A STUDY ON CONSUMER PREFERENCE AND SATISFACTION TOWARDS MICRO BRANDS IN PALANI (A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED FOOD PRODUCTS)

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Abstract
Micro brand is a small-scale brand recognized only in a certain geographic location or by consumers in a specific micro market or niche market. This study is to identify the consumer preference and satisfaction level of the respondents while using Micro brands. The data has been collected from 200 consumers in Palani by applying convenient sampling technique. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, Descriptive statistics, ANOVA and Chi-square analysis have been used to analyse the data. Finding of the study reveals that there is no significant relationship between gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, occupational status, monthly income, residential area and family size level of satisfaction of micro brands. The study has attempted to cast light on the preference of the consumers also the study has necessitated the micro brands increase the awareness about its different products which are high quality then their competitors.

Keywords: Micro brand, Consumers, Satisfaction, Preference.

Introduction
With liberalization, privatization, globalization and modernization, the modern competitive business is based on understanding the best products and services. Considering the truth that the consumer is the king, every organization wants to increase market share and profit. The competitors are also following the same strategy. It involves the psychological processes that consumers got through in recognizing needs, finding ways to solve these needs, making purchase decisions, interpret information, make plans and implement those plans by engaging in comparison shopping or actually purchasing a product. Consumer behavior is one of the stimulating and challenging areas in marketing studies being a human activity focused on the products and services. Understanding the behavior of the consumers is a great challenge.

Today, micro brands occupy a legitimate shelf space in stores and super markets in India. New and high qualities of micro brands have changed the life style of people and led to more number of Indian companies enter the market with verities of micro brands. Micro brands save time and energy.

Statement of the Problem
In a competitive market place where businesses compete for consumers, consumer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy, particularly small firms. Therefore, it is essential for businesses to effectively manage customer satisfaction.

In this backdrop, a study on consumer's preference and satisfaction with micro brands is the most important for the survival of the micro enterprises. Such an analysis will provide micro enterprises, a quantitative estimate of level of satisfaction being perceived by the consumer's. Therefore, in this study an attempt has been made to seek answer to the research questions such as how are consumer's satisfied with the micro brands in the study area what are the factors that affect consumer's satisfaction and what strategies should be initiated to satisfy the micro brand products. Hence, in the present study, an attempt has been made to analyze the consumer's preference and satisfaction with micro brands in Palani.

Scope of The Study
Micro brand food products play a vital role in every human in the day-to-day life. The present study gives an insight into important factors creating awareness and purchasing frequency of the product. It is based on a questionnaire method confined to only users of micro brand food products. The study has been restricted to be following selected micro brand food products:
1. Dairy product (Milk, Curd, Cheese and Ghee)
2. Edible oil
3. Chili Powder and Spice
4. Dry Vegetables and Papad
5. Idly, Wheat Powder and other varieties of Flours/Mix.
6. Pickles.
7. Masala powder (Veg & Non Veg).

Objectives of The Study
1. To study the factors considered for using micro brands available in the market.
2. To study the consumer preference & satisfaction towards the usage of micro brand products.

Review Of Literature
Oliver (1977)[1] has made a study on **"A Behavioural Perspective on the Consumer".** The study concluded that "Satisfaction is the consumer's fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product of service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption- related fulfillment, including levels of under- or over-fulfillment".

Oliver (1981)[2] dealt in **"Developing Better Measures of Consumer Satisfaction: Some Preliminary Results".** Explained that, "the summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumers' prior feelings about the consumption experience".

Westbrook and Reilly (1983)[3] in their study **"The Vicious Circle of Consumer Complaints"** investigated customer satisfaction as "an emotional response to the experiences provided by, associated with particular products or services purchased, retail outlets, or even molar patterns of behaviour such as shopping and buyer behaviour, as well as the overall market place" .

Kumar et al. (1987)[4] in the research **"what is means to Indian consumers?"** examined various factors influencing the purchasing decision making of different food products. Origin and brand of the products were cross-tabulated against age, gender and income. Results revealed that age, education and income were the significant factors influencing in buying decision. Consumers were attracted by the brand image than the origin of the product.

Tse and Wilton (1988)[5] in their exploratory study **"Models of Consumer Satisfaction: An Extension"** examined that, "the consumer's response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations (or some other norm of performance) and the actual performance of the product/service as perceived after its consumption"**.**

Methodology
The data has been collected from 200 Consumers in Palani by applying convenient sampling technique. Secondary data for the study have been collected from various publications in journals, magazines, website and books. Statistical tool such as Percentage analysis, Descriptive statistics, ANOVA and Chi-square analysis have been used to analyse the data.

Analysis And Interpretation
Percentage Analysis
Table No: 1,Personal Profile of The Respondents

Particulars		No. of respondents	Per cent
Gender	Male	66	33
	Female	**134**	**67**
Age	**Up to 25 years**	**57**	**28.5**
	26-30 years	46	23
	31-35 years	43	21.5
	36-40 years	38	19
	41-45 years	16	8
Marital status	**Married**	**125**	**62.5**
	Unmarried	75	37.5
Educational qualification	No school education	35	17.5
	Up to school level	32	16
	Diploma/certificate course	34	17
	Undergraduate	35	17.5
	Postgraduate	**62**	**31**
	Others	2	1

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	Student	34	17
Occupational status	**Employees**	**78**	**39**
	Agriculturalists	22	11
	Businessmen	11	5.5
	Housewives	55	27.5
Monthly income	**Up to 20,000**	**100**	**50**
	20001-30000	62	31
	Above 30000	38	19
Residential area	**Rural**	**70**	**35**
	Urban	68	34
	Semi Urban	62	31
Family size	Less than 3	36	18
	3-5	**93**	**46.5**
	More than 5	71	35.5
Frequent use of Micro brand Products	Dairy product(milk,curd,cheese&ghee)	55	27.5
	Idly'wheat powder and other varieities of flour mix	**57**	**28.5**
	Chilli powder and spice	53	26.5
	Dry vegetables and papad	35	17.5
	Edible oil	55	27.5
	Pickles	42	21
	Masala powder(veg & non veg)	56	28
Awareness about micro brand	Retail shop display	23	11.5
	News paper & magazine	61	30.5
	Tv/radio	46	23
	Friends& Relatives	**70**	**35**
Frequency of product consumption	Less than 3 years	76	38
	3-5 years	**97**	**48.5**
	More than 5 years	27	13.5
Purchase frequency	Daily	35	17.5
	Weekly once	51	25.5
	Fortnightly	31	15.5
	Monthly once	**57**	**28.5**
	Quarterly	9	4.5
	Occasionally	17	8.5
Point of purchase	Directly from manufacturer	17	8.5
	Retail grocery shop	27	13.5
	Super market	**75**	**37.5**
	Petty shop	47	23.5
	Departmental store	34	17

(Source :Computed)

It is inferred from above table that 67 percent of the respondents are female, 28.5 percent of the respondent are in the age group of up to 25 years, 62.5 percent of the respondents are married, 31 percent of the respondents are postgraduates, 39 percent of the respondents are employees, 50 percent of the respondents are belong to the income group up to Rs.20,000, 35 percent of the respondents are residing in rural area and 46.5 percent of the respondents have 3-5 members in their family, 28.5 percent of the respondents use idly, wheat powder and other variety of flours/mix, 35 percent of the respondents aware about micro brand through friends & relatives, 48.5 percent of the respondents are consuming the micro brands 3-5 years, 28.5 percent of the respondents purchase monthly once and 37.5 percent of the respondents purchase in super markets.

Descriptive Statistics
Table No: 2 The Factors Considered For Using Micro Brands

Factors	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D
Traditional usage	200	1.00	5.00	4.0201	1.00484
Liked by family members	200	1.00	5.00	3.5350	1.25565
Taste	200	1.00	5.00	3.4350	1.25445
Readily available	200	1.00	5.00	3.2000	1.33751
Save time of preparation	200	1.00	5.00	3.4850	1.27983
Influence of friends & Relatives	200	1.00	5.00	3.2150	1.32952
Availability of products at reasonable price	200	1.00	5.00	3.3300	1.26057
Necessary ingredient for preparations	200	1.00	5.00	3.1100	1.35539
Availability of quality products	200	1.00	5.00	3.3100	1.31245
Habitual	200	1.00	5.00	3.0550	1.38621

(Source :Computed)

The above table reveals that majority of the respondents have given average rating to traditional usage (4.02) and the least rating is given for habitual (3.71). The mean rating indicates that traditional usage, liked by family members, save time of preparation and taste have ratings between good and very good. Availability of products at reasonable price, availability of quality products, influence of friends & relatives, readily available, necessary ingredient for preparations and habitual have ratings between not bad and good.

Anova
Table No: 3, Relationship Between The Personal Factors And Satisfaction Towards Micro Brand

Personal factors	Calculated value	DF	Table value	Hypothesis
Age	6.581	4	3.417	Rejected
Educational qualification	4.382	5	3.113	Rejected
Occupational status	5.592	4	3.417	Rejected
Monthly income	0.257	2	3.042	Accepted
Residential area	7.747	2	4.715	Rejected
Product consumption	7.897	2	4.715	Rejected
Level of purchase frequency	8.800	5	3.113	Rejected

(Source :Computed)

The table shows the relationship between personal factors & satisfaction towards the micro brand. There is no significant relationship between monthly income and level of satisfaction towards micro brands. Since the calculated F value is less than table value **the hypothesis is accepted.** There is no significant relationship between age, educational qualification, Occupational status, Residential area, Product consumption, level of purchase frequency and level of satisfaction towards micro brands. Since calculated F value is greater than the table value **the hypothesis is rejected**.

Chi-Square
Table No: 4 Showing Relationship Between The Personal Factors And Satisfaction Towards Micro Brand Factor

Personal factors	Calculated value	DF	Table value	Hypothesis
Gender	6.984	2	5.991	Accepted
Age	20.090	8	21.685	Rejected
Marital status	5.991	2	2.252	Accepted
Educational qualification	23.209	0	24.520	Rejected
Occupational status	15.507	8	16.756	Rejected
Monthly income	9.488	4	5.081	Accepted
Residential area	13.277	4	17.109	Rejected
Family size	13.277	4	23.528	Rejected

(Source :Computed)

The table shows the relationship between the personal factors and satisfaction towards micro brands. There is no significant relationship between age, educational qualification, occupational status, residential area, family size and level of satisfaction of Micro brands. Since the calculated value of chi-square is less than table value **the hypothesis is rejected.** There is no significant relationship between gender, marital status, monthly income and level of satisfaction of Micro brands. The calculated value of chi-square is greater than the table value **the hypothesis is accepted.**

Suggestions
1. The study reveals the majority of the respondents purchased the micro brands from the Super market. Therefore, it is suggested that the micro brands marketers should pay attention to other retail outlet particularly super markets where the higher income group consumer buying their necessaries with easy business term for improving their sales.
2. It is understood from the study that the most of the respondents get product information on the micro brands from friends and relatives. Therefore, the micro brands manufacturers should disseminates their product features with appropriate and effective medium of advertisements to make the consumers aware of the micro brands available in the local market.

Conclusion
The high quality of the end product will make this technology more prevalent in the market as consumers are becoming more conscious about the nutritive value of foods and leading a healthy life style. Consumer behaviour is basically social in nature hence the social factors play important roles in shaping the buying behaviour. Further, efficient consumer awareness and education programmes, market promotion activities and effective distribution – channel management with a vast distribution network to maintain direct relationship with the consumers essential, as the micro brand products market transit to supply driven situation, the firms has to make his marketing very effectiveness in all the functional areas. This can help the industry to gain customer loyalty and above all the demand expansion. At the end it could be concluded that, there is a significant positive relationship between product features, quality, price and packaging. Therefore, if the micro brand manufacturers focus on these factors, the micro brands become macro brands and to survive in the market forever.

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