

A STUDY ON BRAND INFLUENCE ON PURCHASE OF PACKAGED DRINKING WATER

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INTRODUCTION

“Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink” from the Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner is perhaps a fitting description of the attitude of many consumers living in urban areas today who are increasingly looking toward bottled water as a means of meeting some or all of their daily requirements. As fresh water supplies are further stretched to meet the demands of industry, agriculture and an ever-expanding population, the shortage of safe and accessible drinking-water will become a major challenge in many parts of the world. In the wake of several major outbreaks involving food and water, there is a growing concern for the safety and quality of drinking-water. While bottled water is widely available in both developed and developing countries, it may represent a significant cost to the consumer. Consumers may have various reasons for purchasing bottled drinking-water, such as taste, convenience or fashion, but for many consumers, safety and potential health benefits are important considerations. Since such considerations are often not founded on facts, these will be specifically addressed here.

THE SAFETY OF DRINKING WATER

While the term bottled water is widely used, the term packaged water is perhaps more accurate. Water sold in countries for consumption can come in cans, laminated boxes and even plastic bags. However, bottled water is most commonly sold in disposable plastic bottles. Bottled water also comes in various sizes from single servings to large carboys holding up to 80 liters. Depending on the climate, physical activity and culture, the drinking-water needs for individuals vary, but for high consumers it is estimated to be about two liters per day for a 60 kg person and one liter per day for a 10 kg child.

Drinking-water may be contaminated by a range of chemical, microbial and physical hazards that could pose risks to health if they are present at high levels. Examples of chemical hazards include lead, arsenic and benzene. Microbial hazards include bacteria, viruses and parasites, such as *Vibrio cholerae*, hepatitis A virus, and *Cryptosporidium parvum*, respectively. Physical hazards include glass chips and metal fragments. Because of the large number of possible hazards in drinking-water, the development of standards for drinking-water requires significant resources and expertise, which many countries are unable to afford. Fortunately, guidance is available at the international level.

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Bottled water is drinking water, packaged in bottles for individual consumption and retail sale. The water used can be glacial water, spring water, well water, purified water or simply water from the public water supply (tap water). Many countries, particularly developed countries, regulate the quality of bottled water through government standards, typically used to ensure that water quality is safe and labels accurately reflect bottle contents. In many developing countries, such standards are variable and are often less stringent than those of developed nations. While bottled water companies are facing criticism from activists saying the product's plastic harms the environment and privatizes a basic human right, the bottled water industry has countered those claims. For instance, though organizations such as Corporate Accountability International say that "millions" plastic bottles end up in landfills, the industry points out that PET bottles make up only one-third of 1 percent of the waste stream in the United States.

Meanwhile, the Natural Resources of Defense Council, Sierra Club and world wildlife fund have all urged their supporters to consume less bottled water and various campaigns against bottled water are starting to appear. Though many of these campaigns claim that bottled water is no better than tap water, the fact is that some bottled water companies use municipal water as the source, but it is additionally purified or treated. Therefore, as the International Bottled Water Association states, bottled water "is not simply tap water in a bottle".

Supporters of bottled water view the product not just as an alternative for municipal water, but as a healthy choice instead of soft drinks or sport drinks that can be purchased in restaurants, convenience stores or vending machines.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Initially, when water was sold in packets or bottles, there was not much response from the customers. After sometimes due to travelling and other reasons, people started buying Packaged Drinking Water. This continued by customers even when there is no travelling under taken by the customers. Subsequently there are more brands of packaged water which are made available for customer use in different Quantities. In this context, it is worth to study the brand preference of customers towards, buying packaged water.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study

- To study the awareness level of customers about the different brands of Packaged Drinking Water.
- To study the existing practices of customers and the factors that influences the customers in the purchase of Packaged Drinking Water.
- To study the brand influence of customers towards purchase of Packaged Drinking Water.
- To study the customer preference and satisfaction towards different brands of Packaged Drinking Water.
- To offer suggestions on the basis of the results of the study.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the said objectives of the study, the following methodology is used.

AREA OF THE STUDY

The area of the study refers to Coimbatore city.

SOURCES OF DATA

The data required for the study is primary in nature and for this purpose the questioner has been used.

SAMPLE DESIGN

In the study, samples of 250 respondents are selected from the Coimbatore city using convenient random sampling method.

STATISTICAL TOOLS APPLIED

The following are the statistical tools used in the study

1. Descriptive Analysis
2. Chi-square Analysis
3. Anova Analysis
4. t-test Analysis
5. Factor Analysis
6. Rank Analysis

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following are the limitations of the study

1. The research is geographically restricted to Coimbatore city only.
2. The sample size is restricted to 250 respondents.
3. The result of the analysis is purely based on the information provided by the respondents.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of literature is the study of the prevalent materials related to the topic of the research. This helps the researcher to get a clear idea about the particular field. Following are some of the literature that are reviewed and enlisted.

Michael Mayers (2007)¹ carried out a study on Global Market review of packaged water – forecasts to 2010, presents that according to the food reference, there are over 700 brands of bottled water worldwide out of which just five giant multinational food drink and beverage companies dominate the global market such as Nestle SA, Danone group, PepsiCo Inc, Coca Cola Inc, Suntory Group along with the Card bury Schweppes plc and Highland spring ltd. The report also covers marketing strategies of the major companies, total market value and trends in sales, consumer profiles and product innovations.

Chandrashekar Hariharan (2008)² carried out a survey on attitude to water conservation, observed that rather than expecting restraints from water users, it was important that urban planners devise and implement measures to enhance water reuse.

Centre for Science and Environment (2003)³ conducted a study on Is packaged / mineral water safe for drinking and reveals that most of the brands of packaged / mineral water available in the country contain pesticides – several of them banned - significantly higher than permissible limits, which can cause serious changes that occur with chronic arsenic exposure in humans and provide led's and potential physical impairment ranging from damage to the correct nervous system to lung cancer.

1. Michael Mayers : “Bharat Book Bureau”, April 30,2007.

2. Chandrashekar Hariharan, Business daily from the Hindu group of publications, April 23, 2008.

3. Center for Science and Environment : BS Corporate Bureau in New Delhi, February 5, 2003.

Carmena, Aguinagalde, Zigorraga, Fernandez-Crespo and Ocio (2007)⁴ had conducted a study on presence on Giardia cysts and Cryptosporidium oocysts in drinking water supplies in northern Spain and they point out that water treatments based on rapid filtration process and chlorination only are often unsatisfactory to provide safe drinking water, a situation that represents an important public health problem for the affected population because of the risk of waterborne outbreaks.

Dixon, Butler, Fewkes (1999)⁵ observed that the potential threat to health associated with the microbial contamination of grey-water. Although it has been shown that grey water may contain large numbers of potentially pathogenic micro organisms, the incidence of disease is dependent upon more than just the concentration of organisms. Other factors include the degree of exposure and the health and age of affected individuals. Proposed guidelines for the re-use of grey water focus upon faecal coliform contamination and suggest limits based upon the end use of recycled water. The paper also proposes modifications to the guidelines to better represents the delicate balance between protection of public health and the levels of risk posed by grey water re-use within the context of everyday human activity and attempts to identify where there is either an expectation for responsibility or a personal acceptance of responsibility with regard to public or personal health.

BRANDING - AN OVERVIEW

BRANDING AS A CONCEPT

The word “Brand” owes its origin to the Norwegian word “Brandr” which means to burn. Farmers used to put some identification mark on the body of the livestock to distinguish their possession. Products are what companies make, but customers buy the brands. Therefore, marketers resorted to branding in order to distinguish their offerings from similar products and services provided by their competitors. Additional, it carries an inherent assurance to the customers that the quality of a purchase will be similar to earlier purchase of the same brand.

WHAT IS A BRAND?

The world’s standard marketing textbook, written by Philip Kotler, defines a brand as “a name, term, symbol or design, or a combination of them, which is intended to signify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them those of competitors”. At one level this technical explanation is true. As improvements in manufacturing and distribution give consumers an ever greater choice, come form of supplier identification becomes a necessary piece of information in the purchase selection. However, the modern brand has outgrown the mechanical aspects of product differentiation. Today’s great brands are personalities, as intrusive in our culture as film stars, sports heroes or functional characters. Clint Eastwood, Coca-Cola, Boris Becker, Kodak, Madonna. IBM and Donald Duck are equally well known.

4. Carmena.D, Aguinagalde.X, Zigorraga.C, Fernandez-Crespo.J.C and Ocio.J.A, Journal of Applied Microbiology, Vol. 102, Issue 3, pp 619-629, March 2007.

5. Dixon.A.M, Butler.D, Fewkes.A, Water and Environment Journal, Vol. 13, Issue 5, pp 322-326, Oct 1999.

Ask consumers to describe a branded product, and they will tell you that the biggest obstacle they face is the “name” or reputation of Sony, or Kellogg’s, or whoever. A brand, then, is a sort of prejudice, in the literal sense of a pre-judgment. Like all prejudices, it will seem unfair to the people who are on the wrong end of it—in this case, the less well-known competitors of the big brands.

“Branding is, therefore, to do with the way customers perceive and buy things, not simply characteristics of certain industries”.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF BRANDS

Having clarified the concept of the brand, it is worth appreciating how brands evolved. This historical review shows how different aspects of branding were emphasized.

There were examples of brands being used in Greek and Roman times. With a high level of illiteracy, shop keepers hung pictures above their shops indicating the types of goods they sold. Symbols were developed to provide an indication of the retailer’s specialty and thus the brand logo as a shorthand device signaling the brand’s capability was born. Use is still made of this aspect of branding, as in the case, for example, of the poised jaguar indicating the power developed by the Jaguar brand.

In the middle Ages, craftsmen with specialist skills began to stamp their marks on their goods and trademarks. **Differentiating** between suppliers became more common. In these early days, branding gradually became a **guarantee** of the source of the product and ultimately its use as a form of **legal protection** against copying grew. Today, trademarks include words (e.g. Duracell), symbols (e.g. the distinctive shell logo) or a unique pack shape (e.g. the Coco-Cola bottle), which have been registered and which purchasers recognize as being unique to a particular brand.

A PRODUCT MAY DIE BUT BRAND WILL SUSTAIN

The brand protects the innovator, granting momentary exclusiveness and rewarding the willingness to take risks. Branding cannot be reduced to a symbol or a product or a merely graphic and cosmetic exercise. A brand is the signature on a constantly renewed, creative process. Products are introduced, they live and disappear, but the inner or core value of the original brand endures. This consistency of creative action is what gives the brand its meaning, its contents and its character. Creating a brand requires time to build up that identity.

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The following are the findings of the study relating to descriptive analysis.

- Majority of the respondents belong to the age group of below 25 years, are female having degree level of education, employed having an income level of Rs. 10,000 – Rs.15,000 and having 4 members in their family.
- A maximum (47%) of the respondents are aware of Packaged Drinking Water through advertisements.

- A maximum of (37%) the respondents are aware of Packaged Drinking Water through television advertisements.
- Majority number of (154) the respondents are having very high awareness towards Aquafina Packaged Drinking Water.
- Majority (63%) of the respondents purchase Packaged Drinking Water during travelling.
- A maximum of (50%) the respondents are purchasing Packaged Drinking Water in 1 liter quantity.
- Majority (69%) of the respondents spend up to Rs. 200 for the purchase of Packaged Drinking Water.
- A maximum of (34%) the respondents buy Packaged Drinking Water at departmental stores.
- Majority (73%) of the respondents prefer to buy Packaged Drinking Water in bottles.
- Majority (92) of the respondents are influenced by the purity of the Packaged Drinking Water.
- A maximum of (39%) the respondents prefer to buy Aquafina Packaged Drinking Water.
- A maximum of (25%) the respondents are using Packaged Drinking Water for above 3 years.
- Majority Number (148) of the respondents had given 1st rank to quality as the influencing factor to buy Packaged Drinking Water.
- Majority (90%) of the respondents feel that the brand they consume is superior to other brands in Packaged Drinking Water.
- Majority (65%) of the respondents are not having the plan to switch over to other brands in Packaged Drinking Water.
- Out of those who prefer to switch over, 37% of them are switching over to other brands due to high price in Packaged Drinking Water.
- A maximum of (36%) the respondents are having high preference towards Packaged Drinking Water.
- A maximum of (36%) the respondents are having high satisfaction towards Packaged Drinking Water.
- A maximum of (39%) the respondents feel that the Price is moderate in Packaged Drinking Water.
- A maximum of (34%) the respondents are having high satisfaction on the Package of the Packaged Drinking Water.

- A maximum of (35%) the respondents are having the opinion about the taste of Packaged Drinking Water as very good.
- A maximum of (31%) the respondents are having high reliability on advertisements of Packaged Drinking Water

FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

- The Family Monthly Income of the respondents alone have significant influence on the Quantity of Packaged Drinking Water they prefer to buy.
- All the personal factors of the respondents have insignificant influence on the Amount spent for the Packaged Drinking Water.
- Age, Gender, Education, Occupation, Family Monthly Income, Marital Status and Size of Family have insignificant influence on the Package preferred for buying Packaged Drinking Water.
- The Family Monthly Income of the respondents have significant influence on Duration of Usage of Packaged Drinking Water.
- All the personal factors of the respondents have insignificant influence on the Brand Preference of Packaged Drinking Water.
- The Age and Family Monthly Income of the respondents alone have significant influences on the Level of Preference of Packaged Drinking Water.
- All the personal factors of the respondents have insignificant influence on the Quality of Packaged Drinking Water
- All the personal factors of the respondents have insignificant influence on the Price of Packaged Drinking Water.
- All the personal factors of the respondents have insignificant influence on the Opinion on Satisfaction Level of Packaged Drinking Water.
- All the personal factors of the respondents have insignificant influence on the Opinion of Taste of Packaged Drinking Water.
- All the personal factors have insignificant influence on the Opinion on Reliability of Advertisement of Packaged Drinking Water.

FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF ANOVA ANALYSIS

- There is no significant difference between the age groups in their agreeability of Packaged Drinking Water.
- There is no significant difference between the Education groups in their agreeability of Packaged Drinking Water.
- There is no significant difference between the Occupation groups in their agreeability of Packaged Drinking Water.

- There is no significant difference between the Family Monthly Income groups in their agreeability of Packaged Drinking Water.
- There is no significant difference between the Sizes of the Family groups in their agreeability of Packaged Drinking Water.

FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF T-TEST ANALYSIS

- There is no significant difference between the Gender groups in their agreeability of Packaged Drinking Water.
- There is no significant difference between the Marital Status groups in their agreeability of Packaged Drinking Water.

FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF FACTOR ANALYSIS

- There is no significant influence over the agreeability towards the Packaged Drinking Water in various factors.

FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF AVERAGE RANK ANALYSIS

- It is concluded that among the various factors purity is the important influencing factors for the purchase of Packaged Drinking Water.
- It is concluded that among the various factors quality is the important influencing factors for the respondents to buy the brand of Packaged Drinking Water

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of study the following recommendations had made.

1. AWARENESS

The study revealed that majority of the respondents is aware of packaged drinking water through television advertisements. It is an indicator that the other Medias are not exploited fully to the extent of its utility. Hence, it is suggested to the manufacturers to use not only television media which heavily add to the expenditure but also other media like Newspaper, Hoardings that are equally powerful.

2. PURITY FACTOR

It is found in the study that, among other factors the purity factor has influenced the respondents, than other factors. Hence it is important that the manufactures have to be careful in ensuring the hygiene aspect in the production of consumable drinking water.

3. QUALITY ASPECT

Generally Quality is the most important factor every manufacturer should ensure in the production of goods and services. For packaged drinking water also this concept will apply perfectly. On the basis of respondent's preference for quality, it is suggested to the manufacturers to follow a quality norm which is very vital as they deal with drinking water.

4. BRAND SUPERIORITY

It is found that respondents feel that their brands are superior to other brands. This shows the brand equity established by the respective brands. Therefore it is suggested to the manufacturers to take advantage of this situation in the customer creation and customer retention for their product.

5. SATISFACTION

It is found that the customers are highly satisfied with the package, taste and price of packaged drinking water. Also they have a high reliability on advertisements for these products. Customer satisfaction and customer response are the key elements in marketing the products. In marketing of packaged drinking water this two aspects are fairer to the manufacturers and hence they have to pay attention on this and continue to ensure the same for the success.

6. OTHER SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of recommendations and suggestions given by the individual respondents the following are presented.

- The container of packaged water must be selected for packing the drinking water in such a way that it can be crushed and easily dispersed.
- Some kind of flavor may be added without affecting the hygienic aspect of the drinking water.
- The containers used for storing 20 liters, 50 liters, etc., may be identified and make it more user friendly.
- The information about the availability, new arrivals etc may be given to the customers in time.
- Discount may also be offered to the customers to buy more than 5 bottles.

CONCLUSION

Further insight to the challenges facing the brand can be gained by identifying which members of the buying centre will be the users, influencers, deciders, buyers and gatekeepers. Brand marketers must work to endure that brand information is not blocked by gatekeepers. Brand presentations then should not just be directed at the needs of the decider, but also at the needs of key influences, such as architects influencing the choice of office heating systems. Attention also needs to be given to the nature of the persuasion process between members of the buying centre and the seller, as these two main forms of persuasion have different implications for marketers.

To facilitate the buying centre's evaluation of both rational and emotional aspects of the brand, personal visits by sales representatives are of considerable value. However, buyers also place a lot of importance on the supplier's track record with the firm, as well as discussing matters with colleagues and visiting the supplier's factories. The brand purchase decision is more confidently made when the buyer favorably associates the supplier's brand with a well-respected corporate image. It is inevitable that the brands of packaged drinking

water are not exceptions to the general implications of branding and brand image which play vital role in marketing of any product.

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