



**“ Consumer Perception towards Attributes of Ice Cream and Chocolate” – With special reference to Ponlait, Pondicherry, India.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Consumers buy what they perceive, and what they perceive is heavily influenced by the cues — brand name, packaging, color — that marketers send to them. This article reports on an empirical study Consumers act and react on the basis of their perceptions, not on the situation the basis of objective reality (Leon g.schiffman.at.el.2013). For each one reality is based on individual needs, wants, values and personal experiences. A motivated person is ready to act. How the person acts is influenced by his or her own perception of the situation. This paper identifies the suitable attributes for Ponlait ice cream and Ponlait chocolate to make Ponlait as a leader in both products in Pondicherry ,India. Its felt that ponlait has to instill in the minds of the consumers the quality of the products

**KEYWORDS**

Perception, behaviour, decision making, brand

**INTRODUCTION**

Consumption experience can be defined as “an emergent property that results from a complex system of mutually overlapping interrelationships in constant reciprocal interaction with personal, environmental, and situational inputs” (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1986, p. 219). This definition recognizes how numerous contextual, that is, environmental, motivational, emotional, social, and time-related factors can modulate the consumption experience. That is applicable to food-related consumption experiences as well, starting from the purchase act – which is an important part of the consumption experience (Arnould et al., 2002) – and arriving to the consumption of food products in a broader sense.

Consumers act and react on the basis of their perceptions, not on the situation the basis of objective reality (Leon g.schiffman.at.el.2013). For each one reality is based on individual needs, wants, values and personal experiences. A motivated person is ready to act. How the person acts is influenced by his or her own perception of the situation (Philipkotler. at.el.2010). Means-end theory proposes that consumers desire product attributes for the consequences (i.e. receipt of benefits and avoidance of sacrifices) those attributes provide (Gutman,1982).Thus ,to the marketer , consumer’s perceptions are much more important than their knowledge of objective reality. Individuals make decisions and take decisions based on what they perceive to be reality, it is important that marketers understand the notion of perception and related concepts to determine more readily, what factors influence customers to buy(Leon g. schiffman.at.el.2013).In a marketing context people tend to perceive products and product attributes according to their own expectations (Leon g. schiffman. at.el.2013).

**STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Basically Ponlait produces milk and milk products and sells

it to customers. In that Milk price is controlled (fixed) by the Government of Pondicherry. Due to this Ponlait is unable to raise the price o milk whenever the cost of processing is hiked. However the leverage in setting price is available over milk products i.e. it is in the hands of Ponlait. More over milk products are value added products and milks products strategy helps to earn profit and run the business smoothly.

In Ponlait milk products the researcher has chosen two products i.e. ice cream and chocolate to study consumer perception towards attributes of these two products over competing brands.

**Research objectives**

To study the consumer’s perception towards attributes of Ponlait Ice Cream and chocolate.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Perceptions about how products perform on salient attributes is more vital to consumers’ purchase behavior than actual product attribute performance (Kevin & Joyce ,1998). Attributes are those dimensions of a product that define a given consumption experience. They represent the building blocks that consumers use to make product judgments and form purchase decision (Johnson and Gustafsson,2000).We simply define “ attributes” as those dimensions or elements that form the criteria for evaluating a particular consumption experience, however narrow or broad that experience may be.

Products are known to represent a bundle of attributes, such as packaging, labeling, brand name,...etc (Muellera and Szolnokib, 2010). Keller (1999) defined attributes as the descriptive features of a product or service, dividing them into product-related attributes and non product-related attributes. Product-related attributes are explicit features of a product or service, such as price, color, or brand. Non-product related at-

tributes are implicit, less observable features of a product or service, such as quality and style. Attributes, whether explicit or implicit, have been used to predict outcomes such as service quality and satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Driver and Johnston,2001). Attributes are believed to be important to consumers because they deliver certain desired benefits or consequences.

On an average, an urban household in Uttar Pradesh[1] spends about 47 per cent of its consumption expenditure on food items, out of which, about 30 per cent is spent on grocery items and about 16 per cent on fruits and vegetables (NSSO, 2006). Increase in income, particularly of the lower and middle-income households, is having a significant impact on the demand for food items, because these groups tend to spend a relatively larger share of their income on food consumption. Middle income and urban consumers also spend a greater part of their income on upgrading and diversifying their diet towards high value products like fruits and vegetables, eating out more often and eating more processed and convenience food items (Landes et al., 2004).

In addition, a growing consumer preference for shopping convenience is fostering the growth of modern retailing in India, which in turn demands greater efficiency, quality and safety standards in the food supply chain (Chengappa et al., 2005; Mukherjee and Patel, 2005; ). Consumers have now become more discriminating in their food product choices and have started emphasizing more on convenience, freshness and quality of the products (Quagrainie et al., 1998; Acebro'n et al., 2000). With the emergence of the supermarket and hypermarket culture, consumer preference for packaged food products has increased significantly in the recent years (Stewart-Knox and Mitchell, 2003; Silayoi and Speece, 2004). The desire for convenience and an increase in the number of working women are some of the important factors driving a strong growth of packaged food products (Goyal and Singh, 2007). Besides, consumers have now started preferring quality food intake and are becoming more conscious in terms of nutritional diet, health and food safety issues (Ruth and Yeung, 2001).

Even though past chocolate consumption research has to some extent examined consumer perceptions, attitudes, and motivations towards chocolate and chocolate consumption as a symbolic (Belk and Costa, 1998) and social experience (Cova and Pace, 2006), it has not explored how different chocolate consumption contexts shape and define these experiences. This is an obvious shortcoming, since contextual variation in food consumption experiences is important and yet poorly understood (Bisogni et al., 2007).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This paper identifies the suitable attributes for Poulait ice cream and Poulait chocolate to make Poulait as a leader in both products in Pondicherry ,India. The study was carried out on the respondents of Pondicherry. A sample of 100 respondents were identified and the sampling procedure followed was random sampling. The instrument used for primary data collection were questionnaire and interviews. To identify the appropriate attributes for inclusion in the study for ice cream and chocolate ,interviews were conducted with owners of six retail outlets. To ensure consumer input ,a pilot sample of 25 respondents were asked to list the attributes they believed influence their purchase of both i.e ice cream and chocolate and the frequency of each attribute being reported in tables 1 &2 respectively. Due to paucity of time ,after having identified the attributes ,a questionnaire was designed on the basis of identified attributes and issued to 100 respondents. Using,the MULTIPLE DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS respondents response were analyzed and important attributes with respect to each brand is assessed on the basis of standardized discriminant function coefficient as presented in table 3&4 for ice cream and chocolate respectively.

**RESULTS**

**Table-1: Attributes of ice cream for pilot survey**

NO	SERIAL	ATTRIBUTE	FREQUENCY
1		TASTE	25
2		AVILABILITY	25
3		COLOR	15
4		PACKING	12
5		PRICE	25
6		IMAGE	21
7		VARIETY	18
8		QUALITY	25
9		QUANTITY	25

**Table-2: Attributes of chocolate for pilot survey**

SERIAL NUMBER	ATTRIBUTE	FREQUENCY
1	TASTE	25
2	NUTRITION	21
3	AVAILABILITY	25
4	COLOR	12
5	PACKING	11
6	PRICE	25
7	IMAGE	17
8	SHAPE	19
9	VARIETY	20
10	QUALITY	25
11	QUANTITY	25

**Table-3: Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients: Ice Cream**

Attributes	Function				
	1	2	3	4	5
Taste	.356	-.002	-.584	-.549	.647
Availability	.529	-.442	-.298	.025	-.569
Color	-.005	.366	.258	1.045	.331
Packing	-.074	.184	.595	-.326	-.651
Price	.285	-.160	.099	.266	.424
Image	-.009	.485	.474	-.587	.054
Variety	.302	.418	-.362	.157	.087
Quality	.090	-.125	-.358	.205	-.507
Quantity	-.005	-.568	.625	-.162	.314

**Table-4: Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients: Chocolate**

Attributes	Function			
	1	2	3	4
Taste	.515	-.117	-.1000	.353
Nutrition	.161	.119	.126	.611
Availability	.054	.554	.482	-.078
Color	.204	-.222	.478	.107
Packing	.162	-.745	-.246	-.490
Price	-.085	.525	-.232	-.521
Image	-.131	-.130	.475	.514
Shape	.135	.151	-.384	-.307
Variety	.196	-.284	.354	-.314
Quality	-.195	.550	.137	-.449
Quantity	-.195	.336	-.016	.583

**Discussions**

Product attributes play an important role in marketing communication for both the consumer and the marketer alike. Consumers use attributes as the basis for evaluating a product and attributes promise benefits consumers seek when purchasing a product. Consumers also use attributes to make comparisons between competitive brands. The importance of studying attributes goes beyond the physical features of a product since consumers link attributes to benefits of purchas-

ing and consuming products. These benefits, or consequences, in turn lead to certain end states or values that consumers wish to achieve (Aaker et al., 1992; Belch and Belch, 1995; Kotler, 1991; Mowen, 1993; Peter and Olson, 1994). It is important to note that it is the consumer's perception of product attributes that is of crucial importance to the marketer. As Lewin (1936) points out, people respond on the basis of their perceptions of reality, not reality per se. Porter (1976) confirms that perceptions are important to study, even if they are misconceptions of actual events. Analysis of the consumer perception and decision-making processes is therefore extremely important to assist the marketer to understand consumer behaviour, draft better positioning strategies and develop more effective advertising campaigns based on product attributes and the associated perceived benefits. The framework underlying the attribute-based product classification was first proposed under the economics of information literature (Darby and Karni, 1973).

Brands and their association with attributes in respect of ice cream:-The study identified five major leading brands as competitor to Ponnait ice cream. They are Aavin, Amul, Arun, Kwality and Jamai. The study considered nine attributes as important attributes. They are Taste, Availability, Colour, Packing, Price, Image, Variety and Quality and Quantity. Accordingly questionnaire was issued to 100 respondents. As it is evident from table-3 as above that Aavin seems to be stronger on variety, Amul seems to be stronger on quantity, Arun seems to be stronger on colour and image, Kwality seems to be stronger on packing, taste, availability, price and quality. Ponnait and Jamai ice creams score low on all attributes as compared to its competitors. Hence Ponnait must try to address these issues and achieve leader position in ice cream.

Brands and their association with attributes in respect of Chocolate :- The study identified four major leading brands as competitors to Ponnait chocolate. They are Aavin, Amul, Cadbury and Nestle. The study considered eleven attributes as important attributes. They are Taste, Nutrition, Availability, Colour, Packing, Price, Image, Shape, Variety, Quality and Quantity. Accordingly a questionnaire was issued to 100 respondents. As it is evident from table-4 as above that Ponnait seems to be stronger on taste and colour, Cadbury seems to be stronger on nutrition and quantity, Aavin seems to be stronger on availability, packing, price, quality, Amul seems to be stronger on image, shape and variety. Nestle scores low on all attributes compared to its competitors. Out of the eleven attributes Ponnait is stronger on only two attributes (taste and colour). Hence Ponnait must workout suitable strategy and try to be stronger on other attributes to achieve a leader in chocolate.

## Conclusion

The objective was to study the consumers perception towards Ponnait ice cream and chocolate. The way consumers perceive these products is the key to enhanced consumption. It is therefore not conceivable to achieve this goal overnight. In contrast longer campaign aimed to educating, reminding or informing these consumers of the competitive advantage of Ponnait's ice cream and chocolate. Ponnait must carry out availability, process innovation, product innovation and consumer education on a continuous basis to position itself as a market leader/superior brand in ice cream and chocolate. Its felt that ponnait has to instill in the minds of the consumers the quality of the products

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