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BUYER AWARENESS TOWARDS NESTLÉ INDIA BABY FOOD PRODUCTS IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates buyer awareness towards Nestlé baby food products in India and explores how various demographic factors influence this awareness. The study adopts a convenience sampling methods to ensure representation from different demographic groups. Data is collected through structured questionnaires. The questionnaire includes items related to buyer awareness of Nestlé baby food products and demographic information, including gender, age, educational qualification, and monthly income. The baby food product portfolio of Nestlé India includes a variety of options, such as infant formula, cereals, purees, snacks, and beverages. These products are carefully formulated to meet the specific nutritional requirements of different age groups and developmental stages of infants and toddlers. In recent years, Nestlé India has introduced innovative products to meet the evolving needs and preferences of Indian consumers. These products often incorporate locally relevant ingredients and flavors while maintaining the company's commitment to nutrition and quality. The findings of this study will contribute valuable insights into the perception and awareness of Nestlé baby food products among Indian consumers. Ultimately, the study aims to enhance consumer knowledge and contribute to the development of safer and more effective baby food products in the Indian market.

KEYWORDS: Buyer awareness, Nutritional requirements, Innovative products, Company's commitment, Consumer knowledge

INTRODUCTION

In India, Nestlé is a well-known and trusted brand that offers a wide range of baby food products catering to the nutritional needs of infants and toddlers. Nestlé has established itself as a leading player in the baby food industry globally, providing high-quality products that prioritize the health and well-being of young children.

Customer perception refers to the way consumers perceive and evaluate a brand or its products based on their experiences, beliefs, and attitudes. Understanding customer perception is crucial for companies like Nestlé as it provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of their marketing strategies, product quality, and overall brand image.

Nestlé has been operating in India for several decades, continually expanding its portfolio of baby food products. The company's commitment to stringent quality standards, nutritional expertise, and extensive research and development has garnered the trust of Indian consumers. Nestlé offers a diverse range of baby food products, including infant formula, cereals, purees, snacks, and beverages, catering to the specific needs and developmental stages of infants and toddlers.

One significant factor influencing customer perception is the quality and safety of the products. Nestlé has implemented strict quality control measures to ensure the purity and nutritional value of its baby food products. By adhering to international guidelines and regulations, Nestlé aims to provide parents with the assurance that their products are safe and reliable for their children's consumption.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The following is the main objective of this study

1. The study aims to analyze the relationships between gender, age, educational qualification, and monthly income with buyer awareness.

RESEARCH DESIGN

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- ❖ Utilize quantitative research methods to collect and analyze data.
- ❖ Adopt a convenience sampling approach to select participants from Tirunelveli District.

SAMPLING

- ❖ Use convenience sampling to select participants who are customers or caregivers of infants using Nestle baby food products.
- ❖ Sample size of 487 participants

DATA COLLECTION

- ❖ Conduct a survey to gather data on buyer awareness towards Nestle baby food products.

DATA ANALYSIS

- ❖ Applied statistical tests, such as Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and mean rank analysis, to analyze the survey data.
- ❖ Utilize the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test to compare perceptions among different demographic groups or customer segments.
- ❖ Calculate mean ranks to determine the average perception of Nestle baby food products.

STUDY AREA

- ❖ Focus the study on Tirunelveli District to obtain localized insights into buyer awareness. Consider the district's population demographics and its relevance to Nestle's market presence.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The following are the hypothesis of this study

- ❖ H_0 – There is no significant difference between gender and buyer awareness

- ❖ H_0 – There is no significant difference between age and buyer awareness
- ❖ H_0 – There is no significant difference between educational qualification and buyer awareness
- ❖ H_0 – There is no significant difference between monthly income and buyer awareness

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pradeepa, V., et al(2019) said that the significance of the baby food sector is growing globally, driven by factors such as rising awareness, higher income levels, and changes in consumer habits. For various reasons, a majority of mothers are opting for baby food formula. The quality of food holds immense importance in people's lives, and they are increasingly concerned about nutrition, food safety, and environmental factors that influence their acceptance of food products.

Nandal, N., et al(2020) expressed that the present era, the market has become increasingly customer-centric, with all business activities revolving around satisfying customers through effective service and meeting their needs. Baby products of high quality tend to be expensive, prompting companies to continually strive for innovation in order to develop the most advanced offerings. Parents are primarily concerned with acquiring the best products for their children to ensure their safety and well-being. Rather than blindly relying on advertisements, parents conduct thorough research on the Internet, exploring product websites, consumer reports, blogs, and other sources, before making a decision that best suits their requirements.

Pandian, K., et al (2010) explained that the generation of children who are healthy contributes to a generation of youthful individuals filled with energy and vitality. It is these upcoming citizens who play a crucial role in shaping the social and economic progress of the nation.

Dhanesh, G. S., et al (2018) analysed that Nestle India encountered a significant challenge within the realm of global public relations, which encompasses various cultural aspects such as political, economic, media, societal, and activist cultures. Our examination revealed that despite Nestle's extensive history in the country as a multinational corporation, it faced difficulties in adapting to the intricate cultural dynamics of the host nation. In the specific case of Nestle India, while factors like the political economy and the influence of Westernization in urban India contributed to the success of its instant noodles, the company also struggled to navigate the effects of media commercialization, pressure from activists, and unpredictable regulatory enforcement, not to mention the impact of cultural nationalism.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Age wise Classification of the respondents

Age		
Particulars	No. of respondents	Percent
Below 20	47	10
21-30	226	46
31-40	186	38
41-50	16	3
Above 51	12	3
Total	487	100

Gender wise Classification of the respondents

Gender		
Particulars	No. of respondents	Percent
Male	352	72
Female	135	28

Total	487	100
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Educational Qualification wise Classification of the respondents

Educational Qualification		
Particulars	No. of respondents	Percent
SSLC	40	08
Up to HSC	56	12
UG Degree	272	56
PG Degree	78	16
Diploma	31	06
Professional Degree	10	02
Total	487	100

Monthly income wise Classification of the respondents

Monthly income		
Particulars	No. of respondents	Percent
Below Rs.10,000	50	10
Rs.10,001- Rs.20,000	194	40
Rs.20,001- Rs.30,000	142	29
Rs.30,001- Rs.40,000	57	12
Rs.40,001-50,000	32	07
Above Rs.50,001	12	02
Total	487	100

Descriptive Statistic

1. Ho – There is no significant difference between gender and buyer awareness

The present study investigates the relationship between gender and buyer awareness in the preference for Nestle products. Specifically, the study examines the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between gender and buyer awareness in preferring Nestle products. Buyer awareness refers to individuals' knowledge and consciousness about a brand or product, while gender represents the socially constructed roles and characteristics associated with being male or female. By analyzing data using statistical techniques such as Mann Whitney U test, this study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on consumer behavior and provide insights for Nestle's marketing strategies targeted towards different genders.

Particular	Gender	No. of Respondents	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Buyer Awareness	Male	352	254.26	20148.500	-2.601	.009	Reject
	Female	135	217.25				
	Total	487					

The "Mean Rank" is a measure of the average rank given by each group regarding buyer awareness. In this study, male respondents have a mean rank of 254.26, while female respondents have a mean rank of 217.25. A higher mean rank indicates a higher level of buyer awareness.

To determine if there is a significant difference in buyer awareness between male and female respondents, the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. The Mann-Whitney U value obtained is 20148.500, which represents the sum of ranks for the two groups. It assesses the difference in ranks between the male and female respondents.

The "Z" value obtained is -2.601. The Z value is derived from the Mann-Whitney U test and indicates the number of standard deviations the U value deviates from the expected mean. In this case, a negative Z value suggests that male respondents have higher buyer awareness rank compared to female respondents.

The "Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)" value is 0.009, which is the p-value associated with the Mann-Whitney U test. It represents the probability of obtaining the observed results by chance alone. In this study, the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. Thus, there is a significant difference in buyer awareness between male and female respondents.

In summary, the research reveals that male respondents have a higher mean rank for buyer awareness compared to female respondents. The Mann-Whitney U test confirms a significant difference between the two groups, suggesting that gender influences buyer awareness.

2. Ho – There is no significant difference between age and buyer awareness

The objective of this study is to examine the potential relationship between age and buyer awareness in the preference for Nestle products. The hypothesis under investigation is that there is no significant difference between age and buyer awareness in preferring Nestle products. Buyer awareness refers to individuals' knowledge and familiarity with Nestle products, while age represents the chronological age of the consumers. Understanding how age influences buyer awareness is crucial for Nestle to tailor their marketing efforts and effectively target different age groups. By employing statistical analyses such as Kruskal-Wallis tests, this study aims to provide insights into the role of age in shaping buyer awareness and inform Nestle's marketing strategies to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of different age segments.

Particular	Age	No. of Respondents	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis Test	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Buyer Awareness	Below 20	47	270.22	8.819	4	0.066	Retain
	21-30	226	247.5				
	31-40	186	243.08				
	41-50	16	156.84				
	Above 51	12	205.92				
	Total	487					

To further analyze the differences in buyer awareness among the age groups, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted. The Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric statistical test used to compare ranks among multiple groups. In this study, the test resulted in a chi-square value of 8.819 with 4 degrees of freedom. The associated p-value, known as "Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)," is 0.066.

The p-value of 0.066 suggests that there is no significant difference in buyer awareness among the age groups at the conventional significance level of 0.05. However, it is important to note that the p-value is relatively close to the significance threshold, indicating a marginal level of significance.

3. Ho – There is no significant difference between educational qualification and buyer awareness

The purpose of this study is to investigate the potential association between educational qualification and buyer awareness concerning Nestle products. The hypothesis under examination is that there is no significant difference between educational qualification

and buyer awareness in Nestle products. Buyer awareness pertains to consumers' level of knowledge and familiarity with Nestle products, while educational qualification represents the academic background and attainment of the consumers. Understanding how educational qualification impacts buyer awareness is essential for Nestle to tailor their marketing strategies and effectively engage consumers with varying educational backgrounds.

By employing statistical methods such as Kruskal-Wallis tests and mean rank calculations, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the role of educational qualification in shaping buyer awareness and offer recommendations to Nestle for reaching and appealing to consumers from diverse educational backgrounds.

Particular	Educational Qualification	No. of Respondents	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis Test	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Buyer Awareness	SSLC	40	201.26	9.799	5	.081	Retain
	HSC	56	276.35				
	UG Degree	272	237.19				
	PG Degree	78	264.56				
	Diploma	31	236.42				
	Professional Degree	10	282.10				
	Total	487					

The "Mean Rank" represents the average rank assigned by each educational qualification group to buyer awareness. Among the groups, respondents with a Professional Degree have the highest mean rank of 282.10, indicating a relatively higher level of buyer awareness in this group.

To further analyze the differences in buyer awareness among the educational qualification groups, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted. The Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric statistical test used to compare ranks among multiple groups. In this study, the test yielded a chi-square value of 9.799 with 5 degrees of freedom. The associated p-value, known as "Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)," is 0.081.

The p-value of 0.081 suggests that there is no significant difference in buyer awareness among the educational qualification groups at the conventional significance level of 0.05. However, it is important to note that the p-value is relatively close to the significance threshold, indicating a marginal level of significance.

In summary, the research indicates that respondents with a Professional Degree have the highest mean rank for buyer awareness

4. Ho – There is no significant difference between monthly income and buyer awareness

The aim of this study is to examine the potential association between monthly income and buyer awareness in the context of Nestle products. The hypothesis under scrutiny is that there is no significant difference between monthly income and buyer awareness. Buyer awareness refers to consumers' knowledge and familiarity with Nestle products, while monthly income represents the financial capacity of the consumers. Understanding how monthly income might influence buyer awareness is crucial for Nestle to tailor their marketing strategies and effectively reach consumers from different income groups. By utilizing statistical methods like Kruskal-Wallis tests and mean rank calculations, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the role of monthly income in shaping buyer awareness and offer recommendations to Nestle for better engaging and appealing to consumers from diverse income levels.

Particular	Monthly Income	No. of Respondents	Mean Rank	Kruskal Wallis Test	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Buyer Awareness	Below Rs.10,000	50	265.54	3.644	5	.602	Retain
	Rs.10,001- Rs.20,000	193	250.38				
	Rs.20,001- Rs.30,000	153	240.90				
	Rs.30,001- Rs.40,000	54	220.94				
	Rs.40,001-50,000	19	234.00				
	Above Rs.50,001	18	221.83				
	Total	487					

The "Mean Rank" represents the average rank assigned by each income group to buyer awareness. Among the groups, respondents with a monthly income between Rs.10,001 and Rs.20,000 have the highest mean rank of 250.38, indicating a relatively higher level of buyer awareness in this income range.

To further analyze the differences in buyer awareness among the income groups, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted. The Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric statistical test used to compare ranks among multiple groups. In this study, the test yielded a chi-square value of 3.644 with 5 degrees of freedom. The associated p-value, known as "Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)," is 0.602.

The p-value of 0.602 indicates that there is no significant difference in buyer awareness among the income groups at the conventional significance level of 0.05. This suggests that monthly income does not have a strong impact on buyer awareness in this context.

FINDINGS

1. Male respondents have a higher mean rank for buyer awareness compared to female respondents. The Mann-Whitney U test confirms a significant difference between the two groups, suggesting that gender influences buyer awareness.
2. Given the p-value of 0.066, which is slightly above the conventional significance level of 0.05, there is a suggestion that there may not be a significant difference in buyer awareness among the age groups in this study.
3. The research indicates that respondents with a Professional Degree have the highest mean rank for buyer awareness. However, it is important to note that the p-value is relatively close to the significance threshold, indicating a marginal level of significance.
4. Based on the p-value of 0.602, which exceeds the conventional significance level of 0.05, it suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in buyer awareness among the income groups in this study. Therefore, it can be concluded that income does not have a significant impact on buyer awareness in this context.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Refine Targeted Advertising Channels: Based on the effectiveness of different advertising channels, such as television, radio, print, and digital media, consider reallocating advertising budgets to focus on the channels that have shown the highest impact on buyer awareness. This will help optimize advertising efforts and ensure that resources are allocated strategically to reach and engage the target audience effectively.
2. Strengthen Digital Marketing Strategies: Given the potential influence of digital marketing strategies, such as social media and online advertisements, consider enhancing and expanding digital marketing campaigns. Invest in targeted online advertising, collaborate with parenting influencers or bloggers, and engage with consumers through social media platforms to maximize brand exposure and create awareness among the digital-savvy consumer segment.

3. **Improve Product Packaging and Branding:** Since packaging and branding elements play a significant role in buyer awareness, consider refining the design, messaging, and visual appeal of the packaging for Nestlé India baby food products. Conduct consumer research and feedback surveys to ensure that the packaging effectively communicates product benefits, safety features, and differentiation, thus capturing consumers' attention and increasing brand recognition.
4. **Foster Consumer Education and Engagement:** Given the importance of consumer knowledge and perceptions, implement educational initiatives to increase awareness about the nutritional value, safety standards, and product benefits of Nestlé India baby food products. Develop informative content, organize workshops or seminars for parents, and leverage digital platforms to disseminate educational materials, thus empowering consumers to make informed choices and building trust in the brand.
5. **Monitor and Analyze Consumer Feedback:** Continuously monitor and analyze consumer feedback, including online reviews, social media conversations, and customer surveys, to identify areas for improvement and gauge the effectiveness of advertising and marketing strategies. Address any concerns or misconceptions promptly, respond to customer queries, and use the feedback to refine messaging and communication strategies, thereby enhancing buyer awareness and perception.

By implementing these suggestions, Nestlé India can strengthen its advertising and marketing strategies to enhance buyer awareness of its baby food products.

CONCLUSION

Customer perception plays a crucial role in determining the success of any brand, including Nestlé's baby food products in India. Nestlé's commitment to quality, safety, nutrition, and continuous innovation has established a positive perception among Indian customers. By conducting comprehensive studies and analyzing customer feedback, Nestlé can further enhance its products and services to meet the evolving needs

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