suggested that there were no truly isolated cultures. According to him personal, social and consumption changes occurred as people crossed cultures and migration played a very important role there. [Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983] were also of the opinion that acculturation might involve changes in consumption behavior patterns relating to a range of consumption, including food eaten, and goods purchased among migrants. In the words of [King, 1994], migrants frequently wanted to maintain links to their home country. While working on the Australian migrants in Vietnam, [Nguyen, 1996] found that there was a sense of obligation amongst migrants to return home to maintain social and family ties. In this type of situation, there is a great chance of changing consumer behavior of those households having out-migrants from their families. Thus, both the complete household migration as well as out-migration of an individual from the household is expected to bring significant change in the attitude and behavior as a consumer. In the words of [Taylor and Dyer, 2006], access to markets shapes the interactions, direct or indirect, between migrant and other households at the place of origin and remittances represent a direct effect of migration on their consumer behavior. In a study carried out by [Dholakia et al., 2005] in Ahmedabad, it was found those traditional Gujarati families, where annual bulk purchases of cereals, grains, pulses and cooking oil constituted more than 60 percent of the total grocery, preferred more frequent and casual marketing in the supermarkets, after migrating to the city.

According to [Chen et al., 2004] there is a definite link between migration and consumer behavior. Through an empirical study on the effects of migration on the consumer behavior in China, they found that the variables representing the characteristics of households, such as location, education, the number of family members and the category of households, could explain consumer behavior as well as average income and the expectation of future income too.

In the words of [Sriraman, 2007] today's consumer is brave and adventurous, yet nervous and restrained, open and communicative, yet private and hidden. They are willing to trade and barter yet demanding high levels of service and commitment. As discussed by [Perner, 2007], consumer behavior is the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society. For this study, as

shown in Fig.1, various aspects of consumer behavior have been taken in to account, with an attempt of correlating the change of such behaviors with the process of migration.

Figure 1: Framework showing the link between migration and consumer behavior



This is an attempt to link the process of migration with consumer behavior in a typical developing world setting in the district of Balasore of the state of Orissa in India and the specific objectives are –

1. To find out the variation in household article possessions, as well as food consumption patterns of the households and role of migration if any, on them.
2. To understand the marketing behavior and preference of the person involved in maximum marketing in the family.

## THE METHODS

This study is purely based on primary data collected during February 2007, from 84 sample households selected from the district of Balasore in Orissa, which is located on the eastern coast of India. In the first step one urban center (Balasore) and one rural area (Langaleswar Village) were selected, followed by a random selection of three wards of the village, where house listing was done to find out the households having at least one current out-migrant. Then, using the house list, 20 households were selected randomly from those having at least one out-migrant and 20 households were selected from those without having any out migrants. In

addition 5 migrant households were also selected from the rural area. However, the data could be collected from 42 households in total.

The slum population of the selected urban area i.e. Balasore being around 22percent of the total city population, one slum pocket and three non slum localities were selected randomly, with a target sample size of 10 to 12 from each centre .The number of households, selected randomly from the four pockets were 10 from Jail Road (Non-slum), 10 from Bhoisahi (Non-slum), 10 from Chandmaripadia (Non-slum), and 12 from Nuapokhari (Slum).

A structured interviewing schedule was used for interviewing the wife of the working household head/major earning male member of the household in both rural and urban areas. In case of unmarried working household head, his mother was interviewed. Apart from this, the person involved in majority of marketing for the household, usually the working household head was also interviewed in each selected household.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current study is based on a sample of 84 households, with information collected from both the functional head and his wife on various aspects related to consumption and marketing. As far as the sample is concerned, out of a total size of 84, 27 were migrant households. Of the rest, 20 were natives with at least one out-migrant and 37 were natives without having any out-migrant.

### Household Article Possession

There have been plenty of studies on various aspects of migration on possession of different household articles. In fact, studies by [Taylor, 1992] and [Garip, 2010] suggested that households with migrants accumulate more assets in the long run. While analyzing the case of Kerala state in India, [Irudaya Rajan, 2004] found a sharp increase in the number and variety of consumer durables in the households in Kerala, as a result of migration. He opined that increase in household income, exposure to the use of these goods at the destination and sheer necessity for using labour-saving appliances in the changing social and demographic set up are factors associated with the rising demand for consumer durables in the households of migrants.

The findings of the current study supported the earlier literature. In fact, from table 1 it was clear that proportions of migrant households possessing articles like color TV, telephone, cooking gas, mobile, audio system; motor pump, mobile phone and scooter etc. were substantially higher than those of the households without any out-migrants. In most cases the percentage was the highest for migrant households, followed by natives having at least one out-migrant and it was the

lowest in case of those natives, who did not have any out-migrant from their households. The reason behind such trend may be an increasing affordability due to economic advancement, coupled with a change in the need system followed by exposure to the modern world. Interestingly, cycle and television was found in most of the households, which clearly suggested that television is no more an item of luxury, even in an underdeveloped state of India like Orissa and cycle is still being used as an important mode of individual transport, even today. Items like car, computer and washing machine were not available in the households without having out-migrant and the overall possession of those items was in fact very low.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Household Article Possession against Household Types, 2007

Household Article	Migrant	Native		Total
		With Out-Migrant	Without Out-Migrant	
Black & White TV	37.04	50.0	43.24	42.86
Color TV	81.49	65.0	35.14	57.15
Radio	33.33	55.0	27.03	35.72
Audio System	48.15	40.0	24.32	35.72
CD/VCD/MP3 player	55.56	50.0	29.73	42.86
Telephone	51.85	50.0	18.92	36.90
Refrigerator	70.37	45.0	32.43	47.62
Cooking gas	85.19	70.0	43.24	63.10
Oven	18.52	10.0	29.73	21.43
Cycle	88.89	90.0	91.89	90.48
Mobile Phone	70.37	60.0	32.43	51.19
Car	07.41	00.0	00.00	02.38
Water pump	44.44	35.0	16.22	29.76
Computer/Laptop	22.22	25.0	00.00	13.10
Scooter	44.44	20.0	8.11	22.62
Motorbike	44.44	35.0	32.43	36.90
Washing Machine	00.00	05.0	00.00	01.19

Source: Based on Primary Data

In most of the cases, possession of household articles was found to be the highest in case of migrants, followed by natives with out-migrant and then by natives without out-migrant. Migration was probably related to an increasing level of affordability, which when coupled with the change in the need system led to a change in the possession of different articles at the household level. It was found that mobile phone sector had already entered the non-migrant and rural households as well, to a great extent.

### Choice of Children

Working on a specific theme (decision-making in the process of migration), [Folbre, 1994] stated that the authority and decision-making primarily rests with

men because they tend to earn most of the money and children are seen as consumer goods and not economic contributors or producers within households. Though a few believe that many children in some part of the world are in fact, economic contributors [Mayall, 2002], children, however, mostly appear as passive with their roles within households are barely acknowledged [Whitehead and Hashim, 2005]. There are definitely some positive and negative impacts of giving more attention to the choice of children in household decision making and consumption pattern. However, some feel that giving children choices is a step in growing up, which helps them feel like they have some power and control over what they do (Horning and Van Horn), and much more attention should be paid to what children themselves say [Whitehead and Hashim, 2005].

Children's choices have been given little attention in the traditional societies and such behavior is expected to be modified with the process of migration. It was found that migrant households were giving more attention to the choice of their children, compared to the natives, and among the natives, the paid attention was more in case of those having out-migrant from their households than those without. It was very clear from the figure depicted in table 2, that almost 85 percent of the migrant households were giving attention to the choice of their children, whereas the figure was 74 percent for the natives having out-migrant and 64 percent for those natives, who did not have any out-migrant from their households. Remittance also seemed to play an important role in this context as almost 78 percent of the households receiving remittance paid attention to their children's choice, compared to 65 percent in case of those not receiving any remittance.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Households Giving Attention to the Choice of Children against Household Type, 2007

Household Type	Percentage
Migrant	84.62
Native with Out-Migrant	73.68
Native without Out-Migrant	63.89
Native getting Remittances	77.78
Native not getting Remittances	65.22
Total	72.84

Source: Based on Primary Data

### Attitude and Behavior towards Food Consumption Pattern

Effect of migration and acculturation on food consumption pattern is very well documented now. According to [Opore-Obisaw et al., 2002] and [Onuorah and Ayo, 2003] food habits are determined through the operation of different factors like climate, economy, belief, attitude, values, education, advertisement and some environmental religious circumstances, all of which are the products of

tradition and culture. As discussed by [Schmidhuber, 2005], the last few decades have seen fundamental changes in food consumption and lifestyles. He pointed out that the emergence of new marketing channels and the spread of super markets is one of the major drivers of such transition towards high calorie density diets saturated with fats and cholesterol like fast food. While working on a sample of black South African men, [Viljoen and Gericke, 2001] found a substantial change in the food habits and consumption patterns and they attributed such changes to the process of acculturation after urbanization and improved transport and communication. In another study on the black South Africans, [Viljoen et al., 2005] found a gradual shift in the food practices towards the Western-oriented diet. According to [Walker and Charlton, 2001], cited in [Viljoen et al., 2005] such changes can be attributed amongst others to migration, urbanization, acculturation, education and economic development. Similar findings were also obtained by [Pouretedal et al., 2008] in their study on university students of Tabriz. They found a significant increase in the consumption of junk food and fast food after entering university, especially among exotic students.

According to [Tagle, 1988] variation in family income and rural-urban migration induce changes in the food consumption pattern. [Himmelgreen et al., 2007] found that in most cases post immigration food types and behaviors represented unhealthy changes including consumption of fast food, processed food etc. In a study of on a sample of 7049 Indian factory workers, [Bansal et al., 2001] found that consumption of western food was maximum in case of the urban population followed by the migrants and minimum in case of non-migrant rural population. Interestingly, migrants within India were willing to pay higher prices to consume foods that were common in their states of origin [Atkin, 2009].

It was found that both husband and wife in majority of the sample, preferred homemade / traditional food. However, such a choice was more in case of natives without having any out-migrant, in comparison to the other two groups, in case of the husband and wife, as well as their children. But as shown in table 3, preference towards such food was found to be lower in case of the children and half of the children preferred other types food among the migrant families, where as this figure was 26.3 percent for the natives with out-migrants and 25 percent for the natives without out-migrants. It clearly reflected that compared to the children of the natives, those belonging to the migrant households were more exposed to other types of available foods, which might have affected their dietary choice.



Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Households with Preference for Home Made / Traditional Food against Household Type, 2007

Person	Migrant	Native		Total
		With Out-Migrant	Without Out-Migrant	
Self	85.2	80.0	91.9	86.9
Husband	88.9	95.0	91.4	89.3
Children	50	73.7	75.0	66.7

Source: Based on Primary Data

As far as the current study is concerned, food habit experienced a sea change with the process of migration. Table 4 clearly suggested that use of wheat, preference for fast food, frequency of consuming outside food, for all - percentages of households were found to be the highest among the migrants, followed by natives with out-migrant, followed by natives without having out-migrant. Rice being the primary staple food in this part of the world was expected to be reported as the most important staple food by almost all the respondents. However, as high as 89 percent of the migrant households used wheat as the major staple food at the dinner, whereas the figure was 65 percent for the native households having out-migrant and for the native households without having any out-migrant, rice was still the preferred staple food with only 37.8 percent of them using wheat during dinner.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Households with Different Food habit against Household type, 2007

Food Habit	Migrant	Native		Total
		With Out-Migrant	Without Out-Migrant	
Wheat as staple food at dinner	88.89	65.00	37.84	60.71
Preference of Fast Food	81.48	70.00	43.24	61.90
Bringing Packed Lunch / Dinner	70.37	15.00	13.51	32.14
Visiting out for Dinner	81.48	50.00	29.73	51.19

Source: Based on Primary Data

Fast food was clearly preferred by majority of the migrant households (81.5 percent); whereas 70 percent of the native households having out-migrant preferred fast food and only 43 percent of the native households without having any out-migrant had similar preference. Another important change was regarding ready to eat food. Visiting out for dinner was as high as 82 percent for the migrant households, whereas it was 50 percent and 30 percent for natives with and natives without out-migrant respectively. With regard to bringing packed lunch/ dinner, more than 70 percent of the migrant households had such a habit, whereas it was very low among the natives.

Regarding frequency of buying cereals and pulses, migrant households had a habit of purchasing those items in a monthly basis more compared to the native households, who preferred it buying every week, clearly suggesting the greater prevalence of the norm of monthly budget among the migrant households. Though very low, around nine percent of the native households (5 out of 57) had their own production of cereals and pulses, while the case was the same for only one migrant household. The findings were in fact, concurrent with those of [Dholakia et al., 2005].

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Households with Respect to Frequency of Buying Cereals against Household Type, 2007

Frequency	Migrant	Native		Total
		With Out-Migrant	Without Out-Migrant	
Own production	03.70	10.00	08.11	07.14
Every week	33.33	50.00	48.65	44.05
Every month	62.96	40.00	43.24	48.81

Source: Based on Primary Data

#### Marketing Behavior and Choice: Perception of the Functional Head

Four decades back, [Kelley, 1969] opined that migrants are assumed to take on the behavioral and economic characteristics of the area in which they reside. According to [Luna and Gupta, 2001], as migrants are exposed to their host culture they begin to acculturate and may adopt its norms of behavior. In the words of [Douglas and Craig, 1997] increased migration is one of the forces that are causing radical changes in consumer behavior. [Deshpande et al., 1986] are of the opinion too that acculturation also moderates sub cultural influences on behaviors like brand loyalty and purchase of prestige products to name a few.

It is clear from the table 6 that marketing behaviors like “visiting shops with brand name”, “looking at the brands”, “looking at the health claim”, “looking at the expiry date”, “giving more importance to quality” etc. became more intense with the process of migration, whereas habits of “looking at the price” and “comparing price” came down in the process. It was found that fewer respondents among the native households without having any out-migrant were conscious about not using polythene when compared to the other groups; but there was not a single respondent in the entire sample, which did not use it. It was also found that there was hardly any change regarding “getting motivated by neighbor’s possession” and very few people looked at the ingredients especially while buying foodstuff, be it a migrant household or native.

Table 6 suggested that people became more conscious about brand, health claim, expiry date, quality etc.; but started giving lesser attention to price, after the process of migration. Looking at the health claim, being a very important aspect needed special attention by the buyers. However, only 22 percent of the native households without having any out-migrant were looking at the health claim, compared to 48 percent and 60 percent of the migrant households and native households with out-migrant respectively; and the trend was same in case of looking at the expiry date too. It can be well inferred from the current study that while migrant households and those households with out-migrants were found to be more status seeking consumers, natives without any out-migrant from the households were found to be more budget-conscious consumers.

Table 6: Percentage Distribution of Households regarding marketing Attitude of the Working/ Functional Head against Household Type, 2007

Marketing Attitude/ Behavior	Migrant	Native		Total
		With Out-Migrant	Without Out-Migrant	
Buying new / special items	59.26	40.00	59.46	54.76
Motivated by neighbors possessions	25.93	30.00	24.32	26.19
Stocking up item when find a bargain	85.19	70.00	75.68	77.38
Comparing price	81.48	85.00	89.19	85.71
Paying more for national brand	70.37	95.00	72.97	77.38
Buying items only if in the list	85.19	55.00	72.97	72.62
Use of polythene bag	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
If polythene should not be used	85.19	85.00	81.08	83.33
Visiting shop with brands name	70.37	75.00	54.05	64.29
Always looking at the Price	44.44	45.00	64.86	53.57
Always looking at the Brand Name	59.26	55.00	40.54	50.00
Always looking at the Health Claim	48.15	60.00	21.62	39.29
Always looking at the Expiry Date	81.48	80.00	54.05	45.24
Always looking at the Ingredient	11.11	15.00	10.81	11.90
Looking at Quality over Price	70.37	80.00	59.46	67.86

Source: Based on Primary Data

When asked about the major goal of saving (as shown in Table 7), it was found that majority of the household heads preferred to buy high-class goods, in the sample. Interestingly, more than 24 percent of the native household heads without out-migrant reported about their interest of buying automobiles, which was

too low i.e. 3.7 percent in case of the migrant households. The reason behind such response could be the extent of current possession of automobiles in the households. It was also found that 30 percent of the migrant household heads reported about investment as the major goal of saving, while 15 percent of the natives with out-migrant and 2.7 percent of the natives without having out-migrant reported so. It could be referred from the figure that heads of the migrant households were more conscious about the growth of their income source, compared to those of the natives.

Table 7: Percentage Distribution of Households with respect to the Major goal of saving of the Functional Head against Household Type, 2007

Major Goal	Migrant	Native		Total
		With Out-Migrant	Without Out-Migrant	
Buying high class goods	33.33	45.00	40.54	39.29
Marriage of children	33.33	25.00	32.43	30.95
Buying automobile	03.70	15.00	24.32	15.48
Investment	29.63	15.00	2.70	14.29

Source: Based on Primary Data

According to [Darling, 1996], the five major factors influencing consumers' shopping patterns are convenience, service, selection, price and quality. In this study, when asked about the factors affecting the choice of primary store selection (as shown in table 8), majority of the respondents reported about friendly employee. The second most important factor was found to be availability of high quality products and the response was similar across all the categories of respondents. However, location and cleanliness were regarded as equally important issues by the migrant household heads. More than 22 percent of the migrant household heads reported location and cleanliness as important factors, compared to 15 percent and 11 percent in case of native heads with out-migrant and those without out-migrant respectively. The trend was just the reverse when price, gift and attention were taken in to consideration. It was quite clear that while the households involved in the process of migration were more inclined towards high quality, comfort and cleanliness, those without any out-migrant from the households were more inclined towards better quality and lower price. However, most of the consumers were interested in visiting the shops having courteous and friendly employee.

Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Households with respect to the major factor affecting the Functional Head regarding choice of Primary Store against Household Type, 2007

Most Important Factor	Migrant	Native		Total
		With Out-Migrant	Without Out-Migrant	
Product Quality	29.6	30.0	29.7	29.8
Friendly Employee	29.6	35.0	32.4	32.1
Price, Gift & Attention	11.1	15.0	18.9	15.5
Location	7.4	5.0	5.4	6.0
Cleanliness	14.8	10.0	5.4	9.5
Checkout Time	7.4	5.0	8.1	7.1

Source: Based on Primary Data

Two more important issues were preferred marketing time and perception about brands. It was observed among the samples that evening was the most preferred time for shopping. However, shopping during the holidays was reported to be relatively higher among the migrant households. It suggested that holiday shopping is becoming a trend for the migrant households, mostly because of an urban location and time-constraint during the working days.

Brand names are usually considered to be the indicator of quality. But at the same time, higher price, which is also considered as another indicator of quality, is required to be paid for purchasing items of a reputed brand. As discussed earlier, the migrants were found to be more status seeking consumers and as such, considered brands to be almost synonymous with reliability and quality. On the other hand, budget conscious non-migrant consumers though felt that quality was definitely associated with brands, price of such products were much higher, than one could expect to pay for that quality.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the process of migration, the requirement, attitude and behavior related to consumption changes drastically. Individuals as well as the entire household get exposed to new and different products, which when coupled with other factors result in a shift in the consumption pattern. It was well evident from the current study that migration by one way or the other could bring a lot of changes in the perception, attitude and behavior of the individuals related to consumption and marketing. The decisions taken by a consumer depend on a number of factors and understanding them would provide valuable inputs for proper planning of markets, projecting future requirements and suggesting possible steps to solve the problems associated with changing food habits and other consumption patterns. In the word

of [Kotler, 1994] understanding the buying behavior of the target market is the essential task of marketing managers. There have been plenty of research works in the developed nations regarding the major drivers of consumption pattern and behavior. However, such studies are relatively few in the developing world, especially in India. The current study suggested a few links between the process of migration and changing behavior of the consumers in the district of Balasore. However, as suggested by [Douglas and Craig, 1997] future studies must also examine the role of immigration on the host culture i.e. how migration affect the consumer behavior of the natives at the place of destination.

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