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"BRAND PREFERENCE OF RURAL CONSUMERS TOWARDS FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS".

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Abstract:
Rural consumers today are aware of different brands of products and services than before and are more demanding and prefer branded products. Their needs, preferences and factors influencing their purchases are entirely different from one product to another and from urban consumers. In order to achieve success in the rural markets, companies have to reach, acquire and retain rural consumers. Hence, this study has been undertaken to know the brands preferred by the rural consumers and the factors influencing them to buy different fast moving consumer products. The study reveals that different factors influences the rural consumers in purchasing different fast moving consumer products and rural consumers are health conscious in respect of food products.

Key words: Rural Consumers, Fast moving consumer goods, Brands.

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1. Introduction:

India's rural consumers are becoming more ambitious, involved and understanding. Their purchase decisions are reformed with their new attitudes, priorities and behaviors. Indian rural consumers are ahead of you to be served in new ways and with new offerings. Due to the rise in the incomes of rural consumers, through education and health care they want to provide a better future for their children.

Changing Rural Consumers:

In India rural consumers are now brand savvy (to ensure quality they are willing to buy branded products), trading up (to boost social image they want more features and better product designs) and explorers (using multiple channels they want to adopt new categories). Word of mouth plays a powerful role in the purchase decisions of rural consumers and they have better access to mobile internet, TV, media music, movies. Rural consumer's interaction with urban consumers has increased and they try to seek information from multiple sources. Women play an active role in decision making. Rural consumers are more aware, do not trust fraudulent schemes. They do seek value and does not always make purchases on the basis of price and they do have strong peer effect. On these bases, they are categorized as street smart, value seeking and social. The study conducted by Accenture reveals that rural consumers falls into categories and they classified rural consumer segment into four categories:

1. Traditionalists are those who make purchase decisions by relying on conventional channels and their purchases on the basis of their needs and they prefer cheapest offerings available.
2. Steady climbers are those who want to outstand among their peers and strive to do the same by buying branded products. They do aspire for an additional comfortable lifestyle.
3. Village Elites are progressive and who possess high education and awareness level. They look in the quality, features and aesthetics.
4. Young consumers belonging to the age group of 18-28 makes ample use of digital technology and purchases branded products to augment their social image. They do influence other consumers.

Rural consumers in India are keen to share the fruits of India's industrial growth and to try out with latest products, services and processes. Increased poverty, low literacy and insufficient infrastructure have lead to the implausibility about sustainability of the opportunities in the rural areas. Issues such as no proper connection for roads, railways and telecom infrastructure have become the big hindrances to the businesses. Many companies considerable portion of revenues and profits are from rural markets. In order to have profitable and sustainable growth in rural markets, efficient selling and distribution system is required in the organization. Vast differences exist between rural and urban markets in the areas of infrastructure, social structure, business, and market size and consumer behavior. It is reported in the study of Accenture that amplified household purchasing power and stable income of rural India is due to the industrial development. Nearly 70 percent of India's population lives in rural India and about 50 percent of India's GDP are contributed by rural India. Shift in the consumption of products such as necessity to discretionary good and lifestyle products such as cell phones, television sets and two wheelers among the rural consumers is witnessed due to the rise in the incomes. Even if the opportunity is realized by the companies in the rural markets, they do feel that profitability from the same is uncertain. Innovative strategies and capabilities are demanded by the economic, demographic and cultural drivers which silhouette the rural market. In order to tackle with the same and to position them in the rural market, companies are exploring different sales and distribution models which lead them to face numerous barriers.

2. Literature Review:

Rural marketers are price sensitive, price conscious and they purchase simple and low priced goods. Brand loyalty is very low in rural areas; male member alone goes to buy consumer products. Non availability of brand is another reason which affects purchasing decision. He also found that package should be strong and small and brand names should be simple, small and easy to remember and pronounce. Consumers' attitude differs among different products Chandrashekhar B.V.N.G [2012]. Respondents of big villages spend more on toiletries which indicates that their preference for high quality, high priced premium soaps, while respondents of small villages use low priced, carbolic soaps. In terms of cosmetics, which were considered to be the privilege of urban consumer have entered villages and also made an impact and sustained its market in rural areas. It is also observed that in case of food items the rural consumers are using more national brands than local brands available in the market and the study also reveals the preference of rural consumers was for low priced toiletries. The shifting of brand was on the higher side among the respondents in big villages when compared to those of small villages (Sarangapani A & T Mamatha, 2008). Majority of the consumers are aware about the organization and its product line and sales promotion techniques of Dabur India are effective and influential for targeting consumers for purchasing the products. The study also reveals that the sales promotion schemes given by the organization are able to match the customer's needs and expectations and are good motivator for consumers to make a favorable purchase decision (Malik .G.,2011). Among the five demographic factors tested, occupation and income emerged as the strongest determinants, followed by age and education, whereas gender did not yield a strong significance in determining the attitudes wards different brands of consumer durables category in the rural markets of Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh, India (Nandamuri P P & Gowthami, 2012).

3. Need of the Study:

This study highlights the facts about preference of rural consumers towards fast moving consumer goods. Today rural consumers are found more challenging and more quality conscious than earlier and their preference towards different product category vary. By understanding different buying behavior of rural consumers towards different product categories in India, the researcher has decided to conduct this study to understand the buying behavior and brand preference of rural consumers towards fast moving consumer goods. Hence, this made researcher to conduct a study on the "Rural Consumers and Fast Moving Consumer Goods". This type of study particularly concentrating on different fast moving consumer goods has not been conducted in the Phajeer village of Dakshina Kannada District in Karnataka state.

4. Objectives of the study:

1. To study the buying behavior of rural consumers towards fast moving consumer goods.
2. To identify the brand preference of rural consumers towards fast moving consumer goods.

5. Research Methodology:

Primary data and secondary data is used for the present study. Primary data required for the study was collected with the help of structured questionnaire. The products involved in the study are Biscuits, Tea Powder, Milk, Cooking Oil, Tooth Paste, Bathing Soap and Shampoo. The data has been collected from 55 respondents on the basis of convenience sampling method belonging to the phajeer village.

6. Analysis and Interpretation:

The buying behavior and brand preference of rural consumers towards Fast Moving Consumer Goods are examined through survey method and the results are presented below.

Demographic Analysis of Respondents:

Table 1.0. Age wise classification of Respondents

Age wise classification(yrs)	**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
18 - 27	01	01.80
28 - 37	31	56.40
38 - 47	16	29.10
48 and above	07	12.70
Total	55	100.00

Table 1.0 clearly shows that 56.4% (maximum) of respondents are in the age group of 28-37 years and 29.1% of respondents are in the age group of 38-47 years, 12.7 % of respondents belong to the age group of 48 and above and only 1.8% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 18- 27 Years.

Table 1.2: Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
Illiterate	12	22.00
Primary Education	29	53.00
High School Education	03	05.00
Matriculation	11	20.00
Total	55	100.00

Table 1.2 reveals that maximum of respondents that is 53% of them possess primary education and 22% respondents are found to be illiterate and 20% of the total respondents possess matriculation and 05% of the respondents possess high school education.

Brands purchased in rural areas:

Table 1.3: Brands of Biscuits purchased by the respondents:

Brand Names	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Marie Vitae	26	47.30
Krack jack	07	12.70
Good day	07	12.70
Parle-G	06	10.90
Others	05	9.10
No Consumption	04	7.30
Total	55	100.00

The table 1.3 reveals that maximum number of respondents that is 47.3% of the respondents buy Marie vitae biscuits followed by Krack jack and Good day with 12.7 % of the respondents using the same, 10.9% of the respondents buy Parle-G biscuits, 9.1% of the respondents prefer other biscuits and 7.3% of the respondents do not consume biscuits at all.

Table 1.4: Brands of Tea powder purchased by the respondents:

Brand Names	**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
Devagiri	40	72.70
Assam Golden Tea	02	3.60
Red Label	04	7.30
Loose	09	16.40
Total	55	100.00

It is evident from the table 1.4 that majority of the respondents that is 72.7% of the respondents prefer Devagiri brand of tea powder. About 16.4% of the respondents prefer unbranded tea powder, 7.3% of the respondents prefer Red Label and 3.6% of the respondents prefer Assam Golden Tea.

Table 1.5: Brands of Bathing Soap purchased by the respondents:

Brand Names	**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
Lifebuouy	16	29.10
Lux	10	18.20
No.1	08	14.50
Santoor	05	9.10
Pathanjali	04	7.30
Others	12	21.80
Total	55	100.00

The table 1.5 reveals that majority of the respondents that is 29.1% buy lifebuoy soap, 18.2% of the respondents buy Lux soap, 14.5% of the respondents buy No.1 soap, 9.1% of the respondents buy Santoor soap, 7.3% of the respondents buy Pathanjali soap and remaining 21.8% of the respondents buy other soaps.

Table 1.6 : Brands of Shampoo purchased by the respondents:

Brand Names	**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage**
Clinic Plus	09	16.36
Karthika	04	7.30
Sunsilk	03	5.45
Pathanjali	02	3.63
Head and Shoulders	01	1.81
Do not buy any brand	36	65.45
Total	55	100.00

It is evident from the table 1.6 that majority of the respondents that is 16.36 % uses Clinic Plus shampoo, 7.3% of the respondents buy Karthika Shampoo, 5.45% of the respondents buy Sunsilk shampoo, 3.63% of the respondents buy Pathanjali shampoo, 1.81% of the respondents buy Head and Shoulders shampoo. Where as it is also found that 65.45% of the respondents do not buy any brand of shampoo.

Table 1.7: Brands of Milk purchased by the respondents:

Brand Names	**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
Nandini (Green Colour package)	31	56.40
Nandini (Blue Colour package)	10	18.20

Do not consume milk	14	25.40
Total	55	100.00

The table 1.7 reveals that 56.40% of the respondents buy the brand Nandini (Green colour package), whereas 18.20% of the respondents buy the brand Nandini (Blue colour package) and 25.40% of the respondents do not consume any brand of milk.

Table 1.8: Brands of Cooking Oil purchased by the respondents:

Brand Names	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Sun Rich	29	52.70
Ruchi Gold	14	25.50
Gold winner	07	12.70
Coconut oil	03	5.50
Others	02	3.60
Total	55	100.00

The table 1.8 reveals that majority of the respondents that is 52.7% of them uses Sun Rich oil, 25.5% of the respondents uses Ruchi Gold oil, 12.7% of the respondents prefer Gold Winner oil, 5.5% of the respondents prefer coconut oil and 3.6% of the respondents prefer other brands of oil.

Table 1.9: Brands of Tooth paste purchased by the respondents:

Brand Names	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Colgate	36	65.50
Close Up	9	16.40
Meswak	6	10.90
Others	4	7.20
Total	55	100.00

It is found from the table 1.9 that 65.5% of the respondents prefer Colgate toothpaste, 16.4% of the respondents prefer Close Up tooth paste, 10.9% of the respondents prefer Meswak tooth paste and 7.2% of the respondents buy other brands.

Table 2.0: **Attributes influencing the respondents to purchase the food products.**

Attributes / **Products**	**Healthiness** (% of respondents)	**Tasty** (% of respondents)	**Children's liking** (% of respondents)	**Less Price** (% of respondents)	**Habit** (% of respondents)
Biscuits	40.82	18.36	40.82	0	0
Tea Powder	5.45	49.10	0	18.18	27.27
Milk	32.00	44.00	2.00	0	22.00
Cooking Oil	61.11	20.37	0	7.40	11.12
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 2.0 reveals that in case of biscuits, Healthiness and Children's liking are the attributes which influenced the majority of the respondents that is 40.82% of the respondents; in case of tea powder 49.10% of the respondents are influenced by the taste factor; in case of milk taste is the factor which influenced 49.10% of the respondents and in case of Cooking Oil 61.11% of the respondents are very conscious about Healthiness attribute.

The following chart exhibits the attributes which influenced the respondents to purchase the food products such as Biscuits, Tea Powder, Milk and Cooking Oil.

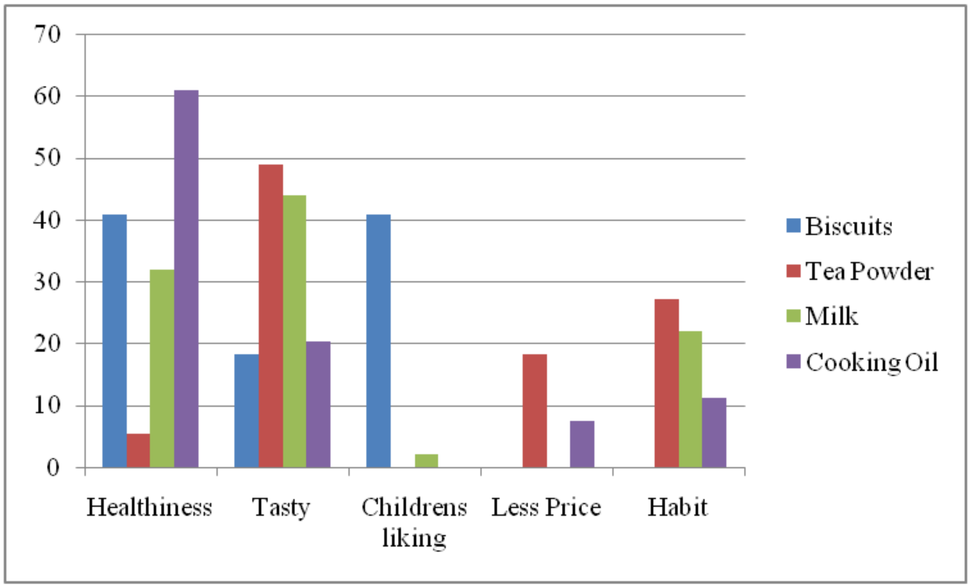

Figure 1.

Table 2.1: Attributes influencing the respondents to purchase Bathing Soap, Shampoo and Toothpaste.

Products / **Attributes**	**Bathing Soap** (% of respondents)	**Shampoo** (% of respondents)	**Toothpaste** (% of respondents)
Children's liking	1.96	5.30	3.60
Prevents hair fall	11.76	94.70	0
Cures skin infections	23.53	0	0
Ayurvedic	9.80	0	5.50
Fragrance	25.50	0	0
Prevents Cavity	0	0	67.30
Long Lasting	9.80	0	0
Habit	13.73	0	23.60
Low Priced	3.92	0	0
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 2.1 reveals that 25.50% of the respondents are influenced by the fragrance of the bathing soap whereas 23.53% of the respondents purchased bathing soap with the perception that it cures skin infections. In case of shampoo, 94.70% of the respondents buy shampoo with the feeling that, particular shampoo will prevents hair fall and in case of toothpaste 67.30% of the respondents buys toothpaste with the perception that the particular toothpaste will prevent cavity. It is evident from the table 2.0 and 2.1 that, different attributes influences the respondents to purchase different fast moving consumer products.

The following charts exhibits the attributes which influenced the respondents while purchasing bathing soap, shampoo and toothpaste.

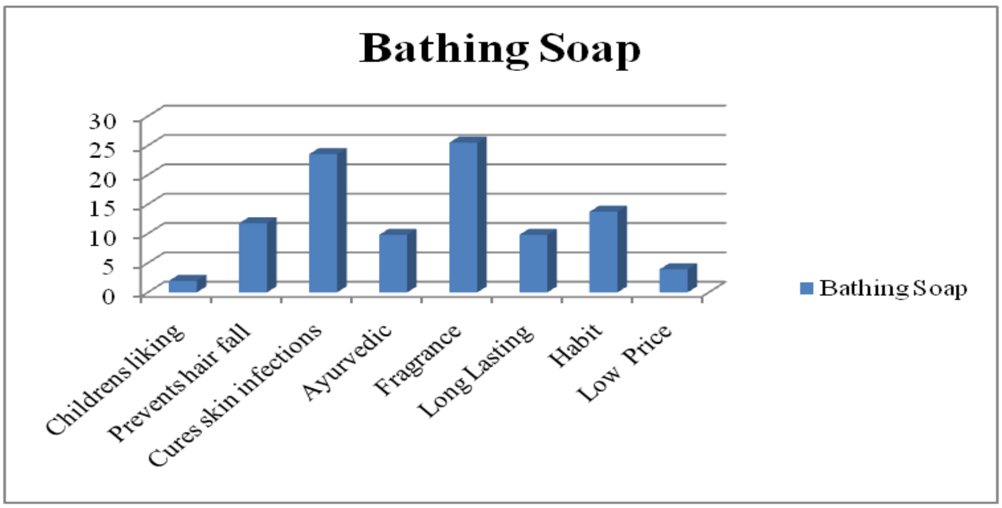

Figure 2.

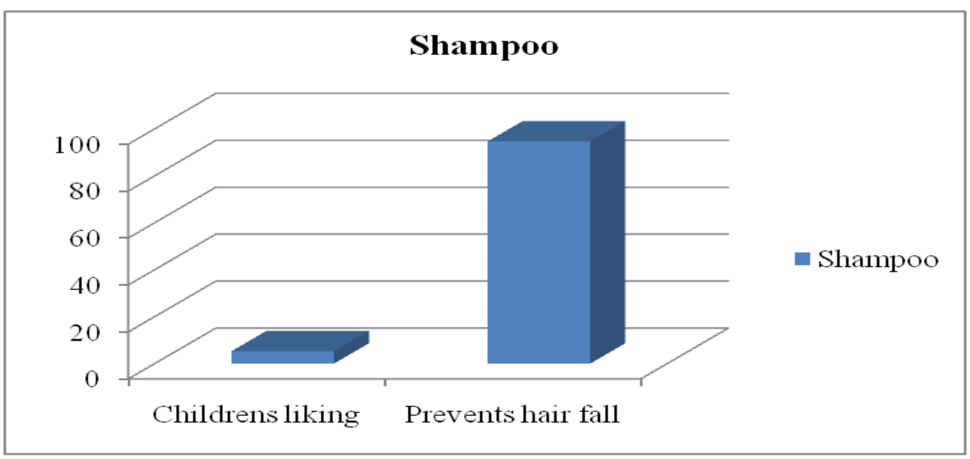

Figure 3.

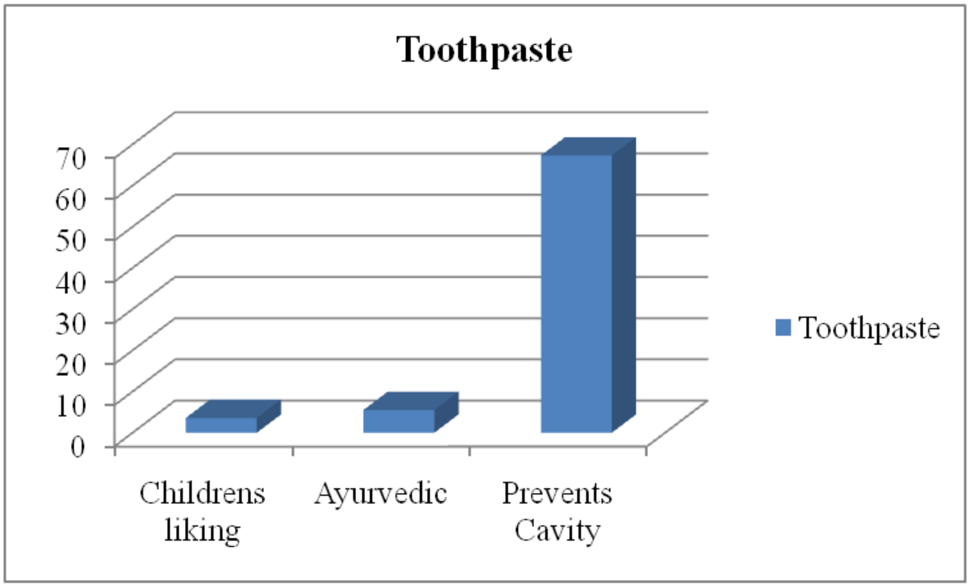

Figure 4.

Table 2.2: Frequency of buying:

Frequency of Buying / Products	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	As and when the product finishes	As and when need arises
Biscuits	2.04	18.37	4.08	67.35	8.16
Tea powder	0	27.28	7.27	65.45	0
Milk	98	0	0	2	0
Cooking Oil	0	0	0	100	0
Bathing Soap	0	23.63	7.27	69.1	0
Shampoo	0	0	0	94.11	5.89
Tooth Paste	0	2	0	98	0

It is found from the table 2.2 that majority of the respondent's buys biscuits, tea powder, bathing soap, shampoo, cooking oil and toothpaste as and when the product finishes, whereas in case of milk majority of the respondents buy daily.

Table 2.3: Purchaser of the fast moving consumer Goods.

Purchaser	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Husband	49	89.1
Wife	4	7.3
Children	2	3.6
Total	55	100.0

The table 2.3 reveals that, in majority of the families that is among 89.1% of the families, husband is the one who purchases the products required by the family.

Table 2.4: Respondents opinion regarding the quality of branded products.

Opinion	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
All branded Products are of good quality	31	56.4
All branded Products are of not good quality	14	25.5
Branded products are neither good nor of bad quality.	10	18.2
Total	55	100.0

Table 2.3 reveals that, 56.4% of the respondents feel that all branded products are of good quality and 25.5% of the respondents opine that all branded products are not of good quality and 18.2% of the respondents opine that branded products are neither good nor of bad quality.

7. Findings of the study:

1. It is found from the study that 87.3% of the respondent's family income is less than Rs.6000, 9.1% of the respondent's family income belongs to Rs.6000 to Rs.12000, and 3.6% of the respondent's family income belongs to Rs.12000 to Rs.18000.
2. The study reveals that 91% of the head of the respondents family are daily wage workers, 5.4% of the head of the respondents family are beedi rollers, 3.6% of the head of the respondents family are teachers.
3. All the respondents selected for the study are females.
4. It is evident from the study that majority of the respondents (20%) got to know about the brands of biscuits through friends and 20% of the respondents got to know about the products through family. In case of tea powder, majority of the respondents (65.5%) got to know through shop keeper and 29.1% of the respondents got to know through the family members. 43.6% of the respondents are aware of the brands of bathing soap through shopkeeper and 23.6% of the respondents got to know through the family members. The study found that majority of the respondents (20%) got to know about the brands of shampoo through friends and 3.6% of the respondents got to know through shopkeeper. The study reveals that 30.9% of the respondents got to know about the brands of milk through family and 29.1% of the respondents got to know through shopkeeper. It is evident from the study that 45.5% of the respondents got to know about the brands of cooking oil through shopkeeper and 21.8% of the respondents got to know through family. 56.4% of the respondents got to know about the toothpaste through family and 16% of the respondents got to know through friends.

8. Conclusion:

The behavior of rural consumers towards a product category cannot be generalized to all product categories. They behave differently with different product categories. Rural consumers consider different factors as important while buying different products. They may be loyal in some aspects and would like to be brand switcher in few categories. Friends and family members are found to be the main source of information in rural areas. As the rural consumers are scattered over large geographical areas, the companies have to take efforts to spread awareness among them who has not been reached through media for any of the reason. There are consumers who are willing to buy the products if they are aware of the product, but lack of awareness due to absence of media and advertising channels in remote areas seizes them from buying the branded products. Today, we can find less difference among rural and urban consumers in case of preference towards products, but lots of differences can be found regarding importance given to the variables of the products which is influenced by the income, education, family members and the place of residence. Hence, marketers have to be very conscious and above mentioned aspects have to be considered when penetrating into rural areas. It is better for the companies to go and reach rural consumers by creating awareness and making the products available at smaller unit price package especially in case of fast moving consumer goods rather than solely depending on rural retailers.

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