



A STUDY ON SHOPPERS' PREFERENCES TOWARDS VARIOUS BRANDS IN CONSUMER PACKAGED GOODS OFFERED BY MODERN RETAIL STORES

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the shoppers' preferences towards various brands in consumer packaged goods (CPG) category in modern retailing. The study sought to examine the general buying habits of shoppers, their brand preferences, factors influencing their brand preferences and their opinion on various brands. The above aspects are tested by using a questionnaire instrument with 8 items including demographic variables. A total of 125 completely filled-in questionnaires were evaluated for analysis. The results suggest that shoppers' are prone to unfamiliar brands if their quality is good. As against the general conception, price and promotional offers alone are weighed down by most of the shoppers over quality. This study signifies the importance of quality over price, promotion and varieties of options for shoppers in consumer packaged goods category.

Keywords: Shoppers, brand-preferences, quality, price, consumer packaged goods

1. Introduction

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet", quoted Shakespeare in his famous play Romeo and Juliet. But that seems no longer pertinent in the world of branding. Brands today is so popular for their names. A brand is defined as "a name, term, logo, symbol, trademark, design, piece of music or a combination of all, intended to identify the goods and services of a particular seller to differentiate them from those of competitors. Marketers in every industry are more inclined in branding their products across various product categories. Branding is not just a marketing activity of organizations, it's the customer's identification of that product. Branding helps customers in understanding what a seller's offering stands for; what they get from it, how it's different from any other product from the competitors. Branding aids customers in their decision-making process. Brands connect with the customers rationally and emotionally. Thus, brands are helpful for marketers to establish relationship with customers, logically or emotionally. In the world of retail, brands play more important role as retailers are very close to customers in distribution chain. Indian retail market is witnessing a clutter of brands--local, regional, national and international. Thanks to FDI norms in multi-brand retail and single-brand retail, foreign brands came closure to the common man. Today, a typical shopper in retail store has a gamut of brands to choose from across all product categories.

1.1 Brand Preference

Which mobile do you buy? If your answer is a specific one, you have a brand preference. Brand preference signifies one's desire to buy and use a particular company's product, even when there are equally worthy alternatives. Brand preference is important for companies as it reflects customer's loyalty, the success of their marketing strategies and the strength of their respective brands. It is commonly believed that customers would pay premium for a particular brand though the alternatives are seemingly similar. In most cases, customers buy a single brand of soft-drink, magazine, hair-oil etc. even though their prices vary relatively over a period of time. Most of the customers buy branded medicines though their generic equivalents are available in market for much lower prices.

However, this phenomenon of preferring a particular brand across the sections of customers is challenged by the new-age brands that appear in the shelves of a modern retail stores. Brands in a given retail store is alluring the shoppers and trying to alter their preferences. A customer who buys a particular brand of shaving cream may prefer another brand the next time. Similarly, a family that has been buying a particular brand of edible oil for years and years may end up picking altogether another brand the next time. This phenomenon is much evident in the case of packaged goods such as food, beverages, home-care, toiletries, over-the-counter drugs etc. Attractive packaging, enticing promotions and compelling pricing are alluring the new-age shoppers to change their preferences. On the other hand, there are these brands which have been existing for generation and generations which are keeping their

customers' preferences towards them with no much change. It is however, interesting to find out the preferences of shoppers across the consumer packaged goods category and factors affecting their preferences towards various brands

2. Review of Literature

To gain better understanding on the subject and to critically evaluate the study, a thorough review of various literature is carried out and the key excerpts are given under.

Consumers' preferences for products or brands arise from the combination of many different factors. Some factors come from features of the product itself (e.g., price, durability), while others are attributes of consumers themselves (e.g., goals, attitudes, discretionary income), (Venkatraman, Clithero, Fitzsimons, and Huettel, 2012). Ge, Brigden and Häubl (2015) proposed that consumers often make choices in settings where some alternatives are known and additional alternatives can be unveiled through search. When making a choice from a set of alternatives, the manner in which each of these was discovered should be irrelevant from a normative standpoint. Consumers must often decide between choosing among a set of previously discovered alternatives and searching to discover additional alternatives before making a choice. A substantial body of prior work examines consumer choice from pre-determined sets of alternatives. As a result, we know much about the influence of choice set composition and decision context on choice (Ge, Brigden, and Häubl, 2015). Additionally, consumer characteristics such as patriotism, protectionism and social economic conservatism are effecting their choices (Spillan & Harcar, 2010). Often, consumers will tend to choose a brand that they consider congruent with their self-image. In this particular way each consumer at an individual basis will try to reflect his or her own identity through choice. When part of a larger social group, consumer choices tend to converge to a certain pattern thus forming the basics of an individual social identity (Cătălin, Andreea, 2014). Brand preference is regarded as a key step in consumer decision making, involving elements of choice. In establishing brand preference, consumers compare and rank different brands by focusing on their uniqueness defined brand preference as "the extent to which the customer favors the designed service provided by his or her present company, in comparison to the designated service provided by other companies in his or her consideration set," with a consideration set referring to brands that a consumer would consider buying in the near future (Jin & Weber, 2013). Also, customer's advisory has a positive effect on establishing a positive effect on brand and consumer preferences (Güngör & Bilgin, 2011).

Karjaluoto et al (2005) conducted a research to find out the factors influencing consumer choice of mobile phones. The study uses focus group interview with 79 graduate students followed by a survey of 196 respondents. Price, brand, interface, and properties are the factors which affects purchasing behaviour of mobile phones in Finland. Gihan Wijesundera et al (2008) try to find out Factors Influencing the Demand of Beauty Soap among Female Consumers in the Greater Colombo Region. Purpose of this study is to explore how the marketing mix & demographical factors influence the brand preference & purchasing behaviour of beauty soap among the female consumers in the greater Colombo region. Sample consisted of 91 female consumers in greater Colombo region. Data were gathered by administrating questionnaires. The independent variables are 4Ps, Age, Income Level, Education, Marital status, Occupation, skin type, social factors, substitute products & dependent variable is the brand preference. Analysis was done using the Chi-square method at the significant level of 0.05. The results indicated that there were statistical relationships between price, product, education, occupation and brand preference and there was no statistical relationship between place, promotion, age, income level, marital status, skin type, social factors, and substitute product with the brand preference. Bikash et al (2010) studied the factors influencing purchasing of Nano cars. This study attempts to find the factors, which are important for choosing the revolutionary car 'Nano' launched by one of the leading Indian automobile industry called 'Tata Motors'. The report published by Cygnus research ranked Indian automobile sector to be number one on the basis of sales growth and Profit After Tax (PAT) growth during October- December 09 over October- December 08 over other 14 manufacturing sectors. The paper considers 22 factors, which may be important in the customer decision-making process. The factors are price is a affordable, because of Tata product, many love the name "Nano", available in attractive colours, style/look, high fuel efficiency, financing option, interior design, comfortable, space inside, value for money, environment friendly, running cost, warranty, power, status / prestige, safety features, resale value, accessories available, performance. Sääksjärvi and Samiee (2011) examined the relationships among brand identity, brand image, and brand preference in the context of cyber and offline-based extension retail brands over time. They examined a conceptual model with survey data collected over three time periods and found out that offline-based extension brands had an advantage over cyber brands when it came to translating a brand identity into a successful brand image, especially in the early Internet stages. Zeenat Ismail et al (2012) find out the Factors Affecting Consumer Preference of International Brands over Local Brands. This study was conducted in order to determine the consumer preferences of global brands instead of local ones. The research was conducted in Karachi and the samples selected included 200 people of age 16-24. The data collected for the research was through a questionnaire and was conducted in two popular shopping malls of the city and two universities since the target audience was largely the youth. Calculations were then analysed and interpreted using a percentage of respondents and through frequency distribution tables and charts. There are a number of factors affect the consumer purchase decisions. The results suggest that most important factors that influence a consumer's final decision are the price and quality of the

product in question. Since the consumers usually associate the price of the brand with its quality, a brand priced too low is generally perceived as a low quality product. Similarly, a product priced too high may not be affordable by many. Other factors that have an impact on the consumer preferences are: consumer ethnocentrism, country of origin, social status, price relativity with the competing brands and family and friends. Azad et al (2013) present an exploration study to detect important factors influencing car accessory market. The proposed study designs a questionnaire in Likert scale consists of 16 questions, distributes it among 200 experts and analyses it using factor analysis. Cronbach alpha and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy are calculated as 0.823 and 0.863, which validate the overall questionnaire. The results indicate that there are three influencing factors including brand capability, brand characteristics and consumers' believe. Prasanna et al (2013) conducted a study to find out factors influencing customers' brand preferences of the economy segment SUV's and MUV's. A total of 143 respondents were included among which 98 met the target group criteria set for the study. The data collection was made through direct interaction and customer intercepts survey using printed questionnaires. Descriptive Analysis was used to transform data into understandable format and factor analysis was used for identification of factors influencing customer preference. Friedman's test was used to identify the prominent emotions customers associated to the utility vehicle. The study identified the six factors that influence brand preference they are Product reliability, monetary factor, trendy appeal, frequency of non-price promotions offered, trustworthiness and customer feeling or association towards brand. Malviya et al (2013) said about brand preference on the basis of research conducted on the Factors Influencing Consumer's Purchase Decision towards Smartphones in Indore. The basic purpose of the research is to identify the key factors which have a dominating effect on the consumers' minds while making a purchase of Smartphone. The collected data were analysed and interpreted using chi-square, reliability analysis, Factor analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis. It was found that data is reliable for factor analysis. The measurement model suggested four factors price, brand preference, social influence and features having a dominant influence on the purchase decision of consumers in Indore.

3. Objectives of the Study

In the above backdrop, the study aims at gaining more practical insights on shoppers' preferences towards various brands in consumer packaged goods (CPG) in modern retailing with the following objectives.

1. To study the buying habits of shoppers
2. To find out shoppers' brand preferences
3. To determine the factors influencing their brand preferences.
4. To elicit the opinion of customers towards their various brands.

4. Scope of the Study

The inferences from the study are based on the responses given by the customers in a specific area. This study is helpful in getting insights on brand preferences of middle and higher socio-economic group of customers of shopping mall in Vijayawada. A few of the findings may be deviating towards retail stores present in the mall at the time of survey as the survey was carried out in the premises of the mall. It may not fully reflect the brand preferences of shoppers as the responses of the participants of the survey might be biased.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study is based on both primary data and secondary data. The primary data was collected through structured questionnaire. A sample of 150 questionnaires were distributed and 132 questionnaires were collected back. Out of them, 7 questionnaire forms were excluded for missing data. Thus, exactly 125 (83%) completed forms were evaluated for further analysis. The data was collected during April 2018 in Vijayawada at PVP Square Mall.

H1: There is no significant difference between occupation and frequency of buying CPGs

H2: There is no significant difference between level of education and brand selection

H3: There is no significant difference between gender and opinion on brands

5.2 Research Approach

Survey method is used for collecting data from customers randomly chosen from various retail outlets and showrooms at a shopping mall. Respondents were requested to respond to various questions and the responses were recorded in the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained both open and close-ended questions in a structured format.

5.3 Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling (a non-probability sampling method) technique is used to pick 150 shoppers at PVP Square Mall in Vijayawada. The members of the sample selected were requested to participate in the survey voluntarily.

5.4 Data Analysis

Out of 150 survey forms distributed, 125 forms were found to be suitable for analysis. For the purpose of analysis and interpretation, only the primary data is used. However, for conclusion and recommendations both primary and secondary data along with the information obtained from observation is used. The data collected from these sources were analyzed using various tools like percentage analysis, Chi-square test and cross table analysis.

5.5 Tools

Frequencies and cross tabulation have been calculated for the responses of the respondents. Chi-square test was conducted on the data to test the significance of the hypotheses.

6. Analysis and Interpretation

6.1 Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Male	Female		
	78 (62.4)	47 (37.6)		
Age	18-25	26-35	36-45	Above 45
	22 (17.6)	33 (26.4)	57 (45.6)	13 (10.4)
Education	Below graduation	Graduation	Post-graduation & Above	
	32 (25.6)	44 (35.2)	49 (39.2)	
Occupation	Student	Employed - Private Sector	Employed - Public Sector	Professional / Business
	23 (18.4)	57 (45.6)	12 (9.6)	33 (26.4)
Monthly Individual Income (in INR)	Below 10000	11,000-25,000	25,000-40,000	Above 40,000
	32 (25.6)	47 (37.6)	46 (36.8)	

Figures in brackets represent percentage values of the corresponding numbers

6.1.1 Interpretation

With 63%, men dominated the survey over women. On further classification based on age, adults (36-45) dominated the survey constituting around 46% of the respondents. Next comes young adults (26-35) with 26% and youth (18-25) with 17%. Elders (Above 45) represent low with just 10%. This signifies that adults and young adults are active shoppers than youngsters and elders. Most of the respondents are either post-graduates (39%) or graduates (35%). Non-graduates comprises only 37%. This specifies that most of the shoppers are well educated. Most of the shoppers surveyed (46%) are employed in private sector. Coming to monthly individual income, a considerable number of the respondents fall under either below 10000 (34%) or between INR 11,000 and 25,000 (38%). A minuscule 14% are earning above INR 25,000. This denotes that a good majority of the respondents belong to middle SEC (socio-economic class). Higher SEC represent low in the survey.

6.2 Buying Habits of Shoppers

How often do you buy consumer packaged goods (CPG)?	Every week	Once in a month	As and when required	Once in a while
	46 (36.8)	58 (46.4)	18 (14.4)	3 (2.4)
Which types of brands satisfies your needs and requirements?	Familiar brands	Unfamiliar brands	Unbranded products	Can't say
	73 (58.4)	23 (18.4)	7 (5.6)	22 (17.6)
Which CPG items do you mostly buy at this store?	Personal-care	Home-care	Toiletries	
	35 (28)	46 (36.8)	44 (35.2)	

Figures in brackets represent percentage values of the corresponding numbers

6.2.1. Interpretation

The above table unearths the brand preferences customers. It is found that a majority of the respondents (46%) buy CPG monthly and 37% buy them every week. This means most of the respondents are frequent buyers of CPG. Most of the shoppers (59%) believe that familiar brands would satisfy their various needs and requirements. Surprisingly, a significant percentage of them (18%) believe unfamiliar brands do better. A very little percentage of

the shoppers (6%) opine that unbranded items work better for them. Home-care (37%) is the mostly bought CPG items by shoppers. Toiletries (35%) and Personal-care (28%) comes next.

6.3 Factors Influencing Brand Preferences

What is your general brand-choice behavior	Always stick to one brand	Pick brands with offers	Always try new brands			
	21 (16.8)	46 (36.8)	58 (46.4)			
How would you react if your favorite brand is not available	Try at other stores	Go for available brands	Postpone buying	Place an order for the favorite brand		
	17 (13.6)	102 (81.6)	2 (1.6)	2 (1.6)		
Most important factor in choosing a brand	Price	Availability	Brand Image	Advertising	Promotional Offers	Quality
	27 (21.6)	3 (2.4)	13 (10.4)	22 (17.6)	29 (23.2)	31 (24.8)

6.3.1 Interpretation

From the above data, it can be found that majority of the shopper are innovators. They (46%) always try out new brands. Also a good percentage of them (37%) pick brands that come with a discount or any offer. Only a few of them (17%) always stick to a single brand. This signifies that only a few of the shoppers are hard-core loyals. If the favorite brand is not available in store at that moment, a majority (82%) preferred to go for brands available at the moment. Rest of them either try at other stores (14%) or postpone their buying (2%) or Place an order with the store (2%). This reflects the loyalty of the shoppers towards their favorite brands. In choosing a brand, quality(25%), promotional offers (23%) and price (22%) plays dominant roles. Fancy advertising messages (18%) brand image (10%) doesn't have much significant role to play. This signifies that most of the shoppers are quality-conscious and not brand-conscious.

6.4 Shopper's Opinion on Various Brands

What is your general opinion on brands available in this store?	Prices lower than other stores	Attractive offers on brands	Brands' quality is consistently good	Always latest brands	Wide varieties of brands
	22 (17.6)	25 (20)	27 (21.6)	25 (20)	26 (20.8)

6.4.1 Interpretation

Above data reveals that shoppers' have equal opinion on various aspects of brands offered by their favorite store. While they have relatively equal opinion that their favorite store offers brands with consistently good quality (22%), wide varieties of brands (21%), brands with attractive offers (20%), and offers latest brands always (20%), a slightly less percentage of them (18%) agreed that the prices at their favorite store is lower than the prices offered by other stores. This indicates that price is not a pull factor compared to quality and promotional offers.

6.5 Chi-Square Test

6.5.1. Occupation and Frequency of Buying CPG

Is there any Relation between Occupation of the respondents and their Frequency of Buying CPG?

Ho: Occupation and Frequency of Buying are not dependent

H1: Occupation and Frequency of Buying are dependent

		Frequency of Buying				
		Every Week	Every Month	As and When Required	Once in a While	Total
Occupation	Students	11	7	5	0	23
	Employed - Private	13	36	7	1	57
	Employed - Public	4	4	3	1	12
	Professional / Business	18	11	3	1	33
	Total	46	58	18	3	125

Degree of freedom (df) = 9,
 Level of Significance = 5%
 Critical Value = 15.507 (from table)

Expected Values						
Frequency of Buying						
Occupation		Every Week	Every Month	As and When Required	Once in a While	Total
	Students	8.5	10.7	3.3	0.6	23
	Employed - Private	21.0	26.4	8.2	1.4	57
	Employed - Public	4.4	5.6	1.7	0.3	12
	Professional / Business	12.1	15.3	4.8	0.8	33
	Total	46	58	18	3	125

Contingency Table					
O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E	
11.0	8.5	2.5	6.3	0.7	
7.0	10.7	-3.7	13.7	1.3	
5.0	3.3	1.7	2.9	0.9	
0.0	0.6	-0.6	0.4	0.6	
13.0	21.0	-8.0	64.0	3.0	
4.0	26.4	-22.4	501.8	19.0	
18.0	8.2	9.8	96.0	11.7	
46.0	1.4	44.6	1989.2	1420.8	
18.0	12.1	5.9	34.8	2.9	
11.0	15.3	-4.3	18.5	1.2	
3.0	4.8	-1.8	3.2	0.7	
1.0	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.1	
				1462.9	

Chi-square calculated = 1462.9
 Chi-square from table = 15.507
 Since, calculated value of Chi-square is much higher than table value, Ho is rejected.

Inference:
 Occupation and Frequency of Buying are dependent

6.5.2. Level of Education and Brand Selection

Is there any Relation between Level of Education and Brand Selection?
 Ho: Level of Education and Brand Selection are not dependent
 H1: Level of Education and Brand Selection are dependent

Brand Selection						
Level of Education		Familiar Brands	Unfamiliar Brands	Unbranded products	Can't Say	Total
	Below graduation	13	8	3	8	32
	Graduation	25	6	2	11	44
	Post-graduation	35	9	2	3	49
	Total	73	23	7	22	125

Degree of freedom (df) = 6
 Level of Significance = 5%
 Critical Value = 12.529 (from table)

Expected Values						
Level of Education	Brand Selection					
		FB	UnFB	UnBP	CS	Total
	Below graduation	18.7	5.9	1.8	5.6	32
	Graduation	25.7	8.1	2.5	7.7	44
	Post-graduation	28.6	9.0	2.7	8.6	49
	Total	73	23	7	22	125

Contingency Table					
	O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
	13.0	18.7	-5.7	32.5	1.7
	8.0	5.9	2.1	4.4	0.7
	3.0	1.8	1.2	1.4	0.8
	8.0	5.6	2.4	5.8	1.0
	25.0	25.7	-0.7	0.5	0.0
	6.0	8.1	-2.1	4.4	0.5
	2.0	2.5	-0.5	0.3	0.1
	11.0	7.7	3.3	10.9	1.4
	35.0	28.6	6.4	41.0	1.4
	9.0	9.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	2.0	2.7	-0.7	0.5	0.2
	3.0	8.6	-5.6	31.4	3.6
					11.7

Chi-square calculated = 11.7
 Chi-square from table = 12.529
 Since, calculated value of Chi-square is lower than table value, Ho is accepted.

Inference:
 Level of Education and Brand Selection are not dependent

6.5.3. Gender and Opinion on Brands

Is there any Relation between Gender of the respondents and their opinion on Brands they buy?
 Ho: Gender and Opinion on Brands are not dependent
 H1: Gender and Opinion on Brands are dependent

		Opinion on Brands					Total
		LP	AO	BQ	ALB	WVB	
Gender	Male	13	16	17	15	17	78
	Female	9	9	10	10	9	47
	Total	22	25	27	25	26	125

Degree of freedom (df) = 4,
 Level of Significance = 5%
 Critical Value = 7.815 (from table)

Expected Values							
Gender	Opinion on Brands						
	LP	AO	BQ	ALB	WVB	Total	
	Male	13.7	15.6	16.8	15.6	16.2	78
	Female	8.3	9.4	10.2	9.4	9.8	47
	Total	22	25	27	25	26	125

Contingency Table				
O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
13.0	13.7	-0.7	0.5	0.0
16.0	15.6	0.4	0.2	0.0
17.0	16.8	0.2	0.0	0.0
15.0	15.6	-0.6	0.4	0.0
17.0	16.2	0.8	0.6	0.0
9.0	8.3	0.7	0.5	0.1
9.0	9.4	-0.4	0.2	0.0
10.0	10.2	-0.2	0.0	0.0
10.0	9.4	0.6	0.4	0.0
9.0	9.8	-0.8	0.6	0.1
				0.3

Chi-square calculated = 0.3

Chi-square from table = 7.815

Since, calculated value of Chi-square is lower than table value, Ho is accepted.

Inference:

Gender and Opinion on Brands are not dependent

7. Findings

1. 37% of respondents buy Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) every week, while 46% buy every month.
2. 58% of the respondents buy familiar brands in CPG, while 18% buy unfamiliar brands.
3. 37% of the people surveyed buy Home-care products, 28% buy Personal-care and 35% buy Toiletries under CPG.
4. 46% of the shoppers surveyed try new brands always. 17% of them stick to a single brand. 37% of the respondents surveyed are open to brands with offers.
5. For 25% of the respondents, Quality is the most important factor in choosing a brand.
6. For 23% of the respondents, Promotional Offers is the most important factor in choosing a brand. For 21% of them, it's Price.
7. For 10% of the total respondents, Brand Image the most significant factor in choosing a brand.
8. 17% have the opinion that prices of the brands in their favorite store is lower than prices at competitors' stores.
9. 22% of the respondents said Brands they generally buy are keeping quality consistently.
10. Around 20% of the people surveyed said that Attractive Offers on Brands, always availability of Latest Brands and availability of Wide Varieties of Brands are the most compelling reasons in choosing a particular brand.

8. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to examine the shoppers' preferences towards various brands in consumer packaged goods (GPG) offered by modern retail stores. The study reveals several interesting findings. The test conducted under the study proves that there is significant relationship between occupation of the respondents and frequency of buying CPGs. However, the test also proves that level of education has no significant relationship on brand selection. Similarly, it is also found that gender of the respondents and their opinion on brands are not dependent. Furthermore, the study reveals that while familiar brands are preferred by most of the respondents,

unfamiliar brands are also preferred by a significant number of respondents. While a few of the respondents stick to a single brand in CPG category, most of them are always open to new brands. This signifies that most of the respondents are not hard-core loyals. This result is further strengthened by the alternative behavior of shoppers, i.e., going for other available brands, in case the favorite brand is not available. Quality is playing a dominant role over price, promotion and advertising in choosing a brand. Moreover, the test reveals that quality, availability of wide varieties of latest brands and attractive offers are driving them to prefer branded items in CPG category. The study is comes as a revelation to modern retailers who wish to understand more the buying behavior and brand preferences of customers. The study suggests that modern retailers may rope in new brands more, as long as there are different from the existing ones and are of good quality. The findings further reveals that promotional offers and discounts alone are not crowd-pullers. They work good only when coupled with good quality.

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