

Marketing Strategies vis-à-vis Consumer Preference for Aquarium Business Service

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Abstract - Aquarium business service in India recorded a value of US\$ 1.3 million in the export trade in the year 2006 according to Food and Agriculture Organization. Internationally, Singapore ranks first with US\$ 49.5 million, and Zech Republic, Japan and Malaysia stood almost equally 7% in aquarium fish trade. Robert fanner (2001) reported that the concept of running a service company in contrast with retail business is not new to many industries. The service sectors provide employment for favourable economic growth. In this direction, in order to develop market for aquarium business service, there is need to studying consumer preference and existing marketing strategies, adopted by aquarists. The objectives of the study are to identify consumer preference for ornamental fish with profile of aquarium keeping customers and to study the existing marketing strategies adopted by ornamental fish aquarium business service providers. Selvarasu A. and Sankaran A. (2010) have developed a marketing scale to measure consumer preference for aquarium hobby. In addition, an interview schedule have been planned to review the existing marketing strategies as on year 2010.

Keywords: *marketing strategy, aquarium, consumer preference, aquarium business service, ornamental fish*

1. Market Situation of Aquarium Business Service

Ornamental fish keeping is a popular hobby in developed countries and is gaining popularity in many developing countries. The growing interest in aquarium fishes has resulted in steady increase in aquarium fish trade, globally. According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2006), export earnings from ornamental fish trade is US \$ 251 million and more than 60% of the production comes from households of developing countries. The wholesale value of the global ornamental fish trade is estimated to be US \$ 14 Billion. More than 2500 species of ornamental fishes are traded and some 30-35 species of fresh water dominate the market. The trade with an annual growth rate of 8 percent offers a lot of scope for development. India's share in global ornamental fish trade is negligible and at present the ornamental fish export from India is dominated by the wild caught species. The top exporting country is Singapore, followed by Hong Kong,

Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Indonesia and India. The largest importer of ornamental fish is USA. Europe and Japan, China and South Africa are the emerging markets of ornamental fish trade.

Ornamental fishes market in the world for public aquaria is less than 1% at present and over 99% of the market for ornamental fish is still confined to hobbyist. The brilliant, flamboyant colour and exotic appearance of the fish appeal to one and all children and aged alike. As the day passed, ornamental fish keeping become an interesting activity for many, in the process, generating income for the unemployed youth and farmers. The concept of entrepreneurship development, through ornamental fish farming is gaining popularity day-by-day. Many numbers of people are entering into this business of culturing, breeding and farming. In India, out of total export of ornamental fish, 95% is based on wild collection. Majority of the indigenous ornamental fish trade is from the North Eastern states and Southern states in India. The capture of ornamental fish is based on development of the fish culture. Fish species grown for their importance, can be successfully bred in India. The ornamental fish trade depends upon supply and demand, which is possible only by mass breeding.

Ornamental fish market linkage exists between buyers and sellers as well as domestic and international market. In order to strengthen Indian position in international ornamental fish trade, MPEDA has implemented several strategies to adopt in terms of technology, infrastructure in order of to develop export demand based production for major importers in EU, USA and Japan. The distribution and marketing channel for the ornamental fish and plants in India is developing. The exporter (or) wholesaler plays on important role in promoting breeders and consumers. Wholesaler usually sells the fishes to local retailers and in turn, retailers directly sales to local customers, hobbyists etc.

1.1 Consumer Preference for Aquarium Business Service

Consumer means an individual who purchase goods and services to satisfy his personal or household needs and wants. According to a statement made by mahatma Gandhi, "A consumer is the most important on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an outsider to our business. He is part of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving him. He is doing us a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so". So, consumer is life blood of

business and a consumer who is satisfied gives a word of mouth advertisement for goods and services. The consumer is buying goods, keeping in mind the performance of product and expected features such as quality, value, performance, and special features. Every one is a consumer of different products. If there is no consumer, there is no business. Therefore, consumer satisfaction is very important to every business person. Every one of us in the community group is a consumer in some respect of living standards. Business services can exist only with the interaction of consumers. It is the responsibility of business firms to keep consumer satisfied at all times. According to Philip Kotler, consumer satisfaction is defined as “personal feeling of pleasure resulting from comparing products and perceived performance in relation to expectations”.

1.2 Marketing Strategy for Aquarium Business Service

The term “strategy” comes from the Greek word “Strategic” and it means “generalship”. The strategy focuses on long-term company objectives and planning, marketing programs, visions as well as goals. Marketing strategies generally include price reduction for market share growth, product differentiation, and market segmentation, as well as numerous specific strategies for specific areas of marketing. Strategy can be formulated by individuals, groups and organizations. The strategic thinking focuses on competitive advantage, consumer needs and wants, creativity, and flexibility. It is grouped as (i) customer oriented marketing strategy, (ii) competitor oriented marketing strategy. Customer oriented marketing strategy help to establish long term relationship between customers and business where as Competitor oriented marketing strategy focuses on outdoing competitors by product, prices, place, and promotion. The specific marketing strategy is planned for the following situations as pioneer strategy, follower strategy, fortress strategy, flankers strategy, market expansion strategy, withdrawal strategy, frontal attack strategy, leapfrog attack strategy, encirclement strategy, guerrilla attack strategy, divestment strategy, global strategy, national strategy, exporting strategy, pricing strategy, channels strategy, and promotion strategy.

2. Review of Literature

There are four various articles referred and the essence of market situation for ornamental fish aquarium business is presented. The concepts that are revisited in this section are as follows; (1) macro-diagnostic and marketing; (2) aquarium business service company; (3) fish farming and marketing; (4) fish keeping for hobby; (5) fish health consultancy services.

2.1 Market Situation for Aquarium Business Service

Mark Whittington (2000) stated that the ornamental fish trade in Mozambique comprised information of macro – diagnostic gathering data about the status and management of the ornamental fish trade worldwide.

Also, a project appraisal, which included a preliminary field study of the biological and socio economic impacts of previous ornamental fish collection activities in inhambane province. Robert Fenner (2001) reported that the concept of running a service company in contrast with a retail business is not new to many industries. The service sectors provide employment for more economic growth. The critical elements of this retail business were stated as finance, personnel, location, set up and stock. Sudhi K.S. (2002) stated that marine products export development authority supported financial aid for the analysis of ornamental fishes in Kerala as market development in India and abroad. Ornamental fish farming and aquarium keeping were reported as a major business in the state. The marketing of aquarium systems is also emerging in the state as a booming business, which mainly targets posh hotels, corporate offices and other business establishments.

Liffy Thomas (2010) reported that fish keeping as a hobby prevalent for decades but the kind of interest and time many individuals have started giving it is on the rise. It is reported that hobbyist felt as fish is a good pet as they are silent, easy to maintain and a delight to watch. The climatic condition is stated as other reason for ornamental fish industry as an important market. The entry of exotic varieties from other countries and increased interest in vaastu fish added to the existing demand that has resulted in people going any extent for care and keep of aquarium. Rajaraman V. is reported to be one the fish health consultants in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, a state of India, who treats around 20 numbers of patients a day, especially during October and January. Owner of varieties such as flower horn and arowana is major customers. The aqua clinic for 10 days treatment charges vary between US \$ 14.40 and US \$ 33.30. The customers receive around 20 numbers of queries a week asking about maintaining a fish tank and other issues from consultant.

2.2 Market Availability of Ornamental Fish Varieties

There are two various articles referred and the essence of market availability for ornamental fish aquarium business service is presented. The concepts that are revisited in this section are as follows; (1) export trade; (2) availability of ornamental fish. Martin Thoene (1999) presented a collection of Indian fishes covering 10 orders, 53 families, 119 genera and 250 species that are considered as suitable for aquarium keeping. Insights into the geography, vegetation type regions, political zones, population distribution etc. have also been emphasized by researcher. It is that the aquarium trade in India depends on natural live food availability. According to the researcher, many foreign fish species are farmed purely for the aquarium export trade market availability of ornamental fish varieties. Rajeev Raghavan et al. (2007) reported that seventy one fish species belong to 27 numbers of families and 50 numbers of general categories were collected from various sampling sites along the Chalakudy River in

Kerala, South India. Indiscriminate collection of ornamental fish species for export, exploitation of endangered food fishes by forest dwelling communities and local fishes folk, pollution, loss of riparian cover, damming and exotic species diversity of Chalakudy River was also reported.

2.3 Market Risk analysis of ornamental fish aquarium business

There is only one articles referred and the essence of market risk analysis of ornamental fish aquarium business service. The concepts that are revisited in this sections are as follows; (1) potential economic cost value and environmental effects. Paul Lajicek et al. (2009) reported that a known risk analysis process to access risk associated with marine ornamental pathway of market coverage on expert panel of 18 importer, wholesaler, retailer, producer, researcher, and extension agency representatives implemented. The participants produced the reviews; marine ornamental trade description assessed the ecological risks to Florida waters, determined the escape risk at each link and mode in the pathway and suggested risk instigations action. They were very certain about the potential economic costs high based upon literature and general knowledge. Potential and real environmental effects were suggested for the direct customer solves link and the consumer mode.

2.4 Business opportunities for ornamental fish production in India

There are four various articles referred and the essence of business opportunities for ornamental fish aquarium business service is presented. The concepts that are revisited in this section are as follows; (1) self employments; (2) aquarium maintenance service; (3) creation of advertising; (4) agribusiness opportunities.

Robert Fenner (2001) stated that for the pet business primary objectives are desire in self employment as well as doing small business which is the backbone of the economy. The successful keeping and reproducing aquatic life well being, a good hobbyist should easily translate into being good retailers. Actually, the knowledge, skills, methods, and attitudes of being a good pet keeper are vital to successful retailing the business. Duane Clark (2002) reported that two common ideas of pet business in ornamental fisher are-either breeding fish or starting an aquarium maintenance service. Breeding fish can certainly help pay for your hobby but running an aquarium maintenance service actually generate profit. However, before a person run off to start his own service, he must consider a few things such as motivation, research, necessities, finding clients, customer service, pricing, advice etc. Jay Shaw (2002) reported that aquarium business service is creation of advertising. Almost all of business clients, contact aquarists because of a tank, hobbyist saw else where, that the work done by him. Most people associate a spotless tank with a healthy

environment, and maintenance package. These rules of business protect business flow and investment on client base. To decrease health risks on client's fish, have them resist from adding fish without aquarists consent. Also, perform the maintenance tasks at off peak business hours. This protects the client customers from potential accidents.

Mandal Subhasis, et al. (2006) researcher reported that ornamental fish is providing marketing opportunities. Several agribusiness opportunities be provided for the collection and selling of native ornamental fish as well as rearing of exotic ornamental fish species suitable to the region. It has been stated that the agribusiness opportunities be realized at every stage, namely, production, marketing and conservation of ornamental fishes. The ornamental fish production in the region has been observed to be financially as well as economically viable and investment friendly. The ornamental fish production increases the employment opportunities.

2.5 Ornamental Fish Aquarium Management Service

There are three various articles referred and the essence of aquarium management service is presented. The concepts that are revisited in this section are as follows; (1) maintain water quality parameters; (2) aquarium management requirements; (3) keeping feeding time, disease prevention. Jason Shaw (2001) reported that aquarium fish disease is directly related to stress, and the best way of fighting disease is prevention. Knowing in detail the species of fish, clients are keeping and its requirements is very important. Without this information, aquarists are doomed from the beginning. There are specific water quality parameters that are very different for each species, pH, temperature, water hardness, salinity and many other trace elements. The most exciting parts of keeping fish is feeding time. Hopefully, this has given a little more insight on disease prevention, remedies and purchasing of new fish.

Kevin Thurston (2002) stated that early days of the hobby, there were various methods for shops to obtain their fish, but the late 60's, the local wholesaler had gotten a foothold and was on the rise. The local wholesaler dealt with fish farms and overseas suppliers in the '70s, a new type of company began to emerge called transship per. These companies would deal with foreign suppliers. In the '80s, the transshippers for much better at developing water change and repacking techniques. These trends have continued through the '90s to the present, these are a few local wholesalers let, but they have been managed to stay in business through exclusive contracts with chains such as Wal-Mart, paucity, and pet ranch. Adrian Lawler (2007) reported that aquarium management requires knowing enough about many subjects in order to do all aspects of an aquarium operation, plus practicing constant diligence, observation and work. As they are dealing with living

organisms held under unnatural conditions some failures are expected.

2.6 Marketing Strategies for Ornamental Fish Aquarium Business Service

There is only one article referred and the essence of marketing strategies for ornamental fish aquarium business service is presented. The concepts that are revisited in this section are as follows; (1) business concepts; (2) strategic planning and business plans.

Andrew Palfreman (1999) stated that the business concepts relevant to managing small and medium sized enterprises. It has been designed to equip readers with the managerial tools to set up and run their own business. The topics discussed are, strategic planning and the business plan, game theory, how to set up a fish business, aspects of marketing, exporting fish and fish products, privatization, the common fisheries policy, setting up a fish action, management and financial analysis of projects, policies for development of the private sector and fully worked case studies.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Statement of Problem

In the event of economic growth all over the world, stress has become evident among all people. In order to get relieved from stress, every one has cultivated the habit of hobby as part and parcel of their way of life. There are different growing businesses related to hobby in maintaining aquarium in the institutional offices and also at the household. The supply of ornamental fish is providing way for eco- friendly breeding and rearing activities. In line with aquarium business service to support the hobby, promotion is done through various schemes at the initiatives of governments and non government agencies. It is understood that the hobby of mainly aquarium has been in practices in developed countries very well. However, this has been adopted in developing countries in the initial stage. In this context, it is imperative to see a problem in setting up business support as well as develop the market with suitable marketing strategies. It is true that there are problems reported in the maintenance of health of fish as well as reacting customers with modern equipments.

3.2 Need for the Study

The present study intends to specify marketing strategies for ornamental fish aquarium business service in an introductory phase. Also it tries to identify the marketing strategy vis-à-vis consumer preference. The previous research work has focused on breeding, rearing and maintenance of aquarium business service. But in this work successful ornamental fish aquarium business people support and provide in existing marketing strategy. In this process, aquarium shop owners and users are coming up with new and innovative ideas to improve the sales volume on aquarium business service. It is aimed at specifying strategies to increase sales that

satisfy the aquarium users based on consumer preference.

3.3 Objectives of the Study

The following five objectives have been proposed for the purpose of studying customers' preference for aquarium keeping.

- a) To identify the consumer preference for ornamental fish and profile of customer
- b) To find out the varieties of fishes and ornamental fish aquarium business service (ABS).
- c) To verify the sources of supply for setting up of ornamental fish aquarium
- d) To study the existing consumer preference vis-a-vis marketing strategies adopted by ornamental fish aquarium business service providers.

To design strategies for promoting ornamental fish aquarium business service.

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection is based on two unique methodology prescribed for the study. The primary data have been collected through survey among aquarium keeping customers. The sales data have been extracted from aquarium seller's records on the basis of weekly sales for a period from January to August 2010. Selvarasu A. and Sankaran A. (2010) have developed a marketing scale to study the consumer preference and marketing strategies demanded for aquarium business. In order to collect data, filed survey was conducted from May to August 2010.

3.4 Sampling

The quota sampling methods have been adopted to select sample respondents. The sample size is 150 individual respondents of aquarium keeping customers. The study area is Cuddalore district and sample unit are houses, business enterprises (including aquarium shops), and institutions. In the pilot study using 30 users of aquarium in the form different state houses (household person & hobbyist), business enterprises and institutions in the proportion of 0.95 (0.17 & 0.78); 0.04; and 0.01; respectively. The study period spread from September 2009 to August 2010.

4. Results

The compilation of data and its results are presented in Table 1 for better understanding.

4.1 Profile of Aquarium Users

In the study, the share of hobbyists are more than 78%, household customers are about 17% and other two categories of business enterprise, and institution respondents are under 5% as presented in the appendix [refer Table 1 and Fig.1]. The share of customers with Graduation (Under Graduate) are more than 44%, Secondary level are about 37% and Post-Graduation

level are 15% and others are under 10%. The share of customers below 20 years and 20-30 years of age group are more than 40% and 30-40 years of age are 12% and other categories of respondents are under 10%. The share of male customers is more than 69% and female are 31%. The share of customers with an annual income of US\$1100-US\$2200 are more than 35%, below US\$1100 are 13.3%, and other three categories, US\$2200-US\$3300, US\$3300-US\$4400, and above US\$4400 are under 16.7%. A sizable portion of around 34% of customers does not disclose their income. The share of customers below 5 year of experience in aquarium keeping are more than 67% and above 5 years of experience are 33%.

4.2 Customer' Knowledge about Aquarium Keeping

The share of respondents who have not attended training programme on aquarium keeping is more than 87% and those who have attended are only 13%. The shares of respondents who have professional knowledge are 39% and more than 61% of them have no professional expertise in aquarium. The share of community type of aquarium are more than 65% and 29% of respondents are familiars with single species aquarium. The shares of customers keeping pets like ornamental fish are more than 87% and other three categories of pets like dog, rabbit and birds are under 13%. The share of customers who are using modern aquarium equipments is more than 65% and another category of non-users of modern aquarium equipment are more than 35%. The shares of respondents who are aware about marine fish aquarium are more than 51% and others those who are unaware are more than 49%. The shares of aquarium users who are aware about synthetic salt are more than 17% and who are unaware of it is more than 83%.

5. Suggestions

The suggestions are given for marketing strategy in various sections as prescription based on the aquarium keeping customers' preference for promoting Aquarium Business Service (ABS).

Based on the outcome of field level study of Aquarium marketers, the power of existing aquarium shop owners is found to be doing ornamental fish aquarium business service as their main business process with two significant aspects such as professional knowledge and back-end support for fish hatchery and farming. In addition, shop owners have established business linkage with two important sellers market and one major buyers market. The shop owner in the district level have the support of getting new arrivals in the aquarium models through Chennai which is the traders market and the buyer's market is considered to be Bangalore, India.

The target market for aquarium business service is household persons, hobbyists, business enterprises and institution. The demand for fish variety's range from 5 to 25 and for aquarium models from three to five. It is also proved that the aquarium users are in the proportion of 1:2 ratio as female and male. In the age group of below 20 years and 20-30 years equally. It is interesting to note that almost all of them are in the category of Graduation level and they are in the category of youth population. The preference for aquarium is reported in the following section.

- (i). It is suggested to marketers in order to cater to the need for aquarium among household persons by keeping features of aquarium.
- (ii). For hobbyists' need for aquarium has to be met with offering quality of Aquarium business Service.
- (iii). Business enterprises' need for aquarium has to be offered based on value-for-money while offering aquarium business service.
- (iv). Institutions' need for aquarium has to be offered keeping three aspects like quality, value-for-money and features equally of aquarium business service.
- (v). Aquarium Business Service need to be offered by way of penetrating into the customers interest in hobby as they show little interest in attending training. The hobby is developed by acquiring experience in a phased manner.
- (vi). Male and female customers have to be focused with difference in quality, value-for-money, features and value depending on their requirements.
- (vii). Quality of aquarium has to be kept in mind depending on the customers' preference for usage of modern equipments.
- (viii). Value-for-Money is the key to serve customers who have professional knowledge in aquarium keeping.
- (ix). Features of aquarium have to be looked in to when serving customer whose knowledge in using synthetic salt for marine ornamental fish aquarium.
- (x). It is suggested that when value of aquarium become need of customers, features have to be added in direct proportion as these two dimensions are positively related. In addition, quality and value-for-money have also been verified as a bundle of offer.

It is desirable to focus on male customers than female customers and Value dimension has to be given importance while making marketing offers for Aquarium Business Service. In addition, Quality and Mavenism have to be promoted on par with Value-for Money.

6. Conclusions

Aquarium business service is an emerging field of business in India. The target market for aquarium business service is household persons, hobbyists, business enterprises and institution. The demand for fish variety's range from 5 to 25 and for aquarium models from three to five. The target group is expected to have an annual income of US\$1100 to US\$2200 and in the age group of 20 years of age to 30 years of age with graduation level of educational qualification. It is considered to be the most preferred hobby. All five dimensions of aquarium like Value, Quality, Features, Mavenism and Value-for-Money, have its significant importance depending on the category of customers. The future of promotion of aquarium business service depends on the Value proposition and Feature of Aquarium as a whole.

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Table-1: PROFILE OF AQUARIUM USERS

S.NO	DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	CLASSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Category of respondents	Household customer	26	17.3
		Hobbyist	117	78.0
		Business enterprise	6	4.0
		Institution	1	0.7
		Total	150	100.0
2	Qualification	Below Hr. Sec. level	56	37.3
		Undergraduate level	66	44.0
		Postgraduate level	23	15.3
		Others	5	3.3
		Total	150	100.0
3	Age in years	Below 20	60	40.0
		20-30	60	40.0
		30-40	19	12.7
		40-50	7	4.7
		above 50	4	2.7
		Total	150	100.0
4	Gender	Male	104	69.3
		Female	46	30.7
		Total	150	100.0
5	Average annual income	Not response	52	34.7
		<US\$1100	20	13.3
		US\$1100-US\$2200	53	35.3
		US\$2200-US\$3300	16	10.7
		US\$3300-US\$4400	3	2.0
		>US\$4400	6	4.0
		Total	150	100.0
6	Experience in aquarium	<5 years	100	66.7
		>5 years	50	33.3
		Total	150	100.0
7	Training program	Attended	19	12.7
		Not attended	131	87.3
		Total	150	100.0
8	Professional knowledge	Professional	58	38.7
		Non-professional	92	61.3
		Total	150	100.0
9	Familiar aquarium	Single species aquarium	44	29.3
		Community type aquarium	97	64.7
		None	9	6.0
		Total	150	100.0
10	Pets	Dog	9	6.0
		Rabbit	7	4.7
		Ornamental fish	130	86.7
		Birds	4	2.7
		Total	150	100.0
11	Modern aquarium equipments	Users	98	65.3
		Non-users	52	34.7
		Total	150	100.0
12	Marine ornamental fish	Aware	76	50.7
		Unaware	74	49.3
		Total	150	100.0
13	Synthetic salt	Aware	26	17.3
		Unaware	124	82.7
		Total	150	100.0