



A STUDY ON CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS SOFT DRINKS IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI CITY

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ABSTRACT

Consumers have a set of preferences and values whose determination is outside the realm of economics. They dependent upon culture, education, and individual tastes, among a plethora of other factors. The preferences are independent of income and prices. Ability to purchase goods does not determine a consumer's likes or dislikes. In other words, the consumer has different preferences over different combinations of goods defined by set of commodity bundles.

Keywords: *consumer preference, Brand, Cost.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer differs from one and another based on age, gender, income, education level and tastes. Moreover, it has relationship between the unlimited resources, surroundings, etc., and the consumer will be heavily made to change their choice of the goods and services so that they will demand more and more. Consumers may not really understand why they would choose the product and purchase it at the time and what actually control them to buy it and the reason why so because it always comes from their mind. As a result, a number of factors have been identified and taken into considerations that affect consumer's attitude towards product and service. An individual buying characteristic is strongly affected by culture. Culture makes shape on people making decision to purchase and to do their daily activities. Individuals have their own culture values to decide on something. Life style, beliefs, attitudes, also known as subcultures of people belonging to a particular culture such as geographical areas and human characteristics such as age and cultural group of people (ethnic background).

Soft-drinks are fast moving consumer goods. The present study is an attempt to study the brand preference for soft-drinks. The soft-drinks include all types of soft-drinks including fruit drinks. It comes in a variety of flavors and are artificially sweetened. The soft-drinks industry has undergone much transformation with consumer demands, government policy and innovation in the packing. The soft-drink industry comprises of companies that manufacture non-alcoholic beverages and carbonated mineral waters or concentrates and syrups for the manufacture of carbonated beverages. Soft drink products have been well accepted by consumers and gradually overtaking hot drinks.

Consumer started having these artificial drinks not only in summer seasons but also in other seasons. The consumers who do not like tea and coffee started liking these drinks. All type of people in a society either rich or poor started liking these drinks. It has also become means for time passing. Consumers also use it for digestion of food. The manufacturers of these drinks draw the attention of people through attractive advertisements to earn more profit in their business.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the socio economic profile of the consumers of soft drinks.
- To identify the different brands of soft drinks preferred by the consumers.
- To study the factors affecting the preference of consumers towards different soft drinks.
- To analyze the awareness of consumers about the quality and health aspects of soft drinks and
- To analyze the level of satisfaction among the consumers concerning various aspects of soft drinks supply.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Pilot study was undertaken to collect the preliminary information from soft drink users. Based on the pilot study and review of literature a questionnaire was prepared. Pretesting the questionnaire was done with ten sample soft drink users and necessary changes were incorporated in the questionnaire. Primary data for analysis were collected from 110 respondents. The data were collected with the help of structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into five parts in coherence to the objectives of the study. Secondary data were collected from journals, newspapers, books, business magazines and websites.

4. SAMPLING DESIGN

The study was based on survey of 110 sample consumers of soft drinks in Tiruchirappalli city. Sample consumers were selected based on convenience sampling method.

5. TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

Data collected were analyzed with the help of SPSS package. Statistical tools used in the study include Friedman test, weighted scores and mean value. Percentages and cross tabulations have also been used for analysis.

6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

TABLE-1
FACTORS CONSIDERED FOR SELECTING A PARTICULAR BRAND OF SOFT DRINK

Mean Rank

S. No	Factors	Mean Rank	Rank
1	Quality	2.94	1
2	Taste	3.03	2
3	Price	3.31	3
4	Quantity	3.68	4
5	Digesting element	3.95	5
6	Brand	4.09	6
7	Advertisement	7.00	7

Source: Computed from primary data

Table 1 shows that quality is ranked first with the mean rank 2.94, followed by taste ranked second (with mean rank 3.03), price (mean rank 3.31), quantity (mean rank 3.68), digesting element (mean rank 3.95) and brand (mean rank 4.09). Advertisement has been ranked last i.e., 7th (with mean rank 7).

Testing of hypothesis

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference in the ranking of factors considered by the consumers for selecting a particular brand of soft drink.

Alternative Hypothesis:

There is significant difference in the ranking of factors considered by the consumer for selecting particular brand of soft drink.

**TABLE-2
Friedman Test**

Test Statistics - Friedman test	
N	110
Chi-Square	274.995
Df	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Friedman test shows that significance value is 0.000 ($p < 0.5$). Hence null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. It is therefore inferred that there is a significant difference in the ranking of factors considered by the consumers for selecting a particular brand of soft drink.

**TABLE-3
TABLE SHOWING LEVEL OF SATISFACTION CONCERNING SOFT DRINKS**

OPINION		LEVEL OF SATISFACTION					TOTAL WEIGHTED SCORE	MEAN VALUE	RANK
		HS	S	N	D	HD			
	No of respondents	36	50	20	4	-			
Taste	Weighted score	(180)	(200)	(60)	(8)	-	448	4.07	1
Quality	No of respondents	16	79	12	2	1	437	3.97	2
	Weighted score	(80)	(316)	(36)	(4)	(1)			
Quantity	No of respondents	21	64	23	2	-	434	3.95	3
	Weighted score	(105)	(256)	(69)	(2)	-			
	No of respondents	29	48	26	7	-			

Availability in stores	Weighted score	(145)	(192)	(78)	(14)	-	429	3.9	4
	No of respondents	29	44	33	3	1			
Colour	Weighted score	(145)	(176)	(99)	(6)	(1)	427	3.88	5
Advertisement	No of respondents	30	48	21	4	7	420	3.81	6
	Weighted score	(150)	(192)	(63)	(8)	(7)			
Customer service	No of respondents	15	53	28	13	1	396	3.62	7
	Weighted score	(75)	(212)	(84)	(26)	(1)			
Sales promotional Measures	No of respondents	16	42	42	7	3	391	3.55	8
	Weighted score	(80)	(168)	(126)	(14)	(3)			
Health effects	No of respondents	15	30	54	8	3	376	3.42	9
	Weighted score	(75)	(120)	(162)	(16)	(3)			
Price	No of respondents	20	41	16	24	9	369	3.35	10
	Weighted score	(100)	(164)	(48)	(48)	(9)			
Overall features	No of respondents	16	24	42	23	5	353	3.20	11
	Weighted score	(80)	(96)	(126)	(46)	(5)			

Source: Primary data

Note: HS- Highly satisfied, S- Satisfied, N- Neutral, DS- Dissatisfied, HD- Highly Dissatisfied

Weighted scores allotted: HS- 5; S-4; NO-3; DS-2; HD-1.

Table 3 shows the level of satisfaction concerning various factors relating to soft drinks, weighted score, total weighted score and mean values based on weighted scores. Among the various factors considered by the respondents, satisfaction is the highest for Taste as it ranks first with the highest weighted scores (448) and highest mean value (4.07). Next to Taste satisfaction is the highest for Quality as it is ranked second (mean value 3.97) followed by Quantity (mean value 3.95) , Availability in stores (mean value 3.90) , Color (mean value 3.88) , Advertisement (mean value 3.81), Customer service (mean value 3.62), Sales promotional measures (mean value 3.55), Health effects (mean value 3.42), Price (mean value 3.35) which is ranked tenth.

For overall features, satisfaction is moderate as the mean value is 3.20.

7. FINDINGS

- From the mean rank, it was found that quality is ranked first with the mean rank 2.94, followed by taste, price, quantity, digesting element, brand and Advertisement has been ranked last i.e., 7th (with mean rank 7).
- From the Friedman test shows that significance value is 0.000 ($p < 0.5$). Hence null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the ranking of factors considered by the consumers for selecting a particular brand of soft drink.
- From the weighted average mean rank measure the level of satisfaction concerning various factors relating to soft drinks. Among the various factors considered by the respondents, satisfaction is the highest for Taste as it ranks first. Quality as it is ranked second, Availability in stores, Color, Advertisement, Customer service , Sales promotional measures, Health effects and Price is ranked tenth.

8. SUGGESTIONS

- Maximum of the respondents, prefer soft drinks during summer seasons. Hence, more sales promotional measures may be undertaken during summer.
- Majority of respondents prefer soft drinks packed in plastic bottle. Hence, producers may increase supply of soft drinks in plastic bottles.
- The respondents feel that price is high so, manufacturer may try to reduce the price without compromising the quality.
- Continuous advertisement attracts the customers. Hence, continuous advisements may be made to increase market share.
- Customers change the brand because of new varieties of product, so manufacturers should produce new products & launch in market frequently.

9. CONCLUSION

People, whether young or old have a liking for soft drinks. Students are no exception to these things. They enjoy soft drink for relaxation and refreshment and get energy from it. Thus soft drinks have become a part of their life. As regard to manufacturers, they should believe that the consumers are the focal point of any enterprise. They should be conscious of the fact that the consumer is prime determining factor or a decisive force in the market and that they can't be ignored. So they have to see what exactly is expected of them by their consumers especially the student society who are highly sensitive and reactive. Thus the acceptance or rejection of the product is in the hands of consumers. The above factors implies that there is an imperative necessity on the part of the manufactures to supply tastier drinks at competitive prices without compromising the taste and quality of their product.

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