INTRODUCTION

Mahjabeen Aydeed “Availability and use of information for managerial decision making of information technology industry in Kerala” Thesis. Department of Library and Information Science, University of Calicut, 2015
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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The introduction for the study by explaining the various aspects of managerial decision making by stressing the role of information in decision making and the need, significance, scope and limitations of study along with the objectives and hypotheses of the study are presented in this chapter.
1.1. INTRODUCTION

The human civilization is witnessing a transition from the industrial age to the modern information age in which every domain of society like business, education, health, government etc. constantly engage in a struggle for information. It is very obvious that in today’s complex society no meaningful development can be achieved in the absence of proper and reliable information. The socio-economic, political and technological development of a nation heavily relies upon the availability and access to information. Information is also regarded as a vital input for the development and establishment of an industry. It is one of the powerful sources of industrial development of any country as it is very much necessary for the day to day operations of an industry.

Industries are the backbone of the economic structure of a country. Today, industrial corporations have emerged as an important part of the economy and are continuously evolving to keep up with the pace of reform and increased global competition. Appropriate management of industries entails planning, directing, controlling, decision making, and forecasting to ensure productive operations. Adequate information is required for their establishments, functioning, regular supply of raw materials, production, marketing the products and diversification of the industries. From the small scale industries to the large multinational corporations, managers are looking for the right information in the right format provided at the right moment to make key decisions. In addition to the raw materials of capital and labour, more and more information is required for industries and it must be planned, protected, preserved, and controlled as other valuable assets.
As Davis and Olson (2002) reports “As much as eighty per cent of a typical executive’s time is spent in the processing and communication of information. More than fifty per cent of the United States work force is employed in jobs that involve some form of information processing. A large proportion of these employees are “Knowledge Workers”; their duties involve the production and use of information outputs like documents, reports, analyses, plan, etc. This statement of eminent experts in the field of Management Information Systems, clearly validate the significance of information for employees.

During the past fifty years, the Information Technology industry has been continually evolving and performing an increased role in driving economic growth and prosperity. As the IT industry evolves to meet the technological demands of today’s organisations and has a great role in improving the other sectors of economy, the IT professionals must be well informed and skilled who are responsible for helping others get their work done efficiently without the complex jargon of the technology world. Today, more and more information is needed by planners, policy makers, managers, technologists, as well as market analysts and decision makers to manage organisations, large and small.

Information is required for organisations to serve a host of purposes ranging from the most critical, like decision making, strategizing, and planning, to the operational control. Organisations need socio-economic data, information on current plans and projects, financial data, marketing data, information on technologies, equipment, management practices, on-going industrial and technological research, and legislation etc. Information on the internal and external aspects of the organisation is a vital factor for decision making in any industry. Managers and other professionals in a firm need internal information for performing the duties effectively and information on
external environment is essential in order to trace the strategic threats and opportunities. It is therefore, obligatory on the part of any business organisation to provide information to its employees to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in their area of specialisation. This will increase their effectiveness and enhance the productivity of the organisation and is essential to adapt to the complex and dynamic business environment. In the absence of accurate and timely information people and organisations are liable to make wrong decisions. Organisations must adopt effective information management processes at each stage of their functioning.

Information and communication technology have a great impact on each and every type of industry, trade and business by optimising the use of scarce resources and streamlining a variety of services. The impact of technology had a great effect on managerial decision making since the information from wide variety of sources is available and passed through the communication network within the limited span of time. Internet and its application improve the accuracy of forecasting and the performance of decision making through better internal and external communication. Recent advances in information technology have dramatically increased the speed at which information is delivered to decision makers and the speed with which decisions can be made. Today, due to the advancement of IT, information systems are playing a strategic role in organisations. Information systems make it possible for firms to manage their information, make better decisions, and improve the execution of their business processes. The organisation, the employees as well as the information society each play an important role in dealing effectively with information and communication technology and they influence each other.
1.2. DECISION MAKING IN MANAGEMENT

Management is the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims. It is a distinct process consisting of the activities of planning, organising, actuating, controlling and decision making. It organises men, materials, technology, money and other resources in the business areas of Marketing, Production, Sales, Research & Development, Human Resource, Finance, and Operations etc. through the various levels of management performed to determine and accomplish stated objectives. It is the force that unifies human as well as non-human resources to achieve the organisational goals (Weihrich, 2005).

Decision making is an integral part of management which permeates through all the managerial functions and in all areas of business. It is the process by which individuals select a course of action among several alternatives to produce a desired result. In every function of management, choice has to be made among alternative courses of action. According to Peter F. Drucker, Father of modern management, “whatever a manager does, he does through decision making” (Rao& Krishna, 2007).

Decision making is essential in all functional areas of management and in all managerial functioning such as planning, organising, directing and controlling. In planning, through the process of decision making, the objectives and policies are laid down. In organising, decision making relates to the choice of structure, nature and form of organisation, division of work and delegation of authority and responsibility. In directing, decision making relates to determining the course of action, deciding the orders and instructions to be given providing leadership, etc. Controlling the decisions relate to laying down performance standards, strategic control points, procedure for control, etc. (Kesavan, Elanchezhian & Rammath, 2004).
Managers at all levels make decisions that ultimately influence the survival of organisation. Decisions are required to be made regarding various elements of management and matters involved there in, such as determination of organisational goals and other plans, designing the structure of organisation, devising controlling techniques, scheduling network of communication and designing motivational systems. The managers have also to decide upon various issues related to functional areas like Production, Distribution, Finance, Personnel and purchase, etc. Thus it runs through the entire process of management and all sub-systems of organisation.

1.3. STAGES OF DECISION MAKING.

Decision making involves a series of steps which are taken in a logical manner. This is treated as a rational or scientific 'decision-making process' which is a lengthy and time consuming process or steps that are logically arranged that needs to be followed in order to take rational or result oriented decisions. It was Peter Drucker who first strongly advocated the scientific method of rational decision-making in 1955, which according to him, involves the following six steps:

1.3.1. Defining or Identifying Managerial Problem

Sufficient time should be spent for defining the problem as it is not always easy to define the problem and to see the fundamental thing that is causing the trouble that needs correction. Practically, no problem ever presents itself in a manner that an immediate decision may be taken. It is therefore, essential to define the problem before any action is taken. Clear definition of the problem is very important as the right answer can be found only to a right question.
1.3.2. Analysing the Problem

After clearly recognising the problem, the next phase of decision making is the analysis of problem which involves classifying the problem and gathering information. Classification is necessary in order to know who should take the decision and who should be consulted in order to implement that decision.

1.3.3. Developing Alternative Solutions

After defining and analysing the problem, the next step in the decision making process is the development of alternative courses of action.

1.3.4. Selecting the Best solution out of Available Alternatives

In order to make the final choice of the best alternative, one will have to evaluate all the possible alternatives. The most common method is through intuition i.e., choosing a solution that seems to be good at that time. The second way to choose the best alternative is to weigh the consequences of one against those of the others for which proper and adequate information is essential.

1.3.5. Converting the Decision into Action

This is the fifth major element in the stages of decision making which is the most difficult and time consuming stage. After the selection of the best decision the next step is to convert the selected decision into an effective action. Thereafter, the manager has to take follow-up steps for the execution of the decision taken.

1.3.6. Ensuring Feedback for Follow-up

Feedback is the last step in the decision-making process. Here, the manager has to make built-in arrangements to ensure feedback for
continuously testing actual developments against the expectations. It is necessary to decide whether the decision already taken should be continued or be modified in the light of changed conditions. The figure no: 1 clearly describes the six steps of rational decision making.

**Figure 1: Decision making process (Akrani, 2010)**

1.4. TYPES OF DECISIONS

Decision making is an essential part of modern management. Decisions help in translating management plans, policies and objectives into concrete actions. The management is required to take a series of decisions from time to time. Decisions have been classified by management experts on different bases. Herbert Simon has given the classification of programmed and non-programmed decisions. Following are the important types of decisions.
1.4.1. Routine and Strategic decisions

Tactical and routine decisions are made repetitively following established rules, procedures and policies. They do not require any special effort by the manager. Such decisions are generally taken by the managers at the middle and lower management level. Strategic or basic decisions, on the other hand, are more important and so they are taken generally by the top and middle management.

1.4.2. Policy and Operating decisions

Policy decisions are of vital importance that is taken by the top management. These decisions have an effect on the entire enterprise. But Operating decisions are taken by lower management in order to put the policy decisions into action.

1.4.3. Organisational and Personal decisions

Organisational decisions are those decisions which a manager takes in his official capacity. Such decisions can be delegated. But personal decisions, which relate to the manager as an individual and not as a member of the organisation, cannot be delegated.

1.4.4. Programmed and Non-Programmed decisions

Programmed decisions are of routine and repetitive in nature which is to be dealt with according to specific procedures. But the non-programmed decisions arise because of unstructured problems. There is no standard procedure for handling such problems. Non Programmed decisions require thorough study of the problem and scientific analysis of the situational factors.

1.4.5. Individual and Group decisions

When a decision is taken by an individual in the organisation, it is known as Individual decisions. Such decisions are generally taken in small
organisation. Group of collective decisions refer to the decisions which are taken by a group of organisational members (Singh & Singh, 1999).

1.5. INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DECISION MAKING

Information is required for different functional areas and levels of management for decision making. But the types of information vary as per the role of particular area and level of management. Managers which belong to the primary functional areas of Finance, Marketing, Human resource management, Operations etc. have unique information needs. Financial managers focus on the acquisition and use of money and require information about the flow and use of funds in the organisation, the availability of capital, and potential investment alternatives. Marketing managers seek information about consumer’s needs and preferences, product characteristics, and other qualities of the market place. Operations managers seek information that helps to organise, direct and control the physical operations of an organisation. They acquire information related to the product, process, service, planning and design, capacity planning, scheduling, and inventory control. Human resource managers need information that assists with the design and implementation of human resource planning, staffing, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and labour management relations.

Managers at all levels of an organisation require extensive and diverse types of information to perform effectively. Top-level managers are responsible for the overall direction of an organisation and hence have a unique need for strategic information that assists in formulating strategies, policies, long-range plans and objectives. Middle managers tend to have greater need for information required for implementing these long range plans, formulating tactical and operational plans and objectives and also need tactical information that helps increase employee performance and customer
service. Lower level managers require operational information to make short-term decisions that help them to ensure the effective conduct of the day to day activities of organisation. The management process of planning, organising, leading and controlling need information about the organisation, mission, strategies, structure, products, staff, standards and performance (Gordon & Gordon, 1996).

Information could be classified on the basis of the purpose for which it is utilised, into three main categories, namely strategic information, tactical information and operational information.

1.5.1. Strategic information

Strategic information is required by the managers at the strategic level of management for the formulation of organisational strategies. This relates to long-term planning policies of the organisation as a whole. For example, information pertaining to new technologies, new products, competitors, etc. is strategic information.

1.5.2. Tactical information

Information in this category is used for short-term planning and is used at the management control level. For example, sales analyses and forecasts production resources requirements, annual financial statements etc. This type of information is generally based on data arising from current activities of the organisation.

1.5.3. Operational information

Operational information applies to short periods which may vary from an hour to a few days. It is generally used by decision makers at the operational level. Examples of operational information include current stocks-in-hand, work-in-progress levels, outstanding orders from customers, etc.
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The other types of information needed for the management are information on Status, Resource, Resource Allocation, Planning and Control, Government, Social, Economic, Technology and Competition Information etc.

Information for management can also be divided into two types- internal and external information.

1.5.4. Internal information

Internal information has been defined as the information which has been generated from the operations of the organisation at various levels in the various functional areas. This information always pertains to the various operational units of the organisations and is utilised usually by middle and lower managers.

1.5.5. External information

External information is usually collected from the environment of the business organisation. This information is considered to be affecting the organisational performance from outside the organisation and is utilised usually by the top management (Ramaswamy, 2004).

1.6. ROLE OF INFORMATION IN MANAGEMENT DECISION MAKING

Organisations can use information as a resource, as an asset or as a commodity. Nowadays information is used in addition to money, people, raw materials, machinery or even time, as resources to convert inputs into outputs. Information is considered as an asset since it encourages management to view it as an investment that managers can use strategically. Some companies use information primarily to sell it as a commodity. In the service oriented economy, an increasing number of organisations are adopting a commodity view of information-viewing it as a saleable product. Because of the value of
information to organisational performance, most organisations develop procedure to ensure that information is collected, captured accurately and organised effectively (Gordon & Gordon, 1996).

Management requires information in order to take decisions, prepare plans and control the company’s activities. Proper and reliable information plays a crucial role in every stage of the decision making process at all levels in businesses. If an organisation is to survive and prosper, it must understand both its own internal workings and the nature of the environment to which it has to adapt and respond. Information improves decision making, enhances efficiency and provides a competitive edge to the organisations. In modern times information has acquired a new status and importance as an organisational resource (Griffin, 2005). In brief, the role of information in decision making may be outlined as under:

- Information plays a significant role in identifying and defining the problem.
- It helps in developing tentative solutions and selecting a suitable one.
- Availability of required information encourages the managers for using quantitative techniques in decision-making which give better results.
- Adequate and relevant information on the problem situation may further help in reducing uncertainty and complexity associated with further problems.
- Availability of information may also encourage factual decision-making and ensure higher degree of objectivity and precision.

To ensure timely availability of required quantity and quality of relevant information to managers, a Management Information System can be installed through which information is generated systematically from inside and outside the organisation, compiled, stored, processed and supplied to the managers (Nirmal Singh, 2000). Information relevant to managers is now
accessible than ever before, particularly through the use of electronic databases and networks. Organisations must develop an information strategy and corporate structure which ensures the fullest use of internal and external resources.

1.7. IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Information systems have a vital role to play in the success of different types of organisations. These are special class of systems or set of interrelated components that collect, process, store, and distribute information to support decision making in an organisation. Information system may also help managers and workers analyse problems, visualise complex subjects, and create new products or services in organisations. These systems contain information about significant people, places, and things within the organisation or the environment surrounding it (Laudon, Laudon, & Dass, 2010). Information systems are defined as a system, whether automated or manual, that comprises people, machines, and methods organised to collect, process, transmit, and disseminate data. Organisations use several types of information systems to suit their needs. The various types of information systems that an organisation uses may be classified into the following categories:

1.7.1. Office Automation Systems

This type of information system aids in automating office tasks. They have a limited role in decision making and are more useful for operational level people. The information coming out of this kind of system can be used for rule-based decision making for managers at the operational level.

1.7.2. Transaction Processing System

This type of system is critical for the smooth functioning of an organisation. The objective of this kind of system is to capture all transaction related data between the organisation and its external and internal customers.
1.7.3. Decision Support Systems

Decision support systems help senior management to take strategic decision. These systems are developed with the objective of providing the users with unstructured information. This deals with both internal and external data.

1.7.4. Executive Support Systems

Executive support system is also known as executive information system. Its main objectives are to provide a macro organisation wide view for senior executives, by providing a very user friendly interface so that proactive steps may be taken to beat competition.

1.7.5. Business Expert System

Some business scenarios are so complex that they require the help of advanced systems that can provide expert solutions. These systems use artificial intelligence and neural networks to reach the performance level of a human expert thereby helping the organisation. These systems are different from any other information system as they are capable of decision making by them without human intervention (Nirmalya Bagchi, 2010).

1.8. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR DECISION MAKING

An information system that helps management at different levels to take better decisions by providing the necessary information is called Management Information Systems. MIS is a formal method of identifying the decision needs and making available to management the accurate and timely information necessary to facilitate the decision making process and enable the organisation’s planning, control and operational function to be carried out efficiently and effectively. Gordon B. Davis defined as “MIS is an integrated
user-machine system for providing information to support operations, management and decision making in an organisation. The system utilises computer hardware and software, manual procedures, models for analysis, planning, control and decision making; and a database. The system identifies, collects, stores, process, structures and retrieves information on the past, present and projected future and about relevant events inside and outside the organisation to assist in decision making (Dudeja, 2000). The typical MIS is based on four major components:

1. Data gathering: Data pertinent to the operations of the organisation gathered from both external and internal sources.
2. Data entry: The above data is inputted and stored in databases as the information processing core of the system.
3. Data transformation: Data is transformed into useful information through the application of computer software programs and judgements made by technical support staff and other system users.
4. Information utilisation: This useful information is retrieved as needed by the management and technical personnel and applied to a wide variety of decisions related to the conduct of organisational operations (Murthy, 1999).

1.9. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Decision making is a vital part of every type of organisation, be it a service or business undertakings. The managers are responsible for taking ultimate decisions in complex, competitive and dynamic business environment. This in turn makes effective decision-making very complex. Different categories of managers take different type of decisions ranging from strategic to operational decisions. Effective and efficient decisions may ultimately lead to the successful attainment of the organisational objectives.
and thus in turn leads to the success of the economy. Thus decisions have to be taken with proper care.

The study gains importance on the ground that without proper information, decisions cannot be taken by managers. Managers of different industrial undertakings require adequate and reliable information at the various stages of their managerial activity to promote fruitful decisions in order to ensure that the day to day organisational activities are successfully carried out. Without obtaining information, managers have to operate in confusion and have to rely on forecasts, guesses and luck. This may result in over or under production of goods and services, misallocation of resources and poor response times which in turn may raise the costs and lose the ultimate customers. Studies revealed that managers of different business undertakings often plan, solve problems and make decisions based upon incomplete and inaccurate information which may result in the dire consequences for their organisation. Though managers are exposed to a huge amount of information through a wide range of sources, they must selectively use the information to make day-to-day decisions. In the case of IT industry which is dynamic and has a great impact on other industries, it is doubtful that the managers in their busy schedule are properly utilising information from different sources to support their decision making activities. Whether the managers are utilising information for decision making or for solving problems is a matter which needs a comprehensive and in depth study.

Industries have to develop and alter as a result of global competition. Thus the information requirement of industries alters and it is a requisite to discern the information needs particularly of a business environment. Most of the information user studies are conducted among the community of students, teachers, librarians, scientists, doctors and other professionals. Among a comparatively small number of studies are there on managers as information
users, only a small portion deal with the IT managers and even a smaller fraction is conducted on the use of information for decision making by the IT managers.

The population of present research comprises of the managers of IT industry, an industry that is becoming increasingly vital to the national economy. The IT professionals are carrying out a busy work schedule and may not be able to search and collect appropriate information from different sources. Hence it is essential to understand whether different categories of IT managers are employing adequate search measures through various information sources and utilising proper information for their decision making. A better understanding of the information use for decision making can aid the design of information management processes that quicken their learning and organisational knowledge building and may identify the functional areas of management in which the information utilisation is not much performed.

The thrust of the study is to understand the availability of information for their management decision making. Availability of reliable information is a key requirement where information is needed and for the effective decisions undertaken by individuals, professional organisations, business, governments etc. As the study aims at understanding the level of availability of the required information it is expected that the study will help to know the areas where information availability is lacking. The study also aims at understanding the sources of information depended by the managers. Hence, the study will help to understand the important information sources from which managers get the required information. The study is expected to reveal the shortcomings of internal and external information sources. The study will thus help the information professionals in the design of the sources of information oriented towards managers. This study also indicates the extent to which libraries or
resource centres are utilised by the managers which in turn will help to improve the existing library services in the IT firms.

As the study also aims at understanding the important barriers faced by the managers in effectively using the required information, it is expected that the result of the study will help the information professionals to provide better information services to the IT managers. The study is of much importance to the information and software professionals, managers and software developers and designers. It also helps to design a conceptual model of information systems in organisations.

1.10. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A clear and defined statement of the problem is needed to achieve the goals and objectives of study. The problem of the present study is entitled as “AVAILABILITY AND USE OF INFORMATION FOR MANAGERIAL DECISION MAKING OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY IN KERALA

1.11. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts of the problem and their operational definitions are given below.

1.11.1. Availability

Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles (2007) defines availability as “able to be used or turned to account; at ones’ disposal; within one reach, obtainable; the quality of being available or something available.

From the study’s point of view, it means the availability of information from various internal and external sources to the managers for taking
managerial decisions properly and to carry out the tasks deriving from them is mentioned.

1.11.2. Use

Dictionary of Information and Library Management (2006) defines use as “to employ somebody or something for a particular purpose”.

From the study point, use refers to the utilisation of information by the managers of different levels of functional areas of Marketing, Human Resources, Finance, Operations, and General management for decision making activities.

1.11.3. Information

Information is defined by the Glossary of Library and Information Science (2004) as “the data presented in readily comprehensible form, to which meaning has been attributed within a context for its use. In a more dynamic sense, it is the message conveyed by the use of a medium of communication or expression”.

In the present study the information utilised for decision making activities by the managers of IT industry in Kerala is considered.

1.11.4. Managerial Decision Making

Oxford Learners’ Dictionary of Current English (2010) defines managerial as “connected with the work of a manager”.

Dictionary of Management (1990) defines decision making as “the process of being made aware of a course of action, idea, product or service, gathering information about it is interested, undertaking a test or trial and finally adopting it.”
From the viewpoint of the study, managerial decision making means the decisions taken by the managers of three levels of five major functional areas like Marketing, Human Resources, Finance, Operations, and General Management on the various aspects in their respective areas.

1.11.5. Information Technology Industry (IT industry)

Dictionary of IT terms (2000) defines Information technology as “the acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of various types of information via computers and telecommunications.”

Industry is defined as “the commercial production and sale of goods and services and a specific branch of manufacture and trade” by The Illustrated Heritage Dictionary and Information Book (1977).

In the Indian context the IT industry is almost entirely devoted to software services, hence the terms ‘software industry’ and ‘IT industry’ are often used interchangeably. The study is based on the IT industry in Kerala. The study covers only the software firms of Government owned IT parks in Kerala. i.e., this study has covered employees in the managerial position of software services and products firms thereby excluding Information Technology Enabled Services (ITeS) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) firms from the preview of the study.

1.11.6. Kerala

Kerala is the southernmost state in India formed on 1st November 1956. Its’ area is 38,863 square km and has a population of 31 million (Manorama Yearbook, 2013).

1.12. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the information requirements of the managers of IT industry in Kerala for managerial decision making.
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2. To ascertain the extent of use of information by the managers of IT industry in Kerala for managerial decision making.

3. To assess the availability of internal information to the managers of IT industry in Kerala for managerial decision making.

4. To examine the role of organisational libraries in information transfer to the managers of IT industry in Kerala for managerial decision making.

5. To explore the dependence on external information by the managers of IT industry in Kerala for managerial decision making.

6. To identify the barriers faced by the managers of IT industry in Kerala in effectively using information for managerial decision making.

1.13. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. The extent of use of information by the managers of IT industry in Kerala for managerial decision making vary according to the level of management.

2. There is no significant variation in the availability of internal information to the managers of IT industry in Kerala for managerial decision making.

3. The managers of IT industry in Kerala obtain a high level of information from Management Information System for managerial decision making.

4. Organisational libraries have a prominent role in information transfer to the managers of IT industry in Kerala for managerial decision making.

5. The managers of IT industry in Kerala always depend on online sources for managerial decision making.

6. The barriers faced by the managers of IT industry in Kerala for effective utilisation of information for managerial decision making does not have a significant variation.
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1.14. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study is an attempt to assess the availability and use of information by the managers of IT (Information Technology) industry in Kerala for decision making. The main focus of the study is to understand the utilisation of information by the managers for decision making. The study aims at analysing the internal information support from formal and informal sources. The dependence on external formal and informal sources by the managers for decision making is also studied. Another important aspect of this study is to examine the role of organisational libraries in information transfer for decision making. The study proceeds to seek the availability of information, the adequacy of available information and the satisfaction level of managers on the available information. Finally the barriers faced by the managers in effectively using information for managerial decision making are also assessed.

This study is conducted in the context of IT industry in Kerala, which is considered as a vital industry that has a great influence on other industries of the state. The study is conducted among the managers of IT industrial units of Kerala, i.e., the study cover the employees in various managerial positions who control the affairs of the different sections of the software firms in Kerala. The three main IT parks which are covered in the study are Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram, Infopark, Kochi and KINFRA Neospace, Malappuram.

1.15. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The investigator has taken all steps to make the study as accurate as possible. However, some limitations have crept into the study. The following are the important limitations.
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- The study is confined only on the managers of software firms in Kerala. This is because only a very few hardware companies are there in Kerala.
- The Information Technology enabled Service (ITeS) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies are excluded from the study.
- This study is carried out on the managers of only five major functional areas - Marketing, Human resources, Finance, Operations and General management based on only two aspects such as ‘functional area’ and ‘managerial level’.
- Some managers were reluctant to provide data due to their busy schedule and declined the request for filling the questionnaire. Hence a large number of companies had to be contacted to get the required number of respondents. The collection of data was very difficult mainly due to security reasons and lukewarm response of the management.

Though the study has the above limitations, the investigator wishes to note here that such limitations are not unusual in the studies of this kind and it will not affect the study in fulfilling its objectives. However efforts have been taken to cross check the responses and to make the conclusions as meaningful and rational as possible.

1.16. THESIS OUTLINE

The whole study is structured in the main part of the thesis in six chapters. The Bibliography and Appendix are given at the end of the thesis. The main part of the thesis is organised as detailed below.

Chapter 1 - Introduction - Chapter 1 is devoted to present an introduction for the study and throws light on the importance of decision making, stages of decision making, information requirements for decision making, the role of information in decision making and the importance of
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Management Information Systems. Further the chapter outlines the significance, scope and limitations of the study, statement of the problem, definition of key concepts, objectives and hypotheses of the study and provides the outline of thesis.

Chapter 2 - IT industry-A Profile - Chapter 2 sketches the IT industry of India in brief and the IT industry of Kerala in detail.

Chapter 3 – Review of Related Literature - Prior to launching the study, a survey of related literature was undertaken. The purpose of this survey was to understand the already existing trends, methodology, findings and problems in this area of study so as to arrive at the right perspective. In this chapter the relevant literature on the sub sections – Use of information in general, Use of information for decision making, ICT for decision making and Management Information System for decision making was reviewed.

Chapter 4- Research Methodology- Chapter 4 discusses and justifies the methodology undertaken for the present study. This chapter also dwells on the research design and explains the variables, data collection tool, pilot study done, and a very brief outline of the statistical analysis and validation.

Chapter 5 - Analysis and Interpretations - In Chapter 5, the detailed analysis and interpretation of the primary data and the critical examination of results are also exhibited in tables and graphs to present the results in a simplified manner.

Chapter 6 - Findings, Conclusion and Suggestions - Finally, discussion of the major findings and conclusion of the research problem are drawn in this chapter. Moreover the tenability of hypotheses, general suggestions for the study and the suggestions for future research are also summarised in this chapter.
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