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EXPLORING BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF URBAN CONSUMERS TOWARDS SHAMPOOS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCES FROM INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The global shampoo industry is an attractive business opportunity in the context of emerging economies like India. This paper aims to study the effect of attributes of shampoo brands on brands choice and to explore the brand preference of Indian consumers towards shampoo. The paper also focuses on exploring gender difference on the various dimensions affecting the consumer behaviour regarding brands of shampoo and concludes with marketing implications. A questionnaire was administered to 103 consumers to test six hypotheses concerning the impact of gender. The data confirmed that there are significant differences in the perception of college going male and female urban consumers regarding the features like package design etc. The study revealed that purchase is driven either by practical objectives such as benefits or by individual perceptions. These individual perceptions can be altered with the help of suitable advertising campaigns and marketing strategies. Findings and implications of the study will help not only Indian marketers but also international marketing practitioners to develop appropriate promotional tools to extend their product coverage. The study provides valuable insight into one growth area and indicates that more research in this area would be of value.

KEYWORDS

Shampoo industry, buying behaviour.

1. INTRODUCTION

The cosmetics and personal care products industry depicts a huge opportunity with estimated sales over US\$ 200 billion in the year 2003 and the growth is expected at a rate of 4 per cent per year (Briney, 2005). Over all the personal care industry is classified into sub sectors namely face care, hand and foot care, hair care, skin care, oral hygiene, fragrances and cosmetics. Hair care makes the largest sub-segment in this industry with a 22 per cent share of total consumer expenditure followed by skin care (16 percent) and make up (13 percent), oral hygiene (12 percent), fragrances (12 percent) and other (25 percent) (Weber and Capitant de Villebonne, 2002). The shift in personal care and cosmetics markets from developed to emerging markets has not only proposed new objectives with the purpose of extending the customer base but also meeting the demands of those new bases (Ortega, 1998). The major demand is for the products that are of basic need for the consumers like soap, shampoo, hair oil etc. A notable limitation in the academic literature, however, and one that has some importance to FMCG marketing practitioners, specially the shampoo industry, relates to the attributes and features explaining the purchasing of shampoo brands. Only few studies included the measures of variables affecting the shampoo brand preference which helps in understanding the reasons for purchase of low involvement product like shampoo. Better knowledge of the impact of demographic of the consumers on the psychographic factors of the brand can help in dovetailing the final purchase behaviour to the consumer choices and preferences. This study focuses on exploring key drivers influencing the reasons for buying various brands of shampoo. The study followed with examining the association of gender on those key drivers and the impact of gender too.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INDIAN SHAMPOO INDUSTRY

The exercise of shampooing (derived from the Hindi word *champi*) became popular during the British colonization in India, hence well translated to London too (Mahomet, 1997). Gradually the "idea of shampooing for health" made the practice quite popular in the field of medical sciences too, where the concept got some vital changes and employed for several uses within a period of few decades while the product later named as shampoo (Mahomet 1997). The shampoo market is deeply disjointed in terms of huge number of manufacturers, suppliers, brands, and trade channels. In the past decade, India's cosmetic market has undergone the biggest ever evolution, providing the Indian consumers more choices of branded shampoos. At present, the Indian shampoo market has a penetration level of 14 per cent and is estimated to have a value of around Rs. 2,700 Cr (Business standard, Friday, 2012). Following is the list of top five most popular brands of shampoo in India:

1. L'Oreal

L'Oreal is the most popular brand of shampoo brand among Indian consumers. It is a French cosmetics company which got established in the year 1909 by Eugene Schueller. The Head quarter of the company is situated in Paris. Variants of L'Oreal shampoo are total repair, fall repair, oil nourish, colour protect and nutri gloss.

2. Dove

Dove is a brand of Unilever in the category of personal care. Unilever is a multinational company established in 1929 after the merger of Lever Brothers and Margarine Unie. The brand offers various products like shampoo, hair conditioner, deodorant, body wash, face wash and lotions.

3. Pantene

Pantene is ranked 3rd in the list of five best shampoo brands in India on the basis of popularity. This brand of shampoo is owned by Procter & Gamble which is an American multinational consumer goods company founded in the year 1837 by William Procter and James Gamble.

4. Sunsilk

Another brand of shampoo owned by Unilever is Sunsilk. Presently covering the market in 80 countries, Sunsilk was launched in the year 1964. Some popular variants of Sunsilk Shampoo are Hair fall solution, Radiant shine etc.

5. Head & Shoulders

The brand is owned by the parent company Procter & Gamble. The brand was launched in the year 1961 in North America, introducing ZPT (Zinc pyrithione) to treat dandruff. As an anti-dandruff agent, the brand got huge popularity along with other variants like cool menthol and anti-hair fall.

Source: Listz (Dec 2014)

2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Authors have reported various reasons affecting the consumer inclination towards a particular brand. Ragavendran (2009) concluded that consumer consider the package design to be one of the reasons for choosing the shampoo along with the benefits offered. Psychographic attributes were found to be connected with the demographics of the shampoo consumers (Zbib et.al, 2010). The study found some significant differences between the demographic variables and the evaluation the consumers perception about overall performance of shampoo brands obtained from various countries. Marketers have used gender as one of the most common criteria for segmentation of consumers. The concept makes sense, given that the gender split can be easily identified and the results can be implied to earn profits (Putrevu, 2001.).

Sharma and Mehta (2012) reported that frequency of shampoo use in males is very less as compared to females and the consumers use it only for the purpose of cleaning, not for making their hair healthier or stronger. Whereas, Wells et.al (2010), concluded that demographic variables are not helpful in explaining the brand choice instead benefits are the powerful basis for describing consumer inclinations towards shampoo brands. Studies in the past have revealed the effect of gender on expenditure revealing women can go even in debt but they won't stop shopping (Weeks, 2004). Akarta and Arora (2012) opined that Indian consumers are less aware about the brands of shampoo irrespective of gender and so is the expenditure in such low involvement products. Thapa (2012) explored consumer switching behaviour and the findings suggested the impact of packaging, brands benefits, advertisement source etc. are the reasons of switching or continuing behaviour of shampoo consumers. Authors posit that brand commitment is highly associated with brand loyalty (Kim et al., 2008); even some argue that it is an essential and adequate condition for brand loyalty (e.g. Knox and Walker, 2001). While brand loyalty is a function of brand attributes (Kim et al., 2008), it may also be related to consumer demographic characteristics and traits. For example, brand loyalty is associated with risk aversion and females were found to be more risk averse than men (Matzler et al., 2006). Though there is substantial work on gender differences in the literature, still not much research has been done on gender differences in consumer behaviour regarding shampoo brands. That is quite shocking as researchers believe that today's men have taken on many of the shopping responsibilities that women predominantly performed in the past (Harnack et al., 1998).

On the basis of extant literature and considering objectives in mind, we proposed the following null hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant association between gender and brand preference of shampoo.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between gender and brand loyalty of shampoo.

H₀₃: There is no significant association between gender and expenditure on shampoo.

H₀₄: Significant differences do not exist between males and females in terms of fragrance as an attribute.

H₀₅: Significant differences do not exist between males and females in terms of package design as an attribute.

H₀₆: Significant differences do not exist between males and females in terms of variety as an attribute.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for the study was collected from a convenience sample of 103 respondents out of which 53 were males and 50 were females representing close to that of the general population. Around 74 per cent of the respondents were in the age band of 21-25 years while rest of respondents were in the age group of 18-21 (~26 %). 95 respondents were post graduates and the remaining 8 respondents were graduates enrolled in an esteemed university near capital region of the country. Monthly family income of majority of the respondents ranged between 15,000 to 25,000 INR. A self-structured questionnaire was employed in order to collect data regarding consumer buying behaviour towards shampoo.

The data was obtained with the use of self-administered questionnaire which comprises of two sections: first section includes the demographic information of the respondents while the second section includes questions related consumer brand preference, expenditure and attitude towards various attributes of shampoo. The second section also includes consumer opinion regarding the three attributes of brands of shampoo namely: fragrance, variety and package design.

3.1 BRAND PREFERENCE AND CUES

As noted in the literature, there are varied choices of consumers regarding buying of shampoo brand and there are several reasons affecting the inclination towards particular brand of the shampoo. The current study revealed that 88 per cent consumers find pricing of their brand as optimum and reasonable while 12 per cent said that the brand is priced higher than expected. The response of shampoo users to product cues and their evaluation of important attributes are vital towards purchase behaviour. In the context of Indian shampoo users, Head & Shoulders was found to be the most preferable brand followed by Dove and Sunsilk (See Table 1).

TABLE 1: BRAND PREFERENCE

| Shampoo brand | Frequency | Per cent |
|------------------|-----------|----------|
| Head & Shoulders | 26 | 25.2% |
| Dove | 25 | 24.3% |
| Sunsilk | 16 | 15.5% |
| L'Oreal | 13 | 12.6% |
| Others | 23 | 22.3% |
| Total | 103 | 100 % |

Good R&D emerged to be one of the most important factors which convince Indian consumers to use a particular brand. Recommendations from family member is the second reason for choosing a shampoo while the suitability of a particular brand of shampoo is the third most important factor for choosing it. (Please refer to Table2)

TABLE 2: REASONS FOR CHOOSING A BRAND OF SHAMPOO

| Reason for choosing a brand | Per cent |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Good R&D | 24.0% |
| Recommended by Family Member/Friends | 22.3% |
| Promotions and Offers | 15.7% |
| Suits my hair type | 14.0% |
| Influenced by brand Ambassador/Ad | 10.7% |
| Others | 13.3% |

3.2 TYPES OF SHAMPOO AND MONTHLY EXPENDITURE

Consumers provide some interesting results about their choice of shampoo brand on the basis of utility and characteristics. Hair fall control was found to be the prime reason for choosing a particular brand of shampoo, closely followed by anti-dandruff shampoo which is evident with the high number of respondents using Head & Shoulders. Third and fourth are closely ranked with 18.6% responses for dry and damaged and 16.7% for silky straight respectively. Also the shampoo consumers provided the information regarding their monthly expenditure on the brand of shampoo they use. As it can be inferred from the data, 45 respondents spend less than Rs. 100 monthly on shampoo. The second most common group was of Rs. 100-300 which is the price of premium shampoo brand. Then a relatively smaller group was that of Rs. 300-500 and the smallest group was the Rs. 500-1000 range. (See Table 3)

TABLE 3: MONTHLY EXPENDITURE

| Monthly Expenditure | Frequency | Per cent |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| <100 | 45 | 43.7% |
| 100-300 | 36 | 35.0% |
| 300-500 | 14 | 13.6% |
| 500-1000 | 8 | 7.8% |
| Total | 103 | 100% |

3.3 BRAND EXPOSURE AND USAGE

Sources of brand exposure towards shampoo were also examined. The most common method of brand exposure of respondents was Television (32%). Next is exposure through friends and family. Around 7% consumers said they are exposed to their preferable brand of shampoo through internet. 65 per cent consumers said that are using the brand for the past 2-4 years while 34 per cent consumers are using for less than a year. A huge percentage (90 per cent) of shampoo buyers revealed that they have their preferable brand available almost everywhere. Hence brand availability also has an impact towards choice of brand.

3.4 HYPOTHESES TESTING

A series of six hypotheses were developed based on the literature. With the purpose of testing the proposed hypotheses and considering the suitability of data, chi-square test and independent samples t-test were operationalized. The test reveals interesting results about the affect of gender on the attributes relevant in explaining the inclination towards a particular brand among both the genders.

3.4 (A) CHI-SQUARE TEST

Hypotheses H_{01} - H_{03} was tested by applying chi-square test at 95 per cent confidence level of significance. The results were significant in explaining the association of gender towards the considered attributes. (Refer to Table 4)

TABLE 4: CHI-SQUARE STATISTICS

| Attribute | χ^2 | df | p value | Remark |
|------------------|----------|----|---------|--------------|
| Brand Preference | 23.506 | 7 | .001 | Not Accepted |
| Brand Loyalty | 7.961 | 1 | .005 | Not Accepted |
| Expenditure | 17.132 | 3 | .001 | Not Accepted |

The results of chi-square test revealed that there is a significant association of gender with respect to brand preference and brand loyalty, as well as expenditure on brand. Hence H_{01} - H_{03} were failed to be accepted as the significant value was lower than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$).

3.4 (B) INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T- TEST

In order to test H_{04} - H_{06} , independent T-test was conducted where in gender differences were examined on the attributes fragrance, package design and variety of brand of shampoo. (Table 5)

TABLE 5
Independent Samples Test

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Fragrance | Equal variances assumed | 1.273 | .262 | -1.395 | 101 | .166 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -1.389 | 96.481 | .168 |
| Package Design | Equal variances assumed | 5.167 | .025 | .096 | 101 | .924 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .097 | 96.561 | .923 |
| Variety | Equal variances assumed | 1.288 | .259 | -1.371 | 101 | .174 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -1.376 | 100.557 | .172 |

GROUP STATISTICS (FIG. 1)

| Attribute | Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------------|--------|----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| Fragrance | Male | 53 | 3.42 | .819 | .112 |
| | Female | 50 | 3.66 | .961 | .136 |
| Package Design | Male | 53 | 3.72 | 1.007 | .138 |
| | Female | 50 | 3.70 | .763 | .108 |
| Variety | Male | 53 | 3.47 | .973 | .134 |
| | Female | 50 | 3.72 | .858 | .121 |

As it can be observed by the tables above, no significant differences were found to exist between males and females in context of the attributes namely Fragrance and Variety. Hence, H_{04} and H_{06} failed to be rejected. But the results also revealed that there is significant difference vis-à-vis package design in the minds of male and female consumers. Hence H_{05} was not accepted as the significant value was found to be lower than 0.05 at 95 per cent level of significant.

4. DISCUSSION AND MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

In a low consumer involvement category such as shampoo, purchase is either driven by practical objectives such as usage benefits, or by experiential pleasures. Generally, as a low involvement product, shampoo has low loyalty rates; but the current study revealed that Indian consumers are quite loyal to the brand they prefer as they were using the brand of shampoo for the past 3-4 years continuously. This result is a bit different to what is experienced by researchers in other countries (Zbib et.al, 2010), where 90 percent of consumers shift from one brand to another every month. The results of the chi-square test reveal the association of gender with the brand preference, brand loyalty and expenditure. Hence marketers should strive to develop a leadership position in the minds of the consumer as it will help in gaining consumer surplus with an extended loyalty for coming years. Studies in the past have revealed the effect of gender on expenditure (Weekes, 2004). Hence, Gender specific products can be developed which should promote ideas like "Only for men" or "Women worth it" can be of immense help.

Indian consumers will stick to the brand if promoted through suitable media like television and internet as the results showed that television is the prime source through which their purchasing behaviour is getting influenced a lot. This means shampoo brands must focus their marketing on television advertisements and make them as appealing as possible. The internet is also an upcoming medium for targeting consumers, it can help in brand recall and brand presence as social networking sites and online shopping are gaining popularity. This is also more important for the shampoo industry because it is a low involvement product and brand loyalty is therefore not too high; consumers may switch from one brand to another easily so retaining consumers as well as acquiring new ones can be accomplished by affective advertising. Peer influence was also found to be a source of exposure towards shampoo brands in the form of word of mouth. This very impact of social influence is in line with studies conducted on the interpersonal and peer influence (Lee, 2008; Khare, 2013).

The research found a significant difference on the attribute package design. It might an attractive tool to promote the brand. Marketers can exploit the product design and its packaging to reach the market which has not been covered by them. Indian consumers found to be indifferent on the aspects fragrance and variety, which is quite shocking. It requires further examination to make it more conclusive.

The results revealed that 43.7 per cent spend less than Rs. 100 monthly on shampoo indicating the two trends prevalent in the Indian Shampoo Industry: popularity of shampoo sachets, as well as low frequency of shampoo use. The second most common group was of Rs. 100-300 which is the price of premium shampoo brand bottles. This more economical mind set is prevalent due to the fact that the respondents of this questionnaire were all students. Hence marketers can focus on developing wide assortment for their shampoo in all sizes. Shampoo users believe that the pricing is reasonable for the brand they and most of them were found satisfied with the shampoo they use. Most shampoo users were willing to continue using same brand of shampoo; only 7 per cent were found to discontinue the current brand. Hence, marketers should also focus in exploring the causes for satisfaction and dissatisfaction among Indian consumers regarding purchase of shampoo.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

There is limited generalizability of the research findings as the study was conducted in a particular setting with a particular sample namely, Indian students. India is occupied with a fairly mixed culture that affects the consumer pattern and usage of products. It may be that our findings would be less relevant to other settings, such as older shoppers. Future research could replicate the study across several other countries which would help to validate our findings. More research should be done to develop a detailed understanding of the perceptions and the psychological influences that affect the purchasing behaviour. Linking other demographic variables might reveal some valuable inputs.

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