

BRAND SWITCHING OF BATHING SOAPS AMONG WOMEN OVER AGES

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Abstract

Beauty Soap segment holds the largest market share, account for more than 50% of the market. Keeping this in view this research is done to know the Women's Current and Past Consumption Pattern of bathing Soap brands and to identify their Switch over Pattern of brands among women over ages. The age categories are classified as 11-20, 21-30, 31-40 and 41-50 years and above. In depth survey was carried out among 175 women in Sivakasi of Virudhunagar District in Tamil Nadu. Results show that predominantly women consumers prefer a soap brand which is suitable for their skin type. There seem an age wise switching pattern of brands and the switchover happens predominantly during 21 to 30 age spans. Mostly women get settled with a particular brand by the time they reach 40 years of age. The major switchover was from a popular Neem-Tulsi-Aloevera based Soap and a Beauty Bar from the same multinational brand house to a Sandal based south Indian brand. This shows the strong presence and brand loyalty for that south Indian brand in the market under study. It is also implicit that, the income level of the individual women and their family do not affect the choice of the Brand which they prefer. Curiosity to try a new product is the prime reason which induces women to switch over another brand. Rather than the promotions and other beauty aspects, women choose soap brand for their skin suitability. This draws attention to the brand houses marketing women soaps.

Keywords:

Beauty Soaps, Age Category, Brand Switchover, Women Consumers, Brand Preference

1. INTRODUCTION

Bath Soaps are regarded as a staple commodity falling under the category of personal care products and bath Soaps came into use around thousands of years ago. Bath Soaps currently represent a multibillion-dollar industry and according to IMARC Group, the total revenues of the global bath Soap market reached values worth US\$ 20 Billion in 2019. In recent years, the use of bath Soaps have reduced in some countries due to the availability of substitutes, yet they continue to be the most popular cleansing product across the world.

The Soap Industry in India is comprised of about 700 companies, which generate combined annual revenue of approximately \$17 billion US dollars. The soap market in India is segmented based on brands, soap category (beauty soaps, health soaps, medicated soaps, Ayurvedic soaps and others) and players in the market. Soaps are distributed to all of India's major metropolitan cities and an estimated 50 % of the soaps that are produced in the country are sold in rural markets.

The size of India's Soap market is expected to grow at a moderate rate over the next few years. Bathing soap products is a prominent segment of country overall bathing products market. Though Soaps were once products that were only used by the elite, today, the increase of disposable incomes throughout India has led to an increase demand for Soaps.

Brand awareness and brand image of bath soaps grasp greater attention [1] among consumers. Now a days the marketers are providing lot of importance to distinctive ingredients of Soap and advertisements of bath Soaps [2]. In Soap market, generally, buyers are of low or reasonable price minded, expecting free gifts, quality and modification [3].

Soap manufacturing companies are predominantly targeted towards women, as they are the decision makers in terms of soap purchase for their entire family. Brand came out as a major factor considered by all women while purchasing soap.

Quality, naturalness and suitability to skin type and affordability are other factors which affect purchase of soap among the women consumer [4]. The basic reasons for changing their soap brands are curiosity to try new brands and when they are not satisfied with the product [5].

There is also significant association between the age of women and buying behavior of women consumer while purchasing the bathing Soaps [6]. Brand loyalty among youth and middle age women is less compared to aged women [7].

It is essential that the marketers should find loyalty factors that influence women which make them to shift any other soap brands, which can help in segmenting consumers and markets for their brands and marketing communication [8]-[20]. This research is specifically to apprehend the current trend of consumption and switch over pattern of branded soaps over ages among women.

2. METHODS AND MATERIAL

The data is collected through a structured questionnaire which was designed based upon the review of literatures and a pilot study conducted among women of different age categories initially. Both the online survey and direct survey have been taken for collecting the data from women of different age categories in Sivakasi of Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu, India. The women respondents are from different walks of life such as housewives, working women and college going students, who use either single or multiple brands of soaps for their daily cleansing process.

The questionnaire has been designed to seek data on the demography, current and past consumption pattern of soap brands, brand preference, brand switch over pattern over ages and factors influencing brand shift. The respondents are also asked to opine about currently used soap brand's quality, price, fragrance, shape, medicinal value, brand image, colour, suitability to skin type etc.

The women population in Sivakasi is 1,16,184 as per census 2011. The sample size is attained proportionately and the judgmental sampling method is used to select individual samples. Total Sample size of this research is 175 women of different age categories in Sivakasi. (Table.1)

Table.1. Age Category of Women respondents

Age Category	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
11-20	24	14%
21-30	96	55%
31-40	21	12%
41-50 and above	34	19%
Total	175	100%

Demographic profile of the Women (Table.2) indicates a wide distribution of samples across their age, qualification, occupation, marital status and family income. This profile reveals a spread of trends of soap consumption among the women of different categories which matches with the objectives of the study. A careful selection of samples is evidenced in the intended results of the study on women consumption pattern and switching pattern of soap brands over ages.

Table.2. Demographic Profile

Age Category		11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	Total
Educational Qualification	Primary	-	1	-	3	4
	Higher Secondary	8	1	2	7	18
	Diploma	-	-	-	2	2
	UG	15	44	7	12	78
	PG	1	47	8	8	64
	PhD	-	3	4	2	9
	Total	24	96	21	34	175
	Occupation	Private Employee	-	16	4	1
Homemaker		-	9	9	23	41
Government Employee		-	-	2	4	6
Self employed		-	6	2	2	10
Student		24	60	-	-	84
Profession		-	5	4	4	13
Total		24	96	21	34	175
Marital Status	Married	-	15	20	33	68
	Unmarried	24	81	1	1	107
	Total	24	96	21	34	175
Family Size	2	1	6	-	-	7
	3	1	14	3	3	21
	4	16	44	13	23	96
	Above 4	6	32	5	8	51
	Total	24	96	21	34	175
Monthly family income	Below Rs.10,000	4	5	1	1	11
	Rs.10,000- Rs.30,000	10	40	4	10	64
	Rs.30,001- Rs.50,000	6	16	9	12	43
	Above Rs.50,000	4	35	7	11	57
	Total	24	96	21	34	175

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data were analyzed using SPSS and STATCRAFT statistical packages. The content and construct validity were analytically tested for the empirical data that were collected through the structured questionnaire.

The surveyed group of women are currently using 36 different brands/varieties of soaps in which 4 brands are found be predominantly used. Those four are two brands from an International brand house and other two from 2 Indian brand houses. Before settling in these current brands those women have tried nearly 50 different brands/varieties. The suitability of the soap to their skin is the most significant factor that made them to stick on to their current brand. Fragrance and Quality are also important according to them for a good soap brand. The Table.3 exhibits the factors that the different aged women prefer a Brand of Soap.

Table.3. Significant Factors for Soap Brands Usage

Influencing Factors	Age Category				Responses
	11-20	21-30	31-40	> 41	
Quality	16	54	15	16	101
Price	3	18	4	7	32
Fragrance	12	41	8	13	74
Shape	1	6	-	2	9
Medicinal Value	5	25	1	6	37
Brand Image	2	18	4	9	33
Attractive Colour	3	14	2	-	19
Suitability to skin type	10 (42%)	65 (68%)	13 (62%)	22 (65%)	110
Doctor's Advice	-	2	-	-	-
Number of respondents	24	96	21	34	175

The women consumers belonging to 11-20 age categories consider quality and fragrance of the Soap for their brand preference. The women of 21-30, 31-40 and 41-50 age categories prefer a particular branded soap with high quality, fragrance and suitability to their skin type. This shows their health consciousness in selecting a soap brand over ages. This is evident from the proportion of women who prefers suitability to skin type over ages especially after 21 years of age. It is increasing from 42% to 68%. In general, the price consciousness for soap among women is found to be low. This is yet another important point on the consumer behaviour of women for soaps. A considerable consumer relies on the medicinal value for their brand selection especially in the 21 to 30 age categories.

3.1 BRAND SHIFT PATTERN

A total of 98 women have shifted to different brands of Soaps from their previous age span and 77 of them are using the same soap brand in their respective age categories (Table.4). The trial of new and other brands is found to be increasing when women are crossing the teen age from 11 – 20 age categories to 21 – 30 age categories. When women attain the 41-50 age category, they

tend to stick on to a particular brand and their interest to try new brands is diminishing. A closer observation reveals that a greater number of brand changes is happening specifically at ages of 15, 30 and 40 years. A major switchover happened from an International brand house to a south Indian brand among all age categories. The shift is in favor of that sandal based south Indian brand.

Table.4. Brand shift Pattern over ages

Brand Shift	Age Category				Total
	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	
Shifted Brands from previous age span	16	57	14	11	98
Continuing same brand from previous age span	8	39	7	23	77
Number of respondents	24	96	21	34	175

Table.5. Brand Trial Pattern by women over ages

Number of Soaps tried earlier	Age category				Total
	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	
1	31%	54%	57%	54%	51%
2	25%	37%	21%	27%	32%
3	31%	7%	14%	9%	12%
4	6%	-	-	-	1%
5	6%	2%	7%	9%	4%

Table.6. Brand Switch and reasons

Reasons for Switch over	Age Category				Total
	11-20	21-30	31-40	>41	
Price	2	6	2	-	10
Advertisement	4	9	2	1	16
Doctor's Advice	-	14	1	3	18
Influence by others	4	13	2	2	21
Non-Availability	1	-	3	-	4
Curious to try new soap varieties	6	23	9	5	43
Packaging	1	6	-	-	7
Poor Quality	1	10	1	1	13
Offers	0	1	1	-	2
Not suitable to skin type	0	1	-	1	2
Others	-	1	1	-	2
Total	16	57	14	11	98

On an average, the women respondents tried 1 to 3 soap brands earlier. The maximum number of brands tried is found to be 5. The proportion of women who tried 4 or 5 soap brands seems to be a negligible 5 % only. Wide range of trials is seen in the age group of 11 to 20 as they are in their teens wherein, they may be curious to try new brands. This is a noteworthy finding for soap marketers.

The Table.6 exhibits the reasons for brand shift among women of different age groups. 98 women who tried different soap brands had their own reasons for the brand shift. Most of them had the curiosity to try new brands as the prime reason. Also, they were influenced by others/doctors and attracted by advertisements and other promotions given by the soap marketers. Price is not a big reason for the shift. For some brands, poor quality made women to switch over.

4. CONCLUSION

A Tier 2 town like Sivakasi too having women who are neophilic for soaps is an interesting outcome of this study. Women here are both brand loyals and brand switchers. Those who are loyal as well as who are switching brands, mostly end up with the similar kind of decision with regard to the brand. Their focus is on the suitability of soap for their skin type. Till they get such a skin specific brand, their search goes on with a number of brand trials. Interestingly majority of them finally settled on a sandal-based soap which is from a south Indian based soap manufacturing house. This is true irrespective of their age group. The major switchover was from a popular Neem-Tulsi-Aloe vera based soap and a beauty bar from the same multinational brand house to a sandal based south Indian brand. This shows the strong presence and brand loyalty for that south Indian brand in the market under study. The switching pattern is aligning with the ageing pattern of women.

Most of the brand change happens at 15 or 30 or 40 years of their age. After 40 years of age, the brand shift is found to be reducing among women. This may be attributed to other domestic preferences of women than a brand of soap or they might have got their kind of soap by that time. This study may be the first attempt to assess the interrelationship between age of women and soap brands. Rather than the promotions and other beauty aspects, women choose soap brand for their skin suitability. This draws attention to the brand houses marketing women soaps. The outcome of this study is noteworthy for women soap marketers on how they can develop their product and promote their brand taking the ageing pattern of women consumers.

This study has a future scope to extend it to a broader research across different tiers of cities or among rural and urban population which may give a wider perspective on women consumption behavior for soap brands.

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