

Factors Responsible For Choice of FMCG Products: A Case Study of The Consumers of Dental Care Products

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer attitude towards marketing activities are important from both a theoretical and marginal standpoint (Gaski and Etzel, 1986). Consumers make product choices based on a combination of product attributes that best meet their needs on dimensions of value, cost and prior satisfaction (Kotler 1997). According to Maison et al (2001), consumer researchers of the mid 20th century assumed that consumers make choices consciously and rationally. In the sixties, interest among psychologists in consumer behaviour increased and ample evidence became available to justify that the behaviour of a consumer is not the consequence of an entirely rational cognitive process, especially in relation to fast moving consumer goods (FMCGs). It also became evident that emotions and unconscious motives could be taken into consideration in understanding responses to advertising and other aspects of consumer choice. The advent of an organised consumerism movement in the United States during 1970's led to tremendous interest among researchers in studying the attitude of consumers towards business (Gaski and Etzel, 1986). As consumer perceptions significantly affect their behavioural responses to marketing activities, consumer attitude towards marketing have been found to be linked to several key macroeconomic variables and have been used in economic forecasts (Chopin & Darurat, 2000). Barksdale and Dardan (1972) pioneered the research on consumer attitudes towards marketing in the United States and replicated their study for a number of years in the 1970's. They measured consumer attitudes toward the four marketing mix variables as well as consumerism, government regulation and consumer responsibility. Overall, they found that consumers had rather negative attitude towards marketing practices (Tsang-Sing Chan and Geng Cui, 2004).

As Shapiro (1999) has mentioned, advertising increases brand awareness and affects consumer's brand images, but only rarely influences conscious decisions to choose a certain advertised product. Brand image, on the other hand, has a tremendous impact on product perceptions; it has often been found that people have different perception of product features (Lannon, 1993) depending on if the product is tested "blind"; without being conscious of brand being tested, or with the brand clearly displayed. In order to throw some light on this, applied researchers have attempted to develop and apply "projective techniques" to study the issues beyond consumer's consciousness – anthropomorphisation, animalization, sentence completion (Hussey & Duncombe, 1999; Greenbaum, 1993; Branthwaite and Lunn, 1985).

But academic consumer psychologists have tried to develop quantitative techniques, which have shown better research regarding the consciousness of the consumer. In the 70's, attention was mostly given to physiological measures in the context of reactions to advertising (Bagozzi, 1991). Physiological measures were framed on the hope that they have a better potential to research the "real attitude" and as a consequence, would be more successful in predicting consumer behaviour.

In this regard, Snyder (1974) has referred that there are two types of self monitors- high and low who show different types of behaviour to meet the requirements of a particular situation (Becherer & Richard, 1978; Snyder, 1982). Moreover, individuals with external locus of control believe their outcomes are controlled by luck, fate or more powerful others (Rotter, 1966). Consequently, their behaviour seems to vary almost randomly across situations. But, individuals with an internal locus of control, however, believe that they are masters of their own destinies and are more likely to behave in accordance with their attitudes (Sherman, 1973).

In order to determine the properties of attitudes which a consumer normally exhibits, different models like Fazio Model, MODE Model (Kardes, 2002) has been shown. Fazio, Powell and Williams (1989) measured consumers' attitudes toward ten different snacks and found that consumers displayed different attitude depending

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on their interest toward the products. It was also observed that location of the product on the grocery shelf also has a stronger influence on consumers with relatively inaccessible attitudes. Zanna and Rempel (1988) had formulated a model on the basis of beliefs (cognitions), affect (feelings, moods and emotions), behaviors (actions) or a combination of beliefs, affect and behaviors to determine the attitude of the consumer towards a particular product. According to them, not only attitudes are influenced by belief, affect and behaviour, attitudes also influence belief, affect and behaviour.

In contrast to attitudes, which are evaluative judgments toward one object, preferences are evaluative judgements concerning two or more objects (Kardes, 2002). Preferences always involve making comparisons between objects. At times, attitude serves as building block for preferences, and sometimes preferences are based on comparison of attributes or features of two or more products, in which case, they are referred to as attitude-based preferences or attribute-based preferences. Sanbonmatsu, Kardes and Gibson (1991) have manipulated information processing goals and the evaluative implications of the unique attributes of two products. Tversky (1977) has identified unique attributes as those which are included in the description of one product but omitted from the description of the other product. The research conducted in this regard showed that the direction-of-comparison effect is eliminated when consumers form attitude-based preferences. To truly understand a psychological phenomenon, one must know when the effect is likely to be observed and when the effect is unlikely to be observed.

The research in question was performed with toothpaste, a dental care product to

- (i) Understand the customer orientation towards a particular product type.
- (ii) Analyze the impact of pricing in the selection of a particular brand of toothpaste.

The differences in influencing factors on the consumer decision-making process which are related to contrasts in the economic, personal, demographic, socio-cultural and marketing environment (Mantel and Kardes, 1999) have been examined. The article rather seeks to indicate the process of empirical data gathering and analysis with respect to consumer behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the case study of consumer behaviour aimed to discover the three objectives mentioned above, a conclusive and descriptive research design was chosen. Quantitative primary data were gathered through a sample survey research.

The survey is based on a formal structured questionnaire, restricted to the city of Kolkata with a sample size of 150 using stratified random sampling method. The questionnaire was designed considering four areas – beliefs and attitudes, preference, behaviour and socio-demographic issues. Primary data was collected using questionnaire method after conducting a pilot study. Statistical tools have been used to analyse and interpret the results.

The questionnaire has been prepared considering (i) the profile of the customers (ii) parameters aimed at measuring the satisfaction level of customers and (iii) the preference factors that the customers look into while considering a particular brand. Scaling techniques have been used to analyse the stages of satisfaction.

FINDINGS

On analyzing the customer orientation of a particular brand by calculating the brand awareness of the different brands available in the market, it has been found that the awareness of respondents towards Pepsodent is the highest (35%), followed by Colgate (32%), Close Up (28%), Dabur Lal Dantamanjan (4%) and others (1%) (Figure 1).

In terms of usage of different brands, Pepsodent (37%) is the highest ranked brand followed by Colgate (34%), Close Up (25%) and others. The analysis has shown that the usage rate of the respondents is directly

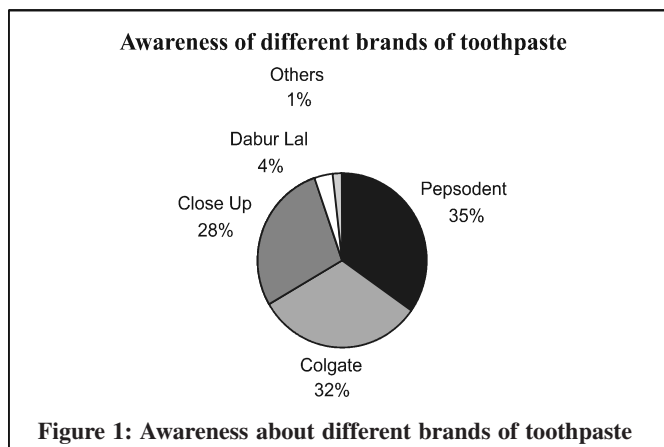


Figure 1: Awareness about different brands of toothpaste

Present Brands Being Used

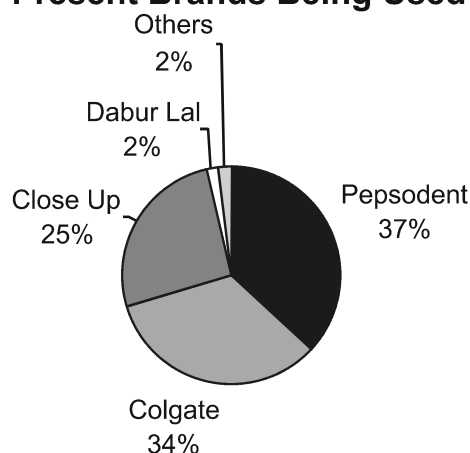


Figure 2: Awareness about different brands of toothpaste

Source of Brand Knowledge

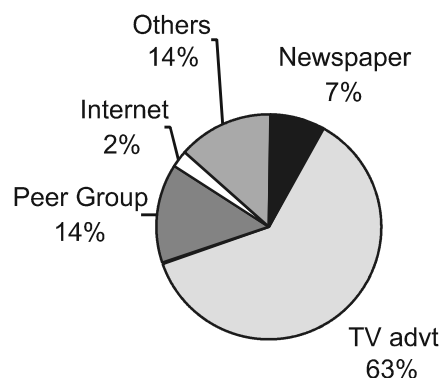


Figure 3: Source of Brand Knowledge

proportional to the awareness about different brands in the same segment (Figure 2). In terms of source of knowledge of the brand, it has been found that 63% of the total sample obtained information about the brands from TV advertisement, 14% from group of friends, 14% from other sources, 7% from newspaper and 2% from Internet (Figure 3).

In order to evaluate the preference of people for a particular flavor, it has been found that the maximum respondents prefer gel (41%), followed by regular (30%) while 29% of the respondents prefer both gel and regular (Figure 4).

Some statistical tests (Factor analysis and Chi-Square Test) have been conducted to understand and evaluate the different factors responsible for selection of particular toothpaste by a consumer, a factor analysis was conducted and the result obtained can be used to interpret the factors and the individual variables associated with each of the factors.

Preference for Flavour

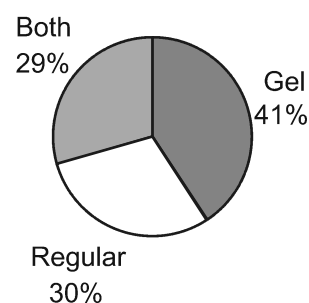


Figure 4: Preference for Flavour

TEST 1 : FACTOR ANALYSIS

Table 1 : KMO and Barlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.712
Barlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	342.734
	Df	78
	Sig.	.000

The scree plot and Eigenvalue>1 showed that there are 3 main factors – 1) Total Dental Care 2) Product Features and 3) Price Consciousness having the total variance upto 64% which should be taken as important for a consumer to look in a particular toothpaste. These three main factors have been further subdivided into sub-factors as given below which can be used as a cluster of attributes for effectively justifying the main factors-

1) F1= Total Dental Care

Sub factors: (i) Decay Protection (ii) Stronger Teeth (iii) Fight Germs (iv) Fresher Breath (v) Healthy Gums (vi) White Teeth

2) F2 = Individual Preference

Sub factors: (i) Taste (ii) Flavour (iii) Color (iv) Foam

3) F3 = Tangible Value

Sub factors: (i) Price (ii) Scheme (iii) Packaging

Table 2 : Rotated Component Matrix (a)

	Component		
	1	2	3
Decay protection	.817	.015	.056
Stronger teeth	.799	-.017	.045
Fight germs	.824	-.068	-.130
Fresher breath	.718	.232	-.080
Healthy Gums	.817	.044	-.002
White teeth	.612	.079	.060
Price	.082	-.051	.903
Schemes	-.079	.198	.644
Taste	.167	.826	.046
Flavors	-.001	.871	.078
Packaging	-.063	.405	.652
Color	-.005	.810	.270
Foam	.139	.589	.494

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation

a Rotation converged in 5 iterations

TEST 2 : CHI- SQUARE TEST

Table 3: Classification of consumers on the basis of Purchase Interval

No. of Weeks	Frequency	Percent
2 weeks	10	6.5
3 weeks	46	30.5
1 month	51	34.5
3 months	17	11.5
Above 3 months	24	16.0
Others	2	1.0
Total	150	100.0

From Table 3, it has been found that the periodicity of purchase is mostly 1 month followed by 3 weeks. Toothpaste - an FMCG product, constituting the Dental Care segment of FMCG sector, has a smaller shelf life. Marketers may consider this observation which is usually not desired by Indian consumers and can adopt a strategy to enhance the healthy proposition and whiteness of teeth as the core value of toothpaste.

As the market has become more diverse, there has been no single brand existing in the market. This was identified while interacting with the retailers. It was observed that there might be some relation between the daily movement of different categories of goods from the retailer outlet and the total sales generated by the particular retailer. A Chi Square (χ^2) test was carried out to ascertain whether there exists no relationship between the daily movement of categories of goods from a retailer and the monthly sales of the retailer.

Table 4: Relationship Between Category Wise Daily Movement of Goods and the Monthly Sales of a Retailer

Particulars	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	39.72	22	0.009

As χ^2 calculated value (39.72) > χ^2 tabulated (33.92) at 22 degrees of freedom, H_0 is rejected. This means that there exists a relationship between category wise daily movement of goods and the monthly sales of the individual retailer. It may be further corroborated by the fact that irrespective of income, consumers prefer a particular type of product having "Quality with Moderate Cost".

CONCLUSION

Despite Galbraith's (1972) observation that techno-bureaucrats of multinational companies have destroyed consumer sovereignty by producing whatever technology and management provides and selling them through promotional measures, a feeling has evolved out of this research that consumers in this (Dental Products) FMCG sector are still sovereign. In this consumer-centric market, where "a consumer" is a "king", the marketer needs to address some points while marketing an FMCG product.

1) A consumer while making a purchase decision evaluates the different factors present in a particular brand of toothpaste and finally decides on a particular brand after assessing the brand from the ones that are available in the market. The consumer shows some brand loyalty towards a particular product or service but the exact reason of his brand loyalty is not always explicit through his reactions while making a purchase decision. So, a marketer should try to highlight the **core product features** with a value addition keeping in mind the need of the consumer for making the product.

2) The advertisement that is being made by the manufacturer will not have much impact with the consumer unless the product is able to satisfy their innate needs. The **message content** of an advertisement should be strong enough to communicate that the needs of the consumer match with the attributes of the product.

3) In case of FMCG products, there are some unique attributes, which play the key role in helping the consumer to make a purchase decision from among the competitive range of products offered by different manufacturers.

4) As the market is becoming more and more competitive, all the players in the distribution channel should be made strongly operative with different innovative incentives to push the slow moving products to the consumer. If there is a snag in the distribution channel, the consumer may not always be loyal towards the same product / brand as "trying for new products / brands has become the order of the day".

5) Apart from the 4P's in marketing mix, a new "P" has also emerged. Perception is an important factor in dealing with the consumers. Change in perception of a consumer can really play havoc for a marketer in case of FMCG products where the consumers are very selective in deciding for a product / brand.

From Engel-Blackwell-Kollat Model (1985), it is understood that the consumer evaluates a product on the basis of belief, attitude and intention about that particular product or brand and after assessing the alternative product or brand available in the market. On the basis of obtaining this information and retaining it in his memory, the purchase takes place. If the outcome of the purchase is satisfaction, then the perception about the product or the brand is strengthened in the mind of the consumer resulting in brand loyalty. This may increase the purchase pattern for the consumer. Otherwise, the consumer will have a negative perception about the product or the brand which may tempt him to look for further alternatives. Hence, a marketer should always try to exercise influence on these three factors, that is, belief, attitude and intention to create a positive perception in the mind of the consumer for the ultimate consumption of the product. Hence it has been felt that in FMCG and service sector, **perception** may be considered as an important attribute and as the "**Eighth (8th) P**" in marketing mix. The belief, attitude and intention to create a positive perception towards the brand as an FMCG product basically evolves around core benefits to be derived from that particular brand, in our case, total dental care alongwith some individual preferences. A marketer of FMCG products has to put before the consumer a tangible value for the perception he or she derives about the brand of that product category.

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CONCLUSION

These commandments will be most helpful for marketing and advertisement agencies. The purpose of this study was to ensure that Indian companies are educated regarding this phenomenon and encouraged to experiment with it. CGA seems to be an uncertain prospect; however, if implemented properly, it can prove to be very benefiting for the organization.

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