

Full Length Research Paper

Consumers' preference for oil brand, oil variants and factors influencing purchase decision

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Consumers around the world vary greatly in age, income, education level, and tastes and understanding how these differences affect consumer buying decision is never easy. However, marketing success largely depends on the ability to anticipate what buyers will do and what they prefer from available products. Today, the highly fragmented Indian edible oil industry with large number of players both from the organized and unorganized sectors has resulted in severe competition and as a result, edible oil businesses in India have shifted their focus to understand consumer choices better on one side and increasingly moving away from products to embracing a structured brand management to achieve competitiveness and profitability in the market place. The present study explores the consumers' preference for oil brand, oil variants, and factors influencing the purchasing decision. The study highlights that, brand image, price, health consciousness, and quality of a particular brand are the most important factors influencing consumers' decision making for edible oil purchases.

Key words: Brand image, brand preference, edible oils.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of edible oil in daily diet is well recognized as a better source of energy as compared to carbohydrates and proteins and as a result it became a part of regular food. Edible oils have got higher importance in preparation of tasty food, improving texture of food items, increasing palatability of food, flavor of food maintenance and growth of human body. Thus, edible oils constitute an important component of food expenditure in house-holds. However, the current per capita consumption levels of India (at 13.3Kg/year for 2009-10) are lower than global averages (24kg/year). According to the United States

department of agriculture (USDA) 2012 report, India's edible oil consumption is expected to grow at 6.5% to 17.9 million tonnes for the year 2012 to 2013. ICRA (2011) documented that the Indian edible industry is under penetrated and given the positive macro and demographic fundamentals, it has a favorable demand growth rate.

At present the Indian edible oil industry is flourishing with rising income levels and living standards of consumers coupled with changing consumer lifestyles and food consumption pattern, further the current health awareness among Indian consumers is increasing preferences for nontraditional oils such as soya bean, mustard oil, rice bran etc for consumption, since these oils with higher levels of saturated fats are considered healthier than traditional consuming palm oil. Food and drug administration USA (1999) noted that consuming soy can be beneficial for health and including soy protein in a healthy diet could reduce the risk of heart disease.

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Oils like rice bran and olive are also gaining popularity due to their superior health properties, although their consumption remains fairly low in absolute terms in India. Rice bran oil promotion council (2013) documented that with gaining popularity of rice bran oil as a healthy option for cooking, its market in the country currently is estimated to grow by 15%. ICRA (2011) documented that in terms of oil consumption the three largest consumed edible oils in India are palm oil with 46% of share, soya bean oil (16%), and mustard oil (14%) in total oil consumption in 2010 and these oils will be continued to account for the bulk of edible oil consumption in the country. However, given the presence of large number of unorganized participants in the Indian edible oil market, the share of branded oil product sales have remained low, as most of the low -income consumers opting for cheaper oils, which are sold in loose form. As per industry data, only about 31% of urban households and about 9% of rural households consume branded edible oils, with the national average at 16%. Thus, edible oil businesses in India are working harder than ever before to achieve some degree of differentiation for their products and trying to build strong brand image and started highlighting the product features with specific brand names offering distinct value propositions in the edible oil market and helping the quality conscious consumers differentiate and choose the products which are best suited to their requirements.

Consumer buying behavior

Buying behavior differs greatly for the products and services, more complex decisions usually involve more buying participants and more buyer deliberation. To understand how the customers make their buying decisions, the marketer must have the knowledge of consumer buying behavior based on the degree of buyer involvement and the degree of differences among brands. Consumer involvement is defined as an un-observable state of motivation, arousal, or interest which is evoked by a particular stimulus or situation and is considered to have drive properties and which influences the search process, information processing, and decision making.

Kotler (1994) documented that the degree of buyer involvement has been clearly explained in Henry Assael (2001) model of buying behavior. Henry Assael categorized four types of buying behavior based on the degree of buyer involvement and the degree of difference among the brands. As per these parameters, the consumers will be engaged in complex buying behavior, dissonance-reducing buying behavior, variety-seeking buying behavior, and habitual buying behavior. In complex buying behavior, the consumers are highly involved in a purchase and are aware of significant differences among the brands. This behavior is often found when the product

is expensive, bought infrequently, risky, and highly self-expressing. In the dissonance-reducing buying behavior, the consumer will be highly involved. But if there is a little difference among the brands, then he may end up buying on price or convenience. After the purchase, the consumer may learn favorable things about other brands and hence he or she will be alert to information that supports his decision. In the variety-seeking buying behavior, the buying decisions of the consumers will be marked with low involvement even though there exists a significant difference among the brands. This happens when the consumers often engage in a frequent brand switching process.

In habitual buying behavior, the consumers have little involvement due to the absence of significant brand differences and they simply go to the store and reach for a brand. If they keep reaching for the same brand it is out of habit rather than strong brand loyalty. Most of the generic commodity products fall under this category. Here consumers do not search extensively for information to evaluate and make a decision. Hence, for low involvement brands, the buying process starts with the brand beliefs formed by passive learning and followed by purchase behavior which may or may not be followed by evaluation. As we understand from the Henry Assael model of buying behavior the commodity brands fall under the habitual buying behavior.

Review of literature

It is widely acknowledged among the academicians and practicing managers that branding has become a tool of strategic importance and studies on importance of brand preference were also highlighted in competitive market place. The American marketing association (1994) defines a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to encourage prospective customers to differentiate a producer's product from those of competitors. A primary function of the brand is to provide convenience and clarity in decision making by providing a guarantee of performance and communicating a set of expectations thereby offering certainty and facilitating the buying process.

Ambler and Styles (1996) describe two different views of defining a brand. The first is the product plus view, when the brand is seen as an addition to the product, and in this view a brand is also called an identifier. The second is the holistic view that communicates the focus on the brand itself that is considered to be much more than just the product. Broadbent and Cooper (1987) indicate that in order to be successful, images and symbols must relate to and indeed exploit the needs, values, and lifestyles of consumers in such a way that the meanings involved give added values, and differentiate the brand from other brands. Aaker (1996) indicate that strong brands help the firm establishes an identity in the

market place, reduce vulnerability to competitive actions, leading to larger margins, greater intermediary co-operation, and support, and a successful brand image enables consumers to identify the needs that the brand satisfies and to differentiate the brand from its competitors, and it consequently increases the likelihood that consumers will purchase the brand.

Gensch (1987) documented that customers form brand preferences to reduce the complexity of the purchase decision process. Rossiter and Percy (1987) describe brand awareness is essential for the communications process to occur as it precedes all other steps in the process and without brand awareness occurring, no other communication effects can occur. For a consumer to buy a brand they must first be made aware of it. Brand attitude cannot be formed, and intention to buy cannot occur unless brand awareness has occurred. In a situation where the consumer is aware of a number of brands which fit the relevant criteria, the consumer is unlikely to spend much effort in seeking out information on unfamiliar brands. Kumar et al. (1987) examined the factors influencing the buying decision for various food products. Country of origin and brand of the products were cross-tabulated against age, gender, and income and study revealed that the considered factors were independent of age, education and income. The brand image seemed to be more important than the origin of the product, since the consumers were attracted by the brands. Nielsen (1998) conducted a study on consumers purchase motives and perceptions on vegetable oil in three countries and found that consumers in France purchase vegetable oil because of its health benefits (attribute).

This provides the customer a healthy body and physical well-being (benefit). They consume this type of product because they value good health and a long life. Mc Enally and Chernatony (1999) documented that consumers brand preferences over time mainly shift due to changes in brand identity consisting of brand awareness, purpose, differentiation, and offerings and brand image pertaining to brand credibility, brand character, consumers' overall attitude towards the brand, and consumers' feelings for the brand. Li and Houston (2001) documented that price level, product variety and marketing communications are the important factors acting as promoters of brand preference. Rundle-Thiele and Mackay (2001) noted that brand preference is important for business as a component of brand loyalty and it is also a way to enhance sales. Keller (1993) views, brand knowledge is not the facts about the brand, it is all the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences etc that become linked to the brand in the minds of customers and two important components of brand knowledge are brand awareness and brand image where brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand node or trace in memory as reflected by customers' ability to recall or recognize the brand under different conditions and brand image is

defined as customer perceptions of and preferences for a brand, as reflected by the various types of brand associations held in customers' memory.

Mathur et al. (2003) noted that from a business standpoint, the challenge is that customers could change their favorite brands by trying products of other brands because they are exposed to a variety of attractive brands. That is, customers tend to seek better brands of products or services, so their brand preference can change. For businesses to reduce that risk, they must identify what affects brand preference and how to build brand preference. Dinlersoz and Pereira (2007) documented that consumers have a brand preference toward an established brand during the firm's long presence in the market and they tend to show little brand preference toward a particular brand when they are exposed to a new or unfamiliar product category. Singh et al. (2008) documented that brand preference refers to the consumers' hierarchical prioritization of the brand as a result of their patronage and cognitive comprehension of the brand. Suwen and Mark (2008) documented that the food habit, location, education of household heads, and other demographic variables have significant effects on the choice of edible oils for consumption.

Today, the organized sector in Indian edible oil business has emerged as one of the fastest growing sectors in recent times creating branded oil sales, though branded oils marked currently low in India, both in terms of volumes and share, they are expected to grow due to improved thrust by major players like Marico Limited, Cargill India Private Limited, Adani Wilmar Limited, Ruchi Soya Industries Limited, Con Agro Foods, ITC Agro-Tech, Godrej Foods, Vippy Industries, Prestige Foods, S M Dyechem, Vijaya Oils and a few mid-sized, regional edible oil companies such as Mantora Oil Products Ltd, Modi Naturals, Amrit Banaspati, Tara Health Foods, Priya Foods, Healthy Heart Foods, Gemini Oils, KS Oils etc offering a larger number of product choices before consumers to choose from and given these choices, consumers are now able to compare many features such as quality, price, and value for money, absorption capacity, brand image etc. to decide which product they want to buy for their need satisfaction.

However, it should be noted that, once customers are satisfied with a particular product or brand, they purchase the product repeatedly, and when a customer repeatedly purchases a product, showing favorable attitude towards the brand, then consumer becomes loyal. A brand that has some level of brand awareness is far more likely to be considered, and therefore chosen, than the brands which the consumers are unaware. So in order to make a consumer to buy or prefer a brand they must first be made aware of the brand and focus on maintaining and monitoring brand awareness. Thus, there is an immediate need for a marketer to know the edible oil brand consumers prefer and identify what affects their brand preference.

Table1. Classification based on preferred oil brand of the consumers

Preferred Oil Brand	(%)100	Total(406)
Fortune	6.40	26
Healthy Heart	1.47	6
Sundrop	9.85	40
Gemini	1.47	6
Vijaya	9.62	39
Gold Drop	51.72	210
Priya	2.46	10
Naturalle	4.68	19
Saffola	2.96	12
Others	9.36	38

(Source: Questionnaire)

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are,

1. To know the most preferred oil brand and edible oil variant of the consumers
2. To examine the present shopping behavior of the customers for the preferred oil brand and understand the composition of the consumers gender wise
3. To know the importance the customers attach to various attributes for purchasing an oil brand
4. To appraise the sources of knowing preferred oil brand by customers
5. To study the affect of oil brand sales of consumers on promotional offers

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both primary and secondary data were collected for research survey and the primary instrument for data collection used in this study was a questionnaire. Primary data was collected from 406 respondents in the city of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India. The sampling method used in the study was random sampling. Data thus collected was processed, analyzed and interpreted to draw the valid inferences. For analyzing the data and providing the realities of the research outcomes suitable statistical techniques were employed.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Given the presence of a large number of unorganized participants in the Indian edible oil market, the share of branded product sales has remained low. However branded oils have started focusing on establishing the brands. Table 1 refers to the classification based on preferred oil brand of the consumers. The responses from randomly selected group of 406 consumers are tabulated to know the oil brands they prefer. As may be seen from the table 51.72% of customers prefer Gold drop oil brand. The brands preferred next are Sun drop oil (9.85%), Vijay

oil brand (9.62%) and fortune oil 6.40% of the sample consumers.

A buyer's decisions are also influenced by personal characteristics such as the buyer's age and life cycle stage etc. Table 2 below shows the classification based on age of the consumers buying oils. As may be seen from the table, most (41.37%) of those, the consumers who are buying oil for consumption belong to the age group of 26 to 35 years. Those below 25 years of age are also to be found in large numbers among the buyers (27.59%). However, the consumers of 36 to 45 age groups are also found in large numbers (19.46%).

Table 3 refers to the classification of the customers of oil by gender. Husband-wife involvement varies widely by product category and by stage in the buying process. Buying roles change with evolving consumer lifestyles. Traditionally women were the main purchasing influence for the family in the areas of food, household products etc. But with more women holding jobs outside the home the willingness of husbands to do more of the family's purchasing can be witnessed. As may be seen from the table 73.40% of buyers who are shopping to purchase their preferred oil brand are males.

The market of Sunflower oil, the fourth most used vegetable oil as cooking medium in the world, is increasing in India in the recent years. So most of the oil brand players in the edible oil category are focusing on the production and marketing of Sunflower oil and the major thrust is to increase market share especially in the sunflower oil category, through continuous brand-building. Table 4 refers to the classification of the buyers of oil by oil variants. We enquired with the sample buyers to know the major preferred oil variety bought by the consumers. It is observed that majority of edible oil buyers 75.36% are buying Sun flower oil variety. However, it should not go unnoticed that buyer's also showing preference towards soya bean variety and mustard oil variety.

Convenience stores are small stores that carry a number of high turnover convenience goods. In the sub-continent, they are seen in the form of local kirana shops that keep products of daily necessities. They offer a number of benefits to buyers, who are their usual consumers and super markets are the most frequently shopped type of retail store with a large, low-cost, low-margin, high-volume, self-service store that carries a wide variety of grocery and house hold products. Table 5 refers to the quantity of oil purchased from super markets and other stores. As may be seen from the table, the data collected by us from those buying preferred oil brands shows that the buyers seems to prefer other market places such as convenience stores to super markets while purchasing the oils. The test of equality of means indicates that the mean value of quantity bought from other markets is higher than the mean value of the quantity bought in super markets. The means are statistically different from one another at 5% level of significance. So it may be assumed that consumers view

Table 2. Classification based on age of the consumers

	Age of the consumers					Total(406)
	15 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	More than 55	
Total	112	168	79	32	15	406
(%)	27.59	41.37	19.46	7.88	3.69	100.00

(Source: Questionnaire)

Table 3. Classification of the customers of oil by gender

Preferred Oil Brand by gender	(%)100	Total(406)
Male	73.40	298
Female	26.60	108

(Source: Questionnaire)

Table 4. Classification of the buyers of oil by oil variants

Preferred oil brand variant	Sunflower	Soya	Mustard	Palm	Groundnut	Others
Total(406)	306	10	5	9	59	17
(%)100	75.36	2.46	1.23	2.24	14.53	4.18

(Source: Questionnaire)

Table 5. Quantity of oil purchased from super markets and other stores

Description	Variable - Quantity purchased from super markets	Variable - Quantity purchased from other stores
Mean	3.484	3.871
SD	1.649	1.503
D.F	404	
t-statistic	-2.146**	

**Significant at 5% level of significance

Table 6. Classification based on mean income of the buyers

Description	Variable - Income of consumers those are buying Gold Drop oil	Variable - Income of consumers those buying other oil brands
Mean	14,526	21,933
SD	7,4180	12,5169
D.F	404	
t-statistic	*-7.3104	

*Significant at 1% level

oil brand as a low-involvement product.

A person's economic situation will affect the product choice. Table 6 shows the classification of oil buyers

based on the income levels. We tried to examine whether the average income of those buying Gold drop oil is less than that of the average income of those buying other

Table 7. Multi linear regression coefficients of income levels, family size, years of schooling for oil quantity

Variable name	Regression Coefficient	t-value
Intercept	1.47381	4.7858
Income levels	0.001493	0.24045
No of family members	0.76126	*13.8996
Years of schooling	-0.05149	*-2.4894
R ² (with F-value)	0.3355	

*Significant at 1% level

Table 8. Classification based on preferred oil and family size of the consumers

Description	Variable- Family size of the buyers who are buying Gold drop oil	Variable- Family size of the buyers who are buying other oil brands
Mean	4.17	3.92
SD	1.214	1.215
D.F	404	
t-statistic	**2.0822	

**Significant at 5% level

oils. We expected that the average income of those buying Gold Drop oil is less than that of those buying other oils because Gold drop oil is low priced in the market place. The test of equality of means calculated to find the difference in means of incomes showed that the mean income of those buying Gold drop oil is significantly less than those buying other oils. The t-statistic is significant at 1% level.

Almost every society has some form of social class structure. Social class is not determined by a single factor, such as income, but is measured as a combination of occupation, income, education, wealth and other variables. We employed the multiple regression technique to identify the factors influencing the quantity of oil bought. Table 7 above shows the details. It is possible that income of consumers, family size, and years of schooling can influence the quantity bought. As income increases one expects the quantity of oil bought to increase. Similarly as family size increases quantity of oil bought can increase and finally as educational level increases people may become more health conscious and consume less of oil.

Thus, we expect a positive relationship between income and quantity bought and also between family size and quantity bought. Years of schooling is expected to have a negative relationship with the quantity bought. Our regression exercise confirmed these relationships. However the independent variable income is not found to have to have a significant relationship in quantity bought. Family size has a positive relationship with the quantity bought. The regression coefficient of family size is statis-

tically significant at less than 1% level. The regression coefficient corresponding to years of schooling appears with a negative sign as expected. It is also significant statistically at 1% level. The regression equation is a reasonably good fit to the data. This is evident from the value of R². The regression equation explains 34% of the variation in the dependent variable. The value of R² is also statistically significant as seen from the value of F-ratio which is significant at less than 1% level.

Family members and size can strongly influence the buyer behavior. Table 8 refers to the classification based on preferred oil and family size of the consumers. We tried to examine if the family size of those buying the cheaper Gold drop oil is larger than the family size of those buying other costlier brands of oils. We have employed the test of equality of means in the process. The test supports the above hypothesis. Gold drop being less costly compared to other oils it is being bought by families whose size is relatively larger. The t-statistic showing the difference in means is significant at 5% level. The aim of marketing is to meet and satisfy target customers needs and wants. Understanding consumer behavior and knowing customers are never simple. Table 9 refers to the classification based on factors influencing the purchasing decision. We enquired with the sample buyers to know the most influencing factor to purchase a particular brand or product. As may be seen from the above table quality of a product is the most influencing factor to buy a particular oil brand (69.45%). Further it can be observed that the shop displays and promotional offers, and advertisements can also influence the buyers

Table 9. Classification of buyers based on factors influencing purchasing decision

Factors influencing purchasing decision	(%)100	Total (406)
Advertisements	17.00	69
Retailer	11.08	45
Packaging and Ingredients	2.70	11
Shop Display and promotional offers	19.45	79
Quality	69.45	282

(Source: Questionnaire) *Some of the customers reported more than one factor

Table 10. Classification based on Gold Drop customer's educational qualification and other brands

Description	Variable- Educational qualification of customers those buying Gold Drop oil brand	Variable- Educational qualification of customers those buying other oil brands
Mean	12.71362	14.12435
SD	3.3629	2.8495
D.F	404	
t-statistic	*-4.53612	

Table 11. Classification based on non-availability of product

Preferred brand is not available then	(%)100	Total (406)
Try another brand	24.13	98
Drop the idea of buying it	14.54	59
Go to another store	61.33	249

(Source: Questionnaire)

to some extent (19.45%).

Marketers in the Indian sub continent have developed a socioeconomic classification system (SEC) to segment urban households on the basis of the level of education and occupation of the chief wage earner of the household. Marketers are interested in socioeconomic classes because people within a given socio economic class tend to exhibit similar buying behavior. We tried to examine whether those buying Gold drop of oil have undergone more years of education or customers who are buying other oil brands. As may be seen from the table 10, it can be said that, those buying Gold drop brand of oil are found to have undergone less years of education than those buying other brands, this is validated by test of equality of means. The t-statistic for the difference of means is 4.53 and it is statically significant at 1% level. Those buying other oil brands are relatively more educated than those buying Gold drop brand of oil. The mean years of schooling of the latter group are significantly higher than that of former group.

Producing a product and making it available to buyer requires building relationships not only with customers,

but also with resellers, in other words successful marketer will focus on partner relationship management. From the economic system's point of view, the role of marketing intermediaries is to transform the assortments of products made by producers into the assortments wanted by consumers. Table 11 refers to the classification based on non-availability of product in the store. As may be seen from the table, 61.33% of oil buyers seem to go to another store if the preferred brand of their choice is not available.

Sales promotion is a tool which could be used in a number of situations where the objective is to quickly get the brand on top of the consumers mind and invoke a spontaneous decision in favor of the brand associated with the sales promotion. Sales promotions consist of short-term incentives to encourage purchase or sales of a product or service. The consumer promotions include a wide range of tools from samples, coupons, refunds, premiums and point-of-purchase displays to contests, sweepstakes etc. Table 12 shows the classification based on oil buyers and sales promotion offers. We enquired with the sample buyers to understand the affect of oil

Table 12. Classification based on oil buyers and sales promotion offers

Affect of sales promotions	Buy more now	Think for second time purchase	It will not affect
Total(406)	257	42	107
(%) 100.00	63.31	10.34	26.35

(Source: Questionnaire)

Table 13. Classification based on oil buyers and preference of packaging

Preference of packaging	1liter Pouch	1 liter Pet bottle	5 liter jar	15 liter jar or can
Total(406)	119	35	172	81
(%)100.00	29.31	8.62	42.36	19.71

(Source: Questionnaire)

Table 14. Classification of consumers on importance they attach to various attributes for purchasing an oil brand

Attributes	Very Imp (%)	Imp (%)	Neutral (%)	Slightly Imp (%)	Not Imp (%)	Total	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness
Brand	39.65	50.76	9.35	0.24	0	100(406)	4.29	0.642	-0.421
Taste	13.54	46.57	36.45	3.44	0	100(406)	3.70	0.741	0.030
Price	32.27	53.70	13.05	0.98	0	100(406)	4.17	0.681	-0.418
Healthy	30.80	49.01	18.22	1.97	0	100(406)	4.08	0.750	-0.424
Absorption	21.42	39.92	36.45	2.21	0	100(406)	3.80	0.794	0.095
Availability	11.59	48.02	36.20	4.19	0	100(406)	3.67	0.729	-0.024

(Source: Questionnaire)

brand sales on promotional offers. As may be seen from the table it can be highlighted that 63.31% of sample buyers are showing interest on sales promotional schemes and purchase more. However 26.35% of customers say it will not affect their purchase decision for buying an oil brand. It is a welcome development few customers are very loyal to their preferred brands.

Packaging involves designing and producing the container or wrapper for a product. Traditionally, the primary function of the package was to hold and protect the product. Today, however, numerous factors have made packaging an important marketing tool as well. Increased competition and clutter on retail store shelves means that packages must now perform many sales tasks such as from attracting attention, describing the product and to making the sale. Table 13 refers to the classification based on oil buyers and preference of packaging. As may be seen from the table 42.36% of oil buyers showing preference towards five liter jars. It can also be noticed that 8.62% of oil buyer's also showing preference for one liter pet bottles.

We enquired with the oil buyers to rate on a 5 point scale the importance they attach (very important to not

important) on various attributes such as brand name, price, taste, health concerns, and absorption capacity of oil brand and availability of the brand. Table 14 shows the details. As may be seen from the table, the most important attribute the customers are attaching to the product is brand image mean of the rating being (4.29). Next in importance is the price. The mean of the rating for this is (4.17). Next in importance is healthy attribute, mean being (4.08).

We tried to examine whether those buying Gold drop oil brand are buying in larger quantities compared to those buying other brands. As may be seen from the table 14, we employed the test of equality of means. It is found that the mean quantities of two groups are significantly different from one another. The mean value of the quantity purchased of Gold drop brand is 4.00, where as the mean of those buying other brands is 3.29. The t-value calculated is 4.84 and it is statistically significant at the usual 1% level of significance. Thus, the Gold drop oil is purchased in larger quantities compared to other brands. This could be because the Gold drop oil brand oil is relatively less. Therefore price is an important factor in influencing the quantity of oil bought.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that buyer's showing preference towards soya bean variety and mustard oil variety. Hence the marketer can take mileage of the current health awareness to persuade the consumers to accept other variants of the edible oils in addition to the sunflower variant. Kotler et al. (2005) views that demographic variables which are easier to measure are the most popular basis for segmenting the customer groups and one reason is that consumer needs, wants, preferences and usage rates are often highly associated with demographic variables.

It is observed from the study that consumers of 26 to 35 age groups are shopping for their preferred oil brand, and buyers who are shopping to purchase their preferred oil brand are males. Hence companies need to focus on effective communications to reach these target groups. Felzensztein et al. (2004) documented that buying intentions are motivated by price and value for money. Erdem et al. (2004) view that price notably plays an important role in consumers' brand choices. Gil et al. (2007) noted that perceived product value for the money can influence consumer's attitudes toward product brand image, affecting consumer intention to buy. Baltas and Argouslidis (2007) documented that product quality is an important dimension of a brand's image because it is generally the most significant role of brand preference and the major purchasing factor.

Findings suggest that brand image, price, health consciousness, and quality of a particular brand are the most important factors influencing decision making for purchases, and thus the marketer's value proposition and positioning should build around health and value for money. The important product decisions in any marketing context are product, features, performance, design, its presentation, variety, sizes etc and it is observed from the study that few oil buyers are showing preference towards purchasing one liter pet bottles in addition to five liter jars, thus companies need to initiate and focus on the availability of these product varieties with maximum visibility, because brands with the largest recognition and availability are most likely to generate more sales.

Study highlights that sample buyers are showing interest on sales promotional schemes and consumer offers. So companies should run effective promotional schemes and consumer campaigns not only to attract new customers but also to retain existing customers. Finally it can be concluded that the marketer of edible oil brands must use the four P's of marketing mix effectively and try to convert a low-involvement product into a moderate or high-involvement buying process.

Research limitations and future research

One of the limitations of the study is, it is limited to only one geographical place, and the brands selected for

inspection were selected because of high familiarity, so the future studies are recommended to introduce more precise selection criteria. The other research direction could be investigations on factors, such as years of usage, monthly frequency of purchases and satisfaction levels of customers on the brand performance. One more research investigation could be to measure where these brands are located in the perceptual space of the target consumers.

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests

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