



Measuring Customer Satisfaction & Expectations Towards Milcent Brand Domestic Flour Mills in Anand City: An Empirical Study

* Dr. Manubhai I. Parmar

* Associate Professor, C. P. Patel & F. H. Shah Commerce College, ANAND (Gujarat)

ABSTRACT

Domestic Flour Mill popularly known as Ghar Ghanti is not the new product but has achieved a sophisticated look in recent times. The market for domestic Flour Mills (DFMs) is of thousands of crores of rupees and growing at an impressive rate. Most of the DFMs manufacturers are located in Gujarat. Anand, Rajkot, Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Navsari are the centers of DFMs manufacturing. With the passage of times, this product has received urbanized touch. Also, it protects the owners from the malpractices of the commercial flour millers. In India, organized DFMs industry is of sixty years old. Many brands have been introduced during this span of time. Many survived. Many have lost the ground and vanished. Milcent is the oldest, pioneer and prestigious brand of DFMs and truly the leader of the market. New entrants like Natraj, Navdeep and Microfine are now in the market and making good progress.

The present research paper not only attempts to comprehend the DFMs industry scenario and its historical perspectives as a whole but studies the customers' ownership pattern with respect to the competitive brands. It makes clear certain objectives and through proper methodology attempts to examine attributes of customer satisfaction and customer expectations. Lastly, this paper concludes with the major findings and useful suggestions with respect to a leading brand Milcent DFMs.

Keywords : Domestic Flour Mills, Commercial Flour Mills , Sturdy Performance, Laminated Sheets, Centrifugal.

INTRODUCTION:

The Domestic Flour Mill (DFM) popularly known as Ghar Ghanti is basically a house hold product, a consumer durable, being produced by assembling a number of components. Even though it has not gained much limelight as those of other consumer durables like television, refrigerators, air conditioner or washing machine, it has ensured the definite space in every household as a kitchen queen. DFM is not a new product. It has been in operation for centuries in rural life of the country. With increased industrialization, urbanization, power driven mechanism and technological advancements, DFM has changed in terms of performance, technical features, look, style and the range. Mostly manufactured in Gujarat, this product has not only commended the regional and the adjoining markets but has successfully reached the Japanese people. Today's domestic flour mill is a package of advanced features and benefits that their owners are enjoying.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PRESENT SCENARIO:

In the past, DFM was found in a corner of a small village house. It was made of two natural stones in the initial stage. A wooden handle was fixed with the upper stone and a centrally located wooden hole was kept so as to enable to pour grain through it. A wooden or iron bar was kept to control the upper stone. Over and above, these two stones were covered with a wooden cabinet which was also used to store the flour. It was not an astonishing fact to see rural house wives getting up early in the morning and milling the grain. There was a constant noise of DFM being heard along with the sweet and melodious noises of birds and lyrics of animals. While grinding, sweet songs and bhajans (Holy songs) were being sung by female members of the family. DFM was at that time a typical manually operated utility product for availing fresh flour for house hold purposes. The live display of this traditional product gradually disappeared with the emergence of automation, industrialization and massive electrification which led to the beginning of the era of commercial flour milling.

The state of Gujarat has been the cradle of DFM industry right from the starting up of organized efforts to manufacture this product. Initially, this industry started in Anand district. Soon after, other players entered the fray from Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Vadodara and Valsad districts. The first DFM was designed and produced by Sayaji Iron Works, Vadodara, in early 1951. The manufacture could not continue the operation due to some reasons. In 1956, Navjeevan Udyog Mandir, Bilimora, introduced Navjeevan brand domestic flour mill with natural stones. However, the real beginning in this field was made by Jashbhai Patel and Purshottambhai Panchal as they entered the market with Milcent brand domestic flour mill in 1964 which was a modified model. Earlier, these pioneers were making blenders (Valonas) for curd-making and other milk products way back in 1944. The Milcent brand name was chosen with the sense that it milled the grain cent percent. As a result of extensive hard work of these pioneers, DFM was well accepted as a consumer durable.

Today, this industry is poised for further advancements. Over these seven decades of functioning, the DFM industry has transformed itself into vibrant industry involving sizeable investment and good employment generation. Many brands have entered and disappeared also from the market during this period. Today, brands like Milcent, Natraj, Navdeep and Microfine have become the house hold names.

At present, there are about one hundred DFM manufacturers mostly located in Gujarat and they represent more than 85% of the total production volume of this product. DFMs are vertically and horizontally designed and available in plywood cabinet, iron body, mini model and also in stone less model which has received the increased preferences of the market. The stone less model of DFM works on the principle of centrifugal force. These varied models are offered to suit the requirements of different market segments. There seems tough competition among various brands of DFMs. The in-

dustry also faces the competitive pressure from branded flour (Atta) marketers particularly in the metros. Truly, Milcent is a brand leader backed by a rich lengthy experience in the DFMs market.

NEED OF THE STUDY:

Systematic studies have taken place on a number of consumer durables like televisions, washing machines and air conditioners. Authentic data are available with respect to these products and their markets. However, very little efforts have been made to study DFM market comprehensively. Besides, information on this product or the industry is not well published and easily available. Though this industry is well established demonstrating better growth potentials, still serious efforts are not made to examine the undercurrent of it. Detailed market studies on DFMs are also not fairly carried out. There is a need to measure the growth trends and understand the problems of this industry. As an established brand in the market, Milcent has won the hearts of millions. A research work is required to measure the issues pertaining to customer satisfaction among the owners of Milcent DFMs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Joel R Evans(2007) explains the concept of customer satisfaction. It is a crucial element in successful marketing. It is the degree to which there is a match between a customer's expectations of a good or service and the actual performance of the good and service including customer service. Grewal Dhruv and Michael Levy (2011) clearly mention that setting unrealistically high consumer expectations of the product through advertising, personal selling or other types of promotion may lead to higher initial sales, but it eventually will result in dissatisfaction if the product fails to achieve high performance expectations. Kenneth Clow, David Kurtz, John Ozment and Beng Soo Ong(1997) state that customers ' expectations are based on their knowledge experiences. Kotler, Kelly, Koshi and Jha (2009) attempt to highlight that whether the buyer is satisfied after purchase depends on the offer's performance in relationship to the buyer's expectations and whether the buyer interprets any deviations between the two. In general, satisfaction is a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment that result from comparing a product's perceived performance to their expectations. Glen B. Voss, A. Parasuraman, and Dhruv Grewal (1998) make a remark that customers form service expectations from many sources, such as past experience, word of mouth and advertising. Shil Nikhil Chandra and M. Muzakkeerul Huda in their research paper on private banks conclude that customer satisfaction is explained by staff quality, tangible quality and delivery quality. Each of these quality measures has independent parameters. Dr. C. Dharamraj (2010) made systematic efforts on studying consumer brand preferences towards passenger cars in India by analyzing the factors that influence brand choice of the customers and revealed the impact of brand preference dimensions on customer satisfaction.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES: Following were the research objectives of this paper.

- To study the present consumer scenario of Milcent DFMs in Anand City.
- To examine the awareness and consumers' opinions on Milcent DFMs.
- To know the respondents' preferences and reasons for buying Milcent DFMs.
- To measure the levels of satisfaction and also loyalty towards Milcent DFMs.
- To comprehend the problems of and gauge customers' expectations for Milcent DFMs in Anand City.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ADOPTED:

Sampling Design: The research design chosen was descriptive in nature. Sampling units were the households in Anand City having any brand of DFM. For data collection, anyone of the family members of households, preferably, female, was the respondent for this study. Convenience sampling method was selected for drawing the sampling units from the popula-

tion of Anand. Total number of households contacted was 162 out of which 28 households were found without any brand of domestic flour mill. Hence, effective sample size for this research work was 134 households.

Data Collection: Primary data were collected from any family member of the household having any brand of domestic flour mill. Secondary data were collected from various sources like dissertation, company web sites, product literature, and news paper reports. Personal contact method was selected for primary data collection. A structured questionnaire was designed, pretested and operated over the respondents for data collection.

Statistical Tools: Analytical tools like tables, and percentile were used for drawing meaningful findings.

MAJOR TABLES:

Table-1: Ownership of DFMs by brands

| Sr. Nos. | Brands | Owners | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|--------|------------|
| 1 | Natraj | 18 | 13.00 |
| 2 | Milcent | 98 | 73.00 |
| 3 | Navdeep | 08 | 06.00 |
| 4 | Microfine | 06 | 05.00 |
| 5 | Others | 04 | 03.00 |
| Total | | 134 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data

Table-2: Duration of Buying Milcent DFMs

| Sr. Nos. | Duration | Owners | Percentage |
|----------|---------------------|--------|------------|
| 1 | Last Two Years | 20 | 20.00 |
| 2 | Three to Five Years | 46 | 47.00 |
| 3 | Six to Ten Years | 22 | 23.00 |
| 4 | Above Ten Years | 10 | 10.00 |
| Total | | 98 | 100.00 |

Source: primary Data

Table-3: Sources of Awareness that influenced buying of Milcent DFMs

| Sr. Nos. | Sources | Respondents n =98 | Percentage |
|----------|------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 | Television | 76 (77.55) | 28.00 |
| 2 | News Papers | 88 (89.79) | 32.00 |
| 3 | Advertising Literature | 68 (69.38) | 25.00 |
| 4 | Mouth Publicity | 42 (42.85) | 15.00 |
| Total | | 274 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data
Note: Figures in the bracket suggest percentage to sample size

Table-4: Factors contributing to buying of Milcent DFMs

| Sr. Nos. | Factors | Respondents N=98 | Percentage |
|----------|--------------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Affordable Price | 78 (79.36) | 23.00 |
| 2 | Sturdy Performance | 82 (83.67) | 24.00 |
| 3 | Brand Image | 70 (71.42) | 21.00 |
| 4 | Good Look and Style | 56 (57.14) | 17.00 |
| 5 | Technological Excellence | 52 (53.06) | 15.00 |
| Total | | 338 | 100.00 |

Source: primary Data
Note: Figures in the bracket suggest percentage to sample size

Table-5: Degree of satisfaction with Different Attributes of Milcent

| Sr. Nos. | Attributes | Respondents N=98 | Percentage |
|----------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | Easy Availability | 82 (83.67) | 18.00 |
| 2 | Durability & Power Efficiency | 76 (77.55) | 17.00 |
| 3 | Design & Appearance | 68 (69.38) | 15.00 |
| 4 | After Sales Services | 88 (89.79) | 20.00 |
| 5 | Smooth Functioning | 78 (79.59) | 17.00 |
| 6 | Wider Range of models | 56 (57.14) | 13.00 |
| Total | | 448 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data**Note: Figures in the bracket suggest percentage to sample size****Table-6: Replacement intentions of owners of Milcent DFMs**

| Sr. Nos. | Intentions | Owners | Percentage |
|----------|--|--------|------------|
| 1 | Do not want to replace | 74 | 76.00 |
| 2 | Want to replace with new model of Milcent | 21 | 21.00 |
| 3 | Do not want to replace with competitive brands | 03 | 03.00 |
| Total | | 98 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data**Table-7: Overall satisfaction of Respondents of Milcent DFMs**

| Sr. Nos. | Level of satisfaction | Respondents | Percentage |
|----------|-------------------------|-------------|------------|
| 1 | Completely Satisfied | 24 | 25.00 |
| 2 | Moderately satisfied | 36 | 37.00 |
| 3 | Satisfied | 31 | 31.00 |
| 4 | Dissatisfied | 03 | 03.00 |
| 5 | Moderately Dissatisfied | 02 | 02.00 |
| 6 | Completely Dissatisfied | 02 | 02.00 |
| Total | | 98 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary data**Table-8: Respondents' Expectations on Milcent DFMs**

| Sr. Nos. | Expectations | Respondents | Percentage |
|----------|--|-------------|------------|
| 1 | More technical features should be added | 29 | 30.00 |
| 2 | Colour preferences of consumers should be studied and incorporated in new models | 26 | 27.00 |
| 3 | New models should be offered for small families | 28 | 28.00 |
| 4 | Promotion should be on much wider scale | 15 | 15.00 |
| Total | | 98 | 100.00 |

Source: Primary Data**MAJOR FINDINGS:**

The brand ownership pattern revealed that 73% of the respondents surveyed in the select area were found having Milcent DFMs. Through this study, Milcent had emerged as a brand leader followed by Natraj (and Navdeep DFMs. (Table-1)

So far as duration of buying Milcent DFMs was concerned, 47% of the total owners were found to have purchased this product within three to five years. 23% owners had bought Milcent DFMs in six to ten years. (Table-2)

News paper advertising had emerged as a dominant source of awareness that influenced the purchase of Milcent brand with 88%. It was followed by television advertising (97%), and friends' advice(69%). (Table-3)

About 80% of the owners of Milcent DFMs had given priority to sturdy performance as the important factor which was followed by affordable price (78%) and brand image (70%). (table-4)

Considering the degree of satisfaction on some attributes, the study revealed that 88% owners of Milcent were satisfied with the after sales services, followed by easy availability (82%), smooth functioning (78%) and durability (76%). (Table-5)

Regarding replacement of DFMs, 76% owners of Milcent did not want to replace as against 21% found ready to replace only with the new model of the same product. (Table-6)

On customers' expectations on Milcent, 30% stated that more technical features should be added. 28% stated that new models should be developed for small families. (Table-7)

On degree of satisfaction on Milcent DFMs, overall, 93% owners were satisfied, out of which, 37% were moderately satisfied, 31% satisfied and 25% found extremely satisfied. (Table-8)

SUGGESTIONS:

The competitive scenario in this market is on rise. It is likely to erode the market share of Milcent DFMs. Hence, new strategies need to be designed and implemented.

Though Milcent DFMs are enjoying the patronage of its owners for many years, still, there is a need to attract new customers for further expansion.

Looking to a very high exposure of television advertising, this brand should be more highlighted through this media.

There is a need to address good look and style and technological excellence as these factors are also equally important to stay in the market.

More technical features need to be added. Colour preferences of customers are required to be studied and incorporated with respect to laminated sheets. Promotion should be on wider scale. For small families, new models are to be developed.

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