



An empirical study on consumer behaviour and brand preference towards toilet soap among youth in Kottayam district of Kerala

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Abstract: Majority of company enterprise relies heavily on its customers. Consumer buying behaviour refers to how people go about looking for, buying, using, reviewing, and discarding products and services. Toilet soap is an essential part of each consumer's daily routine. Consumers have a wide range of toilet soap options, and they are influenced by a variety of internal and external influences. This paper focused on customer purchase behaviour and brand preference for toilet soap in the Kottayam district of Kerala. An in-depth survey of consumer purchasing behaviour is conducted using the interview method and a well-structured questionnaire. A total of 210 people were chosen from various parts of the Kottayam district. For this study, a simple random sample procedure was applied.

Key Words: Buying behaviour, Consumer, Purchase, Soap, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Many people take soap for granted or believe it to be an everyday item, but for others, lathering up is an important part of their daily or night-time routine. Scented or unscented, in bars, gels, and liquids, soap is a part of our daily existence. It is classified as a cleansing and beautifying product that is typically used for body cleansing. Soap's history dates back thousands of years. It was the Romans who were the first to document it. They knew how to produce soap and, more surprisingly, had recipes for both solid and soft soap, often known as bar and liquid soap. Soap was used by the Romans not just to wash their faces and bodies, but also to wash their hair.

The Indian soap industry is extremely consolidated, with the top companies accounting for about 90% of the market. Indian enterprises are relaunching their brands with value adds to clients across India in order to acquire a competitive advantage. Soap is primarily used to cleanse the body, while the latter is meant to enhance the appearance of the skin. The soaps are rated according to the amount of Total Fatty Matter (TFM) they contain. TFM soap is effective in cleaning, moisturising, and nourishing the skin. The TFM value of toilet soap is high. TFM is a metric (in percent) for determining the quantity of fatty matter in soap; the more fatty matter in soap, the better for the skin. The TFM value must be stated on all toilet soaps. Several major national and international brands, as well as a significant number of smaller ones, dominate the toilet soap industry. Hamam, Lux, Power, Dove, Rexona, Medimix, Cinthol, Pears, Mysore sandal, and Life Bouy are some of the well-known toilet soap brands. Because there were so many various types of toilet soap, it was impossible for customers to distinguish between them.

Consumer buying behaviour is crucial for marketers to understand how customers perceive different things and act accordingly. As a result of examining consumer purchasing behaviour, marketing personnel will be better able to meet the needs of various clients. The purpose of this study is to determine how consumers behave in the Kerala toilet soap market. This study is being utilised to calculate various consumer opinions about the products that are being used. Moreover, this study is focusing on following objectives:

- To analyse the knowledge of the consumers about the various brands of toilet soap in Kottayam district.
- To identify consumer's attitude towards various factors influencing their purchasing decision related to toilet soap in Kottayam district.
- To examine the brand preference with regard to toilet soap in Kottayam district.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Suresh (2018) in his research study identified the factors related to traits of utilitarian and hedonistic shoppers and provides insights into characteristics and behavioral patterns of utilitarian and hedonistic shoppers spanning organized apparel, sports, jewelry, books and FMCG retail format. In a study **Ajai Krishnan and Dr. Nandhini (2017)**



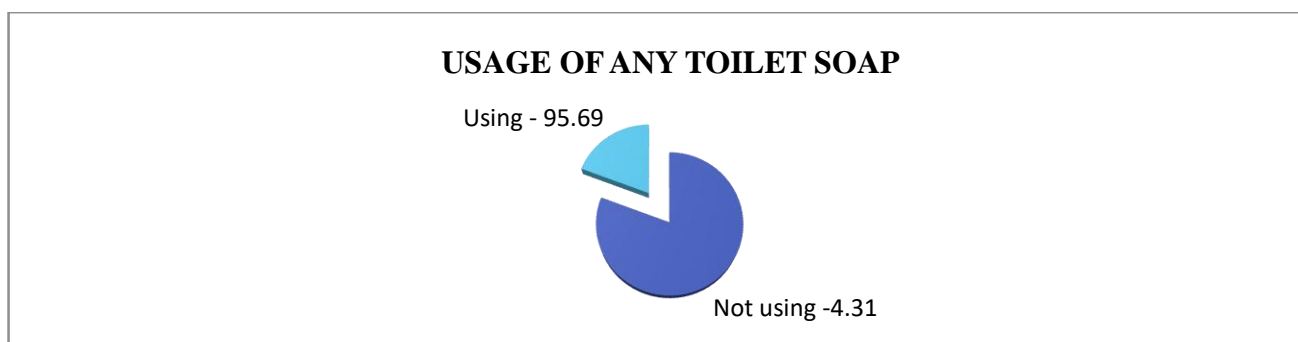
tries to calculate the factors behind the consumers purchasing behavior towards bathing soaps with special reference to Ernakulam District in Kerala. The study made use of primary and secondary data. A sample of 110 customers from Ernakulam city of Kerala is collected from four super markets by using judgment sampling method. The results explain that customers are motivated to purchase bathing soap because of the, awareness, brand image, word of mouth publicity, advertisement, celebrity, price etc. **Dr. Prasanna Kumar and Devendar (2017)** in their study identified the level of influence of various factors on the purchase of FMCG products soaps among consumers. The study emphasized that consumers gave more importance to the quality of the FMCG-personal care brands. Also the study depicts that there is a significant association between the age and buying behavior of people while purchasing the bathing soaps. Also found that people use specific brand rather than trying new brands. Yet another study by **Dr. Varadharajan, (2017)** is focused to identify the factors which influence consumers while purchasing toilet soap and to examine the brand loyalty with regard to toilet soaps. **Stem and Piron (2016)** in their study elucidate the phenomena when consumers purchase goods upon seeing the product accompanied by the sudden realization that they need the product. This type of buying behavior is distinguished as reminder impulse buying, which is quite similar to the reminder in which consumers purchase goods when they encounter the product. In a study conducted by **Baumeister and Stillman (2016)** indicate that consumers use detailed information about products to guide their choices and most consumers purchase products after simply looking at the tag price and story tag of the product. Yet another study conducted by **Shanmugapriya and Sethuraman (2014)** stated that customers are the king of the market, superiors in an organization and Goose laying Eggs. Soap is an important product for the day to day consumption of the customers. They concluded that people need quality of soap for which they are ready to have brand loyalty or switch over from one brand to another. **Khaled & Khonika (2012)** mentioned in their study factors influencing the extent of brand loyalty of toilet soap users says that while in consuming toilet soaps, people are influenced by family members, product features or availability of soaps in the local stores. **Muruganantham and Biswas (2011)** in their study factors influencing the buying behaviour of chocolates reveals that taste plays a crucial role while selecting a chocolate brand, respondents look for unique taste in the product they choose as compared to the other available products in the market. **Mamatha (2008)** in her study says that consumer behavior is a very complex phenomenon, which needs more efforts to understand, explain and predict. In a study **Anderes Hassinger (2007)** tried to examine factors responsible for influencing behaviors of consumers. They have identified price; trust were important factors. **Zaitman and Wallender (1983)** in his point of view human behaviors in consumption process involves planning to make purchase, making purchase and using their varying degree of satisfaction to make purchase. **Louden David et. al (1976)** states that, Consumer buying habits should generally comprise less obvious choice processes that accompany consumption, such as where, how often, and under what conditions customers acquire desired goods and services.

3. MATERILS AND METHODS OF THE STUDY:

In this study researcher has used descriptive research design. Multistage random sampling was used for this study. Sampling unit used is households from various part of Kottayam district in Kerala. Moreover, a pre-structured questionnaire was used in tapping the information from 210 respondents. The secondary data are collected from various e-journals. A well-structured questionnaire is used for data collection. Frequency, simple percentage, total score and simple ranking method have been used for analysis purpose. Tables and charts are used for data presentation. The study was conducted for the period of 50 days and all objective should be attained within this given period.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

Fig -1: RESPONDENTS USAGE OF TOILET SOAP



Source: Primary Data



The above figure reveals that out of 210 respondents, 95.69 % of respondents using toilet soap and rest of them don't use any toilet soap.

TABLE -1: SIZE OF TOILET SOAP USUALLY PURCHASED IN A MONTH

Particulars	Number of respondents	Percentage
Above 200g	126	60
Below 200g	84	40
Total	210	100

Source: Primary Data

The above figure reveals that out of 210 respondents, 60% of respondents buy toilet soap above 200g and 40% of them buy below 200.

TABLE -2: PURCHASING PATTERN OF TOILET SOAP

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondent's
Weekly	44	21
Fortnight	10	4.8
Monthly	126	60
Quarterly	15	7.1
No specific time	15	7.1
Total	210	100

Source: Primary Data

The above table depicts the frequent usage of soap, out of 210 respondents 48% of respondents were use twice in a day, 38% of respondents were use once in a day, and 14% of respondents were using more than twice in a day.

Table no-2 reveals that out of 210 respondents, 60% of them purchase monthly, 21 % of them purchase weekly, 7.1% of them purchase quarterly and another 7.1% of them have no specific purchase pattern and rest of them (4.8%) purchase toilet soap fortnightly.

TABLE -3: TYPE OF TOILET SOAP USUALLY PURCHASE

Particulars	Number of respondents	Percentage
Foamy	80	38
Thick leather	25	12
Transparent	40	19
Milky	65	31
Total	210	100

Source: Primary Data

Table no-3 opined that out of 210 respondents, 38% of respondent like foamy kind of toilet soap, 31% respondent like Milky, 19% like transparent soap and remaining 12% of them like thick leather type of soap.

TABLE -4: THING MOST LIKELY IN TOILET SOAP

Particulars	Number of respondents	Percentage
Perfume	80	38
Colour	21	10
Leather	4	2
Hygienic	105	50
Total	210	100

Source: Primary data

The table no-4 reveals that out of 210 respondents, majority (50%) likes' hygienic factor, 38% likes perfume factor most likely in toilet soap. 10% like colour in toilet soap and rest (2%) of them preferred leather in buying toilet soap.



TABLE -5: FAVOURATE PLACE TO BUY TOILET SOAP

Particulars	Number of respondents	Percentage
Supermarket	145	69
Premium Groceries	55	26.2
Pharmacy	5	2.4
Fancy shop	5	2.4
Total	210	100

Source: Primary data

Table no-5 shows that out of 210 respondents, majority (69%) of them said that their favourite place to buy toilet soap is from supermarket, 26.2% from premium groceries and remaining few percentages are from fancy shop and retail pharmacy (each of them 2.4%).

TABLE -6: PERSON’S WHOSE SUGGESTION LEADS TO THE PURCHASE OF TOILET SOAP

Particulars	Number of respondents	Percentage
Children	11	5
Friends	44	21
Family	126	60
Relatives	6	3
Colleagues	17	8
Dealers	6	3
Total	210	100

Source: Primary data

The table no- 6 reveals the opinion of respondents related to the suggestion leads to the purchase of a particular toilet soap. Out of 210 respondents, 60% of respondents said that suggestions from family, 21% said that it is from friends, 8% said that colleagues, 5% said that from children and rest of them said that it is from dealers and relatives (each of them 3%) suggestions leads to the purchase of toilet.

TABLE -7: RESPONDENT’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THEIR PURCHASING DECISION RELATED TO A PARTICULAR TOILET SOAP

Factors	Highly Important 5	Important 4	Neutral 3	Somewhat Important 2	Not at all Important 1	Weighted Score	Rank
Quality	165x5= 825	35x4= 140	10x3= 30	0x2= 0	0x1= 0	995	1
Brand awareness	45x5= 225	105x4= 420	50x3= 150	5x2= 10	5x1= 5	810	8
Price	65x5= 325	120x4= 480	15x3= 45	0x2= 0	10x1= 10	860	5
Availability	85x5= 425	100x4= 400	15x3= 45	5x2= 10	5x1= 5	885	4
Sales promotions such as discount /Free gifts	50x5= 250	60x4= 240	55x3= 165	30x2= 60	15x1= 15	730	10
Packaging	80x5= 400	75x4= 300	50x3= 150	0x2= 0	5x1= 5	855	6
Celebrity advertisements	20x5= 100	50x4= 200	75x3= 225	30x2= 60	35x1= 35	620	11
Brand reputation	80x5= 400	65x4= 260	40x3= 120	15x3= 45	10x1= 10	835	7
Natural ingredients	110x5= 550	55x4= 220	40x3= 120	5x2= 10	0x1= 0	900	2
Fragrance	95x5= 475	80x4= 320	25x3= 75	10x2= 20	0x1= 0	890	3



	475	320	75	20	0		
Word of mouth publicity	55x5= 275	70x4= 280	65x3= 195	15x2= 30	5x1= 5	785	9

Source: Primary Data

Table-7 reveals the ranking of the factors which influencing the consumers buying behaviour of toilet soap. So from the table it is evident that the Quality has the highest rank and score (995), second rank is given to natural ingredients (score-900), followed by Fragrance (score- 890 and rank -3), followed by availability (score-885 and rank-4), followed by price (score-860 and rank-5), followed by Packaging (score-855 and rank-6), followed by Brand reputation (score-835 and rank-7), followed by sales Brand awareness (score-810 and rank-8), followed by word of mouth publicity (score-785 and rank-9), followed by sales promotions such as discount /Free gifts (score -730 and rank-10), and the last but not least important factor is celebrity advertisements (score-620 and rank-11).

TABLE -8: MOST PREFERABLE BRAND OF TOILET SOAPS (RANKING)

Band name	Total	Percentage	Rank
Sandoor	11	5.24	6
Lux	27	12.86	3
Rexona	11	5.24	6
Dove	56	26.8	1
Pears	46	21.90	2
Medimix	26	12.38	4
Life buoy	12	5.71	5
Cuttee	5	2.38	7
Chandrika	11	5.24	6
Vival	5	2.38	7
Total	210	100	

Source: Primary Data

The above table depicts 48 respondents out of which 41% of respondents were comparing their brand with other brands based on price factor, 25% of the respondents were using the factor quality for their comparison and 17% of the respondents were comparing the brands by using the factors brand availability & free gifts

Table no-8 reveals the respondents ranking based on the preference of the various bands of toilet soaps. So from the table it is evident that Dove is the most preferable brand of the consumers in Kottayam district with highest score (26.8%), followed by Pears (rank-2 and 21.90%), followed by Lux (rank-3 and 12.86%), followed by Medimix (rank-4 and 12.38%), followed by Life buoy (rank-5 and 5.71%), followed by Chandrika, Rexona & Sandoor (rank- and 5.24 % each), and Vival and Cuttee (2.38% each of them).

TABLE -9: CHANGES FELT BY THE RESPONDENTS

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Skin colour	13	6
Skin softness	21	10
Freshness	71	34
Body odour	21	10
Oil controller	29	14
Fragrance	55	26
Total	210	100

Source: Primary Data

The above table highlights the changes felt by the respondents for the use of particular brand of toilet soap. Out of 200 respondents 34% of respondents were said Freshness, 26% of respondents were felt Fragrance, 14% of them are said oil controller, 10% of respondents were felt skin softness, body odour, and 6% of respondents were said skin colour

Table no-9 reveals the changes felt by the respondents for the use of a particular brand of toilet soap. Out of 210 respondents, 34% of respondents said freshness, 26% of respondents felt fragrance, 14% of them said oil controller, 10% of respondents felt skin softness and another 10% of respondents felt body odour, and 6% of respondents said skin colour classifications on the basis of brand loyalty.



5. FINDINGS AND RESULT :

- The analysis parts of the study reveals that out of 210 respondents, most (95.69%) of respondents using toilet soap and rest doesn't use any toilet soap.
- Out of 210 respondents, majority (60%) of respondents buy toilet soap above 200g and 40% were below 200.
- This study reveals that out of 210 respondents, majority (60%) of them prefer to purchase toilet soap monthly.
- Out of 210 respondents, majority (50%) of respondent likes' hygienic factor most likely in the toilet soap.
- Out of 210 respondents, majority (60%) of them said that suggestions from family are mainly considered to the purchase of toilet.
- From the analysis part it is evident that the quality is the important factor which influencing the consumers buying behaviour of toilet soap. Second major factor is natural ingredients and third one is fragrance.
- The study is reveals that Dove is the most preferable brand of the consumers in Kottayam district with highest score (26.8%), second preferable brand is Pears (rank-2 and 21.90%), and third one is Lux (rank-3 and 12.86).
- It is found that the changes felt by the respondents for the use of a particular brand of toilet soap mainly is freshness, second major change felt is fragrance and third one is oil controller.

6. SUGGESTIONS :

- The toilet soap such as Dove, Pears are not popular among the consumer. So the manufactured should take necessary steps to popularize the above said brands.
- The price of brands like Hamam, Power, Lux, Medimix and lifebouy can be reduced. So that these brands of toilet soap can be purchased by all level of income group.
- Most of the consumers are concerned about the quality of toilet soap. So manufacturers can take necessary steps to improve the quality brands of toilet soap.
- The FMGC Company needs to focus on its distribution channels, networking, marketing strategies, sales promotion etc to tap the potential segment.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS :

- A business can also take steps to ensure that customers are included in the decision-making process when it comes to toilet soap.
- Some branded toilet soap companies may be able to lower their prices so that the middle class can purchase them.
- During important events, the company must provide discounts or unique incentives.

8. CONCLUSIONS:

With their high-quality products, international competitors are gaining ground in the Indian toilet soap sector. There are only a few manufacturers in India's toilet soap sector. In terms of pricing, the demand for this product is extremely vulnerable. Toilet soap is becoming increasingly popular in India as a larger percentage of the population, both male and female, is becoming more beauty conscious. According to the findings of this study, toilet soaps with superior awareness and a good brand reputation, followed by excellent quality, celebrity advertising, and word-of-mouth exposure always attract more attention from the targeted clients. Companies will strengthen the word-of-mouth publicity thereby contributing positively towards the brand and finally it will result in the selection of particular toilet soap.

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