Customer Behavior Analysis with Regard to Select Fast Moving Consumer Goods with Special Reference to Branded Bath Soap Products {Empirical Study from Mumbai City}

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Abstract: Consumers across the globe are becoming increasingly concerned about quality ofhealth and hygiene consciousness freshness, fragrance, through nutrition, vitamins, energy, strength etc., towards of their Personal Care Products. Environment and Health consciousness is getting reflected through consumer's enhanced interest in Bath Soaps. Our preferences are part of what makes us who we are and the brands we seek will reflect our preferences. The competition among the brands is fierce. In every product category, consumers have more choices, more information and higher expectations than ever before. Jockeying for position in a consumer's preference set requires an aggressive strategy and constant vigilance. The marketer's principal objective is typically to build a relationship with buyers, rather than merely to make a single sale. Ideally, the essence of that relationship consists of a strong bond between the buyer and the brand. The choice of an individual strategy or combination depends mainly on the nature of the branded product or service. The success of the strategy depends heavily on the marketer's understanding of the preference building and bonding process.

Key words: Health Consciousness, aggressive strategy, vigilance etc.,

NEED OF THE STUDY: In the shifting scenario of socio-economic environment across the world, all the economic activity like venture, production, marketing and international trade have been exposed to open ruthless competition. A similar change have been experiencing in the preference, attitude, lifestyles, likings, perceptions and in overall personality of customers. With these changes, marketing of goods and services has become the most critical task before the managers and executives of corporate. Endurance of profitability of any business firm depends upon their volume of sales. Higher volume of sales in term depends upon different type of marketing strategies.

The marketing strategies like product, price, promotion, place, process, people and physical evidence play a significant role in assuring a success and sizable profits for the companies. On the other hand, customers face several problems such as delay in product supplies, unfair and discriminated prices, and lack of information about expired and obsolete products, deceptive advertisements, raising customer complaints, unsociable approach of sales force, reduced sales after service, etc., and these problems on the one hand, and increasing customer's dissatisfaction on the other.

India being the world's 2nd leading country by population and with an economic growth speed of 8.5% and the utmost population between the age group of 25 to 40 years, backed by growth in earnings. With hectic lifestyle and substantial increase in the share of disposable income, there is a need to examine marketing mix strategy adopted by companies to identify, segregate and reach its target consumer for realizing their objectives.

As Mumbai being the financial capital of India and has a mix of the sample population ranging from Segment D Class to Segment Class A+ public. With a place bombarded with a variety of advertising, marketing and promotional strategy by dissimilar companies to reach its target.

Against this background, an authentic need is felt to carry out an empirical study to analyze and understand consumer behavior with regard to Fast Moving Consumer Goods and therefore, a detailed study relating to select FMCG companies profile, marketing strategies and consumer behavior in respect to FMCG is carried out in Mumbai city of Maharashtra state.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the Marketing Strategies of select FMCG Companies.

2. To assess the Consumer Preference, Top of Mind Brand and Level of Awareness in response to Branded Bath Soaps.

3. Tostudythe Consumer Purchase Frequency, Substitute Brands, Purchase Point and Source of Information with respect to Branded Bath Soaps.

HYPOTHESIS:

1. There exists relationship between the Bath soaps top of mind with Bath soaps purchase cycle.

2. There exists a relationship between Bath soapstop of mind and Bath soaps purchase point.

3. There exists a relationship between the Bath soaps top of mind with the price importance.

METHODOLOGY:

Selection of Parameters: In order to assess and examine the consumer behavior in response to Fast Moving Consumer Goods of Select FMCG, appropriate variables like consumer preference, product awareness, top of mind brand, purchase frequency, purchase point, substitute brand, sources of information and other appropriate variables are chosen and the same are included in the questionnaire.

Selection of Customer Respondents: Mumbai city is taken as a sample unit for the proposed study. It is proposed to choose a sample size of five hundred customer respondents for the study. While choosing the customers, a multi-stage sampling tool is employed. At the first stage, the Mumbai city is divided into four centers viz:-North Mumbai, South Mumbai, West Mumbai and East Mumbai. At the second stage, customers are divided into house-wives, working women, professionals, youth and children. And at the third stage, it is proposed to select randomly total 125 respondents from each center comprising of 25 respondents from each category.

Sources of Data: The primary information with regard to customer opinions relating to distinguished parameters is to be elicited through primary survey of select respondents. Viz: - Housewives, working women's, professionals, children and youths.

The necessary secondary data relating to FMCG companies with regard to their history, present status, estimated growth, product portfolio, etc., of the respective companies; are collected from annual reports, reference books and from the websites of different companies.

Data Collection Instruments: In order to collect primary information from the select respondents, a structured questionnaire is used. Questionnaire contains Ranking, Close end, Likert scale, and Ordinal questions.

Customer Contact Method: The users information from the respondents is gathered through an in depth personal interview method.

Data Analytical Tool: In order to analyze and understand customer respondents' impressions and opinions, simple percentages, averages and chi-square test are used and results are presented with the help of tables, diagrams, charts and graphs.

Scope of the Study: The study has covered consumer behavior with regard to FMCG products of select companies confined to Mumbai city. The findings of the study are of immense help to FMCG companies in particular and FMCG companies in general to understand about their products position in the consumer market and accordingly bring necessary changes for better performance.

Limitations of the Study: Findings of the study represent opinions of the customers residing only in Mumbai city and they are from the well-organized markets. However, the FMCG consumers are spread and scattered in every nook and corner of the country and therefore, these findings do have the limitations of generalization. The researcher has frequently experienced with the customers about their unwillingness to spare time with the researcher.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Agarwal, Vaishali and Mishra, Sanjay (2008) studied the lists of range of factors for minimizing stock and their importance in increasing customer satisfaction while buying a particular brand of a television, refrigerator, and mobile phones from a retailer and also highlights the reasons for fluctuations in demand. The case of LGEIL cited in this article bring up the measures which a robust company can take from time to time to enhance its customer satisfaction and for reducing the inventory helps in its downstream distribution.

Ensuring withholding of their customers through their dealer network has become a momentum and the time has come to stop transferring the cost to their consumers by identifying the ways and means for reducing the cost. Procedures of minimizing bullwhip effect in stock replenishment systems and RFID, which can result in reduced stock levels. Thus to keep customers loyalty to their brands, companies need to extend and monitor effective distribution which ensures low inventory and high customer satisfaction simultaneously.

Akula, Ravi (2008) has focused on Co-Branding as a modern Strategy in Marketing. Marketers need to capture share of mind and share of heart through innovative tools and techniques. Brands with unreliable dimensions of attributes, benefits, values, culture, personality and users have the actual power to generate wealth. Brands which are tough in these magnitude command respectable place in terms of sales, status, image etc., in the market. This keeps marketers on toes to successfully communicate their brand and its value. Co-branding is done with a variety of combinations among individual brands, regional brands, national brands, world brands, family brands or with subtle product like service ensuring synergistic outcome and win-win situation for customers, brands and companies.

Bhandari, Bhupesh, Kar, Sayantani and Iyer, Byravee (2010) have tried to observe that, what young men and women want through across sectors to sell their products to the youth. In the networked world, communication should be bold, it has acted as a catalyst, fun and cheeky, and it must talk to people rather than talk behind them. In youth appeal companies now a day's track, first and foremost, the youth application of any celebrity before finalizing brand ambassador.

Belch, George and Belch, Michael (2008) explained about Perspectives of Integrated Marketing Communications, here author writes on the concept of marketing mix theory with planning, management and strategy in his initial chapters and later on exclusively focuses on changing trends in advertising and methods of promotion including role and impact of different promotion medium like event sponsorship, direct marketing, TV, print media, Internet and social media publicity. Anxiety is more on integration of advertising with other promotional mix elements and the

need to understand their role in the overall marketing program. Later at the end of the chapters the author focuses on depth of effectiveness of Promotional program in detail.

Cravens, D.W. Hills, G.E. and Woodruff, R.B. (2002) describe strategies of marketing mix. Under product development strategies, they give major emphasis on branding and packaging strategies. Distribution is covered under Marketing Mix.[27]

Czinkota, Micheal R. and Kotabe, Masaaki (2005) gives clarity on marketing as a social science, based on theories and concepts, which require marketers, visit to people, observe them, talk to them and understand their behavior as "dialogue" between marketers and customers. Many companies-large and small, domestic and international also have gained the experience on the same. Further authors' enlightens on different GAP analyses in constructing a marketing strategy and innovating new product, product modification and its marketing response. An example of a new product introduction strategy of P and G is given. The pricing and distribution strategies including retailing are discussed and promotional strategies like sales, direct marketing, public relation, personal selling and advertising are also explained.

Derval Diana (2010): describes on people's favorite products and the reasons required for product positioning and targeting the proper segments. Direct marketing was also crucial to the growth of a new product that was an industry innovation and proof of brand concept for consumers. Advertising thinking led to the progress of a big service and branding idea that operated as a pivot for the conversion of internal and external attitudes, while PR thinking helped to form events and stories that built association and belief. An active programmer involving hundreds of staff resulted to changes that improved quality, relevance and consistence of brand experience.

Harmon, Robert R. and Laird, Greg (1997) have identified the factors that generate customer perceptions of value and describe links with marketing strategy. Thorough understanding of customer-driven values can enhance the success of marketing strategy. It has also improved customer understanding is the major payoff. In addition, value-driver analysis can give serious insights for product and service improvement and operational competence.

Kamalaveni, D., Kalaiselvi, S and Rajalakshmi, S (2008) explained that most popular brands do not possess all attributes expected by the consumers. There is high correlation between attributes scores and loyalty. Brand loyalty is extensively associated with the age of the respondent rather than with their income. Loyalty scores indicate that the consumers of less popular brands are more loyal than others with respect to rest all products. Market players have to ensure that their products will have the required attributes to make consumers more loyal. According to Stephen King "Product is made in the factory; a brand is something that is bought by a customer. A product can be copied by a competitor; a brand is unique. A product becomes outdated, soon; a successful brand is timeless".
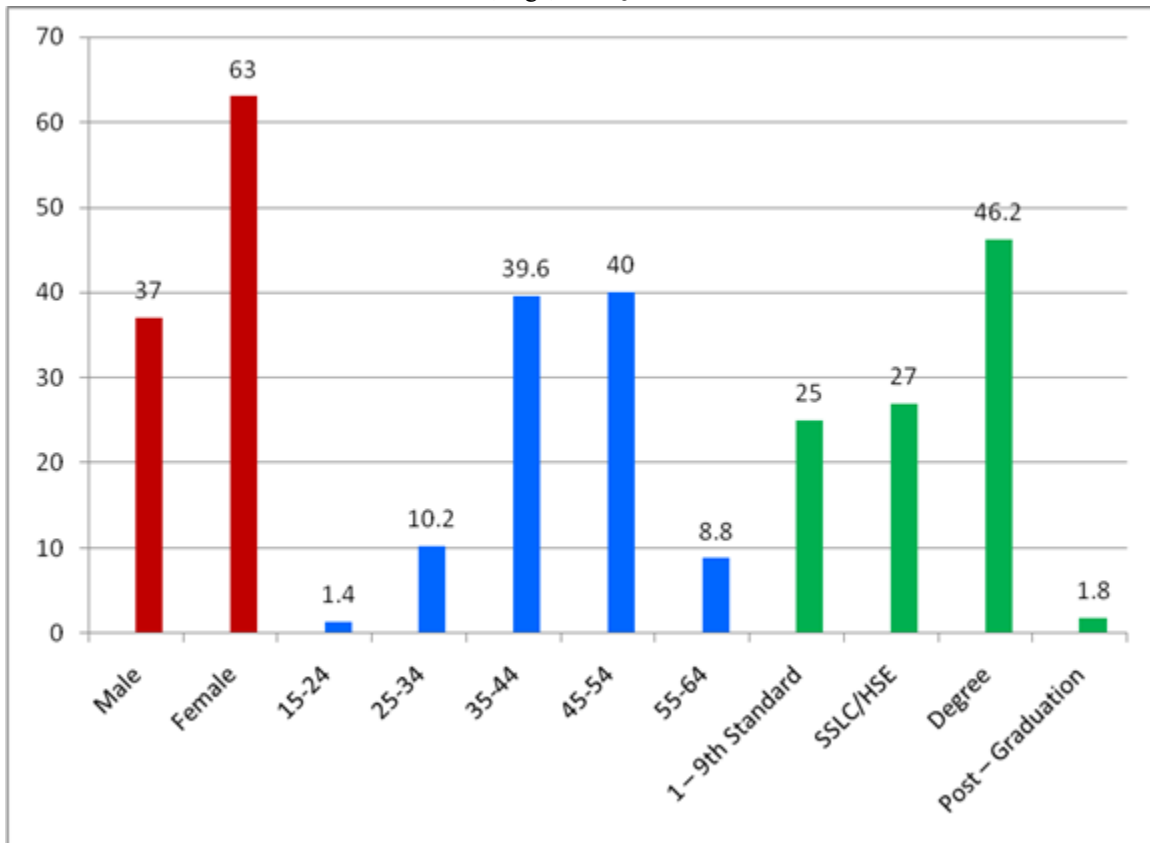
DATA ANALYSIS:

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1

Analysis of Demographic profile of respondents based on
Gender, Age and Qualification

Sl. No.	Variable	No. of Respondents	%
I	Gender		
	Male	185	37
	Female	315	63
	Total	500	100
II	Age		
	15-24	7	1.40

	25-34	51	10.20
	35-44	198	39.60
	45-54	200	40.00
	55-64	44	8.80
	Total	500	100
III	Qualification		
	1 – 9th Standard	125	25.00
	SSLC/HSE	135	27.00
	Degree	231	46.20
	Post – Graduation	9	1.80
	Total	500	100

Chart 1
Analysis of Demographic profile of respondents based on
Gender, Age, and Qualification

In the above table no.1 shows that 37% of male and 63% female respondents. It shows that more females are making purchases as compared to males.

According to majority of the respondents are in the age group of 45-54 (40%) years and 35-44 (39.60%) both of this age group alone contains 79.60% of the total respondents. It shows that most of the decisions are influenced by 35-54 years of age.

Sl. No.3 shows that most of the respondents are graduates (46.20%), and up to Matriculation (42%) these two accounts for 88.20% of cumulative percent.

Table 2

Analysis of Demographic profile of respondents based on Income and Occupation

Sl. No.	Variable	No. of Respondents	%
I	Income		
	Below Rs.5,000/-	31	6.20
	5,001 – 20,000/-	188	37.60
	20,001 – 35,000/-	173	34.60
	35,001 – 50,000/-	66	13.20
	50.001 & Above	42	8.40
	Total	500	100
II	Occupation		
	Unskilled Worker	6	1.20
	Skilled Worker	70	14.00
	Petty Trader	83	16.60
	Shop Owner	89	17.80
	Businessman	63	12.60
	Self-Employed Professional	65	13.00
	Clerical/Salesman	10	2.00
	Supervisory Level	45	9.00
	Junior Executive/Officer	32	6.40
	Middle/Senior Executive/Manager	37	7.40
	Total	500	100

Chart 2

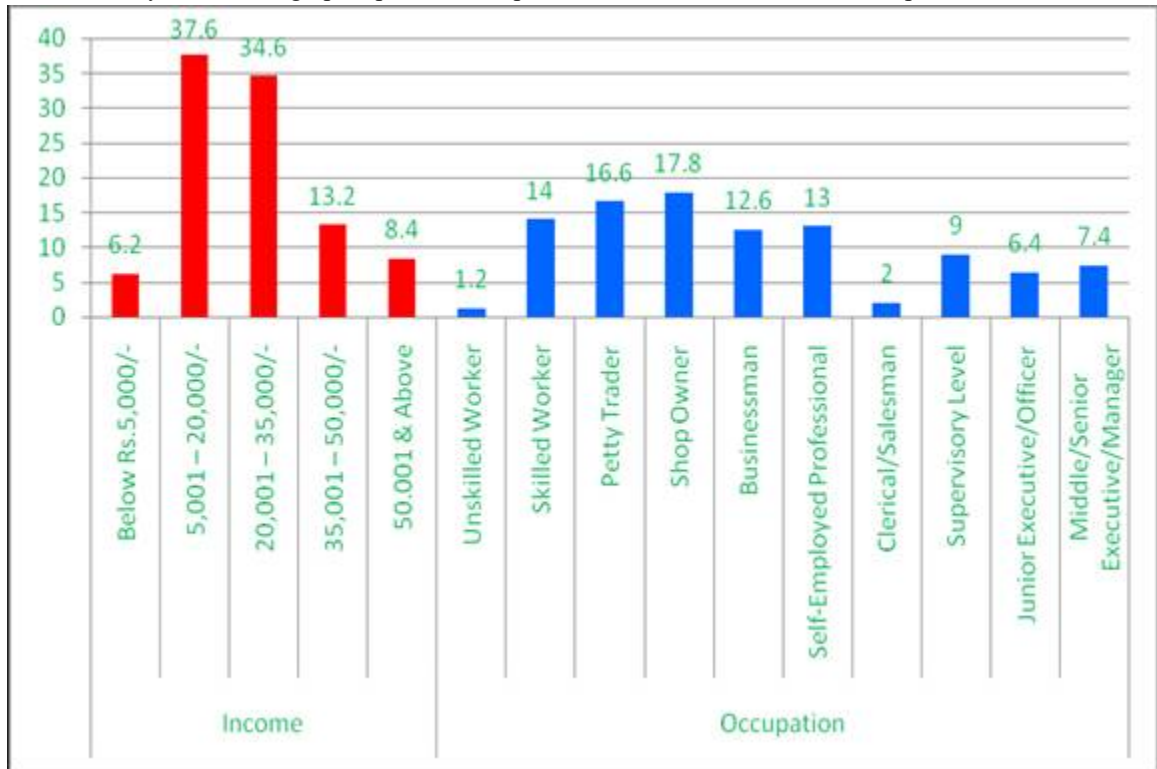Analysis of Demographic profile of respondents based on Income and Occupation

Table No.2 explains the study of 500 respondents across Mumbai city on their socio-economic condition. The members are housewife, bachelors who look after the primary grocery shopping for the house. The same has been topped by the respondents who are having disposable income of Rs.5,000/- to Rs.35,000/- (37.60% + 34.60%) that is 72.20%.

Table No.2 explains that, majority of the respondents (16.60% + 17.80%) that is 34.40% are petty trader and shop owners, and businessman and self-employed professionals i.e., 25.60% followed by skilled worker and self-employed professionals with 14% and 13% respectively.

Consumer Behaviour in Response to Bath Soaps

Table 3

Analysis of Brand Preference, Awareness and Brand purchased in the past three months with regard to select Bath Soaps
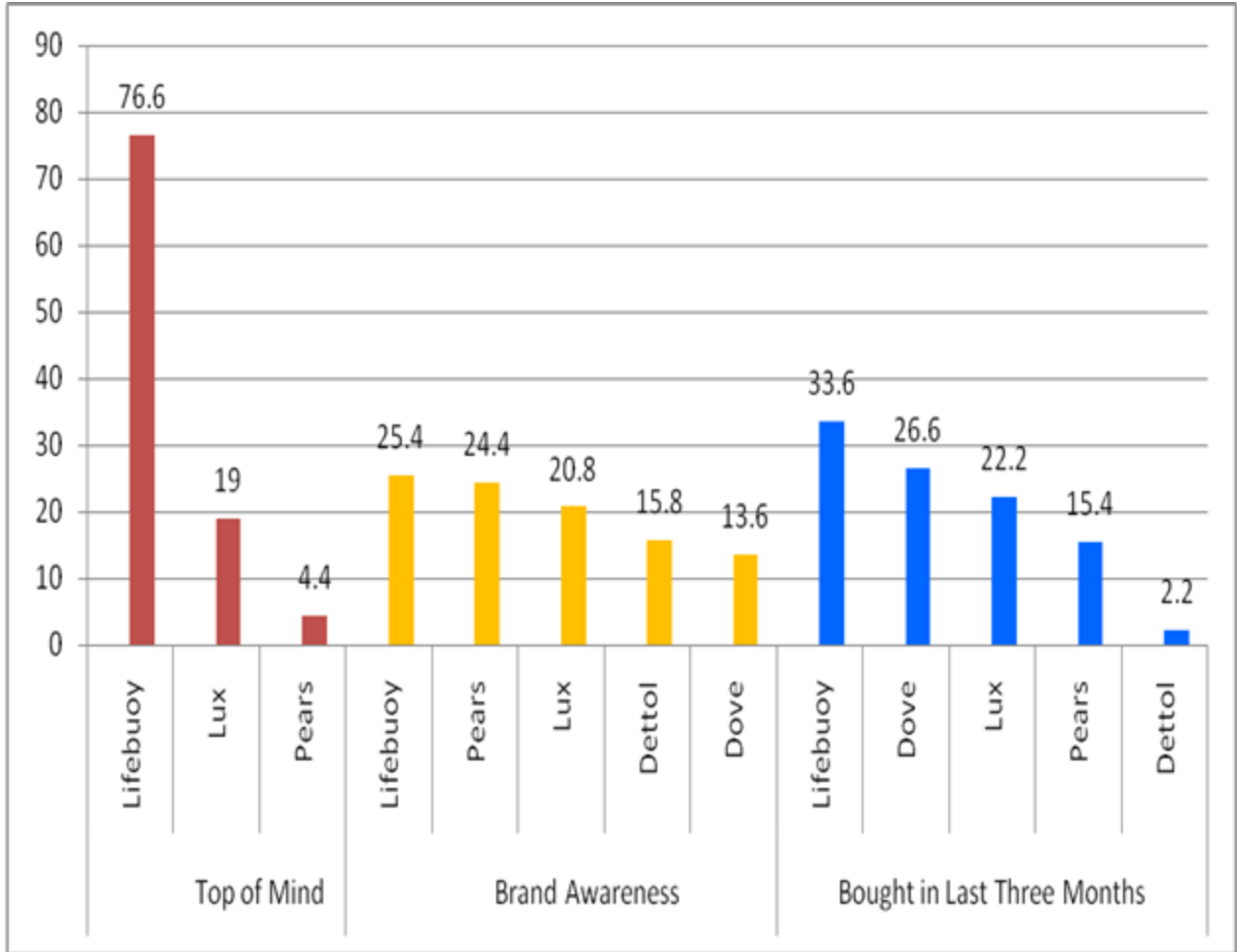
Sl. No.	Variable	No. of Respondents	%
I	Top of Mind		
1.	Lifebuoy	383	76.60
2.	Lux	95	19.00
3.	Pears	22	4.40

	Total	500	100
II	Brand Awareness		
1.	Lifebuoy	127	25.40
2.	Pears	122	24.40
3.	Lux	104	20.80
4.	Dettol	79	15.80
5.	Dove	68	13.60
	Total	500	100
III	Bought in Last Three Months		
1.	Lifebuoy	168	33.60
2.	Dove	133	26.60
3.	Lux	111	22.20
4.	Pears	77	15.40
5.	Dettol	11	2.20
	Total	500	100

Source: Primary Survey

Chart No. 3

Analysis of Brand Preference, Awareness and Brand purchased in the past three months with regard to select Bath Soaps

Bath soap segment is one major Fast Moving Consumer Goods is used very often in a day by most of the consumers. The brand preference, brand awareness and brand purchased in last three months of the consumer respondents are displayed in table – 3. From the table, it is apparent that of the overall three bath soaps, Lifebuoy is observed to have preferred by more than 76% of the total consumer respondents followed by Lux (19%) and Pears (4.40%). This plainly conveys that Lifebuoy soap is used by the great number of people and this brand remains on the top of mind of the consumer. This highest preference of consumer respondents to this brand could be attributed to fragrance, softness, color, foam generating ability, anti-bacteria/bacteria fighting ability for long time,cleanliness, attractive packaging, more quantity at reasonably low price and consumers happiness.

As much as brand awareness of these brands is concerned, analysis shows interesting results that of all the above brands, though Lifebuoy tops as more than 25% of the sample respondents are memorable with this brand yet no significant variation in the brand awareness is observed. Next to this, the percentage of consumers who have chosen and used Lifebuoy bath soap brand is the highest one. This shows that there is no any correlation between brand awareness and brand use.

With regard to purchases of unusual brands in the last three months is concerned, the table exhibits that of all the five brands, Lifebuoy is found to have been purchased by large number of the consumer respondents followed by Dove, Lux, Pears and Dettol. It is prominent that in case of all the brands, the consumer respondents have

purchased all the brands except Dettol which is least preferred and no significant disparity in the percentage of consumers who have purchased diverse brands in the last three months. The overall analysis indicated that Lifebuoy bath soap brand has made an extensive influence on the consumers mind followed by other brands.
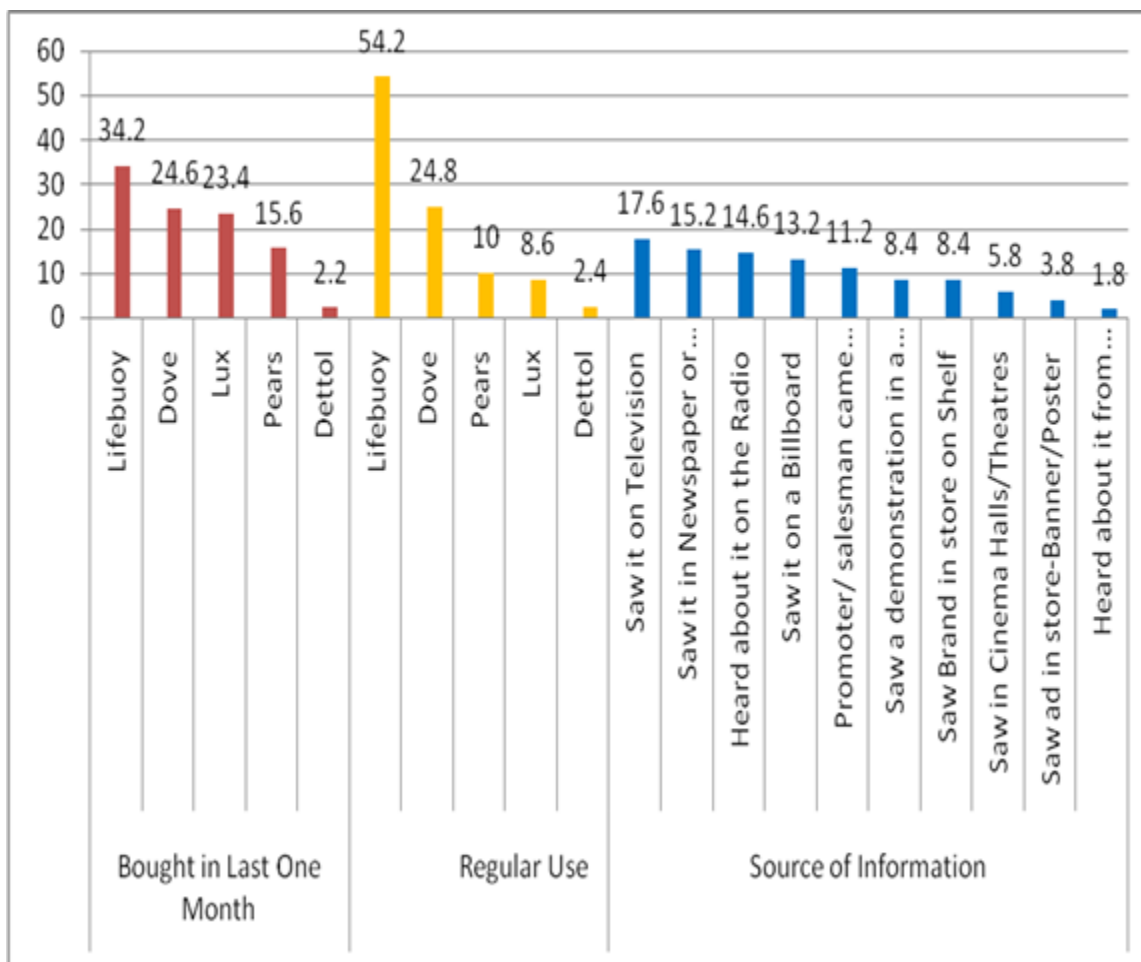
Table 4

Analysis of Brand purchased in the past One month, Regular Use and Source of Information with regard to select Bath Soaps

Sl. No.	Variable	No. of Respondents	%
I	Bought in Last One Month		
1.	Lifebuoy	171	34.20
2.	Dove	123	24.60
3.	Lux	117	23.40
4.	Pears	78	15.60
5.	Dettol	11	2.20
	Total	500	100
II	Regular Use		
1.	Lifebuoy	271	54.20
2.	Dove	124	24.80
3.	Pears	50	10.00
4.	Lux	43	8.60
5.	Dettol	12	2.40
	Total	500	100
III	Source of Information		
1.	Saw it on Television	88	17.60
2.	Saw it in Newspaper or Magazine	76	15.20
3.	Heard about it on the Radio	73	14.60
4.	Saw it on a Billboard	66	13.20
5.	Promoter/ salesman came home	56	11.20
6.	Saw a demonstration in a shopping mall/market	42	8.40
7.	Saw Brand in store on Shelf	42	8.40
8.	Saw in Cinema Halls/Theatres	29	5.80
9.	Saw ad in store-Banner/Poster	19	3.80
10.	Heard about it from Friend/Relative	9	1.80
	Total	500	100

Source: Primary Survey

Chart No. 4

Analysis of Brand purchased in the past One month, Regular Use and Source of Information with regard to select Bath Soaps

As visible in the table 4 head 1 as far as consumption in last one month is concerned LIFEBOUY tops the chart with an acceptance level of 34.20%. The attributes pertaining to such huge response include germ protection power, presence of vegetable oils, neem and lemongrass in the brand which no doubt, allure the hygiene conscious customers to go for the brand. Second in competition comes DOVE with an acceptance level of 24.60%. The brand posses' unique traits including high moisturizing content (to an extent of 25%) – distinguishes the brand from others and exclusively drives females for it. The other feature to mention is the presence of dermatological safety standards in the product. With an acceptance level of 23.40%, LUX comes 3rd in row as regard – bought in last month. The brand is well known since decades as of the quality standards and brand endorsements (by various bollywood actresses from time to time). Above all the availability of the product in different colors and fragrances (especially strawberry), presence of silk protein extracts and cream has helped the product to maintain its pace within such tuff fight scenario. PEARS being a well established brand and entrusted with high glycerin content product has already perceived a large junk of customers thereby creating a niche market for itself. Adding more to this presence of germ shield with mint extract and dermatological safety standards has helped the brand to occupy 4th position in the success ladder of perception with an acceptance level of 15.60%. Having blessed with medicinal values /anti-septic feature as well as germ fighting ability and above all being recommended by IMA (Indian Medical Association) the brand DETTOL comes 5th with acceptance level of 2.20%.

It is interesting to find the deviations in purchasing behavior of consumers within the head – Regular Use (Table 4) vis-à-vis the consumption of same under the head – bought in last one month. The factors attributing to

such dispersion include buy-one-get-one free, pay same and get more option, reduced pricing strategies, availability of combo packs (discounts while buying a bulk pack), and strong advertising campaigns.

Head 3 of Table 4 depicts that among the various sources influencing the purchasing behavior of the consumer Television media plays a vital role with a customer acceptance level of 17.60%. Next in row comes saw it in newspapers/magazine with 15.20% following that is advertising on various FM channels on radio with an acceptance level of 14.60%. Influencing factors such as billboards, demonstration by salesman, campaigns in mall as well as shelf advertising (store) also provide momentum, in hike sales with an influencing pattern of 13.20%, 11.20%, and 8.40% respectively. The table also reveals that the least among all comes with word of mouth as a persuasive factor in terms of convincing the customers with an acceptance level 1.80%.

Testing of Hypothesis

Sl. No.	Hypothesis	Calculated Value	df	P Value
1.	There exists relationship between the Bath Soap top of mind with Bath Soap purchase cycle.	22.844	6	.001 Accepted
2.	There exists a relationship between Bath Soap top of mind and Bath Soap purchase point.	27.796	4	.000 Accepted
3.	There exists a relationship between the Bath Soap top of mind with the price importance.	32.960	6	.000 Accepted

The formulated hypotheses are tested with the help of collected data and the results are analyzed as under:

In case of first, second and third hypothesis, the calculated P-value is less than (<0.05) therefore, it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between Bath Soap top of mind with Bath Soap purchase cycle, purchase point and also with the price importance.

Analysis of Bath Soaps:

➢ Analysis reveals that Lifebuoy is observed to have preferred by more than 25% of the total consumer respondents followed by Pears (24.40%), Lux, Dettol and Dove. This clearly conveys that Lifebuoy bath soap is used by the large number of people and this brand also remains on the top of mind of the consumer.

➢ This highest preference of consumer respondents to this brand could be attributed to fragrance, softness, color, foam generating ability, anti-bacteria/bacteria fighting ability for long time, cleanliness, attractive packaging, more quantity at reasonably low price and consistency in quality and more importantly better consumers happiness.

➢ As far as brand awareness of these brands is concerned, analysis reveals an interesting result that of all the above brands, though Lifebuoy tops as more than 25% of the sample respondents are familiar with this brand yet no significant variation in the brand awareness is observed. Though the brand has recognition yet it has to further incorporate unique and better traits as compared to that of its competitors in order to induce consumers to go for an exclusive buying pattern.

➢ With regard to the purchases of different brands in the last three months is concerned, Lifebuoy is found to have been purchased by majority of the consumer respondents followed by Dove (26.60%), Lux, Pears and Dettol. It is further noticed that in case of all the brands, the consumer respondents have purchased all the brands except Dettol which is more than 75 years old brand consumers yet do not prefer to go for it is quite amazing. Further, there is no significant difference in the percentage of consumers who have purchased different brands in the last

three months. The overall analysis indicates that Lifebuoy brand has made a sizable influence on the consumers mind followed by other brands.

➢ The analysis also reveals that print media and television advertisements play a critical role in spreading the brand awareness among the consumers where as word of mouth remains least impressing source of information. All other sources of information including shelf display, poster display, billboard positioning and mall advertising are placed between the two extremes. Therefore, it would be of major help especially to Lifebuoy and other brands where the market size is not that sizeable vis-à-vis Dove to give a due importance to print media for advertising in order to determine best possible results for the positioning strategy. The study tells that, the Hindustan Unilever Limited soap brands are fully aware with most of the consumers, whereas Reckitt and Benckiser – Dettol soap awareness is not encouraging among the consumers.

➢ This segment continues to do well despite higher penetration in price war in the market, which would erode margins of key players. Reckitt and Benckiser are trying to increase Dettol soap usage on anti-bacterial aspect and is offering new products such as Dettol hand wash and Dettol No-Touch hand wash system.

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are made to the FMCG Companies for the improvement in their respective marketing strategies.

❖ HULis focusing on the mass market. The company being a consumer goods manufacturer and competing with other players in the market, it is felt necessary to design soaps for a lower and mid-market segments. Indian market is made up of a strong middle class customer followed by a lower income group and Hindustan Unilever Limited needs to consider these market segments. Therefore, it is suggested to design soaps for a lower and mid markets so as to supplement sales revenue.

❖ It is found that HUL soaps are currently focusing much on adult segment only. Since baby segment is one of the important segments and presently there are only few manufacturers and marketers catering to this segment. Therefore, it is suggested that HUL, can think of entering this segment with superior product.

❖ The study reveals that soap brands of HUL are more popular in urban as well as rural markets. Since real India lives in rural areas and rural market is potential market for all types of soap brands. Hence, it is advised to the company to develop a customer driven marketing mix with more emphasis on product mix to take the advantage of potential rural market.

CONCLUSIONS: One of the youngest nations in the world is India, with a median age of 25 years, as compared to 36 in US and 43 in Japan. It coupled with quickly evolving consumer preferences and a large population, has transformed into a huge market scope for FMCG players. Nearly 25 percent of the population is consisting of youth segment of 10-24 years age group and they are showing momentous interest to all FMCG companies. New business channels for FMCG companies are coming up through the construction of hypermarkets and shopping malls, as the result of real estate development in the country.

By 2025, India is poised to become the world's 5th largest consuming country from the 12th position 2010. This will ensure the constant development of the FMCG industry in the future. As the urbanization rate is predicted to extend from the current 30% to 45% for the next 45 years, by adding 379 million consumers across Indian cities as a base for FMCG companies.

Household income of the top 20 booming cities in India is forecasted to develop 10% annually by 2018. In addition 100 top cities would be contributing between 50% - 60% of the overall spending on consumption, as per the recent industry sources.

Rapid increase in consumerism and the access of more international players in Indian markets are showcasing revolutionary changes due to the liberalization. International brands are selling their products at fairly competitive prices with variety of choices through market exposure to the quickly evolving Indian consumers.

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