

An Empirical Study on Brand Positioning and Consumer Perception towards Various Shampoo Brands

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ABSTRACT

Positioning is the mental space which every marketer craves to imprint in the consumer's mind. A marketer always desires their consumers to imagine, when they come across with a brand name. In order to keep a hold in the market, the marketers strive to get the best positioning strategies by understanding how customers perceive their brand with respect to the available varieties. As Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) market is booming day by day, five shampoo brands were being considered as cases. With the technique of perceptual mapping, this study identified the effectiveness of the brand positioning strategies, the consumers' perception and the attributes influencing the consumers' buying behaviour towards the selected brands. The study investigated how consumers' associate the attributes in different dimensions with reference to leading shampoo brands. The study revealed that the consumers perceive the selected brands equally and positively as far as their usage is considered. Positioning of these brands effectively influences the consumers' and their buying behaviour and they plan and project the campaigns in accordance with the consumers' perception.

Keywords: Brand Positioning, Perceptual Mapping, Consumer Perception, Buyer Behaviour, Fast Moving Consumer Goods

STATEMENT OF INTENDED CONTRIBUTION

The research attempted to identify the effectiveness of the positioning strategies as implemented by various shampoo brands in North East India, specifically Sivasagar district, Assam. The marketing relevant research question which has been addressed in the study was namely; to access the consumer's perception towards the shampoo brands and the attributes which influences them the most, in their purchase of a particular brand. For addressing the research question, the technique of perceptual mapping has been adopted. From academic point of view, the current research will help in initiating related studies through perceptual mapping in a different geography with a different set of consumers and with various FMCG brands, as within the researcher's venturing into the topic, very limited studies have been conducted in the said area. Through the current study, the advertisers and FMCG companies will be benefitted as they will be able

to identify the effectiveness of their positioning strategies and make necessary modifications as and when required because, positioning of a brand is a matter of involvement of huge investments by the firm.

INTRODUCTION

Product positioning practices are used by the marketers in determining the finest way for communicating their products attributes to the customers based on customer requirements, competitive standards, existing channels of communication and circumspectly crafted key messages. This is often backed by understanding the consumers' perception towards the available products. In addition, deliverable campaigns are being designed accordingly by the marketers in order to minimize the gap between perception and positioning.

In this competitive market scenario, "The study of consumers' perceptions and expectation is of paramount

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importance for the success of any company”¹. In addition, with the fast-growing economy, rising per-capita income of the population and increasing inclination of the society towards urbanization; the FMCG market in India is expanding at a fast pace. “The Indian FMCG sector with a market size of USD 14.8 billion is the fourth largest sector in the economy. The FMCG market is set to double from USD 14.7 billion in 2008-09 to USD 30 billion in 2012”².

Thus, this study aimed to understand the brand positioning and consumers perception in the fast-moving consumer goods sector due to its replenishing and competitive nature in the market.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to fulfill the following objectives: -

- To understand the specific attributes of various shampoo brands that influences the purchasing behaviour of the consumers of the study area.
- To map the consumers’ perception towards various shampoo brands available in the study area.
- To observe the acceptance of the positioning strategies by the consumers of various shampoo brands in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Plan

This study intended to comprehend the brand positioning and consumer perception of various shampoo brands as it falls under the umbrella of fast-moving consumer goods sector which possess the nature of frequent demand, replenishment and competition in the market. Also, within the proximity of the researcher’s venturing into the topic, it has been apparent that Sivasagar district of, Assam falls under that geography; where limited research

studies have been conducted in the areas of customer’s cognitive and purchasing behavior and more specific in the area of various shampoo brands which is actually a daily need of every customer. Thus, the urban and rural plots of Sivasagar district, of Assam has been considered for data collection and in order to generate the data set for the study; respondents were selected based on three (3) strata’s namely; office employees, college students and house wives. As shampoo falls under that product category where it acts as a necessity for every human being, the respondents were not confined to any demographic factor like; age, occupation, gender or education. The period of the study has been confined from May till August 2020.

Using stratified random sampling, at first a pilot survey has been conducted to identify the available and most acceptable brands of shampoo in the study area. For the pilot survey, a sample size of thirty (30) respondents were interviewed by the researcher and based on their responses regarding the availability of various brands in the study area, five (5) most acceptable and popular shampoo brands were considered namely; Tresemme, L’Oreal, Sunsilk, Head & Shoulders and Beer shampoo.

Second; on the basis of the responses and selection of the most acceptable and popular shampoo brands from the pilot survey, a sample size of hundred (100) has been considered for conducting the main study. The sampling technique has been kept intact, i.e., stratified random sampling.

For the research, the package design of the selected brands has been analyzed in order to identify the various attributes that the marketers’ make use off while positioning the same. With the use of semantic differential scale, the various attributes and their degree of importance as per the customer mindset, acted as a base in preparing a proforma/schedule which became the major source for collecting primary data. The attributes under consideration were namely; colour, package design, price, ingredients, availability, texture, certification, popularity, brand name punch line, size, essence, positioning, visibility, lather quality, slogan, satisfaction, net quantity, expiration, composition and frequency of use.

The study aimed to understand the customers’ perception towards those attributes and finally to the selected shampoo brands and the effectiveness and acceptance of their positioning strategies.

¹ Chadha, S. K., & Kapoor, D. (2008). An attribute based perceptual mapping of the selected private life insurance companies: An empirical study in Ludhiana. *Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective*, 12(3), 53-60.

² Mahlingam, S., & Kumar, P. N. (2012). A Study on consumer behaviour towards selected fast moving consumer goods in Coimbatore city. *Indian Journal of Education and Information Management*, 1(11), 500-507.

Analysis Technique

Customers' perception towards various attributes used by the marketers' in positioning the selected shampoo brands in general were analyzed using, first; the concept of perceptual mapping and second; using two dimensional frameworks. Perceptual mapping is a "Marketing research technique in which consumer's views about a product are traced or plotted (mapped) on a chart. Respondents are asked questions about their experience with the product in terms of its performance, packaging, price, size, etc. These qualitative answers are transferred to a chart (called a perceptual map) using a suitable scale, and the results are employed in improving the product or in developing a new one."³

The analysis technique involved the following stages:

Stage 1: In the proforma, the respondents were asked to score the selected five (5) brands on a scale of -3 to +3 per attribute and adjacently on a scale of 0 to 4, the degree of importance of the specific attribute in their purchasing behaviour of shampoo, in general.

Stage 2: Identifying the attributes influencing customers' purchasing behaviour of shampoo, in general.

Total of (Degree of importance per attribute) per customer

Stage 3: Identifying the popularity of the selected brands:

Total of (Attribute scores per brand x Degree of importance per attribute) per customer

Stage 4: Mapping the consumers' perception towards the selected shampoo brands:

Average of attributes per brand = Total of (Per attribute scores per customer) per brand / Total no. of customers

Stage 5: Mapping the degree of importance of each attribute in the consumers' purchasing behaviour of shampoo, in general

Average of scores of degrees of importance per attribute = Total of (Degree of importance per attribute) per customer / Total no. of customers

The scores from stage 2 assisted in fulfilling the first objective of the study. The scores from stage 3 & 4 assisted in fulfilling the second objective of the study. The scores from stage 5 assisted in fulfilling the third objective of the study.

OBSERVATIONS

Understanding the Specific Attributes of Various Shampoo Brands that Influences the Purchasing Behaviour of the Consumers of the Study Area

Table 1: Attributes Influencing Customers' Purchasing Behaviour of Shampoo, in General

Attributes	Total of (Degree of Importance Per Attribute) Per Customer
Colour	196
Package Design	229
Price	295
Ingredients	237
Availability	281
Texture	296
Certification	299
Popularity	298
Brand Name	282
Punch Line	223
Size	299
Essence	292
Positioning	254
Visibility	293
Lather Quality	258
Slogan	199
Satisfaction	279
Net Quantity	230
Expiration	218
Composition	229
Gender specific	240
Frequency of use	310

Source: Self generated through primary data collection

From the above Table, it can be observed that the total value of the selected attributes ranges from 190-320. Purposively considering the attributes with highest degree of importance, i.e., from 290-320, it can be

³ Retrieved from <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/perceptual-mapping.html> (accessed June 01, 2018).

interpreted that, as far as the respondents of the study area is considered; price, texture, certification, popularity, size, essence, visibility and frequency of use are the attributes which highly influences the customers' purchasing behaviour of shampoo, in general. The customers of the study area are price conscious while making operational expenses on shampoos, due to its frequent replenishing nature. The popularity and visibility of various shampoo brands persuades the customers to make a final purchase, as and when needed by them. Certifications from various authorized agencies are well observed by the customers and they connect attributes like; texture, essence and size,

in relation to the price of various shampoo brands with their purchase decisions.

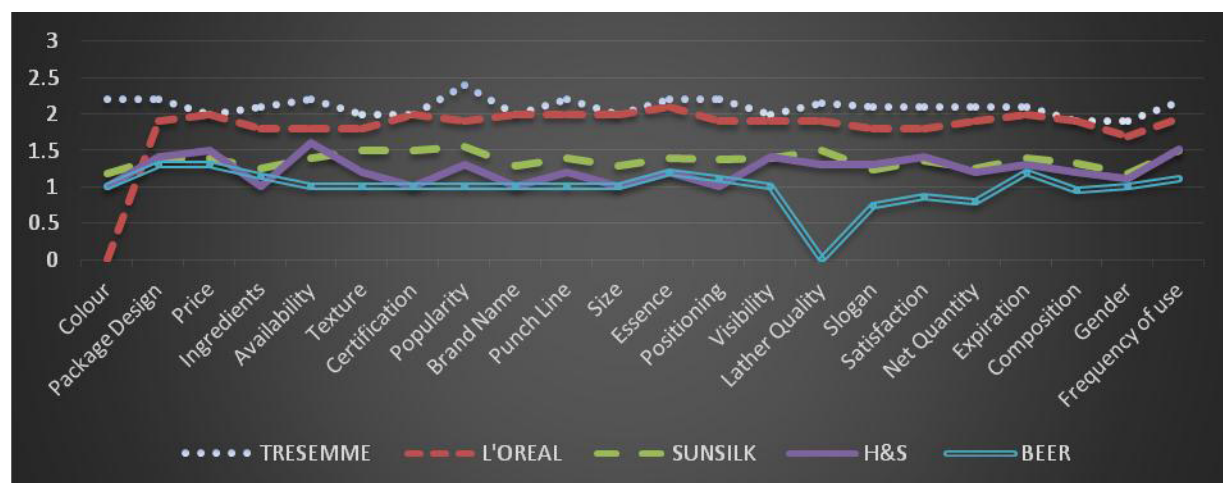
To Map the Consumers' Perception towards Various Shampoo Brands Available in the Study Area

From the below Table, it can be observed that out of the five (5) shampoo brands taken under consideration as cases for the current study, Tresemme is the most popular brand among the customers of the study area, followed by L'Oréal, Sunsilk, Head & Shoulders and Beer shampoo.

Table 2: Popularity among the Selected Shampoo Brands

<i>Brands</i>	<i>Tresemme</i>	<i>L'Oréal</i>	<i>Sunsilk</i>	<i>Head & Shoulders</i>	<i>Beer Shampoo</i>
Total of (Attribute scores per brand x Degree of importance per attribute) per customer	11892	10448	7872	7523	5787

Source: Self generated through primary data collection



Source: Self generated through primary data collection

Fig. 1: Average of Attributes

From the Fig. 1, in order to identify the specific attributes that highly influences the consumers' in their purchasing behaviour of shampoo brands, the attributes with average score more than 2, has been purposively considered by the researcher.

Case 1: Tresemme Shampoo Brand

It has been observed that the purchase of the brand 'Tresemme' gets highly influenced by the popularity attribute at the first instance. This is followed by the

attributes like; colour, package design, availability, punch line, essence and positioning of the brand in the market. Attributes like; ingredients, lather quality, slogan, satisfaction, net quantity and expiration get the third place in influencing the customers while purchase of the mentioned brand. It can be interpreted that the customers of the study area purchase this brand, as the same is easily available in the current market and they feel content with the various aspects that the marketers make use of in their positioning strategies of the brand 'Tresemme'.

Case 2: L'Óreal Shampoo Brand

It has been observed that the customers' purchase the brand 'L'Óreal', at first, by considering the essence attribute. This is followed by the attributes like; price, certification, brand name, punch line, size and expiration, of the brand in the market. The aroma of this brand has a strong influence to the extent of its purchase by the customers.

Case 3: Sunsilk Shampoo Brand

It has been observed that the brand 'Sunsilk' is accepted by the customers' on an average level. While purchasing this brand, none of the attributes place a significant level of influence in the customers' mind. But the popularity and lather quality of the brand somewhat gratifies the purchasing behaviour of the customers from the study area.

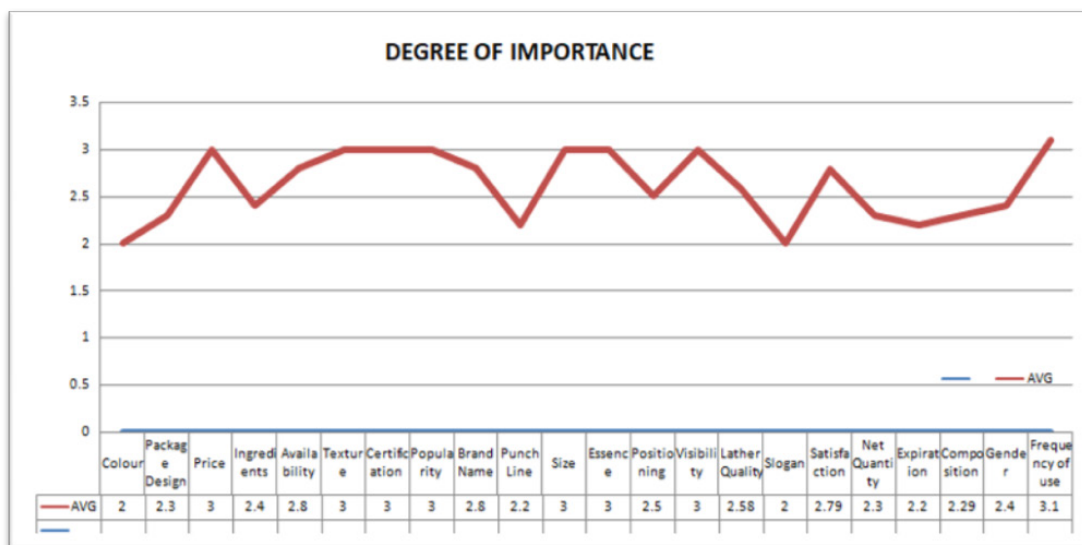
To Observe the Acceptance of the Positioning Strategies by the Consumers of Various Shampoo Brands in the Study Area

Case 4: Head and Shoulders Shampoo Brand

It has been observed that the purchase of the brand 'Head & Shoulders' doesn't have a considerable influence by the attributes taken under consideration for the study. It is only the availability of the brand which has a considerable impact in the purchase decisions of the customers.

Case 5: Beer Shampoo Brand

It has been observed that the purchase of the shampoo brand 'Beer' possesses the least importance among all the five brands taken under consideration. On a scale of 0-3, the attribute 'lather quality' stands on zero (0); this signifies that this attribute doesn't have any impact on the customers' buying behaviour. The remaining attributes also achieves a minimum attention by the buyers of the study area.



Source: Self generated through primary data collection

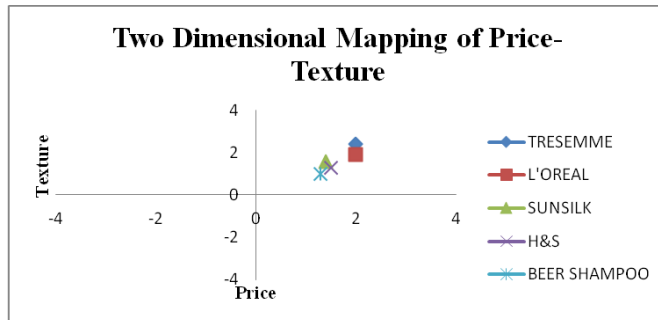
Fig. 2: Average of Scores of Degree of Importance Per Attribute

While mapping the degree of importance of the attributes as given by the respondents of the study area, the above-mentioned exhibit has been generated. From the Fig. 2 in order to observe the acceptance of the positioning strategies by the consumers of various shampoo brands

in the study area, the attributes with average degree of importance scores ranging from 3-4, has been purposively considered by the researcher. It has been observed that the attributes like; price, texture, certification, popularity, essence, visibility and frequency of use, are such attributes

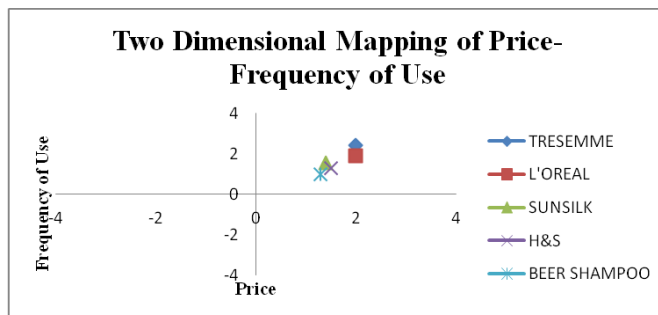
which the buyers consider the most while purchasing any kind of shampoo brands.

Considering the attributes with highest degree of importance, ten (10) pair of attributes has been considered and through two-dimensional mapping, the acceptance of the positioning strategies by the buyers of the five selected shampoo brands has been considered. The ten (10) pair of attributes are namely;



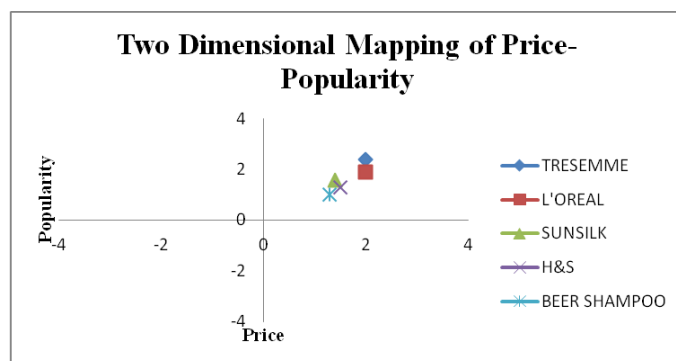
Source: Self generated through primary data collection

Fig. 2.1: Price and Texture



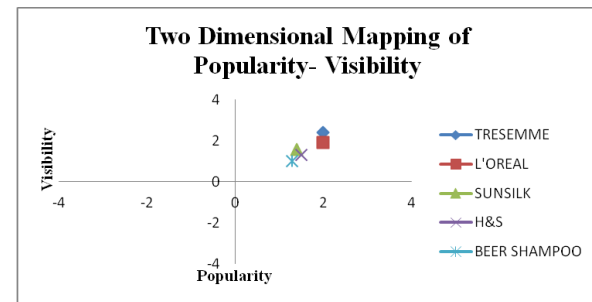
Source: Self generated through primary data collection

Fig. 2.2: Price and Frequency of Use



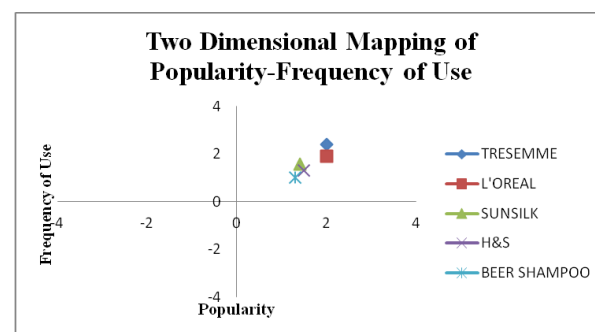
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Fig. 2.3: Price and Popularity



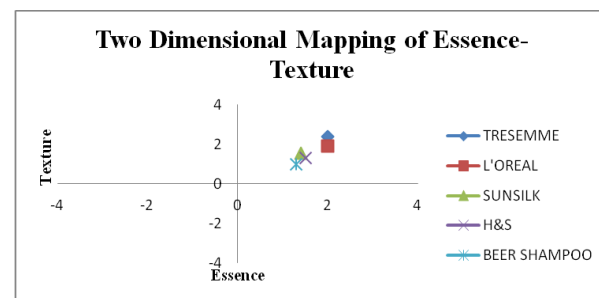
Source: Self generated through primary data collection

Fig. 2.4: Popularity and Visibility



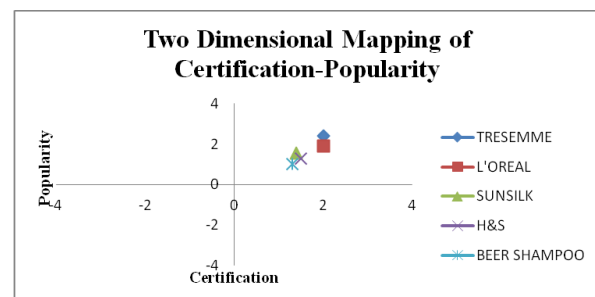
Source: Self generated through primary data collection

Fig. 2.5: Popularity and Frequency of Use



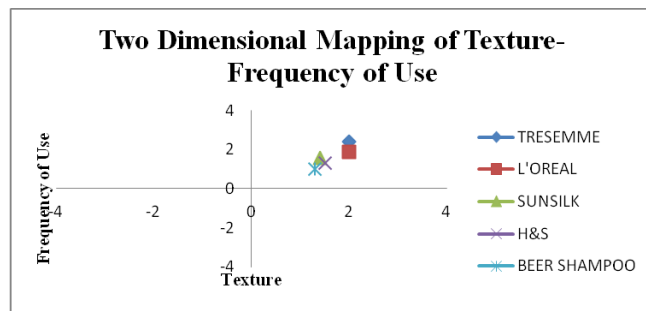
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Fig. 2.6: Essence and Texture



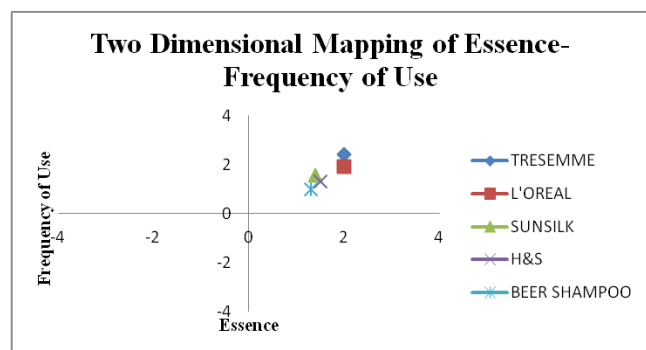
Source: Self generated through primary data collection

Fig. 2.7: Certification and Popularity



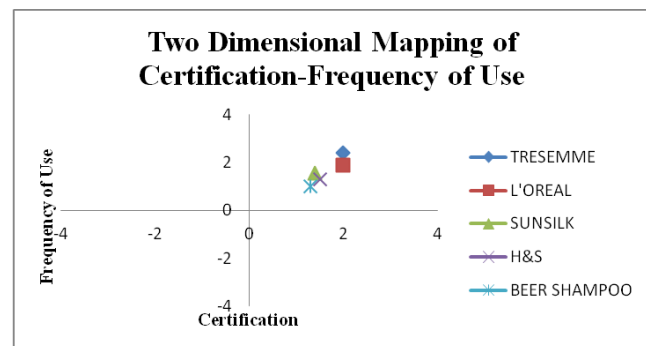
Source: Self generated through primary data collection

Fig. 2.8: Texture and Frequency of Use



Source: Self generated through primary data collection

Fig. 2.9: Essence and Frequency of Use



Source: Self generated through primary data collection

Fig. 2.10: Certification and Frequency of Use

From the ten (10) pairs of two-dimensional maps, it is evident that the five (5) brands taken under consideration fall in the first quadrant, i.e., the section where both the attributes are positive. It can be interpreted that the customers of the study area were of the opinion that 'texture' and 'popularity' of these brands were in consensus with the price of the said shampoo brands. In

addition, the customers' do purchase these brands with eminent frequencies as the price is acceptable from their point of view. All the five (5) brands were very popular in the study area and the visibility campaigns by the marketers of these brands were unbeaten in making the brands well-liked in the market; amplifying the purchase frequencies by the buyers. The essence compliments the texture of the brands and both influences the purchase frequencies. In addition to the brand status; the buyers do consider appropriate certifications and visibility of necessary information for the mentioned product category.

From the two-dimensional mapping, it can be construed that the marketers of the selected shampoo brands position the same, considering various attributes and the consumers of the study area understood the message content of the positioning campaigns and they accepted them optimistically. This signifies that the marketers were able to grab the perceptions of the consumers and plan and position the strategies accordingly which has led to brand acceptance and empathy in the long run.

DISCUSSION

"A process of buying starts in the minds of the consumer, which leads to the finding of alternatives between products that can be acquired with their relative advantages and disadvantages. This leads to internal and external research. Then follows a process of decision-making for purchase and using the goods, and then the post purchase behaviour which is also very important, because it gives a clue to the marketers whether his product has been a success or not"⁴. In this context, brand positioning and understanding the consumers' perception has become a necessity for every marketer. Positioning is more about building a brand experience by putting effort in understanding consumer perception and by assuring that the actual brand experience doesn't differ from the intended one. Positioning is the mental space which every marketer craves to imprint in the consumer's mind. It is the foremost thing; a marketer desires their consumers to imagine, when they come across with a brand name. The key to being a brand lies in establishing an emotional

⁴ Vibuti, Tyagi, A. K., & Pandey, V. (2014). A case study on consumer buying behaviour towards selected FMCG products. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management*, 2(8), 1168-1182.

connection with the customer and the same should be replicated in the positioning statement of a brand. In order to keep a hold in the market, the marketers strive to get the best positioning strategies by understanding how customers perceive their brand with respect to the available varieties.

From the study it was apparent that shampoo being a daily need for every customer; attributes and variety plays a strong role in influencing the consumer perception and finally to the purchasing behaviour. This product category associates with beauty, self-care and hygiene, and customers of every age and status; irrespective of the gender, pays good attention for a renowned and appealing shampoo brand. "Traditionally, only females are conscious toward their look & appearance but today, both male & female consumers are conscious towards their appearance. This trend has provided tremendous opportunity for the manufacturers to produce and sale of such products."⁵ In order to make up and stand the consumers' expectations, the marketers also put effort for a good campaign and an appealing package, without compromising on the quality and availability of the product.

In relation to the present study, it has been found that, out of the many shampoo brands available in the market, the customers from the Sivasagar district, of Assam were more inclined to five brands namely; Tresemme, L'oreal, Sunsilk, Head & Shoulders and Beer Shampoo. As the product falls under the FMCG sector with great varieties and brands available in the market, there exist high expectations from the customers. In order to retain the existing customers and to achieve loyalty from them, the companies do take good care in positioning their brands among the customers. And to a great extent, the marketers of these selected shampoo brands were successful in their positioning strategies for the North eastern market of India.

It has been revealed that various product attributes are associated, linked and connected in designing and positioning the campaigns by the marketers of the shampoo brands. Attributes like; price, texture,

certification, popularity, size, essence, visibility and frequency of use are highly considered by the customers while purchasing various shampoo brands, in general. Price sensitive customers are more inclined in authenticating the mix of attributes like; texture, essence and size, in relation to the price of various shampoo brands with their purchase decisions. "As price influences purchase of FMCG, it is recommended to pursue the low price strategy in marketing."⁶

Certifications from authorized agencies are well depicted in the campaigns and the customers look for genuineness through these certifications while deciding on their final purchase. The study revealed that the consumers perceive the selected brands uniformly and optimistically and the positioning of these brands effectively influences the consumers' and their buying behaviour in the North Eastern part of India.

It can be concluded that the marketers are successful in delivering the message concepts, ideas and themes to the market and the gap between perception and positioning is insignificant in this part of the nation. However, based on the geography the results may vary and there lies a continuous scope of improvement from the marketers' side and this study open the path for ample scope of research by various researchers in the same field.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

For brand positioning, the marketers make use of various attributes and appeals in their promotional campaigns with limited understanding of the prioritized attributes from the customers' perspective. This action directly impacts the financial budget of the organization. Thus, this study was an attempt to identify and understand the product attributes that the customers prioritize while purchasing various shampoo brands from the market. With the knowledge of certain specific and prioritized attributes which the customers' give value while purchasing consumer goods, the marketers will be able to design their campaigns and positioning strategies with streamlined decisions without hampering their promotion budget.

⁵ Pandey, M., & Puntambekar, G. L. (2016). Propensity of consumer behaviour towards shampoo brands (a case study of Sagar city, Madhya Pradesh). *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies*, 2(3), 48-59.

⁶ Vijaya, R. V., & Gurumoorthy, T. R. (2019). Factors influencing the purchasing behavior of shampo. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 6(6), 270-278.

It also highlighted the customers' perceived understanding towards consumable goods and their expectations from the same. This would help the marketers in framing the communication strategies as in case of consumables, the tendency of losing existing customers are normally high due to its replenishing nature and availability of wide brands and varieties in the market.

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