

DETERMINANTS SHAPING CUSTOMER CHOICES IN THE SELECTION OF PACKAGED DRINKING WATER: A PILOT STUDY FROM RAIGAD DISTRICT

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Abstract

In the backdrop of an intensely competitive business landscape, consumers find themselves inundated with a myriad of product alternatives. Consequently, marketers are grappling with the challenge of cultivating brand preferences among customers while warding off competitors aiming to capture the minds of these acquired consumers. To navigate this dynamic scenario, it becomes imperative for marketers to discern the determinants influencing consumers' choices in brands. This research endeavour was undertaken to pinpoint the key factors shaping consumers' brand preferences for bottled water products and to scrutinize the interplay among these determinant variables. The study employed a descriptive and explanatory research design, utilizing a cross-sectional survey strategy. Data was collected from respondents through a combination of convenience and purposive sampling techniques, employing self-administered structured questionnaires. Primary data was sourced from 400 bottled water consumers, and quantitative analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study revealed that packaging, product quality, price, brand name, brand availability, brand image, and advertisement wielded significant influence over consumers' brand choices for bottled water products. Notably, the impact of brand image, brand name, packaging, and price on consumers' brand choice decisions stood out as particularly influential compared to other factors. In light of these findings, bottled water firms are advised to diligently cultivate brand equity that establishes emotional and psychological connections with customers. Enhancing the visual appeal of packaging emerged as a crucial aspect, underscoring the need for attractiveness. Furthermore, pricing strategies should be formulated based on considerations of affordability, ensuring brand accessibility is optimized at the right place and time. In essence, the study underscores the importance of strategic brand management encompassing multiple facets such as image, name, packaging, and pricing for bottled water companies aiming to secure a coveted position in the fiercely competitive market.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Today, the packaged drinking water industry in India has burgeoned into a significant market. This sector is experiencing substantial growth, fuelled by an escalating trend of quality consciousness among consumers. Annually, an estimated 800 million liters of bottled water are marketed in plastic containers, with the demand showing no signs of abating. The evolution witnessed in the last few decades has facilitated swift and efficient methods to meet the global demand for water. Packaged drinking water has become increasingly familiar due to the assurance of convenience and quality. Consumers now have a plethora of brands to choose from when selecting packaged drinking water, available in various styles such as bottled, bubble top, cans, and more. Consequently, research has been conducted to scrutinize the satisfaction levels of consumers who partake in packaged drinking water, shedding light on the determinants that shape their choices in this context.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In the rapidly evolving and intricate world we inhabit, individuals seek not just quantity but quality in their food consumption. Consequently, the consideration of the amalgamation of food items into digestive components is intricately linked to the intake of drinking water. In this milieu, the business landscape has witnessed a significant surge in the consumption of packaged drinking water. The current study endeavours to provide a comprehensive understanding of customer satisfaction regarding various brands endorsing mineral drinking water.

A pivotal aspect of the investigation involves identifying the most popular brands, unravelling the factors that sway consumers towards the purchase of a particular brand. Furthermore, the study aims to gauge the satisfaction levels among consumers concerning different brands. In essence, the research delves into the intricate determinants that shape customer choices in the selection of packaged drinking water.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To investigate the extent of customer awareness concerning brands in the packaged drinking water sector.
- To discern the determinants influencing customer choices and satisfaction in the selection of packaged drinking water.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area: The research was confined to the urban confines of Raigad District.

Primary Data Collection: A structured questionnaire was employed to gather primary data, and a total of 100 respondents participated in the survey.

Secondary Data Collection: Supplementary data pertinent to the study was extracted from various sources, including published journals, magazines, newspapers, and websites.

Sample Design: The random sampling method was utilized to select respondents from the broader population.

Sample Size: The sample size, representing the number of items selected from the universe, was determined as 100 for this study.

Statistical Tools: The analysis employed for this research involved Simple Percentage Analysis and Rank Analysis to derive meaningful insights and draw conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drinking water that has been packaged has earned a reputation for safety. The most dynamic area of the food and beverage industry, according to estimations, is packaged drinking water. Nearly 100 billion litres of bottled water were reportedly drunk in 2017. The device has been put through a number of tried-and-true water supply models, demonstrating their efficacy. It is

undeniable that given the current social and technical costs necessary to revive or establish functional public institutions, associated technologies, and political power, the typical industrialized world model for delivering safe drinking water technology may not be affordable in the majority of developing world countries.

Consumer choice in terms of purchases is very complicated. In most cases, consumer behaviour, perception, and attitude are related to purchasing intent. Consumers should carefully consider and assess purchase behaviour before making a purchase. Purchase intention is a useful indicator of the buying process, according to Ghosh (1990). Customers are driven by their intent when they choose to purchase a product from a particular retailer.

Contrarily, a range of internal and extrinsic factors might have an impact on a person's purchase intention (Zeithaml, 1988). Consumers will also be distracted during the buying process by both internal and environmental urges. Physiological incentive, which prompts their response and propels them to the retail store to meet their need, will have an impact on their conduct.

Because bottled drinking water prevents illnesses like dengue, the common cold, fever, city attacks, diarrhoea, and other viral infections, the business world of today has accepted a high intake of it. As a result, producers start working on packaged drinking water that has been sterilised, exposed to ultraviolet light, absorbed by concrete, and virus cleaned.

India is consuming more bottled water on a per capita basis thanks to rising health consciousness, tourism, and the accessibility of bottled water. In 2013, the market as a whole was estimated to be worth Rs. 60 billion, with 67 percent of the market being held by the top five competitors. By 2020, this market is projected to develop at a CAGR of 22% and reach Rs. 160 million. Shortly after Bisleri introduced packaged drinking water in the nation in the late 1990s, the bottled water sector in India experienced a surge. An increase in industry promotion that said "bottled water was pure and healthful" was what propelled this substantial growth.

S. Selvi (2017)¹, the literature review in this study focused on the usage and satisfaction of consumers towards Hindu newspaper and packaged drinking water. The study was conducted in Coimbatore city and involved a sample size of 150 respondents. The data collected was both primary and secondary and was analysed through a formal interview and a questionnaire. The results of the study provided valuable insights into the consumer behaviour and preferences towards Hindu newspaper and packaged drinking water, and highlights the need for companies to strive towards it providing high quality products and services to satisfy their customers.

M. Sangeetha and K Brindha (2017)², in this paper marketing, consumers and their behaviour are viewed more carefully because of the importance. They believe that compared to the tap water, consuming bottled water is a hygienic one. As of now, 44 million of people suffer the consequences of contaminated water, there by seriously affecting the health of future generations who would be vulnerable to serious water borne diseases, in the area of Coimbatore.

Data Analysis

The data collected for analysis comprises responses from participants across various demographic categories in Raigad District. The survey questionnaire encompassed factors such as age, gender, educational background, and occupation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the respondent profile. The frequency of packaged drinking water consumption, primary reasons for choosing packaged water, preferred brands, and influencing factors were also investigated.

Additionally, the survey delved into environmental considerations, examining respondents' concerns about the impact of plastic bottles and their willingness to opt for eco-friendly packaging. The study also explored the willingness to pay a slightly higher price for water from natural/mineral sources.

The subsequent sections of the data analysis will scrutinize these responses, employing statistical tools and methods to derive meaningful insights. The objective is to discern patterns, preferences, and concerns among consumers in Raigad District regarding packaged drinking water, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the market dynamics and consumer behavior in this domain.

Table 1: Age

Age	Frequency
18-25	24
26-35	23
36-45	23
46 and above	30
Grand Total	100

(Source- Researcher)

The table presents a demographic distribution of 100 survey respondents based on age groups. The categories include 18-25 years with 24 respondents, 26-35 years with 23 respondents, 36-45 years with another 23 respondents, and a category encompassing individuals aged 46 and above, consisting of 30 respondents. This breakdown allows for a nuanced analysis of responses across distinct age brackets, offering insights into potential age-related trends or preferences within the surveyed population.

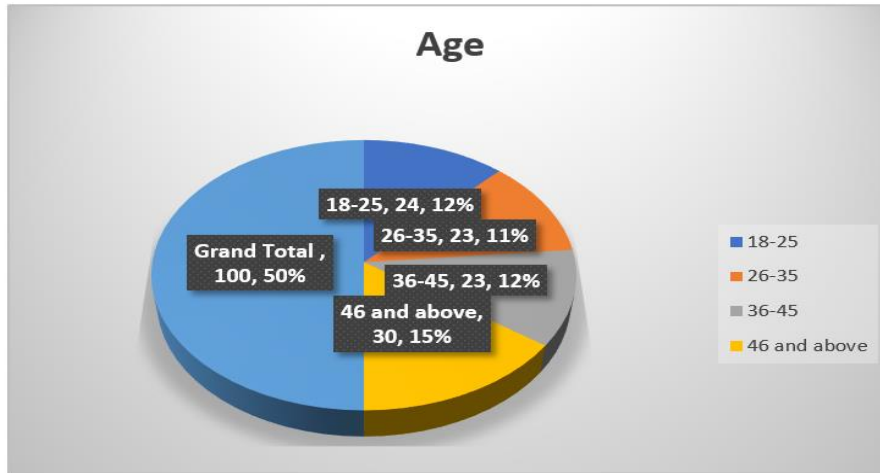


Figure 1: Age

(Source- Researcher)

Table 2: Gender

Gender	Frequency
Female	32
Male	37
others	31
Total	100

Source- Researcher)

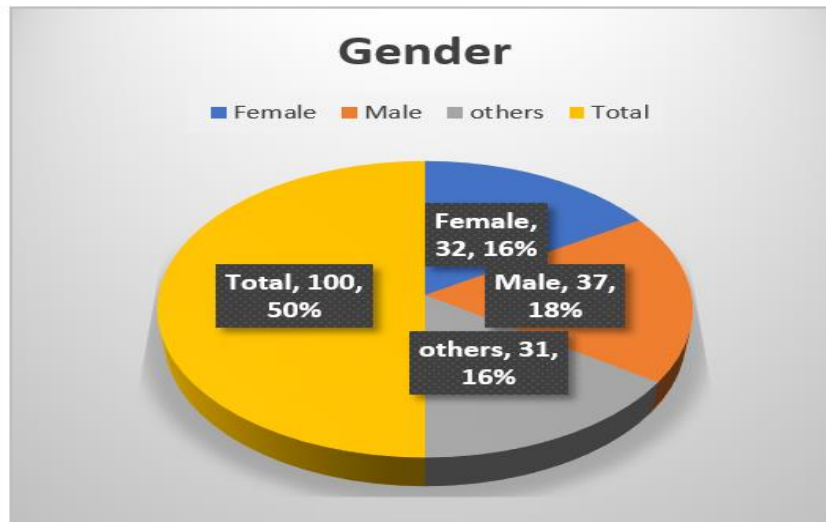


Figure 2: Gender

(Source- Researcher)

The table outlines the gender distribution among 100 survey respondents. The breakdown includes 32 female respondents, 37 male respondents, and 31 individuals identifying as "others." The total count sums up to 100 participants. This gender distribution provides a comprehensive snapshot of the survey sample, allowing for an examination of gender-specific trends or patterns in the responses. It reflects the diversity within the respondent pool and contributes to a more thorough understanding of the perspectives and preferences across different gender identities in the surveyed population.

Table 3: Education

Education	Frequency
Below College/University	36
High School	31
Post-Graduate	33
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)

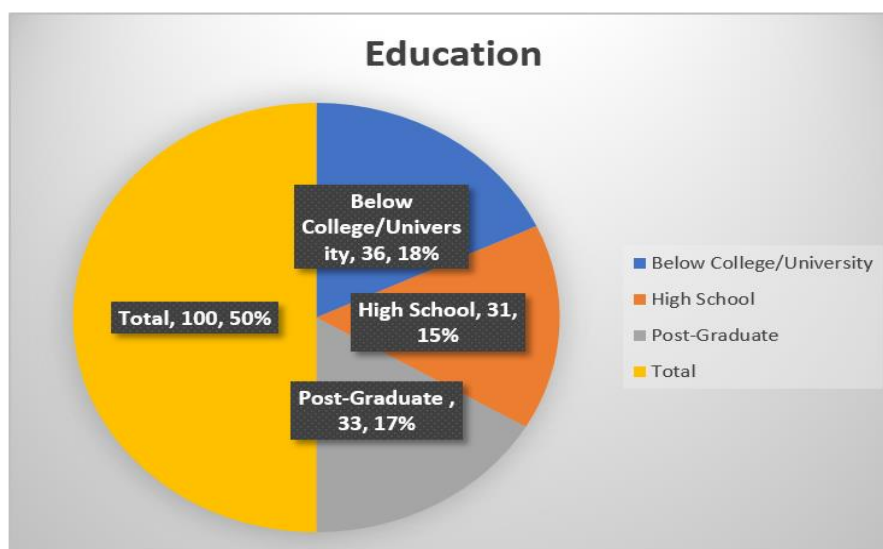


Figure 3: Education

(Source- Researcher)

The table presents a distribution of 100 survey respondents based on their educational background. The breakdown includes 36 respondents with education below the college/university level, 31 respondents with a high school education, and 33 respondents with a post-graduate level of education. This categorization offers insights into the educational diversity within the surveyed population, enabling an analysis of potential correlations between educational background and responses to survey questions. The total count of 100 respondents emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the data set, providing a foundation for a thorough examination of educational influences on consumer perspectives and preferences.

Table 4: Occupation

Occupation	Frequency
Private Sector	37
Public	36
Student	27
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)

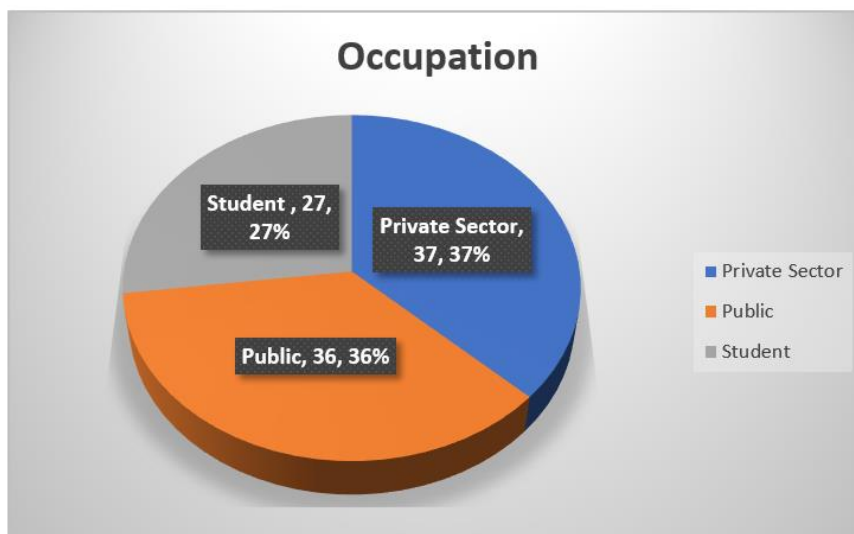


Figure 4: Occupation

(Source- Researcher)

The table illustrates the occupational distribution of 100 survey respondents. The breakdown encompasses 37 respondents from the private sector, 36 from the public sector, and 27 students. This categorization allows for an examination of occupational diversity within the surveyed population, facilitating potential correlations between occupation and responses to the survey questions. The total count of 100 respondents underscores the completeness of the data set, providing a foundation for a comprehensive analysis of how occupational backgrounds may influence consumer perspectives and preferences in the context of the survey.

Table 5: How often do you consume packaged drinking water?

How often do you consume packaged drinking water?	Frequency
Daily	14
Never	26
Once a week	16
Rarely	26
Several times in a week	18
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)

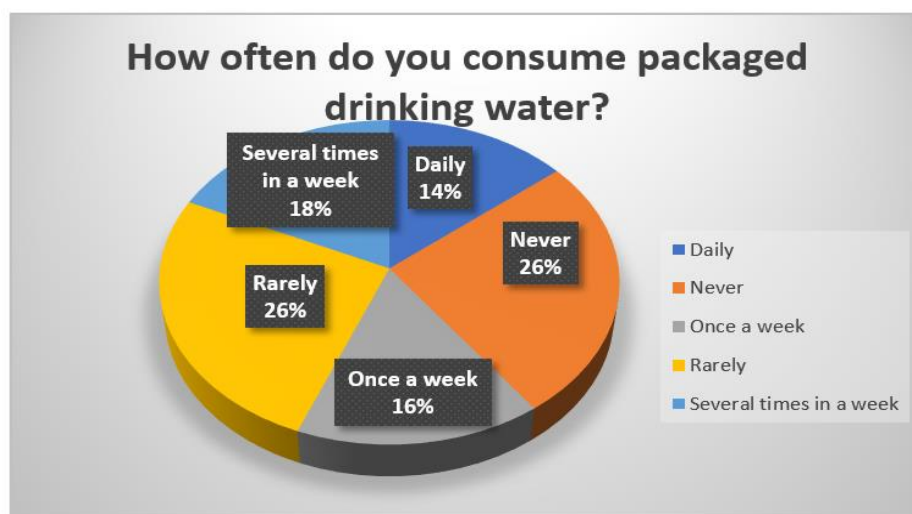


Figure 5: How often do you consume packaged drinking water?

(Source- Researcher)

The table outlines the frequency of packaged drinking water consumption among 100 survey respondents. The breakdown includes respondents who consume packaged drinking water on a daily basis (14), those who never consume it (26), individuals who consume it once a week (16), those who rarely consume it (26), and respondents who consume it several times in a week (18). This categorization provides a snapshot of the diverse consumption patterns within the surveyed population, offering insights into the prevalence and variations in the frequency of packaged drinking water consumption. The total count of 100 respondents emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the data set, providing a foundation for a detailed analysis of consumer behaviours related to packaged drinking water consumption.

Table 6: What is your primary reason for consuming packaged drinking water?

What is your primary reason for consuming packaged drinking water?	Frequency
Convenience	21
Taste Preference	21
Health and Safety Concerns	18
Availability	18
Others (please specify)	22
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)

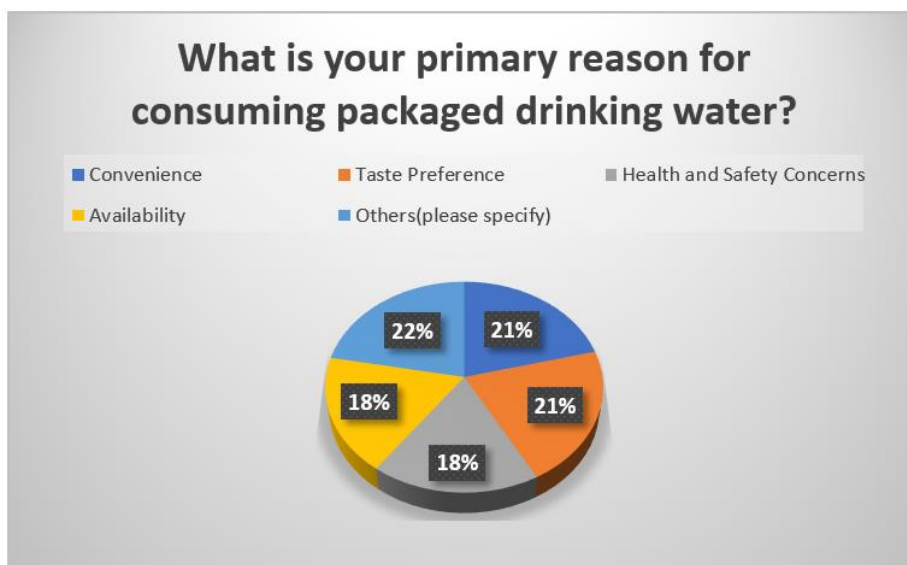


Figure 6: What is your primary reason for consuming packaged drinking water?

(Source- Researcher)

The table delineates the primary reasons for consuming packaged drinking water among 100 survey respondents. The breakdown includes respondents who cite convenience (21) as their primary reason, those who emphasize taste preference (21), individuals who prioritize health and safety concerns (18), those who choose based on availability (18), and respondents who specify other reasons (22). This categorization provides a comprehensive overview of the diverse motivations behind the consumption of packaged drinking water within the surveyed population. The total count of 100 respondents underscores the completeness of the data set, offering a foundation for an in-depth analysis of the predominant factors influencing consumers' choices in packaged drinking water consumption.

Table 6: Where do you usually purchase packaged drinking water?

Where do you usually purchase packaged drinking water?	Frequency
Local stores	26
supermarkets/Hypermarkets	22
online platform	19
Others (please specify)	33
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)

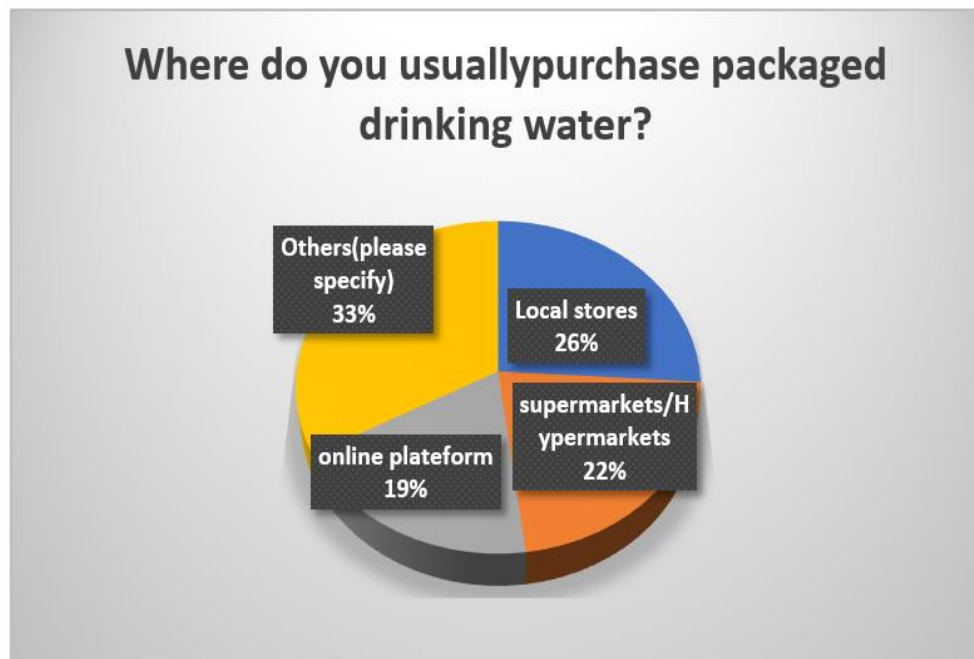


Figure 7: Where do you usually purchase packaged drinking water?

(Source- Researcher)

The table outlines the usual purchasing locations for packaged drinking water among 100 survey respondents. The breakdown includes respondents who typically purchase from local stores (26), supermarkets/hypermarkets (22), online platforms (19), and those who specify other purchasing locations (33). This categorization offers insights into the diverse consumer behaviors regarding the preferred outlets for acquiring packaged drinking water within the surveyed population. The total count of 100 respondents emphasizes the completeness of the data set, providing a foundation for a detailed analysis of the distribution of preferences in purchasing locations for packaged drinking water.

Table 7: Do you have a preferred packaged drinking water brand?

Do you have a preferred packaged drinking water brand?	Frequency
YES	53
NO	47

(Source- Researcher)

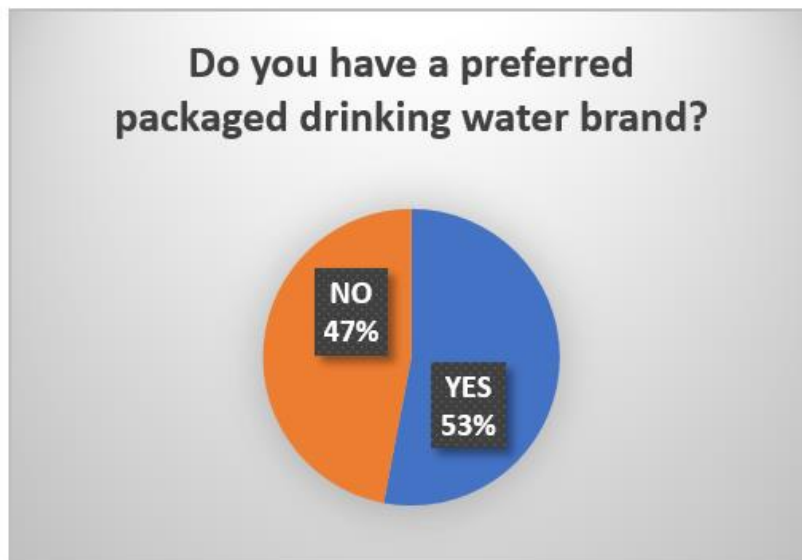


Figure 8: Do you have a preferred packaged drinking water brand?

(Source- Researcher)

The table presents respondents' preferences regarding packaged drinking water brands among 100 survey participants. Of the total, 53 respondents indicated having a preferred brand, while 47 respondents did not express a specific preference. This categorization provides valuable insights into the prevalence of brand loyalty or neutrality within the surveyed population. The balanced distribution of responses emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the data set, forming a basis for an in-depth analysis of factors influencing brand preferences or the absence thereof in the context of packaged drinking water.

Table 8: What factors influence your choice of packaged drinking water brand?

What factors influence your choice of packaged drinking water brand?	Frequency
Brand Reputation	19
Packaging Quality	14
Price	15
Promotion/Advertising	16
Recommendations from others	13
Source of water	15
Taste	8
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)



Figure 9: What factors influence your choice of packaged drinking water brand?

(Source- Researcher)

The table delineates the factors influencing the choice of packaged drinking water brands among 100 survey respondents. The breakdown includes respondents who consider brand reputation (19) as a significant influence, packaging quality (14), price (15), promotion/advertising (16), recommendations from others (13), source of water (15), and taste (8). This categorization provides a comprehensive overview of the diverse considerations that impact consumers' decision-making processes when selecting a packaged drinking water brand. The total count of 100 respondents emphasizes the completeness of the data set, forming a foundation for an in-depth analysis of the relative importance of each factor in influencing brand choices within the surveyed population.

Table 9: Are you concerned about the environmental impact of plastic bottles used for packaged drinking water?

Are you concerned about the environmental impact of plastic bottles used for packaged drinking water?	Frequency
Very Concerned	18
Somewhat concerned	29
Neutral	29
Not Concerned	24
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)



Figure 10: Are you concerned about the environmental impact of plastic bottles used for packaged drinking water?

(Source- Researcher)

The table outlines the level of concern among 100 survey respondents regarding the environmental impact of plastic bottles used for packaged drinking water. The breakdown includes respondents who are very concerned (18), somewhat concerned (29), neutral (29), and not concerned (24). This categorization provides valuable insights into the varying degrees of environmental consciousness within the surveyed population. The total count of 100 respondents emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the data set, laying the groundwork for a detailed analysis of the distribution of environmental concerns related to the use of plastic bottles in the context of packaged drinking water.

Table 10: Would you be more likely to choose a brand that uses eco-friendly packaging (e.g., biodegradable bottles)?

Would you be more likely to choose a brand that uses eco-friendly packaging (e.g., biodegradable bottles)?	Frequency
Yes	36
No	33
Maybe	31
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)

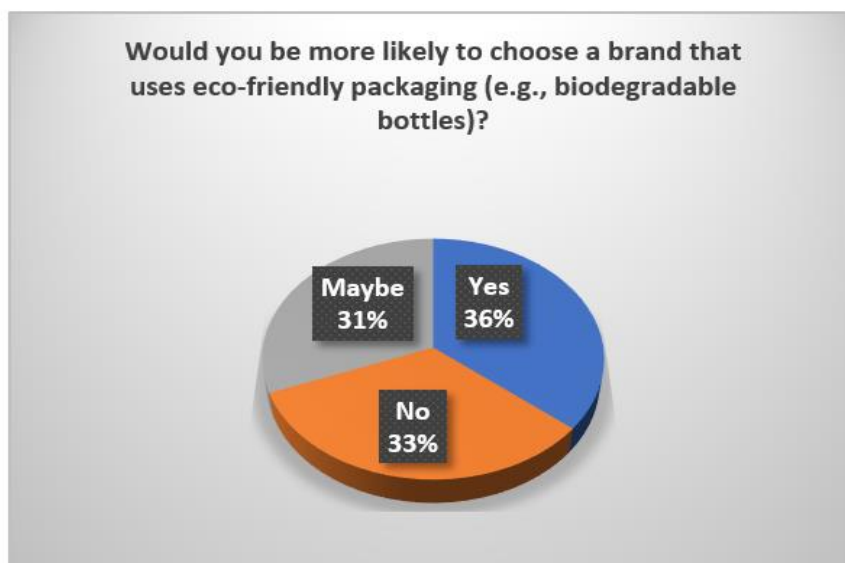


Figure 11: Would you be more likely to choose a brand that uses eco-friendly packaging (e.g., biodegradable bottles)?

(Source- Researcher)

The table illustrates respondents' likelihood to choose a brand that employs eco-friendly packaging, such as biodegradable bottles, among 100 survey participants. The breakdown includes respondents who affirmatively stated "Yes" (36), those who negated with "No" (33), and individuals who expressed indecision with "Maybe" (31). This categorization provides insights into the prevalence and distribution of environmentally conscious consumer preferences within the surveyed population. The total count of 100 respondents underscores the completeness of the data set, establishing a foundation for an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing consumers' inclinations toward brands with eco-friendly packaging in the context of packaged drinking water.

Table 11: How willing are you to pay a slightly higher price for packaged drinking water that comes from a natural/mineral source?

How willing are you to pay a slightly higher price for packaged drinking water that comes from a natural/mineral source?	Frequency
Very Willing	23
Somewhat Willing	29
Neutral	27
Not Willing	21
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)

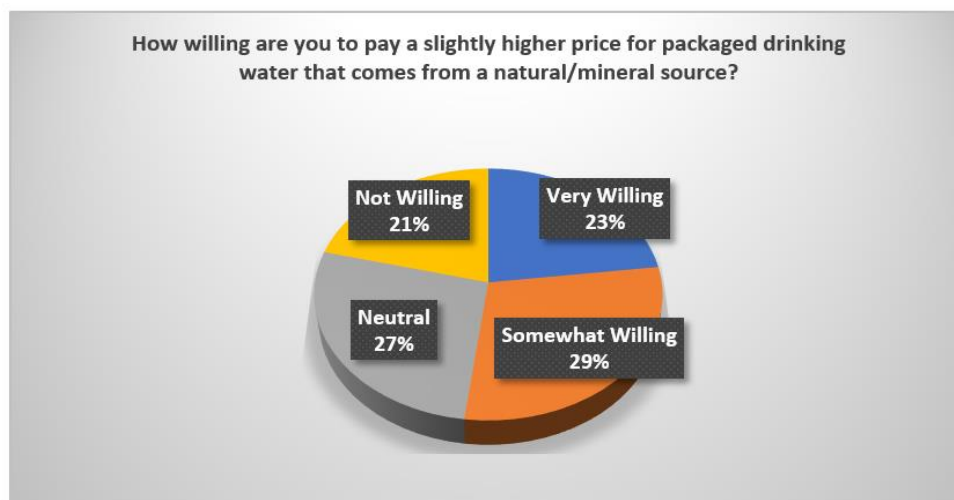


Figure 12: How willing are you to pay a slightly higher price for packaged drinking water that comes from a natural/mineral source

(Source- Researcher)

The table depicts respondents' willingness to pay a slightly higher price for packaged drinking water sourced from a natural/mineral source among 100 survey participants. The breakdown includes respondents who express a high willingness with "Very Willing" (23), those with a moderate willingness labeled as "Somewhat Willing" (29), individuals holding a neutral stance (27), and those not willing to pay more designated as "Not Willing" (21). This categorization provides insights into the varying degrees of consumer willingness to invest in natural or mineral-sourced packaged drinking water within the surveyed population. The total count of 100 respondents emphasizes the completeness of the data set, providing a foundation for an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing consumers' financial considerations in the context of natural or mineral-sourced packaged drinking water.

Table 12: On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with the current options of packaged drinking water available in Raigad District?

On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with the current options of packaged drinking water available in Raigad District?	Frequency
Very Dissatisfied	24
Dissatisfied	23
Neutral	18
Satisfied	18
very Satisfied	17
Total	100

(Source- Researcher)

The table gauges respondents' satisfaction levels with the current options of packaged drinking water available in Raigad District, using a scale ranging from 1 to 5, among 100 survey

participants. The breakdown includes respondents who expressed very low satisfaction with "Very Dissatisfied" (24), those dissatisfied (23), individuals holding a neutral stance (18), satisfied respondents (18), and very satisfied participants (17). This categorization provides insights into the diverse spectrum of satisfaction levels within the surveyed population, allowing for an in-depth analysis of factors influencing consumer contentment with the available options of packaged drinking water. The total count of 100 respondents emphasizes the completeness of the data set, forming a foundation for a nuanced examination of the overall satisfaction landscape in the context of packaged drinking water in Raigad District.

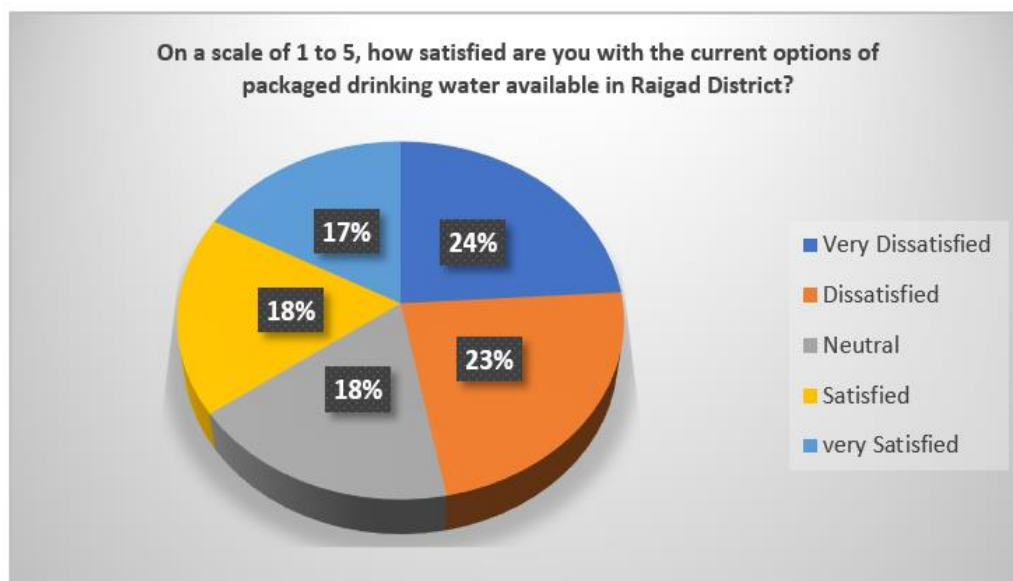


Figure 13: On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied are you with the current options of packaged drinking water available in Raigad District?

(Source- Researcher)

Analysis

Reliability Test:

Reliability is the measure of internal consistency of the constructs in the study. A construct or variable is reliable if the Alpha (α) value is greater than 0.70. Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha.

Construct Consumer Awareness (CA):

The construct **Consumer Awareness (CA)** scale with seven items obtained the Cronbach's Alpha value ($\alpha = 0.825$), the test results revealed that the construct **Consumer Awareness (CA)** is reliable. The Reliability result of the construct **Consumer Awareness (CA)** is given in below table 14.

Table 14: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
CA	7	.825

Construct Consumer Perception (CP):

The construct **Consumer Perception (CP)** scale with Eight items obtained the Cronbach's Alpha value ($\alpha = 0.798$), the test results revealed that the construct **Consumer Perception (CP)** is reliable. The Reliability result of the construct **Consumer Perception (CP)** is given in below table 15.

Table 15: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
CP	8	.798

Construct Consumer Attitude (CAT):

The construct **Consumer Attitude (CAT)** scale with five items obtained the Cronbach's Alpha value ($\alpha = 0.849$), the test results revealed that the construct **Consumer Attitude (CAT)** is reliable. The Reliability result of the construct **Consumer Attitude (CAT)** is given in below table 16.

Table 16: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
CAT	5	.849

Construct Consumer Satisfaction (CS):

The construct **Consumer Satisfaction (CS)** scale with five items obtained the Cronbach's Alpha value ($\alpha = 0.737$), the test results revealed that the construct **Consumer Satisfaction (CS)** is reliable. The Reliability result of the construct **Consumer Satisfaction (CS)** is given in below table 17.

Table 17: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
CS	5	.737

Construct Consumer Preference (CPRE):

The construct **Consumer Preference (CPRE)** scale with seven items obtained the Cronbach's Alpha value ($\alpha = 0.813$), the test results revealed that the construct **Consumer Preference (CPRE)** is reliable. The Reliability result of the construct **Consumer Preference (CPRE)** is given in below table 18.

Table 18: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
CPRE	7	.813

Construct Problems Related to Packaged Drinking Water (PPDW):

The construct **Problems Related to Packaged Drinking Water (PPDW)** scale with five items obtained the Cronbach's Alpha value ($\alpha = 0.902$), the test results revealed that the construct **Problems Related to Packaged Drinking Water (PPDW)** is reliable. The Reliability result of the construct **Problems Related to Packaged Drinking Water (PPDW)** is given in below table 19.

Table 19: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
PPDW	5	.902

CONCLUSION

In the realm of packaged drinking water preferences, this research offers a comprehensive exploration of key determinants influencing consumer choices in Raigad District. The findings reveal a diverse landscape shaped by demographic factors, consumption patterns, and environmental considerations. Age, gender, educational background, and occupation emerged as influential variables in understanding consumer behaviours. The frequency of packaged drinking water consumption varied, with convenience, taste preference, and health concerns standing out as primary drivers.

Purchasing decisions were found to be influenced by factors such as brand reputation, packaging quality, and promotions. Notably, environmental consciousness played a role, with a significant portion of respondents expressing concern about the environmental impact of plastic bottles and showing a willingness to choose eco-friendly packaging. This underscores a growing trend toward sustainability in consumer choices.

The study also delves into the satisfaction levels of consumers with the current options available in Raigad District. It is evident that while certain consumers express dissatisfaction, a considerable number are very satisfied, emphasizing the importance of continuous improvement in the quality and variety of packaged drinking water products.

To capitalize on these insights, bottled water firms are urged to consider the emotional and psychological connections consumers have with brands. Enhancing packaging aesthetics, ensuring product quality, and strategic pricing based on affordability and accessibility emerge as crucial strategies. Moreover, aligning with eco-friendly practices and addressing environmental concerns could serve as a competitive advantage in this dynamic market.

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the nuanced factors influencing consumer choices in the packaged drinking water sector. It provides a foundation for industry stakeholders to refine their strategies, foster brand loyalty, and contribute to a more sustainable and consumer-centric market landscape in Raigad District. Future studies could further explore the evolving dynamics of consumer preferences and the long-term impact of sustainability initiatives in this industry.

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