

## Brand Consciousness of Women Consumers

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### **Abstract**

*Brand consciousness is the new trend in the consumer market. Today's women are going for brands which involves big name, trendy looks and style. The market is now dominated by brands which the people in the earlier days would not have thought of because of the prices and their mind set. The kind of fierce brand loyalty that women consumers have today for their respective brands is commendable. The trend of **being brand conscious** is a similarity between the young women and the working class. The prices and extensive promotions of brands are also one of the main reasons for women to become brand conscious. Women are multiple markets they buy for themselves, they buy for their families, in increasing numbers, and they buy for their business. She is the chief purchasing agent of the family. She is extremely brand – attuned and does a lot of research before buying. Thus it is high time that marketers and manufacturers realize, understand and recognize women as a lucrative segment and start developing concepts and create branded products that are women centric, which reap high growth potential. Hence the present study was undertaken to study the level of brand consciousness existing among women consumers and its effect on family buying behavior. Some of the major findings of the study were older women have high brand consciousness due to their experience with their favorite brand compared to middle aged women. High Brand Consciousness is found among women consumers employed in private organization.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Successful brands live in the hearts and minds of the consumer. A brand is been defined as, “an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values that match their needs most closely.”(Freire and Caldwell, 2004) Brands have a social and emotional value for the users. According to a study by Mademoiselle Magazine, today’s females are “more likely to know what brands they want before they go shopping.”(Parks, 1997).In comparison with males, females shop more, and they search for more information when they make purchase decisions. It is assumed that females will pay more attention to brands and place more value on brand names.

Women, with her increasing financial power, has a greater discretionary income and utilizes it to satisfy wants that have gone beyond these to include holidays abroad, personal vehicles, electronic goods etc.Women are the most influential consumer group because they directly purchase or determine purchasing decisions for not less than 80 percent of all products sold. Women are multiple markets they buy for themselves, they buy for their families, in increasing numbers, and they buy for their business. She is the chief purchasing agent of the family. She is extremely brand – attuned and does a lot of research before buying. Thus it is high time that marketers and manufacturers realize, understand and recognize women as a lucrative segment and start developing concepts and create branded products that are women centric, which reap high growth potential.

## **2. Personal Care Product Industry**

Personal care products are generally used for personal health and hygiene. It includes products like body talc, body scrub, tooth paste, tooth brush; tongue cleaner, tooth powder, bathing salts, bathing gel, essential oils, moisturizer, skin creams, face wash, hair oil, hair shampoo, hair conditioner, soap, nail and cuticle care products. The personal care product market was a success on all counts in 2005-2006 with good performances. The major demand is for the products that are of basic need for the consumers like soap, shampoo, hair oil etc. The personal care products industry consists of four major sub-sectors manufacturing a range of products. These sub-sectors are:

- Face Care Products
- Hand and Foot Care Products
- Hair Care Products
- Cosmetics

Factors Influencing the Growth of Personal Care Products;

The global personal care products industry is growing at a very rapid pace; some of the factors responsible are:

- Rise in consumer spending power,

- Increased demand due to people consciousness,
- Key demographic factors,
- Entry of herbal and organic products,
- Lifestyle and climactic changes, and
- Massive advertising and promotion strategy

### **3. Review of Literature**

Brand consciousness means being aware of popular brands and wanting to buy particular brands rather than others (Cambridge Dictionaries Online). Someone who is brand consciousness only likes to buy products made by certain famous companies (Financial Times, Lexicon). Brand consciousness is defined as the need or desire to purchase well-known national brands, higher priced brands and/or the most advertised brands. Sproles and Kendall (1986), well-known brand names often make a social statement about an individual's status, such as Rolex watches, BMW vehicles, Sony electronics, and GUCCI textiles Wanke, Bohner, and Jurkowitsch (1997). This belief may or may not be accurate or realistic; however, it reflects a specific decision-making outcome for the consumers who purchase these items. Brand consciousness plays an important part in society, and breeds the belief that higher prices mean higher quality. Recently, the rising of Brand consciousness has made women consumers choose to purchase their familiar and favourable brand. Therefore, if businesses want to defeat their competitors, they have to make consumers love to buy their products and brands.

Griese and Kilzer (1997); Sethuraman (2000) in their previous research has shown that various components of utility must first of all be identified when observing brand consciousness. In addition to aspects of quality and risk reduction, well-known brands may be preferred because of their prestige, their emotional value, or the ethical behaviour on the part of the company.

Strebinger (2001) in a study on CBC studied the social, emotional or normative motives for brand-conscious behaviour, which is defined as the strength of the consumer's conviction that well-known brands as a rule provide greater expectancy value of quality than those which are not widely advertised or are not so well-known. But even when focusing on this quality-based dimension of brand consciousness there seems to be considerable heterogeneity, not only between consumers, but also within individual consumers. From an aggregate perspective it can be seen that the level of CBC varies greatly between product categories, being higher for consumer durables than for consumer nondurables.

Lachance, J.J. Beaudoin, P. and Robitaille, J. (2003) analysed consumption attitudes by examining brand consciousness. Brand consciousness is a notion that brands play an important role in the psychological process that precedes the buying act. Gentry J.W., Putrevu

S, Schutz C.H. and Commuri S. (2001) mention brand consciousness as a method to gauge how consumers feel about or process information related to imitation brands. Consumers also feel that 'only loyal or brand conscious customers can pick out differences from a counterfeit product.

Grimm (1995); Kaplitza (1997) defined brand consciousness as the belief that well-known brands are superior to less well-known brands, thus becomes one of the most important influences on the purchasing decision. Whereas commercial market research is mainly concerned with regular observation of brand consciousness, academic research has traditionally placed more emphasis on investigation into the measurement of, motives for and effects of brand consciousness Meffert and Bruhn (1984); Kapferer and Laurent (1992); Bekmeier-Feuerhahn (1998); Burton *et al.* (1998); Sethuraman (2000); Ailawadi *et al.* (2001); Koppe (2001).

Gwen Achenreiner and Leah Rausch (2001) mentioned brand consciousness is more than an awareness or preference for brand names. It is the understanding that brand names, have personal relevance or value in that they serve as a signal of functional or symbolic value. Kapferer J.N. and Laurent, G. (1985) and Shim, S., Synder L. and Gehrt K.C. (1995) studied brand consciousness or sensitivity as a concept to manage brands. It is a way to understand consumer socialization process.

Nelson M.R. and Devanathan N. (2005) mentions brand consciousness like materialism, is not the same for everyone and should be regarded as an individual difference variable. Some individuals are particularly attuned or conscious of brands in general and this consumer style impacts how likely they attend to and think favourably of brand names.

Keum H., Devanathan N., Deshpande S., Nelson M.R. and Shah D.V. (2004) in their research shows that those consumers who are brand-conscious look to and appreciate the media and celebrities for information related to the latest fashions, trends and brands. Marketing to women delivers a better return on the marketing dollar through both higher customer acquisition and greater customer retention. Because women are more inclined to long term brand relationships, enhanced loyalty means every marketing dollar invested in acquiring female customers' results in a higher retention rate Barletta (2003). If marketers recognize the growing importance of women consumers and cater to their needs and likings, it will surely result in a win-win situation for both.

#### **4. Objectives of the Study**

- ★ To study the demographic profile of the women consumers.
- ★ To study the reasons for brand shift existing among women consumers.
- ★ To measure the time period of usage of selected brand of personal care products.

- ★ To study the relationship of brand consciousness with consumers brand awareness, brand association, brand performance, brand knowledge and brand loyalty.
- ★ To study the association between brand consciousness and demographic characteristics of the women consumers.

## 5. Research Methodology

Descriptive research was used for the study. The data was collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected with the help of a structured and undisguised questionnaire among 500 women consumers residing in Chennai in the age group 18 and above, who use personal care products such as bathing soap, talcum powder, shampoo, tooth paste. Secondary data was collected from previous dissertations/research papers/marketing journals/magazines/text books and websites. Convenience sampling technique was employed and the statistical tools used were chi square, K- means cluster analysis, ranking analysis and Co-relation analysis.

## 6. Analysis & Interpretation

### 6.1 Demographic profile

Table 1.1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents

Description	No. of respondents	% of respondents
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 25	87	17.4
26-35	35	7.0
36-45	149	29.8
Above 45	229	45.8
TOTAL	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational qualification</b>		
School level	248	49.6
Diploma/ UG	116	23.2
Post graduation	71	14.2
Professional	65	13.0
TOTAL	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	307	61.4
Unmarried	193	38.6
TOTAL	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Govt. Employee	103	20.6
Private Employee	204	40.8
Business	40	8.0
Self employed	59	11.8

House wife	51	10.2
Student	43	8.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Family Income</b>		
<5000	234	46.8
5000 – 10000	101	20.2
10001 – 15000	48	9.6
15001 – 20000	23	4.6
Above 20000	94	18.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Family Size</b>		
2 Only	248	49.6
3-5	116	23.2
6 and above	136	27.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1.1 shows that majority of the women are above 45years, having an educational qualification up to School level. These women are married, employed in private organization having a family income less than Rs.5000 per month and their family size consists of two members.

## 6.2 Brand Awareness of Respondents towards Personal Care Products

The following table 1.2 delineates the above inference with precision.

Table 1.2 Awareness of Respondents towards Personal Care Products

<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	441	88.2
No	59	11.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

Out of 500 respondents 441 (88.2%) respondents are having information about the various brands in personal care products.

## 6.3 Respondents Opinion towards Brand Shift

Women respondents of various profiles are very receptive and much concerned about the type of brand they use. They look and search for brands which define their inner self. Since the market is flooded by various brands, women consumers have wider choice to select their

favourite brand, which defines themselves. The following table 1.3 displays the opinion of women consumers towards brand shift.

Table 1.3 Respondents Opinion towards Brand Shift

<b>Brand Shift</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
No	447	89.4
Yes	53	10.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

From the above table, it is found that 89.4% of women say no to brand shift followed by 10.6% of women say yes to brand shift of personal care product. This reveals that women consumers stay loyal to their favorite brands.

#### **6.4 Reasons for Brand Shift**

The primary data regarding the reason for brand shift of personal care products is collected through ranking method. Various options like Price, Quality, Quantity, Advertisement, Influence of friends or relatives, to have change in the usage of the brand, free gifts or offers are given to the consumers to mark their preference. The ranking analysis is performed on these seven different options to ascertain the reason for brand shift. The following ranking table 1.4 displays the reason for brand shift of women consumers towards personal care products.

Table 1.4 Reasons for Brand Shift

<b>Reason for Brand Shift</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Price	500	3.5086	1
Quality	500	4.4029	7
Quantity	500	3.6657	2
Advertisement	500	3.9657	3
Influence of Friends or Relatives	500	4.2200	6
To have change in the usage of the brand	500	4.1857	5
Free gifts or Offers	500	4.1486	4

Source: Primary Data

From the above table 1.4, it is identified that the women consumers consider Price, quantity and advertisement to be the important reason for brand shift followed by free gifts, to have a change in the usage of the brand, influence of friends and quality to be the other reasons for brand shift when purchasing personal care products.

### 6.5 Time Period of Using the Same Brand

Brand audience is able to access information more quickly than ever before. They have greater choice in products than any previous generation has had. They are more discerning, savvy and better connected than generations of the past. They are able to voice their opinions online or elsewhere, to tell brands what they think and to choose from any competitor if one brand fails to meet their expectations. Women consumers are usually brand loyal towards personal care products. The following table 1.5 depicts the time period of usage of preferred brand of personal care products.

Table 1.5 Time Period of Using the Same Brand

<b>Personal care products</b>	<b>Less than 3 years</b>	<b>3-5 years</b>	<b>5-7 years</b>	<b>7-9 years</b>	<b>More than 10 years</b>	<b>Total</b>
Shampoo	10 (2%)	46 (9.2%)	13 (2.6%)	324 (64.8)	107 (21.4%)	500 (100%)
Talcum powder	30 (6%)	60 (12%)	44 (8.8)	264 (52.8)	102 (20.4%)	500 (100%)
Bathing Soap	60 (12%)	226 (45.2%)	0 (0)	181 (36.2%)	33 (6.6%)	500 (100%)
Tooth paste	46 (9.2%)	294 (58.8%)	20 (4%)	89 (17.8%)	51 (10.25)	500 (100%)

Source: Primary Data

From the above table 1.5, it is inferred that women consumers use their preferred brand of shampoo and talcum powder for 7-9 years, followed by women consumer using bathing soap and tooth paste of the same brand for 3-5 years. This shows that when it comes to personal care product purchase women consumer remain loyal to their respective brands at least for some years.

### 6.6 Relationship of Brand Consciousness with Brand Elements

Many national and international literatures acknowledged that Brand Consciousness and its association with brand consciousness elements will have relationship with the elements such as brand awareness, brand association, brand performance, brand knowledge, and brand loyalty. This statement is verified through parametric Karl Pearson's co-efficient of correlation. This helps to establish the nature of relationship between brand consciousness elements and their influence on brand awareness, brand association, brand performance, brand knowledge and brand loyalty.



**Hypothesis 1:** Brand awareness, brand association, brand performance and brand knowledge do not predict brand consciousness.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between brand consciousness and brand loyalty among women consumers of personal care products.

In this section the researcher is interested to establish the relationship between brand consciousness and its elements. This hypothesis is verified by parametric Karl Pearson's Coefficient of correlation. The following table 1.6 depicts the relationship of brand consciousness and brand elements.

Table 1.6 Correlations between Brand Consciousness and Brand Elements

Elements of Brand consciousness	Correlation	Brand Awareness	Brand Association	Brand Performance	Brand knowledge	Brand Loyalty	Brand Consciousness
Brand Awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	.678(**)	.613(**)	.465(**)	.592(**)	.660(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	500	500	500	500	500	498
Brand Association	Pearson Correlation	.678(**)	1	.578(**)	.627(**)	.798(**)	.542(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	500	500	500	500	500	498
Brand Performance	Pearson Correlation	.613(**)	.578(**)	1	.480(**)	.559(**)	.449(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	500	500	500	500	500	498
Brand knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.465(**)	.627(**)	.480(**)	1	.716(**)	.436(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	500	500	500	500	500	498
Brand Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.592(**)	.798(**)	.559(**)	.716(**)	1	.530(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	500	500	500	500	500	498
Brand consciousness	Pearson Correlation	.660(**)	.542(**)	.449(**)	.436(**)	.530(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	498	498	498	498	498	498

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the above analysis it is evident from the above analysis that brand awareness, brand association, brand performance and brand knowledge predicts brand consciousness and similarly there is an association between brand consciousness and brand loyalty of personal care products.

### 6.7 Segmenting Women Consumers Based on the Level of Brand Consciousness

The application of K-means cluster analysis on brand conscious elements namely brand awareness, brand association, brand performance, brand knowledge, brand loyalty classifies the sample unit into two predominant heterogeneous groups. These groups possess various heterogeneous characteristics in varying degrees of awareness, association, performance, knowledge and loyalty. These heterogeneous groups and their characteristics are identified through the average mean scores for various elements of brand awareness, brand association, brand performance, brand knowledge and brand loyalty. The following table 1.7 indicates the output of K means cluster analysis.

Table 1.7 Final Cluster Centers

	<b>Cluster</b>	
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Brand Awareness	3.40	4.97
Brand Association	3.35	4.94
Brand Performance	3.65	4.99
Brand Knowledge	3.16	4.90
Brand Loyalty	3.39	5.00

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.7.1 Number of Cases in each Cluster

<b>Clusters</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Moderate Brand conscious	31	6.2
High Brand conscious	469	93.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

From the above table 1.7.1 it is found that the average mean scores of brand awareness, brand association, brand performance, brand knowledge and brand loyalty in the first cluster is moderate. Whereas in second cluster the perception towards the elements of brand consciousness is very high.

The first group consists of 31 women respondents (6.2%) with moderate brand conscious towards personal care products. And the second cluster comprises the maximum number of 469 women respondents (93.8%) who express strong agreements for brand awareness, brand association, brand performance, brand knowledge and brand loyalty. Therefore this cluster is known as high brand conscious cluster.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant association between brand consciousness and demographic characteristics of the women consumers.

In this section the researcher is interested to establish the association between different segmentation of demographic characteristics and moderate as well as high brand conscious segmentation.

### 6.8 Chi square Analysis

Chi square analysis was employed to know whether or not there exists a significant association between demographic variables and brand consciousness of women consumers.

Table 1.8 Showing the relationship between Demographic variables and Brand consciousness of Women

Description	Chi square value	Df	Significant value
Age	8.683(a)	3	.034
Educational	2.946(a)	3	.400
Occupation	11.406(a)	5	.044
Income	19.098(a)	4	.001
Marital Staus	1.336(b)	1	.248
Family size	1.559(a)	2	.459

At 5% significant level

From the above analysis chi-square value is .034, .044, .001, are statistically significant at 5% level. Therefore it can be concluded that hypothesis 3 is rejected at 5% level and concluded that there is a significant association between the level of brand consciousness and demographic characteristics of the women consumers.

## 7. Findings

- ❖ Majority of the women are above 45years, having an educational qualification up to School level. These women are married, employed in private organization having a family income less than Rs.5000 per month.
- ❖ Family size is an important factor while purchasing personal care products. 49.6% of women consumers have two members in their family.
- ❖ Brand shift is found among 89.4% of women consumers whereas 10.6% of women consumers shift their respective brand of personal care products.
- ❖ Ranking analysis was performed to analyse the reasons for brand shift. It was found that women consumer consider price, quantity and advertisement to be the important reason for brand shift followed by free gifts, to have change in the usage of brand, influence of friends and quality to be other reasons.
- ❖ Women consumers use the preferred brand of shampoo and talcum powder for 7-9 years, followed by bathing soap and toothpaste used between 3-5 years.

- ❖ K-means cluster analysis revealed the existence of two predominant heterogeneous groups. The first group consists of 31 (61.2%) women respondents with moderate brand consciousness and 469 (93.8%) of women respondents with high brand consciousness.
- ❖ Chi-square technique was employed to know whether or not there exists a significant association between socio-economic characteristics and brand consciousness of women consumers. It is found that there is a strong association between age, occupation, Income of the women consumers and their perception towards brand consciousness. It is also evident that older women have high brand consciousness due to their experience with their favourite brand compared to middle aged women. High Brand Consciousness is found among women consumers employed in private organization.
- ❖ Women consumers having more income have moderate brand consciousness compared to women having less income possess high brand consciousness. There is no significant association between education, family size and marital status of women consumers and the level of brand consciousness.
- ❖ Karl Pearson's co-efficient of correlation was applied to analyse the relationship of brand consciousness with its elements. Brand consciousness is positively related to brand awareness ( $r = .660$ ), brand association ( $r = .542$ ), brand performance ( $r = .449$ ), brand knowledge ( $r = .436$ ) and brand loyalty ( $r = .530$ ). It is also proved from the analysis that brand awareness, brand association, brand performance, brand knowledge predicts brand consciousness and there is an association between brand consciousness and brand loyalty of personal care products.

## **8. Conclusion**

Brands have gained renewed interest in recent years. Brand Consciousness can create advantages and benefits for the firm, the trade or the consumer. From the firm's perspective brand consciousness imparts competitive advantages to the firm. These aspects of brand consciousness typically involve uncertainties that are difficult to quantify in brand valuation studies. A strong brand can serve as an umbrella under which to launch new products or to license existing one. Brand consciousness also helps companies to endure during crisis situations, periods of reduced corporate support or shifts in consumer tastes. Strong brands also provide resistance from competitive attacks. Well-known consumer brands pay lower slotting fees and are given more shelf facings for new products than weaker brands. Brand consciousness also helps to make the brand dominant in the consumers mind.

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