

A Case Study On Consumers' Buying Behavior And Brand Loyalty With Regard To Processed Liquid Packed Milk In Guwahati , Assam

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INTRODUCTION

Studying the consumer buying behavior is a very complex process, as it involves not only the economic factors but also the emotional factors. However, marketers need to study the consumer behavior, as it helps them to position their products better and develop effective marketing strategies. Consumer buying behavior is influenced by the culture and subculture. Habits, likes and dislikes of the people belonging to a particular culture or subculture can affect the marketing efforts of a firm to a great extent. The social class to which an individual belongs tells about the type of products the individual prefers. Other factors that influence the buying behavior are social factors like reference group and family, personal factors like the age, life cycle and occupation, and psychological factors like motivation, perception and attitude of the customers.

Buying roles and buying decision constitute consumer's decision-making behavior. A customer can adapt various buying roles like *Initiator, Influencer, Decider, Buyer, Preparer, Maintainer And Disposer* in purchasing and using the products. Buying behavior helps marketers learn the intensity and degree of involvement of customers in purchasing the products. Customer buying behavior is broadly classified into three types. *Extensive Problem Solving Buying Behavior* is exhibited when a customer buys high involvement, expensive and less frequently purchased products. Consumers are involved in *Routine Problem Solving Decision-making Process*, when they purchase routinely purchased, low cost products. *Variety Seeking Behavior* is seen when customers purchase low-involvement products. Keeping with this perception, the present study has been designed with special reference to Dairy industry and undertaken to examine the Consumers' Buying behavior and Brand Loyalty with regard to processed liquid packed milk in Guwahati, Assam.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study has been undertaken the following Objectives:

1. To study the brand preference and buying behaviour of the consumers' about the processed liquid milk in Guwahati, Assam.
2. To study the Brand loyalty of the consumers with respect to processed liquid milk in Guwahati, Assam.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

✿ **Arriappan (2004)** in his study explained some aspect to change the consumer habits from loose milk to safe and quality packed milk to protect the health of the family. The study further states that Government agencies like Dairy Development Department and the Kerala Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (MILMA) and the dairy co-operative societies have to play an important role, to help the milk farmers on one hand and consumers on the other. The study also suggests that the efforts of Dairy Development Department and MILMA have to go a long way in the days to come to develop quality milk procurement and marketing in Kerala.

✿ **Wan (1994)** in his study on "*Consumer Satisfaction Research And Theory: Current Status And Future Directions*" have identified three basic types of decision rules. The basis for differentiation is how many attributes are used in a brand comparison and how the attributes are chosen and used by consumer.

✿ **Czepiel (1980)** undertook a study on managing customer satisfaction in consumer service business. The study states

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that marketing involves the distinct processes of both attracting consumers and satisfying them. Glowing promises are useful ways to attract purchasers, but marketers should bear in mind that these promises may form the basis for consumer expectations. Since consumer dissatisfaction springs from negative disconfirmations of these expectations, some instances of dissatisfaction could be avoided if consumers simply expected less in the first place.

✿ **Klaus G. Grunert, Tino Bech-Larsen and Lone Bredahl (2000)** in their study argue that consumer quality perception of dairy products is characterized by four major dimensions: hedonic, health-related, convenience-related and process-related quality. Two of these, viz., health and process-related quality, are credence dimensions, i.e. a matter of consumer trust in communication provided. Drawing on five different empirical studies on consumer quality perception of dairy products, three issues related to the communication on credence quality dimensions are discussed: providing credible information, the role of consumer attitudes, and inference processes in quality perception. Organic products, functional products, and products involving genetic modification are used as examples.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

✿ A total of 180 customers from six selected Zone of Guwahati namely (Dispur, Ulubari, Zoo road, Central, Lokhora, and West Zone) were personally interviewed using pre-tested schedule containing relevant questions. The researchers selected three outlets from each Municipal Zones respectively through **Lottery Method** and from each outlet, ten samples were collected. For the collection of data, the researchers mostly relied on those outlets which are normal. Here the term normal outlet refers to the outlets selling all or most of the brands of milk.

✿ Primary data was collected from the consumers (individual) buying milk from the outlets situated at different locations.

✿ Data were collected in two shifts i.e., Morning and Evening. Interview of the consumers were taken on an interval basis i.e., after selecting the first customer, every third (3rd) was taken into consideration.

✿ It may further be noted here that the customers interviewed were also the members of the household as well as consumers of the same.

✿ Along with the primary data, available secondary data was also used.

ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

The results of the study and analysis are presented under the following heads:

1. BRAND PREFERENCE AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF THE CONSUMERS' ABOUT THE PROCESSED LIQUID MILK IN GUWAHATI, ASSAM

Usually, awareness is expressed in terms of knowledge someone has for certain things and when someone shows preference for different attributes of a particular product or different brands of the same product. Milk consumers in Guwahati are well aware about their preference set regarding the brands. They are able to explore and express their experiences with different brands in use at ease. This indicates their concern for and the understanding of the products in use.

This is reflected from the consumers' ranking of their preference for different brands and the ranking of experience and satisfaction with respect to the product as well as brand thereof is the sign of preference level among the milk

Table 1: Income GroupWise Brand Preference

Income Group Brand	Below ₹ 10,000 (M.V.)	RANK	₹ 10,000 - ₹ 15,000 (M.V.)	RANK	₹ 15,000 - ₹ 20,000 (M.V.)	RANK	Above ₹ 20,000 (M.V.)	RANK	Total (M.V.)	RANK	%
Amul Taaza			.01	3					.01	5	1
Central Dairy	.01	2	.01	3	.03	2	.02	3	.07	3	7
Prithvi Dairy	.01	2	.06	2	.02	3	.03	2	.12	2	12
Dairy Fresh					.01	4			.01	5	1
Purabi Dairy	.08	1	.26	1	.24	1	.17	1	.75	1	74
Nandini	.01	2	.01	3	.02	3	.01	4	.05	4	5

consumers in Guwahati.

Buying behaviour consists of all the mental, emotional and physical efforts put into a marketing setup to make a search for the best solution to the problem of unfulfilled demand by joining the resources one has and the offers available in the market.

In the above context, milk consumers in Guwahati are indeed very involved consumers. They choose their marketing place near to their dwellings and thus, they were found to be optimizing their buying efforts (Ref. Table-1).

The Table-1 depicts a clear picture regarding the consumers' preference towards different brands of processed milk. From the surveyed data, it is clear that the people in Guwahati in general, mostly rely on Purabi brand of dairy milk in comparison to other competing brands i.e., Amul Taaza, Dairy Fresh, Central Dairy, Prithvi Dairy, and Nandini.

The consumers' preference for different brands of milk in Guwahati is as shown below-

Purabi Dairy	:	74%
Central Dairy	:	7%
Prithvi Dairy	:	12%
Nandini	:	5%
Amul Taaza	:	1%
Dairy Fresh	:	1%

Figure 1: Consumer's Brand Preference

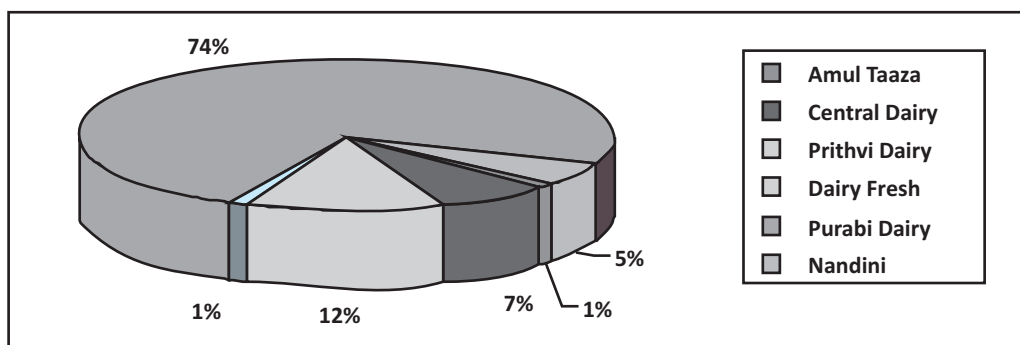


Table 2: Two-Way ANOVA Preference Table Regarding Different Brands (Occupation GroupWise)

Source of variation	S.S	d.f.	M.S.	F. ratio	1% F-limits(or the tables value)	Results
Between columns (i.e., between different income groups)	0	(4-1)=3	0	0	F(3,15)=5.42	—
Between rows (i.e., between different brands)	.09	(6-1)=5	.02	∞	F(5,15)=4.56	*
Residual or Error	.02	3×5=15	0			

Note - * refers significant difference here.

Implementation of the two-way ANOVA technique in the context of consumer's brand preference offers result that there is a significant difference across the brand. Each brand has its own identity, quality, as well as image, which is quite natural. No significant difference was noticed across the occupation, income and age groups of consumers regarding brand preference.

2. BRAND LOYALTY OF THE CONSUMERS WITH RESPECT TO PROCESSED LIQUID PACKED MILK IN GUWAHATI, ASSAM

Milk consumers in Guwahati city also choose brands that are easily available and offered. Their choices are mainly determined by the peer group endorsement. In this sense, they are mostly compliant consumers at the point of entry as a consumer for the milk products. However, later on, they become independent and calculative. They have very clear understanding and perception about their own needs and the options available in the market and the set of attributes associated with the different brands.

Milk Consumers in Guwahati were also found to be brand loyal. Thus, there is a little tendency amongst the consumer for brand's preference switchover unless there is some great motivation from other competing brands. This is reflected in their ranking of different brands and other statistical findings reported in the present work.

CONCLUSION

Studying the consumer buying behavior is a very complex process, as it involves not only the economic factors, but also the emotional factors. However, marketers need to study the consumer behavior, as it helps them for better positioning of their products and develop effective marketing strategies. Customer's satisfaction through net value delivery is the key for any marketing success. Customer satisfaction through the dynamic support like value addition to the consumers has been ignored until recent past. Based on preliminary investigation, it is found that not only the facts mentioned above- are the route cause of marketing failures, but also the perceptual differences that exist between consumers and marketers are more subtle and latent cause of concern.

The present study has been undertaken to examine the Consumers' Buying behavior and Brand Loyalty with regard to processed liquid packed milk in Guwahati, Assam.

The study of the overall objective poses the clear picture regarding consumers' awareness and buying behaviour regarding liquid processed milk of different brands. The consumers in Guwahati were well aware regarding the use of their milk brands among the available alternatives. The different milk brands i.e., Amul Taaza, Central Dairy, Dairy Fresh, Prithvi Dairy Purabi Dairy, Nandini were available in the Guwahati market. Out of all the six brands, Purabi was the dominating one (Reference to table no 1) and most of the consumers (i.e., 74%) relied on this brand.

The success of any marketing strategy lies in the post- purchase experience associated with the products / services. In today's competitive milk marketing environment where customers have many alternatives to choose and satisfy themselves, customer's loyalty is crucial for all competing firms. It is right to say that today's delight of the consumers is their tomorrow's loyalty to the brand. At the same time, this becomes the base for tomorrow's expectation from the brand also.

Expectation and actual delivery of consumer's satisfaction are the basic elements of marketing strategy. It is said and felt that achieving and maintaining customer's satisfaction even at a higher cost would not be as costlier as that of the cost of customer's dissatisfaction and losing the customers to the rivals. Consumer satisfaction is highly focused area of management because the key to consumer retention is consumer satisfaction. A highly satisfied consumer generally stays loyal longer, buys more as the company introduces new products and upgrades existing products, talks favorably about the company and its products, pays less attention to competing brands and is less sensitive to price; offers product or service ideas to the company, and costs less to serve than the new one because transactions are routine.

SUGGESTIONS

Giving **suggestions** in the light of the research work is a difficult task. Still, it is highly imperative from the users' point of view.

Based on the work done, the researchers offer the following suggestions:

1. The concerned authority or executives should take adequate action regarding price so that value addition can be provided to the milk users of respective brand in Guwahati, Assam.
2. Management of quality is of the utmost importance, especially the creaminess of milk, which is the main constituent of taste. Besides this, factors causing bad smell need urgent care. This is a technical and important issue from the qualitative point of view and it invites expert's advice and suggestions for the improvement of the quality.
3. Attempts must be made by the executives of the concerned brand to provide outlets in different localities nearby the main marketing centers, mainly in the residential areas of the city to enhance customers' convenience as well as the brand image of the milk.
4. Enhancement of brand image is required in order to safeguard the market share of the brands, which will help to create positive perception about the product and its attributes of milk. For this, advertisements along with other suitable promotional measures like local celebrity reference and sponsoring local socio-cultural events may be highly useful.
5. Segmented packet designing is recommended in order to maintain customer preferences. Packaging should be developed in an innovative way to make the packaged milk more convenient and attractive, especially for the end users.

like housewives, individuals etc.

In this way, the brands may keep their present customers and motivate others to join same as customers in their favor.

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