A Study on Consumer Buying Behaviour of FMCG Products with Special Reference to Sri Alpha Distribution, Chennai

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Abstract

Consumer buying behaviour in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector is shaped by an intricate interplay of quality, trust, pricing, ultural alignment, and digital experience. This study investigates consumer purchase patterns and influencing factors and consumer expectations with special reference to Sri Alpha Distribution, an authorised Nestlé distributor operating in Chennai. Primary data were collected from 120 respondents using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire and analysed through descriptive and inferential statistical tools including One-Sample T-Test, One-Way ANOVA, Independent Two-Sample T- Test, and Pearson Correlation Analysis. Findings reveal that income level is the most significant demographic differentiator of buying behaviour ($F = 3.025$, $p = 0.021$), while age and gender do not exert statistically significant influences. A very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.904$) exists between customer expectations, brand preference, and buying behaviour. The study concludes that sustained FMCG success depends on consistent product quality, transparent safety standards, culturally sensitive marketing, and value-driven pricing strategies, with income-based segmentation identified as the most impactful approach for Sri Alpha Distribution and Nestlé in the Chennai market.

Keywords: Brand Preference, Chennai, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Customer, Expectations, Distribution, FMCG, Income Segmentation, Nestlé.

Introduction

Consumer behaviour is a field of study that examines the decision-making processes and activities undertaken by individuals, groups, or organisations in relation to the acquisition, utilisation, and disposal of products, services, experiences, or ideas within the marketplace. The process entails comprehending the diverse elements that impact consumers' decision-making and actions, encompassing psychological drivers as well as external aspects such as cultural and social standards.

It refers to the study and analysis of individuals, groups, or organisations and the processes they undergo when selecting, purchasing, using, and disposing of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs Consumer behaviour refers to the systematic examination, analysis, and projection of the decision-making process undertaken by individuals or collectives when selecting products and services, with the various elements that impact their decision-making process.

Consumer behaviour entails "all activities associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services, including the consumer's emotional, mental and behavioural responses that precede or follow these activities." The term consumer can refer to individual consumers as well as organisational consumers, and more specifically, "an end user, and not necessarily a purchaser, in the distribution chain of a good or service."

Review of Literature

Dhariwal and Singh (2025) examined consumer purchasing behaviour for FMCG products and found that age, gender, income, and occupational type influence consumer preferences. The study highlighted the growing importance of sustainability and environmentally friendly packaging as emerging drivers of conscious consumption.

Samundeeswari and Sivapriya (2025), through a descriptive study, revealed that high product quality and ease of accessibility were the dominant drivers of consumer preference, while demographic variables such as age and gender did not significantly influence FMCG buying behaviour.

Kumari and Singh (2025) investigated the impact of digital marketing on FMCG consumer behaviour, establishing that social media and targeted advertising substantially improve brand awareness and impulse buying frequency in the sector.

Naveen Kumar and Janani (2025), in a quantitative study of 438 respondents, found that service quality, customer experience, and competitive advantages in product delivery are pivotal determinants of consumer loyalty in FMCG retail.

Krishna and Ambily (2025) investigated lasting behavioural shifts among FMCG consumers following the COVID-19 pandemic, concluding that digital outreach must be integrated with traditional marketing channels to drive effective consumer engagement.

Objective

- To understand consumer buying behaviour of FMCG products with special reference to Sri Alpha Distribution, Chennai
- To identify factors influencing purchase decisions.

Research Methodology

This descriptive research study examines end-consumer buying behavior within the FMCG food sector—specifically targeting snacks, beverages, dairy items, and ready-to-eat products—to address the rising demand driven by urbanization and shifting lifestyle constraints. In an increasingly competitive landscape, the analysis focuses on identifying the primary drivers of purchase decisions, brand preferences, and switching behaviors by evaluating key variables such as price, taste, quality, packaging, brand image, availability, and nutritional value. The scope of this investigation is limited to individual end consumers and considers the significant impact of demographic factors, including age, gender, income, and lifestyle, on overall consumption patterns. By adopting a descriptive research design, the study systematically captures current market trends and consumer expectations without manipulating variables, providing a comprehensive view of "what is" in the current marketplace. Ultimately, this analysis serves to bridge the gap between consumer expectations and product offerings, offering a strategic framework for companies to refine their marketing approaches and improve long-term customer satisfaction through data-driven insights.

Hypotheses of the Study

H_0: There is no significant difference in the weighted mean scores of all survey items related to Customer Preference, Brand Preference, and Customer Expectation.

H_0:There is no significant difference among Age Groups with respect to Factors of Customer Preference

H_0: There is no significant difference in Customer Expectation score

H_0:There is no significant difference between Male and Female with respect to Factors of Buying Behaviour.

Analysis and Interpretation Hypothesis I

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the weighted mean scores of all survey items related to Customer Preference, Brand Preference, and Customer Expectation.

Table 1 Weighted Mean Analysis of Consumer Buying Behaviour

Consumer Buying Behaviour	Weighted Mean	SD
Digital shopping experience encourages purchase	3.508	0.745
Quality and functionality more important than price	3.633	0.721
Products matching taste guarantee repurchase	3.525	0.777
Online reviews influence purchase decisions	3.558	0.818
Trust and confidence in brand dictates FMCG purchases	3.533	0.755
Nestlé associated with high quality and reliability	3.542	0.798
Cultural suitability influences brand preference	3.608	0.737
Negative experience leads to brand switching	3.617	0.801
Attractive packaging motivates purchase of Nestlé products	3.625	0.768
Loyalty rewards increase preference for a brand	3.583	0.681
FMCG products expected to meet hygiene and safety standards	3.625	0.757
Active social media presence increases consumer confidence	3.592	0.728
Multiple size/flavor options strengthen consumer loyalty	3.550	0.708
FMCG pricing is affordable and suits consumer budgets	3.583	0.740

Based on weighted mean score, Quality and functionality more important than price (S2Q2) is the most important factor with weighted mean 3.633, followed by Attractive packaging motivates purchase of Nestle products (S3Q4) and FMCG products expected to meet hygiene and safety standards (S4Q1) with weighted mean 3.625 each, and so on. The least factor is Digital shopping experience encourages purchase (S2Q1) with weighted mean 3.508. However, all items exceed the neutral midpoint of 3.0, indicating a generally positive attitude across all dimensions.

Hypothesis II

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference among Age Groups with respect to Factors of Customer Preference.

Table 2 ANOVA for significant difference among Age Groups with respect to Factors of Customer Preference

Factors of Customer Preference	Age Group					F value	P value
	Below 20 (N=7)	21-30 (N=35)	31-40 (N=47)	41-50 (N=22)	Above 50 (N=9)		
Technology & digital influence	3.714 (0.951)	3.486 (0.612)	3.468 (0.776)	3.500 (0.673)	3.667 (1.118)	0.272	0.896
Product Feature	3.571 (0.535)	3.629 (0.808)	3.617 (0.709)	3.636 (0.727)	3.778 (0.667)	0.106	0.980
Personal Need & preference	3.571 (0.787)	3.486 (0.742)	3.553 (0.775)	3.500 (0.802)	3.556 (1.014)	0.052	0.995
word of mouth	3.286 (1.113)	3.600 (0.775)	3.511 (0.831)	3.591 (0.796)	3.778 (0.833)	0.420	0.794
Trust of the product	3.429 (0.535)	3.543 (0.741)	3.553 (0.802)	3.545 (0.800)	3.444 (0.726)	0.073	0.990
Overall Customer Preference	17.571 (3.599)	17.743 (3.071)	17.702 (3.368)	17.773 (3.408)	18.222 (3.833)	0.053	0.995

Since P value is greater than 0.05 for all factors of Customer Preference, the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level. Hence there is no significant difference among Age Groups (Below 20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, Above 50) with respect to Factors of Customer Preference. The overall mean scores range narrowly from 17.571 (Below 20) to 18.222 (Above 50), indicating uniform customer preference patterns across all age demographics.

Hypothesis III

Null Hypothesis: The mean Customer Expectation score does not significantly differ from the neutral midpoint (u = 3).

Table 3 One Sample t-test for significant difference of Customer Expectation

Customer Expectation Statements	N	Mean	SD	t value	P value
Safety and hygiene	120	3.625	0.757	9.049	<0.001
Online availability	120	3.592	0.728	8.908	<0.001
Product variety	120	3.550	0.708	8.506	<0.001
Affordable price	120	3.583	0.740	8.635	<0.001
Overall Customer Expectation	120	3.587	0.623	10.328	<0.001

(Test Value: u0 = 3 — Neutral Midpoint on Likert Scale)

Since P value is less than 0.01 for all four statements of Customer Expectation, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level. Hence there is a significant difference between the observed mean and the neutral midpoint (u = 3). Based on mean score, FMCG products expected to meet hygiene and safety standards is the most important factor with mean 3.625 (t = 9.049), followed by FMCG product pricing is affordable, and active social media presence increases consumer confidence. The overall mean 3.587 (t = 10.328) confirms that customers hold significantly positive expectations from FMCG brands across all dimensions.

Hypothesis IV

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between Male and Female with respect to Factors of Buying Behaviour.

Table 4 T-test for significant difference between Male and Female with respect to Factors of Buying Behaviour

Buying Behaviour	Male (N=71)		Female (N=47)		t value	P value	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Online Availability	3.549	0.713	3.426	0.801	0.879	0.381	NS
Quality of the product	3.662	0.736	3.596	0.712	0.485	0.629	NS
Trust of the product	3.606	0.746	3.383	0.822	1.524	0.130	NS
Digital influence	3.606	0.819	3.468	0.830	0.888	0.376	NS
Brand Image	3.577	0.768	3.447	0.746	0.915	0.362	NS
Overall Buying Behaviour	18.000	3.243	17.319	3.389	1.097	0.275	NS

Since P value is greater than 0.05 for all factors of Buying Behaviour, the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level. Hence there is no significant difference between Male and Female with respect to Factors of Buying Behaviour. Equal variances were confirmed by Levene's test (F = 0.036, P = 0.849). Male respondents (Mean = 18.000) show a marginally higher overall buying behaviour score than Female respondents (Mean = 17.319), but this difference is not statistically significant (t = 1.097, P = 0.275).

Findings

- Quality and functionality more important than price scored the highest weighted mean (3.633), confirming that Nestle consumers value product performance above cost.
- Attractive packaging and hygiene and safety standards both scored a weighted mean of 3.625, ranking joint second indicating packaging and product safety are equally strong purchase drivers.
- ANOVA results for all five age groups (Below 20 to Above 50) returned p-values well above 0.05 for both Customer Preference and Brand Preference factors, confirming age is not a differentiating factor in how consumers perceive or prefer Nestle products.
- One-sample t-tests showed all four Customer Expectation statements were significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.001$), with an overall mean of 3.587 and t = 10.328 meaning consumers hold meaningfully high expectations from FMCG brands beyond a neutral stance.
- The two-sample t-test showed no statistically significant difference between male (Mean = 18.000) and female (Mean = 17.319) respondents on any buying behaviour factor (overall p = 0.275), with equal variances confirmed
- Every item across Customer Preference, Brand Preference, and Customer Expectation exceeded the neutral midpoint of 3.0, indicating a consistently favourable perception of Nestle products among the sample of 120 respondents.

Suggestion

- Since consumers rate quality and functionality above price, Nestle should emphasise product performance and ingredient quality in advertising rather than leading with price-based promotions.
- Given that attractive packaging ranked joint second in influence, Nestle should treat packaging as a core marketing asset using it to communicate quality, hygiene, and brand identity simultaneously.
- Since age groups show no significant difference in preference, Nestle can deploy a single cohesive brand message across all demographics rather than fragmenting budgets into age-specific campaigns.
- Consumer expectations around hygiene and safety are significantly high. Nestle should make certifications, safety testing, and quality controls visible on packaging and digital platforms to meet and reinforce these expectations.
- With no significant gender difference in buying behaviour, Nestle can consolidate its FMCG positioning without gender segmented strategies simplifying campaign execution and broadening reach.
- Since loyalty rewards (S3Q5) and active social media presence (S4Q2) both scored above 3.58, Nestle should expand loyalty reward schemes and maintain consistent, confidence-building engagement on digital platforms to convert positive attitudes into repeat purchases.

Conclusion

The present study, titled “A Study on Consumer Buying Behaviour of FMCG Products with Special Reference to Sri Alpha Distribution, Chennai,” was undertaken with the objective of understanding the purchase patterns and influencing factors and consumer expectations of 120 respondents in the Chennai region. The findings reveal that consumer buying behaviour in the FMCG sector is shaped by a complex interplay of quality, trust, cultural alignment, and digital experience, with income level emerging as the most significant demographic differentiator. The strong positive correlation ($r = 0.904$) between customer expectations, brand preference, and buying behaviour confirms that organisations which consistently consistently meet consumer demands are better positioned to earn loyalty and drive purchase decisions. Ultimately, sustained success in the FMCG sector depends on delivering consistent quality, transparent safety standards, and value-driven pricing — priorities that Sri Alpha Distribution and Nestlé should continue to focus on to deepen consumer trust and expand their presence in Chennai.

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