



A STUDY OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS BATHING SOAP MARKET IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT

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Abstract:

The consumers who were not that conscious about discretionary products have started paying lot of attention on the features and the attributes that a particular product is providing. With more and more youth coming into the scene who are more skin conscious than other factors have change the face of the industry. But still a larger population is in the rural area and their attributes of selection are altogether different. So there is wide scope for consumer research. as the consumers taste, consumers likes, consumers preferences etc., change often because of financial, psychological, sociological and some other factors. The present study would help the company to know the satisfaction of the respondents towards bathing soap and various soap brands and how potential target of the market must be matched with marketing mixes and then best attractive strategies to be chosen for implementation. The companies would be in a better position to make and utilize their marketing strategies to gain more and more customers.

Key Words: Consumer's Preference, Discretionary Products, Marketing Mixes and Marketing Strategies.

1. Introduction:

The Indian FMCG sector with a market size of US\$13.1 billion is the fourth largest sector in the economy. A well-established distribution network, intense competition between the organized and unorganized segments characterizes the sector. The market is estimated to grow to US\$ 100 billion by 2025, according to market research firm Nielsen. In the last decade the FMCG sector has grown at an average of 11% a year; in the last five years, annual growth accelerated to 17%. The FMCG Industry is characterized by a well-established distribution network, low penetration levels, low operating cost, lower per capita consumption and intense competition between the organized and unorganized segments. The fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment is the fourth largest sector in the Indian economy. The market size of FMCG in India is estimated to grow from US\$ 30 billion in 2011 to US\$ 74 billion in 2018. India is a vast country with a population of 1,030 million people. Household penetration of soaps is 98%. People belonging to different income levels use different brands, which fall under different segments (see table below), but all income levels use soaps, making it the second largest category in India (detergents are number one). Rural consumers in India constitute 70% of the population. Rural demand is growing, with more and more soap brands being launched in the discount segment targeting the lower socio-economic strata of consumers.

2. Review of Literature:

Neha Joshi “A Study on Customer Preference and Satisfaction towards Restaurant in Dehradun City” talks about the changing habits of the customers towards their choices and the industries must achieve the service quality that surpasses the expectations of the customers however the satisfaction may be influence by various attitudes from internal, external factor.

Thiyagaraj. V. “A Study of Consumer Preference towards Branded Tea in Tiruppur City speaks about offerings by different companies and how the customers rank these bundles of goods according to the price levels of utility they give the consumer.

Dr. M. Nishad Nawaz & Ms. Wafa Yaqoob Ali Alajmi B S,” A Study on Consumer Preferences for E Shopping with reference to Bahraini Consumers” observed that Different parts of the people have similar tastes, perceptions, styles and accessibility and which factors plays an important role in selection of specific product.

Mr. S. Madhan Kumar & Mr. V. Sathish Kumar “A Study on Consumer Preference and Satisfaction towards Laptops with Special Reference to Erode” had observed that how the consumers are choosing their laptop with various opinion like accessibility of the product, assurance of the product, service of the product, user friendliness of the product, technical support of the product, quality of the product, etc. and how these factor affect their buying habits.

V. Anojan & T. Subaskaran “Consumer's Preference and Consumer's Buying Behavior on Soft Drinks: A Case Study in Northern Province of Sri Lanka” in his study observed that how potential target of the market must be matched with marketing mixes and then best attractive strategies to be chosen for implementation.

Ms. M.Gomathi, Ms. R. Gomathi, A” Study On Consumer Preference Towards Selected FMCG Personal Care Products In Erode Town, Tamilnadu” observed that In today’s scenario, Consumer is the king because he has got various choices around him. If you are not able of providing him the desired result he will definitely switch over to the other provider. Therefore, to survive in this competitive competition, you need to be the best.

Dr. S. Subadra on their study “Consumer Perceptions and Behaviour: A Study with Special Reference to Car Owners in Namakkal District” reviewed that the market is now predominantly consumer driver. The focus is shifting for product based marketing to need based marketing. Consumer is given many options to decide.

3. Objectives of the Study:

- To study the consumer perception towards bathing soaps.
- To study the awareness regarding various brands of soap.
- To identify the factors considered before buying bathing soap.
- To identify the product have best range of prices, attractive packaging and easy availability.

4. Scope of the Study:

There is wide scope for consumer research. As the consumers, taste, likes, preferences etc., change often because of financial, psychological, sociological and some other factors. The present study would help the company to know the satisfaction of the respondents towards bathing soap and various soap brands. The companies would be in a better position to make utilize of their marketing strategies to gain more and more customers.

5. Research Methodology:

5.1 Research Design:

Descriptive research design is being adopted in this study.

5.2 Area of Study:

Survey is conducted at Coimbatore district. Primary data is collected through questionnaire containing open ended and close ended questions.

5.3 Sample Size:

The sample size of 120 respondents was selected in Coimbatore district for this study.

5.3 Type of Sampling:

Convenience sampling and Random sampling is adopted for this study.

5.4 Hypothesis:

- Significant number of respondents perceives that price has no effect on the purchase behaviour.
- Significant number of respondents perceives that quality parameter has no effect on the purchase behaviour.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1: General Profile of the Respondents

S.No	Particulars	Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	75	63%
		Female	45	37%
		Total	120	100
2	Age Group	12 years – 18 years	15	13%
		19 years – 25 years	83	69%
		26 years – 35 years	8	6%
		36 years – 45 years	13	11%
		Above 45 years	1	1%
		Total	120	100
3	Monthly Income	Below Rs.20000	66	55%
		Rs.20001 to Rs.30000	30	25%
		Rs.30001 to Rs.40000	10	8%
		Above Rs.40001	14	12%
		Total	120	100
4	Number of Family Members	Below 4 members	44	37%
		4 to 6 members	73	60%
		6 to 8 members	2	2%
		8 to 10 members	1	1%
		Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

From the above table, it is clear that the general profile of the respondents shows that:

- 63% of the respondents are male and 37% of the respondents are female.
- 13% of the respondents are of 12 years – 18 years, 69% are of 19 years – 25 years, 6% are of 26 years – 35 years, 11% are of 36 years – 45 years and 1% is Above 45 years.
- 55% of the respondents have a monthly income of below Rs.20000, 25% of the respondents between Rs.20001 to Rs.30000, 8% of the respondents between Rs.30001 to Rs.40000 and 12% of the respondents have a monthly income of above Rs. 40001.
- 37% of the respondents have a total of below 4 members in family, 60% of the respondents have a total of 4 to 6 members, 2% of the respondents have a total 6 to 8 members and 1% of the respondents have a total of 8 to 10 members.

Table 2: Soap Advertisement Influence by Customers

S.No	Name of the Soap	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Lifebuoy	9	8%
2	Lux	5	4%
3	Cinthol	20	17%
4	Dettol	7	6%
5	Pears	39	33%
6	Hamam	26	21%
7	Other Soap	14	11%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The above table shows that the majority 33% of the respondents were influenced by Pears soap advertisement, 21% of the respondents were influenced by Hamam, 17% of the respondents were influenced by Cinthol, 11% of the respondents were influenced by other soap, 8% of the respondents were influenced by Lifebuoy, 6% of the respondents were influenced by Dettol and 4% of the respondents were influenced by Lux soap.

Table 3: Effect of the Price factor on the Purchase decision

S.No	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Very High	26	22%
2	High	24	20%
3	Medium	61	51%
4	Low	9	7%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The above table shows that the 22% of the respondents has very high effect of the price factor on the purchase decision, 20% of the respondents have high effect of the price, 51% of the respondents have medium effect of the price and 7% of the respondents have low effect of the price.

Table 4: Qualities Required in bath Soap

S.No	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Fragrance	23	19%
2	Good Brand	36	30%
3	Colour	3	3%
4	All the above	58	48%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The above table shows that the 19% of the respondents required fragrance quality in their soap, 30% of the respondent's required good brand in the soap, 3% of the respondents required colour in their soap and 48% of the respondents required all the above quality in their soap.

Table 5: Sources of information about bath soap

S.No	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Family	32	27%
2	Friends	18	15%
3	News paper/ TV	46	38%
4	Internet/ Whatsapp	6	5%
5	Other sources	18	15%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The above table shows that the 38% of the respondents got the information about the soap from News paper/ Television, 27% from their family members, 15% from their friends, 5% from Internet/ Whatsapp and 15% got the information from other sources.

Table 6: Sales Promotion programme affect your Purchase behaviour

S.No	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	26	22%
2	No	63	53%
3	Sometimes	31	25%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The above table shows that the 53% of the respondents not affected by sales promotion programme in their purchase behaviour, 22% of the respondents affected by sales promotion programme and 25% of the respondents affect sometimes by sales promotion programme.

Table 7: Promotional Schemes do you prefer

S.No	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Price Discount	37	31%
2	Free offer	21	18%
3	Quality deal	46	38%
4	Distribution of Samples	16	13%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

It is very much clear from the above table that 31% respondents would like to prefer price discount promotional scheme, 18% respondents prefer free offer promotional scheme, 38% respondents would like to prefer quality deal promotional scheme, and 13% respondents would like to prefer distribution of samples.

Table 8: Respondents give any importance to the Soap fragrance

S.No	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	84	70%
2	No	36	30%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The above table shows that 70% of the respondents give importance to the soap fragrance while 30% of the respondents not give any importance to the soap fragrance.

Table 9: Soap fragrance customers like most

S.No	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Rose	19	16%
2	Lime	6	5%
3	Sandal	50	42%
4	Normal or Natural	45	37%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

The above table shows that 16% of the respondents like rose soap fragrance, 5% of the respondents like lime fragrance, 42% of the respondents like sandal fragrance, 37% of the respondents has normal or natural soap fragrance.

Table 10: Reasons to Switch over the brand

S.No	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Low quality	40	33%
2	High price	22	18%
3	No fragrance	28	24%
4	Try to other brand	30	25%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows that 33% consider low quality as an factor to switch over the brand, 18% consider high price as an factor to switch over the brand, 24% consider no fragrance as an factor to switch over the brand and 25% respondents are try to other brand.

Table 11: Satisfaction regarding the Soap in current use

S.No	Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	113	94%
2	No	7	6%
	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The above table shows that 94% were satisfied with the soap they are currently using while 6% respondents are not satisfied with their soap.

7. Chi-Square Test:

- Significant number of respondents perceives that price has no effect on the purchase behaviour.

Particulars	Observed value (O)	Expected Value (E)	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² / E
Very High	26	30	-4.00	16.00	0.53
High	24	30	-6.00	36.00	1.20
Medium	61	30	31.00	961.00	32.03
Low	9	30	-21.00	441.00	14.70
	120	120			$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E} = 48.47$

Calculated Chi-square Value	Degrees of Freedom	Table Value	Conclusion
48.47	3	7.815	Rejected

Inference:

The above table shows that, since the calculated chi-square value (48.47) is greater than table value (7.815), Null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance. There is no significant relationship respondents perceives that price has no effect on the purchase behaviour.

- Significant number of respondents perceives that quality parameter has no effect on the purchase behaviour.

Particulars	Observed value (O)	Expected Value (E)	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² / E
Fragrance	23	30	-7.00	49.00	1.63
Good Brand	36	30	6.00	36.00	1.20
Colour	3	30	-27.00	729.00	24.30
All the above	58	30	28.00	784.00	26.13
	120	120			$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E} = 53.27$

Calculated Chi-square Value	Degrees of Freedom	Table Value	Conclusion
53.27	3	7.815	Rejected

Inference:

The above table shows that, since the calculated chi-square value (53.27) is greater than table value (7.815), Null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance. There is no significant relationship respondents perceives that quality parameter has no effect on the purchase behaviour.

8. Findings:

- 63% of the respondents are male who make the purchasing decisions for their families.
- 55% of the respondents belong to the monthly income of below Rs.20000 which is more prices sensitive and price plays an important role in purchase decision.
- 69% of the respondents were in the age group of 19-25 years from young generation who is now more sensitive to skin, health and wellness of their being.
- 60% of the respondents are from 4 to 6 members in family are now having their personal choices bathing soap purchased.
- 48% of the respondents most preferred factor before buying soaps based on fragrance, good brand and colour.
- As advertisement plays an important part and has a great recall value the advertisement featured on News paper/ Televisions are of great influence among the customers.
- Aesthetics such as colour, shape, fragrance also have an influence on the purchase of bathing soaps.

9. Suggestions:

- Companies must improve on their packaging and should be made more attractive and appealing to the women customers as they are the one who do the purchasing for their families and not all customers are well knowledgeable.
- As more and more customers now a days are becoming health and beauty conscious the companies should now be using more natural ingredients as it appeals not only to the masses but also to the classes.
- Most of the respondents are under the monthly income of below Rs.20000. So the company should take efforts to position their products in this group in order increase their sales. Celebrity endorsements may be of great help as the young crowds are getting more influence by the celebrities'
- As a quality is the first influencing factor of the company has to focus on quality and improve it for better sales. While segmenting the FMCG market it must be kept in mind that people prefer a good quality product rather than a good scheme or offer. A good scheme or an offer may fetch customer occasionally but the impact of the good quality is long lasting. Companies should work on retaining the customers rather than generating more new customers.
- Reference from friends and family members is the most influential factor in the purchasing soap. Doing advertisement only is not sufficient for attracting the customers. New marketing techniques like viral marketing or word of mouth marketing for FMCGs should be encouraged.

10. Conclusion:

This paper is a combination of both theoretical and practical knowledge. From this research one can conclude that in the recent years the awareness regarding the varieties and effects of soaps have increased many folds. While buying soaps quality is preferred over the price. It was also found that packaging and celebrity endorsements influence the buying decisions of the consumers. Customers' satisfaction plays a significant role in modern market in the present era. Soap is an important product for the day to day consumption of the customers. Nowadays competition is going on with a flame of advertisement war. A lot of varieties of soap are being introduced by several producers. In thus intense competition situations, some soap can cause evil effects due to a mixture of chemical compounds. People need quality soap for which they are ready to have brand loyalty or switch over from one brand to another. In order to capture the needs of all the segments of people, the products are introduced or new features are added to the products to capture the market potential for soap.

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