



EXPLORING THE NEXUS OF CONSUMER BRAND AFFINITIES AND INFLUENCING FACTORS IN THE FMCG SECTOR

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ABSTRACT:

In the dynamic landscape of the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, understanding the intricate interplay between consumer brand affinities and influencing factors is paramount for companies striving to gain a competitive edge. This comprehensive study delves into the nexus of consumer brand affinities and the multifaceted factors shaping them, aiming to provide strategic insights for FMCG businesses. Through extensive data collection and rigorous analysis, the research elucidates the key factors influencing brand affinities in the FMCG sector. Findings reveal that while traditional factors such as price, quality, and advertising play significant roles in shaping consumer preferences, emerging factors such as packaging design, brand reputation, and social influences exert considerable influence as well. Moreover, the study uncovers complex relationships between these factors, highlighting the need for a holistic approach to brand management and marketing strategies. Strategic insights derived from the study offer actionable recommendations for FMCG companies to enhance brand equity, foster consumer loyalty, and drive sustainable growth. By leveraging consumer insights and aligning marketing efforts with evolving consumer preferences, FMCG businesses can adapt to changing market dynamics and capitalize on emerging opportunities in the competitive FMCG landscape.

KEYWORDS:

FMCG, Consumer, Quality, Brand, Package, Advertising

INTRODUCTION:

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector stands as a cornerstone of the global economy, encompassing a wide array of everyday products that are essential to consumers' daily lives. From food and beverages to personal care items and household essentials, FMCG products constitute a significant portion of household expenditures and play a pivotal role in shaping consumer lifestyles and preferences.

In this era of rapid globalization, technological advancement, and shifting consumer behaviors, understanding the dynamics of consumer brand affinities in the FMCG sector has become increasingly vital for companies seeking to thrive in a fiercely competitive market landscape. Brand affinities, defined as the emotional connection and preference that consumers develop towards particular brands, serve as a cornerstone of brand loyalty and influence purchasing decisions in profound ways.

The study of consumer brand affinities goes beyond mere product attributes or functional benefits; it delves into the deeper psychological and emotional connections that consumers form with brands. These affinities are influenced by a myriad of factors, ranging from product quality and price to advertising, packaging, brand reputation, and social influences. Unravelling the complex web of these influencing factors is essential for FMCG companies to effectively position their brands, differentiate themselves from competitors, and cultivate lasting relationships with consumers. Against this backdrop, this study aims to explore the nexus of consumer brand affinities and influencing factors in the FMCG sector, offering a comprehensive analysis to provide strategic insights for businesses operating in this dynamic industry.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer valuable insights to a wide range of stakeholders, including FMCG companies, marketers, researchers, and policymakers. By gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that shape consumer brand affinities, businesses can optimize their marketing efforts, tailor their product offerings, and strengthen their competitive positioning in the market. Moreover, insights derived from this study can inform strategic decision-making processes, guiding businesses in adapting to evolving consumer preferences, market trends, and industry dynamics.

To achieve these objectives, this research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative analysis to capture the nuanced perspectives of consumers regarding their brand preferences and purchasing behaviors. By leveraging both quantitative data and qualitative insights, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing brand affinities in the FMCG sector and offer actionable recommendations for businesses to navigate the complexities of consumer behavior and market dynamics.

This paper will delve into the key factors influencing consumer brand affinities in the FMCG sector and explore their implications for strategic brand management and marketing strategies. Through analysis and interpretation this research seeks to contribute valuable insights to industry practitioners, and policymakers, facilitating informed decision-making and driving innovation at the same time which helps in the growth of FMCG sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the current understanding of consumer brand affinities and influencing factors within the FMCG sector, offering valuable insights for both academia and industry practitioners.

In the ever-evolving landscape of the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector, understanding consumer brand affinities and the myriad factors that influence them is crucial for strategic decision-making and market positioning. This literature review aims to delve into the nexus of consumer brand affinities and the key influencing factors within the FMCG sector, providing a comprehensive understanding that can offer strategic insights to marketers and businesses. Consumer brand affinities refer to the deep emotional connections and preferences that consumers develop towards certain brands within the FMCG sector. These affinities go beyond mere brand loyalty; they encapsulate the psychological and emotional dimensions that drive consumer behavior.

According to **Aaker (1997)**, brand affinities are built upon brand identity, brand image, and brand personality, which collectively shape how consumers perceive and interact with brands. Brand image and identity are fundamental in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences within the FMCG sector. **Kotler (1991)** brand image is the sum of all perceptions, thoughts, and feelings that consumers associate with a particular brand. In the FMCG sector, brands often leverage image-building strategies through advertising, packaging, and product quality to resonate with consumer values and aspirations (**Keller, 1993**).

Consumer behavior plays a pivotal role in determining brand affinities within the FMCG sector. Understanding consumer decision-making processes, such as information processing, decision criteria, and purchase intentions, provides insights into how and why consumers choose certain brands over others (**Engel et al., 1995**). Factors such as price sensitivity, product availability, and past experiences also influence consumer choices and brand affinities in the FMCG sector.

Effective marketing and communication strategies are instrumental in cultivating and reinforcing consumer brand affinities. According to **Keller (2001)**, brands can enhance consumer perceptions and loyalty through strategic brand positioning, integrated marketing communications, and brand storytelling.

In the FMCG sector, where brand differentiation is often subtle, effective marketing campaigns that resonate with consumer emotions and aspirations can significantly impact brand affinities (**Keller, 2003**).

Social influences, including reference groups, family dynamics, and social media interactions, also contribute to the formation of consumer brand affinities (**Olutade, E. O. (2020)**). Technological advancements and digitalization have transformed consumer-brand interactions within the FMCG sector. The proliferation of e-commerce platforms, social media channels, and mobile applications has empowered consumers with unprecedented access to information, reviews, and peer recommendations (**Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013**). Brands that harness digital technologies to engage with consumers in personalized and meaningful ways can cultivate stronger brand affinities and foster brand advocacy. Theoretical frameworks and practical implications that can guide strategic decision-making and inform future research endeavors in the field of consumer brand affinities within the FMCG sector.

METHODS:

Research methodology refers to the systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data in order to answer a research question or to solve a research problem. It encompasses the theoretical and philosophical assumptions underlying the research, as well as the methods and techniques used to conduct the study.

Data is collected through primary source. Primary data is collected through questionnaire, and responses are collected from the targeted audience, namely the consumers. The total sample size obtained for the study is 567. The research design used for this study is qualitative type of research. It involves the collection and analysis of numerical data using statistical methods. It aims to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. The sample area chosen for the study is Tamil nadu. Data from the questionnaires will be obtained and entered in the **Excel**. Analyzed using **SPSS** software ver. 26. Descriptive statistics were performed to find frequencies.

RESULTS:

The percentage analysis is performed to extract the meaning insights from the data collected from the respondents. The analysis are as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents by frequency of purchase FMCG products

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
DAILY	180	31.7	31.7
WEEKLY	120	21.2	52.9
MONTHLY	234	41.3	94.2
OCCASIONALLY	24	4.2	98.4
RARELY	9	1.6	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that **31.7%** of the respondents purchase the FMCG products daily, **21.2%** of the respondents purchase the FMCG products weekly, **41.3%** of the respondents purchase the FMCG products monthly, **4.2%** of the respondents purchase the FMCG products occasionally, **1.6%** of the respondents purchase the FMCG products rarely.

Table 2. Ranking the price factor based on their influence on brand affinities Ranking of price factor

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	121	21.3	21.3
2	163	28.7	50.1
3	126	22.2	72.3
4	66	11.6	84.0
5	91	16.0	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that **21.3%** of the respondents ranked the price factor as 1st, **28.7%** of the respondents ranked the price factor as 2nd, **22.2%** of the respondents ranked the price factor as 3rd, **11.6%** of the respondents ranked the price factor as 4th, **16.0%** of the respondents ranked the price factor as 5th rank.

Table 3. Ranking the quality factor based on their influence on brand affinities

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	178	31.4	31.4
2	105	18.5	49.9
3	59	10.4	60.3
4	111	19.6	79.9
5	114	20.1	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that **31.4%** of the respondents ranked the quality factor as 1st, **18.5%** of the respondents ranked the quality factor as 2nd, **10.4%** of the respondents ranked the quality factor as 3rd, **19.6%** of the respondents ranked the quality factor as 4th, **20.1%** of the respondents ranked the quality factor as 5th rank.

Table 4. Ranking the packaging & design factor based on their influence on brand affinities

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	97	17.1	17.1
2	74	13.1	30.2
3	110	19.4	49.6
4	139	24.5	74.1
5	147	25.9	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that **17.1%** of the respondents ranked the packaging & design factor as 1st, **13.1%** of the respondents ranked the packaging & design factor as 2nd, **19.4%** of the respondents ranked the packaging & design factor as 3rd, **24.5%** of the respondents ranked the packaging & design factor as 4th, **25.9%** of the respondents ranked the packaging & design factor as 5th rank.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	78	13.8	13.8
2	91	16.0	29.8
3	75	13.2	43.0
4	182	32.1	75.1
5	141	24.9	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

Table 5. Ranking the Advertisement factor based on their influence on brand affinities

From the above table it is inferred that **13.8%** of the respondents ranked the Advertisement factor as 1st, **16.0%** of the respondents ranked the Advertisement factor as 2nd, **13.2%** of the respondents ranked the Advertisement factor as 3rd, **32.1%** of the respondents ranked the Advertisement factor as 4th, **24.9%** of the respondents ranked the Advertisement factor as 5th rank.

Table 6. Ranking the Brand Reputation factor based on their influence on brand affinities

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	93	16.4	16.4
2	134	23.6	40.0
3	197	34.7	74.8
4	69	12.2	86.9
5	74	13.1	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that **16.4%** of the respondents ranked the Brand Reputation factor as 1st, **23.6%** of the respondents ranked the Brand Reputation factor as 2nd, **34.7%** of the respondents ranked the Brand Reputation factor as 3rd, **12.2%** of the respondents ranked the Brand Reputation factor as 4th, **13.1%** of the respondents ranked the Brand Reputation factor as 5th rank.

Table 7. Respondents considering the price of FMCG products

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
ALWAYS	144	25.4	25.4
OFTEN	221	39.0	64.4
SOMETIMES	127	22.4	86.8
RARELY	40	7.1	93.8
NEVER	35	6.2	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that **25.4%** of respondents consider the price of FMCG products always, **39.0%** of respondents consider the price of FMCG products often, **22.4%** of respondents consider the price of FMCG products sometimes, **7.1%** of respondents consider the price of FMCG products rarely, **6.2%** of respondents consider the price of FMCG products always,

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Higher Price Indicates Higher Quality	93	16.4	16.4
Price And Quality Are Somewhat Related	259	45.7	62.1
Price Does Not Necessarily Reflect Quality	177	31.2	93.3
Lower Price Indicates Higher Value For Money	22	3.9	97.2
I'm Not Sure	16	2.8	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

Table 8. Relationship between price & quality perceived by respondents

From the above table it is inferred that **16.4%** of respondents perceive higher price indicates higher quality, **45.7%** of respondents perceive price and quality are somewhat related, **31.2%** of respondents perceive price does not necessarily reflect quality, **3.9%** of respondents perceive lower price indicates higher value for money and **2.8%** of respondents are not sure about the relationship.

Table 9. Respondents switched from a preferred FMCG brand to a cheaper alternative

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes, Frequently	61	10.8	10.8
Yes, Occasionally	319	56.3	67.0
No, Rarely	156	27.5	94.5
No, Never	24	4.2	98.8
Not Applicable	7	1.2	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that **10.8%** of respondents switched frequently, **56.3%** of respondents switched occasionally, **27.5%** of respondents switched rarely, **4.2%** of respondents switched never, **1.2%** of respondents chose not applicable.

Table 10. Respondent's importance on Brand Reputation

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely Important	113	19.9	19.9
Very Important	257	45.3	65.3
Somewhat Important	147	25.9	91.2
Not Very Important	50	8.8	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that, for **19.9%** of respondent's brand reputation is extremely important, for **45.3%** of respondent's brand reputation is very important, for **25.9%** of respondent's

brand reputation is somewhat important, and for **8.8%** of respondent's brand reputation is not very important.

Table 11. Respondents seeking recommendations from peers or friends

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	97	17.1	17.1
Often	209	36.9	54.0
Sometimes	163	28.7	82.7
Rarely	98	17.3	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that, **17.1%** of respondents seek information always, **36.9%** of respondents seek information often, **28.7%** of respondents seek information sometimes, and **17.3%** of respondents seek information rarely from peers or friends when making FMCG product purchase decisions.

Table 12. Influence of packaging & design on purchase decisions

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
EXTREMELY	67	11.8	11.8
SIGNIFICANTLY	169	29.8	41.6
MODERATELY	230	40.6	82.2
A LITTLE	88	15.5	97.7
NOT AT ALL	13	2.3	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that, **11.8%** of respondents are influenced extremely, **29.8%** of respondents are influenced significantly, **40.6%** of respondents are influenced moderately, **15.5%** of respondents are influenced a little, and **2.3%** of respondents are not at all influenced by design and packaging of FMCG products.

Table 13. Respondent's view on Attractive packaging as an indication of higher product quality

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES, ALWAYS	100	17.6	17.6
YES, OFTEN	124	21.9	39.5
SOMETIMES	201	35.4	75.0
RARELY	84	14.8	89.8
NEVER	58	10.2	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that, **17.6%** of respondents always find attractive packaging to be indicative of higher product quality, **21.9%** of respondents often find attractive packaging to be indicative of higher product quality, **35.4%** of respondents sometimes find attractive packaging to be indicative of higher product quality, **14.8%** of respondents rarely find attractive packaging to be indicative of higher product quality, **10.2%** of respondents never find attractive packaging to be indicative of higher product quality in FMCG products.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
COLOR	70	12.3	12.3
DESIGN	188	33.2	45.5
BRAND	267	47.1	92.6
LOGO	32	5.6	98.2
IMAGES	10	1.8	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

Table 14. Respondent's attention on aspects of packaging & design

From the above table it is inferred that, **12.3%** of respondents pay attention to color, **33.2%** of respondents pay attention to design, **47.1%** of respondents pay attention to brand, **5.6%** of respondents pay attention to logo, **1.8%** of respondents pay attention to images of the packaging of a FMCG product.

Table 15. Advertisements noticed by Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
ALWAYS	100	17.6	17.6
OFTEN	213	37.6	55.2
SOMETIMES	162	28.6	83.8
RARELY	75	13.2	97.0
NEVER	17	3.0	100.0
Total	567	100.0	

From the above table it is inferred that, **17.6%** of respondents notice always, **37.6%** of respondents notice often, **28.6%** of respondents notice sometimes, **13.2%** of respondents notice rarely, **3.0%** of respondents never notice the advertisements.

DISCUSSION:

The majority of respondents purchase FMCG products monthly (41.3%) or weekly (21.2%), highlighting frequent consumer engagement with these goods. The preference for purchasing from grocery stores (30.7%) and departmental stores (28.9%) underscores the importance of convenience and accessibility in consumer decision-making. Online purchases account for a smaller but notable percentage (2.6%), indicating a growing trend towards e-commerce in the FMCG sector.

Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions:

Quality is also highly valued, with a considerable portion of respondents (31.4%) ranking it as their primary consideration. This emphasizes the importance of maintaining high product standards to meet consumer expectations.

The appeal of packaging and design is significant, influencing consumer perceptions of product quality and attractiveness on the shelf. Brand reputation plays a pivotal role in consumer decision-making, though slightly less than price and quality for most respondents.

The study indicates varying perceptions of advertising effectiveness, with a notable portion of respondents ranking it lower in importance compared to other factors like price and quality. This suggests a need for strategic alignment between advertising efforts and consumer preferences. Insights into how consumers perceive price relative to quality, and their propensity to switch brands based on various factors, provide valuable understanding for FMCG businesses aiming to enhance consumer loyalty and satisfaction. Overall, the outcomes of the study provide actionable insights for FMCG businesses to refine their marketing strategies, optimize product offerings, and enhance consumer engagement based on a nuanced understanding of demographic preferences, purchase behaviors, and influential factors in the consumer decision-making process.

STRATEGIC INSIGHTS:

Competitive Pricing Strategies: Given that "Price" ranks highest in importance, FMCG businesses should focus on competitive pricing strategies. This includes pricing products attractively while ensuring profitability, possibly leveraging economies of scale and efficient supply chain management to maintain competitive prices.

Emphasis on Product Quality: Quality is the second most important factor. FMCG businesses should prioritize maintaining and improving product quality to meet consumer expectations. This could involve investing in research and development to innovate and enhance product formulations or packaging.

Optimize Packaging: Packaging plays a significant role in consumer perception. FMCG companies should invest in packaging that not only protects the product but also enhances its appeal on the shelf.

Packaging should be practical, visually appealing, and aligned with consumer preferences for sustainability and convenience.

Brand Building: While brand ranks lower in importance compared to price and quality, building a strong brand remains crucial. FMCG businesses should invest in brand-building activities that differentiate their products from competitors, establish emotional connections with consumers, and communicate value propositions effectively.

Strategic Advertising: Advertising ranks lower in importance but still plays a role in increasing brand awareness and influencing consumer perceptions. FMCG companies should focus on targeted and cost-effective advertising campaigns that highlight product benefits, address consumer needs, and differentiate from competitors.

CONCLUSION:

This study on FMCG consumer behavior has provided valuable insights into the preferences, perceptions, and purchasing patterns among a diverse demographic of respondents. The findings underscore several key factors that significantly influence consumer decision-making in the FMCG sector. Firstly, demographic analysis revealed a predominant presence of younger adults, particularly aged 18-34 years, comprising a substantial portion of the consumer base. This demographic tends to prioritize affordability, quality, and convenience in their FMCG purchases, with notable preferences for purchasing from grocery stores and increasingly from online platforms. Price emerged as the primary determinant for a significant number of respondents, highlighting the competitive nature of the market where affordability plays a crucial role in consumer choice. Quality closely followed, underscoring the importance of maintaining high product standards to meet consumer expectations and foster loyalty.

Packaging and design were identified as influential factors in shaping consumer perceptions of product quality and attractiveness on the shelf, emphasizing the role of visual appeal in consumer decision-making. Brand reputation, while significant, ranked slightly lower in importance compared to price and quality, indicating that while brand recognition plays a role, it is not always the primary driver of consumer choice in the FMCG sector.

Advertising and promotional activities were perceived with moderate effectiveness, suggesting opportunities for FMCG brands to align their marketing strategies more closely with consumer preferences and behaviors.

In conclusion, these insights provide a foundation for FMCG businesses to tailor their marketing efforts, optimize product offerings, and enhance consumer satisfaction based on a nuanced understanding of demographic dynamics and influential factors in consumer decision-making. By adapting to these insights, FMCG brands can effectively navigate the competitive market landscape and foster lasting connections with their target audience.

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