

An Empirical Study on Key Attributes Influencing Brand Preference for FMCG Products

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Abstract

This study investigates the key attributes influencing brand preference for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and examines how demographic factors, particularly education level, shape consumer attitudes toward branding. Using a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 384 FMCG consumers, the study evaluates the role of brand image, brand awareness, and personal experience in determining brand preference. Descriptive analysis reveals strong consumer agreement regarding the importance of these attributes in shaping purchasing decisions. One-way ANOVA results indicate significant differences in branding-related attitudes across education groups, underscoring the moderating effect of consumer demographics. The findings highlight that brand preference in the FMCG sector is a multidimensional construct driven by cognitive, experiential, and demographic influences. The study contributes to the understanding of consumer behavior in the FMCG market and provides insights for marketers to design targeted branding strategies that enhance preference and loyalty.

Keywords: FMCG, brand preference, brand image, brand awareness, consumer experience, education level, consumer behavior, ANOVA analysis.

Introduction

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) comprise essential, frequently purchased items and constitute a large and highly competitive segment of consumer markets. Growth in disposable incomes, wider retail penetration, and rising consumer awareness have intensified competition among FMCG brands and shifted the determinants of purchase decisions beyond price alone to include perceived quality, packaging, sustainability and ethical positioning. Empirical studies in India and comparable markets show that product-level attributes (quality, packaging, price), brand cues (brand image, advertising) and evolving consumer concerns such as sustainability increasingly shape brand preference and repurchase behavior in FMCG categories.

Because FMCG products are typically low-involvement purchases, marketers must identify which attributes consistently move consumers from awareness to preference and loyalty; this knowledge is essential for prioritizing marketing mix decisions (e.g., packaging design, price promotions, ethical branding) and for segmenting communications across urban and rural consumer groups. The present study addresses this practical need by empirically investigating the key product, brand and contextual attributes that influence consumers' stated brand preference for FMCG products in the chosen population.

Literature review

The literature on brand preference for FMCG products converges on a set of recurring antecedents: perceived quality and brand image, packaging and sensory cues, price and promotion, advertising/endorsement effects, and emerging attributes such as ethicality and sustainability. The review below synthesizes empirical findings and identifies gaps your empirical study can address.

Perceived quality, brand image and value perceptions

Perceived quality and the broader construct of brand image are consistently reported as strong antecedents of brand preference. Zeithaml's (1988) synthesis established that consumer judgments of price, quality and value mediate purchase decisions; subsequent FMCG studies confirm that perceived quality often dominates attribute weighting in low-involvement categories when consumers view differences between brands. Empirical research in services and goods settings also shows that positive brand image increases willingness to pay and purchase intention through perceived value and trust. These results indicate that perceived



quality and brand image are central variables to measure when explaining brand preference.

Gap / implication. Many FMCG studies report correlations between brand image and preference but differ in operationalization of “quality” (e.g., objective features vs. perceived benefits). A rigorous empirical approach should measure perceived quality, brand associations and perceived value separately and test their relative contributions to brand preference.

Packaging and sensory cues

Packaging serves both functional and symbolic roles in FMCG categories (identification, protection, convenience) and also acts as a powerful cue in otherwise low-involvement purchases. Recent industry-academic work identifies sustainable packaging as an emerging determinant of brand choice—consumers increasingly incorporate eco-attributes into preference formation—while older empirical work (and multiple Indian studies) finds that color, labelling, information clarity and convenience features significantly influence brand choice for categories such as biscuits, oral-care and packaged foods. Given the scale of on-shelf decision-making, packaging design variables (visual appeal, information clarity, ease of use, perceived freshness) frequently explain incremental preference beyond price and brand name.

Gap / implication. Many studies treat packaging as a monolithic variable. Your study can contribute by disaggregating packaging into sensory/visual, informational and sustainability sub-dimensions and estimating each sub-dimension’s independent effect on brand preference.

Price, promotions and perceived value

Price remains a primary cue for value judgments in FMCG purchases. Experimental and survey research shows complex effects: higher price sometimes signals higher quality (positive effect on perceived quality) while price promotions increase trial and short-term preference but may erode perceived brand quality in some segments. The interaction of price with brand knowledge and store cues is also important—known brands often withstand promotions with less damage to perceived quality than unknown brands. Thus, price and promotion strategy should be modeled both as main effects and as moderators of other relationships (e.g., price × brand familiarity → preference).

Advertising, celebrity endorsement and communication effects

Advertising raises awareness and can alter brand associations, but its effectiveness in driving sustained brand preference in FMCG is mixed. Several Indian studies find that advertising themes and media exposure influence preference; however, celebrity endorsement effects vary by context. Some empirical work in Indian small towns and other emerging-market settings observes weak or non-uniform effects of celebrity endorsement for low-involvement FMCG categories (endorser–brand congruence and local relevance moderate effects). In short, advertising and endorsements can build recall and short-term trial, but their contribution to long-term brand preference depends on congruence, audience fit, and whether the endorsement reinforces perceived product benefits.

Gap / implication. Existing evidence suggests subgroup differences (urban vs rural, literacy, media exposure) in endorsement effectiveness; your empirical study should test for heterogeneity in advertising/endorsement effects across segments.

Ethicality and sustainability as emerging brand attributes

Recent empirical research highlights consumer-perceived ethicality (CPE) and sustainability as drivers of brand identification and commitment. Studies show that ethical perceptions improve brand identification and can mediate the effect of ethical positioning on commitment or preference—especially for consumers who prioritize values or for categories where sustainability is salient. In FMCG, sustainable packaging and CSR communication influence preference increasingly, but their strength varies by category and socio-demographic segments.

Gap / implication. There is a need for category-specific quantification of how much ethical/sustainability attributes add to explained variance in brand preference, compared with traditional attributes (price, quality, packaging).

Research Gap

Across the reviewed studies, perceived quality/brand image and packaging repeatedly emerge as substantial predictors of brand preference; price and advertising explain additional variance but often interact with brand familiarity and segment characteristics. Emerging attributes (ethicality, sustainability) are significant moderators in some contexts but require more fine-grained measurement. Methodologically, many prior studies are cross-sectional, use convenience samples, and often treat attributes as single indicators; opportunities remain for more rigorous measurement models (multi-item scales, confirmatory factor analysis), interaction tests (moderation), and segment-specific analyses (rural vs urban, income bands).

Objectives:

The primary objective of this study is to empirically examine the key product-related, brand-related, and contextual attributes that influence consumers' brand preference for FMCG products, with a specific focus on perceived quality, packaging cues, price sensitivity, advertising effectiveness, and sustainability-linked attributes. The study seeks to measure the relative significance of these determinants, assess how demographic characteristics moderate their effects, and identify the attributes that most strongly drive consumers' preference formation and choice among competing FMCG brands.

Hypothesis:

H1: There is significant difference in attitude towards brands with people having different Education Background

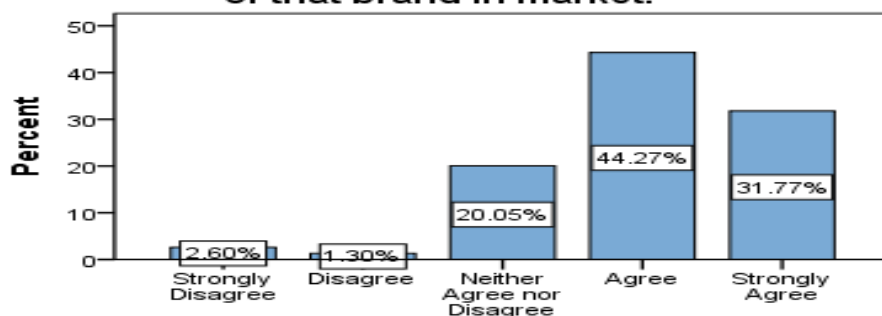
Methodology:

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to empirically examine the key attributes influencing brand preference for FMCG products. Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire comprising validated multi-item scales measuring perceived quality, packaging cues, price sensitivity, advertising effectiveness, sustainability attributes, and overall brand preference. The target population consists of FMCG consumers, and a sample size of 384 respondents has been determined using Cochran's formula for large populations to ensure statistical reliability and representativeness. A non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, will be employed to reach respondents across diverse demographic segments.

Data Analysis

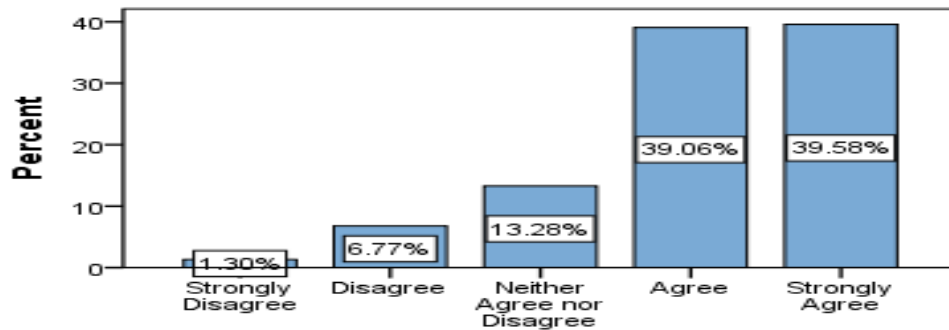
The data analysis and interpretation section presents the empirical findings derived from the responses collected from the sample of 384 FMCG consumers. This section systematically examines the underlying patterns, relationships, and statistical significance of the key attributes influencing brand preference. The analysis begins with the assessment of data reliability and validity, followed by descriptive statistics to summarize respondent characteristics and attribute-level responses. Subsequently, advanced statistical techniques such as factor analysis and regression modelling are applied to identify the most influential determinants of brand preference and to quantify their relative effects. The interpretation of results is undertaken in a structured manner to provide clear insights into how consumers evaluate FMCG brands and which attributes most strongly shape their preference behaviour.

FMCG brand preference is dependent on image of that brand in market.



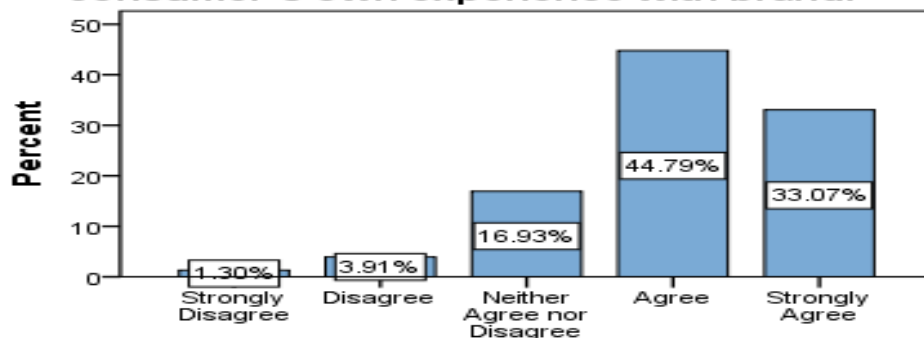
The above table and graph represent that 10 (2.60%) of consumers strongly disagree on the fact that FMCG brand preference is dependent on image of that brand in market, followed by 5 (1.30%) of consumers disagree on the fact that FMCG brand preference is dependent on image of that brand in market, 77 (20.05%) of consumers neither agree nor disagree on the fact that FMCG brand preference is dependent on image of that brand in market. However, 170 (44.27%) of consumers agree on the fact that FMCG brand preference is dependent on image of that brand in market and the remaining 122 (31.77%) of consumers strongly agree on the fact that FMCG brand preference is dependent on image of that brand in market.

There is adequate brand awareness among FMCG Consumers.



It is observed from the above table and graph that 5 (1.30%) of consumers strongly disagree on the fact that there is adequate brand awareness among FMCG consumers, followed by 25 (6.77%) of consumers disagree on the fact that there is adequate brand awareness among FMCG consumers, 51 (13.28%) of consumers neither agree nor disagree on the fact that there is adequate brand awareness among FMCG consumers. However, 150 (39.06%) of consumers agree on the fact that there is adequate brand awareness among FMCG consumers and the remaining 152 (39.58%) of consumers strongly agree on the fact that there is adequate brand awareness among FMCG consumers.

Choice of FMCG brand is dependent on consumer's own experience with brand.



The above table and graph represent that 5 (1.30%) of consumers strongly disagree on the fact that choice of FMCG brand is dependent on consumer's own experience with brand, followed by 15 (3.91%) of consumers disagree on the fact that choice of FMCG brand is dependent on consumer's own experience with brand, 65 (16.93%) of consumers neither agree nor disagree on the fact that choice of FMCG brand is dependent on consumer's own experience with brand. However, 172 (44.79%) of consumers agree on the fact that choice of FMCG brand is dependent on consumer's own experience with brand and the remaining 127 (33.07%) of consumers strongly agree on the fact that choice of FMCG brand is dependent on consumer's own experience with brand.

There is significant difference in attitude towards brands with people having different Education Background

To test the relationship between education and perception of consumers towards branding of FMCG products, one-way ANOVA test has been applied in this research taking education as fixed factor and factors affecting attitude of consumers towards branding of FMCG products

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as dependent factors. The results of the test are shown below:

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I am satisfied with FMCG brand I am using	Between Groups	.725	3	.242	.188	.004
	Within Groups	488.002	380	1.284		
	Total	488.727	383			
I am always in favor of buying the FMCG brand I am using	Between Groups	.266	3	.089	.069	.000
	Within Groups	489.836	380	1.289		
	Total	490.102	383			
I am ready to buy the products of my favorite FMCG brand at any cost	Between Groups	.644	3	.215	.180	.010
	Within Groups	452.263	380	1.190		
	Total	452.906	383			
I frequently buy the FMCG product of my favorite brand	Between Groups	.818	3	.273	.275	.004
	Within Groups	377.492	380	.993		
	Total	378.310	383			
I provide money in my family budget to buy products of my favorite brand	Between Groups	.790	3	.263	.213	.003
	Within Groups	469.169	380	1.235		
	Total	469.958	383			
I plan for the quantity to be purchased in future	Between Groups	.519	3	.173	.164	.001
	Within Groups	401.540	380	1.057		
	Total	402.060	383			
If my favorite brand is out of stock, I would wait to purchase	Between Groups	.860	3	.287	.190	.003
	Within Groups	573.616	380	1.510		
	Total	574.477	383			
Brand comes to recall my mind is exactly my favorite FMCG brand	Between Groups	.545	3	.182	.152	.029
	Within Groups	455.195	380	1.198		
	Total	455.740	383			
I would recommend my favorite FMCG brand to the people who seeks my advice	Between Groups	.754	3	.251	.282	.038
	Within Groups	337.986	380	.889		
	Total	338.740	383			



I am loyal towards my favorite FMCG brand	Between Groups	.830	3	.277	.302	.024
	Within Groups	347.646	380	.915		
	Total	348.477	383			
I feel I have sufficient knowledge about my favorite FMCG brand	Between Groups	.261	3	.087	.080	.001
	Within Groups	414.978	380	1.092		
	Total	415.240	383			

The above one-way ANOVA test gives the F-value in sixth column and sig. value i.e. p-value in the seventh column. The p-value so obtained is compared with the alpha value of 0.05, if the p-value is more than the alpha value, the relationship is said to be insignificant and if the p-value is less than the alpha value of 0.05 the relationship is said to be significant. In case of all the eleven factors affecting branding of FMCG products the P-value obtained is less than the alpha value of 0.05, this indicates that there is significant relationship between different various education groups of customers towards branding of FMCG products. Hence, the hypothesis i.e. ***“There is significant difference in attitudes of different education groups towards brands”*** is accepted.

Discussion:

The results of the empirical analysis provide clear evidence that multiple brand-related attributes significantly influence consumer attitudes and preferences toward FMCG products. The descriptive findings indicate that a substantial proportion of consumers place high importance on brand image, brand awareness, and personal experience when forming their brand preferences. This aligns with the broader theoretical understanding that FMCG purchases, despite being low-involvement, are strongly shaped by cognitive and experiential cues that help consumers reduce perceived risk and simplify decision-making. The high levels of agreement regarding the influence of brand image and consumer experience underscore the role of trust, familiarity, and perceived quality in driving loyalty within highly competitive FMCG categories.

The one-way ANOVA results offer further insight by demonstrating that educational background significantly differentiates consumer attitudes on all eleven brand-related factors examined. Respondents with different education levels vary in their satisfaction, loyalty, purchase commitment, brand knowledge, and willingness to recommend their preferred FMCG brands. This finding suggests that education influences how consumers process information, evaluate brand attributes, and internalize brand value propositions. More educated consumers may engage in more systematic evaluation and develop stronger brand associations, whereas less educated consumers may rely more heavily on heuristic cues such as brand recall or promotional messaging. The significance of education across all dimensions indicates that segmentation strategies based on education level could be advantageous for FMCG marketers seeking to tailor communication approaches, product positioning, and loyalty-building initiatives.

Collectively, these findings reinforce the theoretical premise that brand preference is shaped by a combination of psychological, experiential, and demographic factors. The study contributes empirically by confirming that not only do core brand attributes influence consumer preference, but their effects are also moderated by consumer characteristics such as education. This highlights the need for targeted branding strategies that consider heterogeneity in consumer learning, perception, and decision-making patterns, ultimately enabling FMCG companies to design more effective marketing interventions and strengthen long-term brand loyalty.

Conclusion

The study concludes that brand preference for FMCG products is significantly influenced by key attributes such as brand image, brand awareness, and consumers' personal experience with the brand. The descriptive findings clearly show that a majority of consumers acknowledge the importance of these attributes in shaping their purchase decisions. Furthermore, the one-way ANOVA results reveal that education level plays a critical role in differentiating consumer attitudes toward branding, indicating that demographic characteristics substantially influence how consumers perceive, evaluate, and remain loyal to FMCG brands. Overall, the study reinforces the idea that FMCG brand preference is a multidimensional construct shaped by psychological, experiential, and socio-demographic factors, and that understanding these determinants is essential for designing effective branding strategies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, FMCG companies should adopt targeted branding strategies that consider the varying perceptions and evaluation patterns across consumer education groups. Marketers should strengthen brand image and awareness through consistent communication, value-driven messaging, and packaging innovations that reinforce product quality and reliability. Given the strong influence of personal experience, companies should prioritize delivering superior product performance and maintaining consistency to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, customized promotional strategies and consumer education initiatives may be beneficial, particularly for segments with lower brand knowledge. By focusing on differentiated communication, experiential marketing, and consumer engagement efforts, FMCG firms can effectively enhance brand preference and sustain competitive advantage.

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