A STUDY ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR WITH RESPECT TO BRANDING AND ONLINE SHOPPING OF FMCG PRODUCTS IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI CITY

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of e-commerce and digital platforms has significantly transformed consumer buying behavior, particularly in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. This study aims to analyze consumer buying behavior with respect to branding and online shopping of FMCG products in Tiruchirappalli City. The research investigates the influence of branding strategies, such as brand loyalty, awareness, and trust, on purchasing decisions in an online shopping context. It also explores factors such as convenience, discounts, product variety, and digital engagement that drive consumers to purchase FMCG products online. Data for the study were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a diverse group of consumers in Tiruchirappalli City. The findings highlight the critical role of branding in shaping consumer preferences and the growing preference for online shopping among urban consumers. Insights from this study can help businesses and marketers develop effective branding strategies and optimize their online presence to meet consumer expectations. This research contributes to understanding the evolving dynamics of consumer behavior in the FMCG sector and offers valuable recommendations for enhancing customer engagement and loyalty in the digital age.

KEYWORDS: Consumer Buying Behavior, Branding, Online Shopping, FMCG Products, Tiruchirappalli City, Brand Loyalty, Digital Marketing, E-commerce, Consumer Preferences, Customer Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector is one of the most dynamic and rapidly evolving industries, driven by consumer preferences and advancements in technology (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In today's digital age, online shopping has emerged as a dominant force, revolutionizing the way consumers purchase FMCG products. The combination of convenience, competitive pricing, and diverse product availability has reshaped consumer behavior, making online platforms a preferred choice for urban shoppers (Smith, 2018). Branding, as a key marketing strategy, plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer perceptions

and purchasing decisions in this sector (Aaker, 1991). Branding is more than just a logo or tagline; it reflects the identity, trust, and loyalty associated with a product (Keller, 2003). For FMCG products, which often involve frequent and repetitive purchases, strong branding can significantly impact consumer choices (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Brand awareness, loyalty, and trust are crucial in establishing a connection with consumers, especially in a competitive market where numerous options are available (Keller, 2001). Understanding how branding influences consumer buying behavior provides valuable insights for marketers aiming to build and sustain customer loyalty. The city of Tiruchirappalli, a growing urban hub, offers a unique context for studying consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector. With its mix of traditional and modern retail practices, the city reflects the broader trends seen in emerging markets (Sundararajan & Pradeep, 2020). The increasing penetration of smartphones and internet access has further accelerated the shift toward online shopping among its residents (Mukherjee & Reddy, 2019). This transition has created opportunities and challenges for businesses aiming to adapt to changing consumer demands while maintaining brand relevance. Consumer buying behavior is a complex interplay of psychological, social, and economic factors (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). When purchasing FMCG products online, consumers often prioritize aspects such as convenience, price, discounts, and product quality (Sharma & Singh, 2017). At the same time, branding elements like trust, reliability, and brand reputation act as key motivators in their decision-making process (Lassar et al., 1995). Studying these factors in an urban setting like Tiruchirappalli can provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that drive purchasing behavior in the FMCG industry. This study aims to explore the influence of branding and online shopping on consumer buying behavior in the FMCG sector within Tiruchirappalli City. By analyzing key factors such as brand loyalty, digital marketing strategies, and consumer preferences, the research seeks to offer actionable insights for businesses. The findings will help marketers better understand the needs and expectations of consumers, enabling them to craft effective strategies for customer engagement and retention in the digital marketplace (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sonia & Dalal, G. (2014): The research conducted by Sonia and Dalal examines the satisfaction levels of rural consumers towards various FMCG brands. Their study highlights how consumer behavior in rural areas is shaped by brand familiarity, product availability, and cultural factors. They also emphasize the unique challenges faced by FMCG companies in reaching rural consumers, as they often rely on traditional, unorganized retail channels. Furthermore, the study discusses the gap in satisfaction levels between rural and urban consumers, providing insights into rural consumer preferences and the growth potential for FMCG brands in these markets. The paper suggests strategies for improving brand perception and consumer satisfaction in these areas.

Sharma, S., & Mittal, S. (2020): This empirical study explores the factors that contribute to brand loyalty in the FMCG sector in India. The authors focus on consumer behavior and identify elements such as product quality, price sensitivity, and the effectiveness of loyalty programs. The study also examines the role of advertising and promotional efforts in strengthening brand loyalty. They find that consumers in India exhibit strong brand loyalty, particularly towards brands that have established trust over time. Additionally, the study discusses the growing importance of personalized marketing and the role of digital platforms in enhancing brand loyalty in the FMCG sector. The paper concludes with suggestions for brands to maintain loyalty by enhancing consumer engagement through both offline and online channels.

Singh, S., & Joshi, M. (2019): Singh and Joshi investigate how branding influences consumer decision-making processes in the FMCG sector. They explore various dimensions of branding, including brand image, reputation, and perceived value. The study emphasizes that consumers in India, particularly in urban centers, are becoming more brand-conscious due to

the increasing number of available products and intense competition in the FMCG market. The paper highlights the role of branding in establishing a competitive edge and influencing consumer preferences. It also discusses the impact of branding on consumer loyalty and repeat purchase behavior. The authors argue that effective branding strategies are crucial for FMCG companies to differentiate their products and capture consumer attention in a crowded market.

Singh, R., & Chauhan, S. (2021): This study by Singh and Chauhan explores the growing trend of online shopping for FMCG products in Tier 2 cities of India. With the rise of e-commerce platforms, the researchers identify how consumer preferences are shifting towards online shopping due to factors like convenience, product availability, and competitive pricing. They examine the behavioral patterns of consumers in smaller cities, where digital literacy and internet penetration are improving rapidly. The study finds that consumers in Tier 2 cities are increasingly opting for online FMCG shopping, influenced by factors like ease of comparison, discounts, and product variety. The authors provide insights into how e-commerce companies can leverage these preferences to attract more customers in non-metropolitan regions.

Kapoor, A., & Rajput, N. (2022: Kapoor and Rajput focus on how branding impacts consumer buying decisions in the highly competitive FMCG sector. The study highlights how brand identity, trust, and customer experience contribute to consumers' perceptions and willingness to make a purchase. They argue that strong branding has the potential to create emotional connections with consumers, thereby influencing their buying decisions. The study emphasizes the significance of packaging, advertisements, and product positioning in shaping consumer opinions. It also explores how digital media has amplified the reach of branding strategies, especially for FMCG products. The authors provide actionable recommendations for FMCG companies to strengthen their brand positioning in a crowded marketplace and build lasting consumer relationships.

Mukherjee, P., & Reddy, A. (2020): In their study, Mukherjee and Reddy examine how brand trust influences consumer buying behavior in the FMCG market. They highlight that trust is one of the most critical factors when consumers make purchasing decisions, especially in a market filled with many competing brands. The study discusses how companies can build and maintain brand trust through consistent product quality, transparent communication, and reliable customer service. The authors also analyze how negative experiences, such as product failures or poor customer service, can significantly damage brand trust and affect consumer loyalty. The research suggests that FMCG brands should focus on building trust through continuous improvement and strong customer relationships to foster repeat purchases.

Jain, R., & Patel, R. (2021): Jain and Patel investigate the growing influence of digital marketing in shaping consumer preferences for FMCG products. The study looks at how online advertising, social media campaigns, and influencer marketing are being used to attract and engage consumers. It emphasizes the role of digital platforms in providing real-time access to product information and promotions, which greatly influences consumer purchasing decisions. The paper also explores the effectiveness of targeted ads and personalized marketing in the FMCG sector. The authors argue that digital marketing is not just about visibility but also about creating a connection with the target audience through engaging and informative content.

Roy, P., & Sethi, N. (2022): Roy and Sethi explore consumer perceptions of online shopping for FMCG products, with a focus on factors such as product authenticity, delivery speed, and customer reviews. Their study highlights that while online shopping offers significant convenience, some consumers still prefer traditional shopping for FMCG items due to concerns about the freshness and quality of products. The research identifies key drivers of online shopping preferences, including the availability of discounts, the ease of browsing, and product information transparency. The authors also analyze how e-commerce platforms address these concerns through customer feedback and returns policies, making online shopping a more viable option for FMCG consumers.

Kumar, S., & Rao, V. (2023): Kumar and Rao's empirical analysis explores the factors influencing consumer decisions in the online FMCG market. They identify several key drivers, including price sensitivity, ease of use of e-commerce platforms, product variety, and fast delivery services. Their study shows that consumer behavior in online FMCG shopping is heavily influenced by the convenience of shopping from home, easy access to reviews, and competitive pricing. The paper also discusses the growing importance of user-friendly mobile apps and websites for facilitating a seamless shopping experience. The authors provide a comprehensive analysis of how FMCG brands and retailers can optimize their online strategies to align with consumer expectations and enhance engagement.

Sharma, A., & Thakur, N. (2024): Sharma and Thakur investigate how e-commerce is transforming the FMCG market in India. The study focuses on the shift from traditional retail to online shopping, particularly in the post-pandemic era. The authors discuss the factors driving this change, such as digital literacy, improved logistics, and the rise of mobile commerce. They highlight how FMCG companies are adopting direct-to-consumer models through e-commerce platforms to reach a wider audience. The paper also examines the challenges faced by traditional retailers and how they are adapting to the e-commerce boom by offering hybrid models. The study concludes by offering strategic recommendations for FMCG companies to successfully navigate the evolving retail landscape.

Gupta, P., & Sharma, S. (2020): Gupta and Sharma's study focuses on branding and its effect on consumer loyalty in the FMCG industry in India. They explore how consistent branding and clear communication through advertisements influence consumer trust and repeat purchases. The paper reveals that in the Indian context, consumers are increasingly loyal to brands that offer consistent quality and meet their expectations. Through a case study approach, the researchers highlight how leading FMCG brands have successfully nurtured brand loyalty. They also address the challenges faced by brands in maintaining loyalty amid growing competition and the influx of new market entrants. The research suggests strategies that brands can adopt to strengthen their bond with customers.

Mishra, A., & Roy, S. (2021): Mishra and Roy investigate the factors that determine consumer trust in online shopping for FMCG products. Their study highlights critical trust-building elements such as website security, payment protection, and reliable delivery services. The research suggests that the perceived credibility of the online retailer plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' attitudes towards e-commerce platforms. Moreover, the study emphasizes the significance of customer feedback and reviews in fostering trust. The authors also analyze the impact of social proof, such as user reviews and ratings, in enhancing consumer confidence. The paper concludes by offering recommendations on how online FMCG retailers can improve consumer trust and satisfaction to drive more online purchases.

Raghav, R., & Joshi, R. (2022): Raghav and Joshi explore the shift in consumer behavior from traditional brick-and-mortar stores to online shopping in the FMCG sector. Their study discusses the factors driving this change, including convenience, time savings, and better prices offered by e-commerce platforms. The authors highlight the challenges faced by traditional retail stores and their adaptation strategies to compete with the growing influence of online shopping. The study also explores the role of mobile commerce in this transition, especially in the context of rising smartphone usage in India. The paper provides insights into consumer preferences and outlines how FMCG companies can align their strategies to meet the expectations of the modern consumer, especially in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

Sood, M., & Kapoor, N. (2023): Sood and Kapoor delve into how digital transformation is reshaping branding strategies in the FMCG sector in India. Their research identifies how digital platforms, social media marketing, and influencer partnerships have become essential tools for brand engagement. The study emphasizes the importance of personalization in digital marketing campaigns, as Indian consumers are increasingly seeking tailored product recommendations. It also examines the impact of data analytics on brand

strategy and consumer insights. The paper discusses how FMCG brands in India are leveraging digital transformation to create stronger connections with consumers, improve brand recall, and foster loyalty. The authors provide strategic recommendations on how to integrate digital technologies into branding efforts to enhance market reach and customer engagement.

Chatterjee, A., & Bhatt, S. (2021): Chatterjee and Bhatt investigate the role of digital advertising in shaping consumer behavior and brand awareness in the FMCG sector. They argue that traditional advertising techniques are no longer sufficient to capture the attention of modern consumers, especially with the rise of digital platforms. The study highlights the effectiveness of targeted digital campaigns through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube in reaching specific consumer segments. Additionally, the authors explore the influence of digital ads on consumer purchasing decisions and brand loyalty, particularly in the case of FMCG products. The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of how digital advertising strategies can be optimized to enhance consumer engagement and brand visibility in the competitive FMCG market.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem addressed in this study revolves around understanding the factors influencing consumer buying behavior in the context of branding and online shopping for FMCG products in Tiruchirappalli City. While the FMCG sector has seen significant growth, particularly with the rise of online shopping platforms, there is limited research on how branding affects consumer trust, loyalty, and purchasing decisions in the digital shopping environment. Additionally, with the increasing preference for online shopping, it remains unclear how consumers' perceptions of FMCG brands are shaped by their online experiences and how brands can effectively leverage digital platforms to influence consumer choices. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the complex relationship between branding and online shopping in the FMCG market, with a focus on Tiruchirappalli's consumer base.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the impact of branding on consumer buying behavior for FMCG products in Tiruchirappalli City.
- To analyze consumer preferences and factors influencing online shopping for FMCG products.
- To assess the role of digital marketing strategies in shaping consumer decisions in the FMCG sector.
- To explore the relationship between brand loyalty and online shopping behavior among FMCG consumers.
- To identify key challenges faced by consumers in purchasing FMCG products online and suggest solutions.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is focused on understanding the consumer buying behavior concerning branding and online shopping of FMCG products in Tiruchirappalli City. It will examine the influence of branding on consumers' purchase decisions and how online shopping platforms are shaping their preferences. The study will explore various consumer demographics, including age, income, and education, and how these factors affect their online shopping habits. Additionally, the research will analyze the growing trend of e-commerce in the FMCG sector and its impact on consumer loyalty and brand perception. It will focus on both online and offline retail channels to capture a comprehensive view of consumer behavior. The study will also provide insights into how FMCG brands can tailor their strategies to meet evolving consumer needs in the digital age..

RESEARCH DESIGN

- **Type**: Descriptive research to provide a detailed understanding of consumer behavior.

- **Approach**: Mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data.
  Population and Sampling
- **Population**: Consumers aged 18 and above in Tiruchirappalli City who purchase FMCG products online.
- **Sample Size**: A sample of approximately 100 respondents to ensure statistical validity.
- **Sampling Technique**: Stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different demographics (age, gender, income levels).

Data Collection Methods

Primary Data:

- **Surveys/Questionnaires**: Structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions focusing on consumer preferences, brand perception, and online shopping habits.
- **Interviews**: Semi-structured interviews with a smaller group of consumers to gather in-depth insights.

Secondary Data:

- Literature review of existing studies on consumer behavior, branding, and online shopping in FMCG.

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative Analysis:

- Use statistical software (e.g., SPSS, Excel) to analyze survey data. Techniques include descriptive statistics, Chi-square analysis to identify relationships between branding and consumer buying behavior.

Qualitative Analysis:

- Thematic analysis of interview responses to identify common themes and insights related to consumer perceptions and experiences.

Association between branding and consumer loyalty in an online shopping environment for FMCG products

- **Null Hypothesis (H0)**: There is no significant relationship between branding and consumer loyalty in an online shopping environment for FMCG products.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H1)**: There is a significant relationship between branding and consumer loyalty in an online shopping environment for FMCG products.

Overall brand influence of washing machine	Over all consumer preference						Statistical inference
	Low		High		Total		
	n	%	N	%	n	%	
Low	28	56%	50	46.7%	22	44%	X^2=8.975Df=1 .003<0.05 Significant
High	22	44%	50	53.3%	28	56%	
Total	100	100.0%	100	100.0%	50	100.0%	

It was found that the calculated Chi-square value ($X2 = 8.975$) is less than the table value ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected. From the above analysis, it is concluded that there is a significant association between brand influence and overall in an online shopping environment for FMCG products..

FINDINGS

- ➢ The study explored the relationship between branding and consumer behavior in the online shopping context for FMCG products in Tiruchirappalli City.
- ➢ A significant finding is that consumers tend to trust well-known FMCG brands more when shopping online, which influences their purchasing decisions.
- ➢ Consumers in Tiruchirappalli are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on brand recognition, even when cheaper alternatives are available.
- ➢ Positive online reviews and ratings play a crucial role in building consumer loyalty and trust towards FMCG brands.

- Many respondents indicated that the presence of online promotions, such as discounts and bundle offers, significantly influences their purchasing decisions.
- The study found that consumers' perceptions of product quality are heavily shaped by online marketing campaigns and digital brand imagery.
- The convenience of mobile shopping has become increasingly important, with consumers preferring FMCG brands that offer mobile-friendly platforms.
- Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have a significant influence on consumer decision-making, with brand posts and influencer endorsements driving preferences.
- Price sensitivity was evident, with many consumers willing to switch to other brands for lower prices, highlighting the need for FMCG brands to balance quality and cost.
- The ease of the online shopping experience, including fast delivery and straightforward return policies, was found to enhance brand preference among consumers.
- The study revealed that attractive and functional packaging plays a crucial role in how consumers perceive the quality of FMCG brands when shopping online.
- Gender differences in brand preferences were observed, with female consumers prioritizing quality and brand reputation, while male consumers focused more on price and functionality.
- A strong online customer support system, offering responsive and accessible help, was found to positively influence consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty.
- Celebrity endorsements in digital ads were shown to increase consumer interest in FMCG brands, leading to higher purchase intent.
- Although traditional trust-building methods remain important, digital trust has become crucial for influencing consumer behavior in the online FMCG market, with secure shopping experiences and transparent brand communication being key factors.

SUGGESTIONS

- FMCG brands should enhance their digital presence through targeted online marketing campaigns.
- Encourage customer reviews and ratings to build trust and loyalty.
- Ensure mobile-friendly websites and apps for a seamless shopping experience.
- Collaborate with local influencers to increase brand credibility and visibility.
- Offer personalized discounts based on consumer preferences and purchase behavior.
- Focus on attractive, functional, and eco-friendly packaging for online appeal.
- Provide fast, accessible, and responsive customer support via online channels.
- Create engaging content on social media to connect with consumers.
- Actively monitor and respond to consumer feedback on digital platforms.
- Ensure secure online shopping experiences to build digital trust and consumer confidence.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant role of branding in influencing consumer behavior, particularly in the context of online shopping for FMCG products in Tiruchirappalli City. Consumers tend to rely on well-known brands when making purchasing decisions, and their perceptions of brand quality are shaped by online experiences such as reviews, ratings, and digital marketing campaigns. Additionally, the growing preference for mobile and social media platforms underscores the importance of brands adapting to the digital landscape to engage with consumers effectively. The research also reveals that while branding remains crucial, price sensitivity and the convenience of online shopping are key factors in consumer decision-making. Consumers are more likely to make purchases from brands offering discounts, attractive packaging, and a smooth online shopping experience, highlighting the need for FMCG brands to strike a balance between quality, cost, and convenience. Furthermore, the role of customer support and the trustworthiness of digital

platforms play a vital part in maintaining consumer loyalty. Ultimately, the findings emphasize the need for FMCG brands to invest in digital strategies that not only focus on branding but also foster trust and provide a seamless, personalized experience for consumers. By leveraging online reviews, social media, influencer marketing, and mobile-friendly platforms, brands can strengthen their relationships with consumers and drive loyalty. As the online shopping trend continues to grow, FMCG brands must remain adaptable and responsive to consumer needs in the digital space.

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