



HOW FMCG MARKETERS CAN USHER IN POSITIVE CHANGES IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS PURCHASE OF FMCG PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) are products that sell quickly and at a relatively low price. Examples include non-durable goods such as soft drinks, toiletries, and grocery items. The FMCG sector has been growing at a fast clip although its pace of growth has not been consistent across the country. After all, the sector, on account of the very nature of its activity, requires a good number of stakeholders for its success and the stakeholders have to move in perfect lockstep with each other. Additionally, the consumer / customer stakeholders have different expectations vis-à-vis their requirements based on where they hail from – rural India or urban India. In the circumstances, the researcher set out to ascertain whether a bright year lay ahead for the FMCG industry. He interviewed FMCG marketers and consultants for the purpose and collected primary data from them. The researcher also sought to come up with a strategy that the FMCG marketers could follow to usher in positive changes in consumer behaviour towards purchase of FMCG products. They inferred that the FMCG marketers should exploit the digital marketing tools to the hilt for influencing consumer behaviour. Drip e-mail marketing, consumer-centric content and social media would supplement their efforts ideally. The marketer should create a website for consumers to share information about their FMCG products and engage them through helpful forums. The marketer could use the website to place its ads, too. Eventually, the marketer would have influenced the behaviour of a strong community of loyal customers that it could tap to sell their products in future. One can post messages on Facebook even in the local languages and this means that even the highly diverse and humongous Indian market can be easily accessed by the marketers.

KEYWORDS : Digital marketing tools; Drip e-mail marketing; Facebook; FMCG; lockstep

1.1 Introduction

Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), also known as consumer-packaged goods, are products that sell quickly and at relatively low cost. Examples include non-durable goods such as soft drinks, toiletries, and grocery items. Though the absolute profit made on FMCG products is relatively small, they generally sell in large quantities. So the cumulative profit on such products can be substantial. The FMCG industry includes food and non-food, every day, consumer products. They are usually purchased as an outcome of small-scale consumer decision so they are heavily supported (advertising, promotion) by the manufacturers. Typical purchase of these goods occurs at grocery stores, supermarkets, hypermarkets, etc. Manufacturers always explore new outlets and sales locations while the traditional retailers have introduced private label brands to capture additional profit. Everyone uses fast moving consumer products every day. This business is based on building powerful brands and achieving a high level of distribution. Global power brands are the choice of multinational companies. Local brands can complement these by achieving superior distribution through a powerful supply chain and making sure the products are available wherever someone might want or need it. The FMCG supply chain is the inter-related collection of processes and associated resources. It includes suppliers, manufacturers, logistics service providers, warehouses, distributors, wholesalers and all other entities that lead eventually to delivery to the end-user. Followed in the market through sales force activity it can help gain a high level of distribution. Market Research, consumer research, segmentation and product positioning is the compulsory homework of any company in this industry. Advertising and promotions, POS activities drive brand awareness and trial, purchase and it is a core activity. While TV advertising is common, new methods are also used, including internet advertisements. High budgets, creativity and detailed planning are needed. Given this backdrop, one can appreciate the role of brand loyalty in respect of FMCG items.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The FMCG sector has been growing at a fast clip although the pace of its growth has not been consistent across the country for a variety of reasons. After all, the sector, on account of the very nature of its activity, requires a good number of stakeholders for its success and what is more, the stakeholders associated with the sector's operations in particular have to move in perfect lockstep with each other for the success of the sector. Additionally, the consumer /

customer stakeholders have different expectations vis-à-vis their requirements based on where they hail from – rural India or urban India. Hence the factors that influence the buy decision of the consumers / customers need to be identified accurately. The FMCG sector has to understand the behaviour and mind-set of the consumer / customer / prospect in the first place and formulate the appropriate strategy, marketing and others. Care has to be taken to ensure that the strategy is in consonance with the social and cultural factors that characterise the Indian FMCG market. The Indian FMCG consumer / customer / prospect looks for the best of both worlds in FMCG items, literally and figuratively. The products have to be as safe and as reliable as they are required to be in the advanced West. They have to cater to the unique requirements of the Indian consumer / customer / prospect too at the same time. This thesis seeks to help the FMCG players address this problem effectively.

1.3 Review of literature

1. According to FMCG major Dabur India, the rise in standard deduction against travel and medical expenses allowed by Budget 2018 will in turn raise the disposable income in the pockets of the common man (Sharmila, 2018). The implication is that it will lead to a rise in the spend of the common man on FMCG items.

2. According to Kishore Biyani of the Future Group, Budget 2018 would help draw larger corporate investments into the FMCG sector (Sharmila, 2018). It will render it more attractive for corporate players like the Future group to strengthen the existing linkages between the farmers of rural India and the consumers of urban India. India is home to several climatic zones. Hence the country can raise almost every food produce. Budget 2018 seeks to promote investments in processing the said produce. It will go a long way in helping at least half of the country's population earn more for the hard work the farmers put in, on their farms. The Future group is closely involved with the textile and footwear sector in the country. It empathizes with the challenges the small and medium businesses face in the FMCG sector. The government's focus on easing the labour norms and extending budgetary support to the textile and footwear industry will help the sector immensely. Most of the players in this segment are MSMEs. The linking of trade discounting system (TReDS) with the GST network, the MUDRA scheme and the improved financing options will raise the ease of doing business for the MSMEs. Textile, footwear and leather industries are among the largest employing sectors in India and will benefit from this budget.

3. According to the Retailers Association of India (RAI), no immediate impact on consumption, either negative or positive is likely on account of Budget 2018 (Sharmila, 2018). There is no real additional money in the hands of the middle class, a prime driver of consumption. The proposed reduction in corporate tax to 25 percent in respect of MSME (medium, small and micro enterprises) companies boasting of a turnover of up to INR 250 crore is a welcome move and will benefit a large number of retailers. They will be able to save on the reduced tax slab. Overall, the budget implies no immediate benefits for the retail sector.

4. According to Deloitte India, one of the subtle intentions of the Union Budget 2018 is the attempt to bond domestic sourcing with global retailers (Sharmila, 2018). Recently, a refresh announcement was made with regard to permitting 100 percent investment in single brand retail trade in respect of foreign investors. As of now, the *30 percent sourcing condition* plays an important role in such cases. Some of the global retailers who have no such arrangements with Indian sourcing companies were a bit nervous of meeting the mandatory requirement. The sourcing of 30 percent of the value of goods purchased needs to be done from India, preferably from MSMEs, village and cottage industries, artisans and craftsmen, in all sectors. The Union Budget's focus on providing stimuli to the domestic farmers' and artisans' industry, allocation to various schemes and funds created in the agricultural sector is a smart way to attract foreign direct investments. Thus, to ensure that there is good quality domestic sourcing, these announcements have been made. If things were to go as per plan, the demand for domestic sourcing will rise. It will lead to an overall increase in the quality and quantity in the output of the MSMEs and other local producers. The move clearly indicates the government's backing and support to the domestic industries and will help in making India more attractive to global retailers. It will also improve the standard of living of the people working in the MSMEs, raise in their per capita income and raise their overall growth. Thus, the combination of FDI policy and budget announcements is a win-win situation for foreign retailers and domestic industries.

5. Rose Leahy explored relationship marketing and the existence of relationships in mass consumer markets from the consumers' perspective, with a focus on fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector (Leahy, 2011). The study highlighted the dominant negative consumer attitudes to relationship marketing as it is operationalised in FMCG markets. It concludes that from the consumers' perspective, relationships do not and cannot obtain in these markets and that the nature of exchange in such markets is not relationship-based. Consequently, the research concludes that there is a necessity to move away from the relationship rhetoric in FMCG markets and explore the true nature of exchange in the quest for effective marketing strategies.

6. Kavita Srivastava investigated the impact of perceived quality, brand extension incongruity, involvement and perceived risk on consumer attitude towards brand extension across three product types, namely, FMCG, durable goods and service (FDS) sectors (Kavita Srivastava, 2013). More importantly, her study sought to explore the importance of involvement profile comprised of relevance, pleasure, sign-value, risk importance and risk probability and perceived risk facets (financial, psychological and performance) in the acceptance of brand extension across FDS. Results revealed significant different effects of variables across the three product types. The impact of perceived quality was greater in the case of services than FMCG and durables. On the other hand, perceived risk and involvement had stronger influence on evaluation of durables and service than FMCG brand extensions.

7. Sapna Agarwal says that Indian urban consumers spent less in calendar year 2012 due to high inflation, muted salary hikes, and slowing economic growth that affected both real wages and sentiment (Agarwal, 2013). Yet, the fast moving consumer goods index (the BSE FMCG index) was the third biggest gainer among sectoral indices on BSE, surging 47%, while ITC Ltd figured among

the top 10 best-performing stocks, rising 43.64% in the period. Compared with other sectors, the consumption story remains intact, though the pace of growth has slowed compared with previous years.

1.4 Research gap

The Indian FMCG sector is as challenging as it is rewarding. It does not jell with the "one size fits all" approach given the Indian FMCG market's huge diversity, in geographical or social or cultural or demographic terms. It is this aspect that the reviewed literature has not adequately dwelt on, in its analysis of the fortunes of the FMCG sector, given its ability to ring in positive changes in consumer behaviour towards purchase of FMCG items. It is this gap that the present thesis seeks to address.

1.5 Scope of the present study

The study confines itself to FMCG marketers and consultants based in and around Bangalore.

1.6 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Ascertain the factors that point to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector
2. Suggest a strategy the FMCG marketers can follow to usher in positive changes in consumer behaviour towards purchase of FMCG products

1.7 Hypothesis proposed to be tested

The study proposes to test the following hypotheses:

"Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector".

1.8 Research design

1.8.1 Research methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and has used the 'fact-finding' survey method

1.8.2 Sources of data

Primary data has been collected from the respondents, viz., 30 FMCG marketers and 30 consultants.

Secondary data has been collected from industry bodies / industry associations including Retailers Association of India (RAI), CII and FICCI. In addition, secondary data has been downloaded from the web sites of the government of India, government of Karnataka, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the financial press.

1.8.3 Sampling plan

FMCG marketers: Given the rather limited number of FMCG marketers operating in the vicinity where the researcher lives and the time constraint, purposive or judgement sampling under the non-probability method has been deployed. Applying a minimum exposure of five years to the FMCG industry as the criterion, the researcher selected 30 such marketers. This criterion, according to the researcher, is the most appropriate one for the present study. What is important is the typicality and the relevance of the sampling units to the study and not their overall representativeness to the population. Thus it guarantees inclusion of the relevant elements in the sample. Probability sampling plans cannot give such a guarantee.

Consultants: Given the rather limited number of consultants operating in the vicinity where the researcher lives and the time constraint, purposive or judgement sampling under the non-probability method has been deployed. Applying a minimum exposure of five years to the FMCG industry as the criterion, the researcher selected 30 such consultants. This criterion, according to the researcher, is the most appropriate one for the present study. What is important is the typicality and the relevance of the sampling units to the study and not their overall representativeness to the

population. Thus it guarantees inclusion of the relevant elements in the sample. Probability sampling plans cannot give such a guarantee.

1.8.4 Data collection instruments

Interview schedules, specially designed for the purpose, were administered to the respondents for collection of primary data.

1.8.5 Data processing and analysis plan

Non-parametric statistical units were used to test the association between some qualitative characters and conclusions were drawn on the basis of formation of H_0 and H_1 .

1.8.6 Limitations of the study

Primary data has sometimes been deduced through constant topic-oriented discussions with the respondents. It is possible that a certain degree of subjectivity, even if negligible, has influenced their views.

1.9 FMCG marketers

In the following paragraphs, the primary data collected from the 30 FMCG marketers is analysed.

1.9.1 Factors that point to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector

Analysts and market-watchers forecast a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector. Hence the researcher requested the respondents to reveal the factors that underlie the forecast. Their replies to the query appear in the following Table.

Table-1 Factors that point to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector

Factors	Number of respondents
GST-driven de-stocking giving way to fresh consumer goods inventories	26
Imminent election in some states leading to presentation of populist budgets	25
Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast	22

GST-driven de-stocking giving way to fresh consumer goods inventories is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 26 respondents. Imminent election in some states leading to presentation of populist budgets is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 25 respondents. Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 22 respondents.

1.9.2 Strategy the FMCG marketers can follow to usher in positive changes in consumer behaviour towards purchase of FMCG products

If the prospective consumer has to make the "buy" decision, the FMCG marketer has to follow the right strategy that leads the former to make the "buy" decision. Hence, the researcher sought to know from the respondents, the strategy needed to lead the prospective consumer to make the "buy" decision. Their replies to the query appear in the following Table.

Table-2 Strategy the FMCG marketers can follow to usher in positive changes in consumer behaviour towards purchase of FMCG products

Strategy	Number of respondents
FMCG marketers, with the help of digital marketing tools, should identify the advertisement that prompted the consumer to take the "buy" decision and exploit it	27

FMCG marketers should exploit drip email campaigns to target consumers at various stages, ultimately leading them to make the "buy" decision.	26
FMCG marketers should market through customer-centric content and trigger exchange of views across consumers, influencing their behaviour	25
FMCG marketers should use social media like Facebook to influence consumer behaviour thereby	22

FMCG marketers, with the help of digital marketing tools, should identify the advertisement that prompted the consumer to take the "buy" decision and exploit it, suggest 27 respondents by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should exploit drip email campaigns to target consumers at various stages, ultimately leading them to make the "buy" decision, suggest 26 respondents by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should market through customer-centric content and trigger exchange of views across consumers, influencing their behaviour, suggest 25 by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should use social media like Facebook to influence consumer behaviour, suggest 22, by way of strategy.

1.10 Consultants

In the following paragraphs, the primary data collected from the 30 consultants is analysed.

1.10.1 Factors that point to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector

Analysts and market-watchers forecast a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector. Hence the researcher requested the respondents to reveal the factors that underlie the forecast. Their replies to the query appear in the following Table.

Table-3 Factors that point to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector

Factors	Number of respondents
Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast	26
Imminent election in some states leading to presentation of populist budgets	25
GST-driven de-stocking giving way to fresh consumer goods inventories	23
Fall in prices of consumer goods post GST	21
Rise in sales volumes driven by the end of GST pangs	21

Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 26 respondents. Imminent election in some states leading to presentation of populist budgets is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 25 respondents. GST-driven de-stocking giving way to fresh consumer goods inventories is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 23 respondents. Fall in prices of consumer goods post GST is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 21 respondents. Rise in sales volumes driven by the end of GST pangs is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 21 respondents.

1.10.2 Strategy the FMCG marketers can follow to usher in positive changes in consumer behaviour towards purchase of FMCG products

If the prospective consumer has to make the "buy" decision, the FMCG marketer has to follow the right strategy that leads the former to make the "buy" decision. Hence, the researcher sought to know from the respondents, the strategy needed to lead the prospective consumer to make the "buy" decision. Their replies to the query appear in the following Table.

Table-4 Strategy the FMCG marketers can follow to usher in positive changes in consumer behaviour towards purchase of FMCG products

Strategy	Number of respondents
FMCG marketers, with the help of digital marketing tools, should identify the advertisement that prompted the consumer to take the "buy" decision and exploit it	27
FMCG marketers should use social media like Facebook to influence consumer behaviour	27
Through social media, FMCG marketers should tap into the huge following the influencers command, leading them to buy their products	27
FMCG marketers should market through customer-centric content and trigger exchange of views across consumers, influencing their behaviour thereby	26
FMCG marketers should exploit drip email campaigns to target consumers at various stages, ultimately leading them to make the "buy" decision.	23

FMCG marketers, with the help of digital marketing tools, should identify the advertisement that prompted the consumer to take the "buy" decision and exploit it, suggest 27 respondents by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should use social media like Facebook to influence consumer behaviour, suggest 27, by way of strategy. Through social media, FMCG marketers should tap into the huge following the influencers command, leading them to buy their products, suggest 27 by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should market through customer-centric content and trigger exchange of views across consumers, influencing their behaviour, suggest 26 by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should exploit drip email campaigns to target consumers at various stages, ultimately leading them to make the "buy" decision, suggest 23 respondents by way of strategy.

1.11 Summary of findings

In the following paragraphs, a summarised version of the findings arrived at in respect of the three categories of respondents is furnished.

1.12.1 FMCG marketers

- GST-driven de-stocking giving way to fresh consumer goods inventories is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 26 respondents. Imminent election is some states leading to presentation of populist budgets is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 25 respondents. Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 22 respondents.
- FMCG marketers, with the help of digital marketing tools, should identify the advertisement that prompted the consumer to take the "buy" decision and exploit it, suggest 27 respondents by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should exploit drip email campaigns to target consumers at various stages, ultimately leading them to make the "buy" decision, suggest 26 respondents by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should market through customer-centric content and trigger exchange of views across consumers, influencing their behaviour, suggest 25 by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should use social media like Facebook to influence consumer behaviour, suggest 22, by way of strategy.

1.12.2 Consultants

- Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 26 respondents. Imminent

election is some states leading to presentation of populist budgets is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 25 respondents. GST-driven de-stocking giving way to fresh consumer goods inventories is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 23 respondents. Fall in prices of consumer goods post GST is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 21 respondents. Rise in sales volumes driven by the end of GST pangs is a factor that points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector, according to 21 respondents.

- FMCG marketers, with the help of digital marketing tools, should identify the advertisement that prompted the consumer to take the "buy" decision and exploit it, suggest 27 respondents by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should use social media like Facebook to influence consumer behaviour, suggest 27, by way of strategy. Through social media, FMCG marketers should tap into the huge following the influencers command, leading them to buy their products, suggest 27 by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should market through customer-centric content and trigger exchange of views across consumers, influencing their behaviour, suggest 26 by way of strategy. FMCG marketers should exploit drip email campaigns to target consumers at various stages, ultimately leading them to make the "buy" decision, suggest 23 respondents by way of strategy.

1.12 Conclusions

Conclusions relate to the hypotheses. They are answers to the research questions.

1.13.1 Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis

As explained, the following is the first hypothesis proposed to be tested:

"Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector".

Hence H₀ and H₁ are as follows:

H₀: Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast does not point to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector

H₁: Anticipated revival of the rural economy following a favourable monsoon forecast points to a bright year ahead for the FMCG sector

On the basis of the primary data collected from the respondents, vide Tables: 1, 3 and 5, a chi-square test was applied to ascertain the association, if any, between the two variables. The following Table reveals the computation made using MS-Excel:

	Category	Observed Values		
		Yes	No	Total
	FMCG marketers	22	8	30
	Consultants	26	4	30
	<i>Total</i>	48	12	60
		Expected Values		
	Category	Agree	Disagree	Total
	Bank officers	24	6	30
	Consultants	24	6	30
	<i>Total</i>	48	12	60
		<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	
2	o-e	-2.0000	2.0000	
		2.0000	-2.0000	
	(o-e) ²	4.0000	4.0000	
		4.0000	4.0000	
	((o-e) ²)/e	0.1667	0.6667	
		0.1667	0.6667	
	CV	0.3333	1.3333	1.6667
	TV			3.8415
	<i>p</i>			0.7968

The calculated value of χ^2 is 1.6667, lower than the table value of 3.8415 for an alpha of 0.05 at one degree of freedom. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternate hypothesis is rejected. $p=0.7968$ is the inverse of the one-tailed probability of the chi-squared distribution.

1.13 Researcher's recommendations

1. FMCG marketers should exploit the digital marketing tools to the hilt. The digital marketing tools can help the marketer identify the exact advertisement that led the consumer to take the "buy" decision vis-à-vis the FMCG item concerned. This strategy will help the marketer achieve success with other products too, existing as well as new.
2. Drip e-mail marketing involves the marketer personalising its marketing exercise. Drip e-mail can achieve what a hard sell achieves but without the attendant pestering. It is a strategy that nurtures leads. This strategy comes in handy even in the case of prospective consumers. Prospective consumers who dilly-dally for too long before making the "buy" decision can be wheedled into decision-making. Hence the researcher strongly recommends that the marketer exploit this strategy to the hilt.
3. Marketers should develop and circulate consumer-centric content since it can trigger exchange of views across the entire consumer base, thereby influencing the behaviour of the consumers. Adroit exploitation of content marketing goes a long way in influencing consumer behaviour. The marketer can create a website for consumers to share information about their FMCG products and engage through helpful forums. The marketer can use the website to place its ads. Eventually, the marketer will have influenced the behaviour of a strong community of loyal customers that they can tap to sell their products.
4. FMCG marketers should exploit the social media route too. For example, they can exploit the Facebook for the purpose. One can post messages on Facebook even in the local languages and this means that even the highly diverse and humongous Indian market can be easily accessed by the marketers.
5. Mobile phones and high speed, affordable internet have penetrated almost every town in the country. A big chunk of Indian consumers shops for FMCG products online, thanks to the numerous apps emerging every other day. Hence FMCG marketers should ensure that the digital marketing trends in the FMCG space keep pace with the ever-rising online consumer numbers, existing and potential
6. Adroit exploitation of content marketing is essential on the part of the FMCG marketers because the strategy helps them establish their authority in the space. For example, a marketer of traditional personal care products for women can create a website for women, young, not-so-young and the old to share information and engage through helpful forums. Since knowledge of traditional and home-made personal care products for women is passed from generation to generation, the marketer will do well to reach out to the not-so-young and the old segments of women through the website and include them in the community. In the process, the marketer will have built a solid community of women who patronise traditional / home-made personal care products and comment on them authoritatively. The marketer can tap into the not-so-young and old segments of women to promote their products since they can play the role of influencers effectively. It is difficult to come across a more user-focused marketing strategy. It is unique to digital marketing and helps the marketer promote its products more effectively than ever before.

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