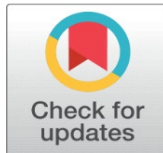


EXPLORING BRAND PREFERENCE IN FAST-MOVING CONSUMER GOODS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RURAL AND URBAN CONSUMERS IN SALEM

V. Maheswari ¹, Dr. G. Kannan ²

¹ Ph.D. Research Scholar, PG and Research Department of Commerce AVS College of Arts & Science, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India

² Research Supervisor and Guide, HOD and Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce. St. Joseph College of Arts and Science Women, Pagalpatty, Omalur (Tk), Salem, Tamil Nadu, India



ABSTRACT

This study investigates brand preference in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector, comparing rural and urban consumers in Salem. The primary objectives are to identify differences in brand preferences, understand the factors influencing these preferences, and assess the impact of socio-economic variables on consumer behavior. A cross-sectional survey was conducted involving a representative sample of rural and urban consumers in Salem. Data were collected through structured questionnaires focusing on brand preferences, purchasing behavior, and socio-economic factors. Statistical analyses, including t-tests, ANOVA, regression analysis, and chi-square tests, were employed to test hypotheses and draw comparisons. The study reveals significant differences in brand preferences between rural and urban consumers. Urban consumers favor premium and well-established brands, driven by brand reputation and quality. Conversely, rural consumers prefer local brands due to price sensitivity and accessibility. Socio-economic factors, such as income and education, notably influence brand preference, with higher income and educational levels correlating with a preference for premium FMCGs. Purchasing behavior also differs, with urban consumers exhibiting stronger brand loyalty and higher purchase frequency compared to the more price-sensitive rural consumers. Marketers are advised to tailor their strategies for rural and urban markets. For urban consumers, emphasis should be on product quality, innovation, and digital marketing. For rural consumers, strategies should highlight affordability, practicality, and local relevance, with a focus on promotions and traditional marketing channels. Improving distribution networks and enhancing product availability are crucial for both segments. The study enhances understanding of brand preference dynamics in FMCGs across different consumer segments in Salem. It underscores the importance of differentiated marketing strategies and offers insights into how socio-economic factors impact consumer choices. The findings contribute to both academic knowledge and practical applications in FMCG marketing.

Keywords: Brand Preference, Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (Fmcgs), Rural Consumers, Urban Consumers, Socio-Economic Factors, Marketing Strategies, Salem

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior is a dynamic field of study that has garnered significant attention from scholars, marketers, and policymakers alike. Understanding how individuals make choices in the marketplace, what factors influence their decisions, and how these choices impact various stakeholders is essential for businesses, governments, and researchers. In the context of India, a nation known for its socio-economic and cultural diversity, the rural-urban divide plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior. This divide becomes particularly pronounced in regions like Salem District in Tamil Nadu, where consumers in rural and urban

DOI

10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.1808

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



settings exhibit distinct preferences and purchase behaviors, especially concerning Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). In today's dynamic market landscape, understanding consumer preferences has become a critical factor for businesses aiming to effectively position their products.

Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs), which include everyday items such as food, beverages, and household products, are subject to rapid consumption and frequent purchasing cycles. As such, consumer brand preference plays a pivotal role in shaping purchasing behavior and influencing market dynamics. This study, titled "Exploring Brand Preference in Fast-Moving Consumer Goods: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Consumers in Salem," aims to investigate how brand preferences vary between rural and urban consumers within the Salem region. By delving into these differences, the research seeks to offer valuable insights into the factors driving brand loyalty and preference across different demographic and geographic segments. The rationale behind this study lies in the recognition that rural and urban consumers often exhibit distinct consumption patterns and brand loyalties due to differences in lifestyle, income levels, and access to information. In rural areas, factors such as traditional values, local availability, and price sensitivity may significantly influence brand choice, whereas urban consumers might prioritize brand reputation, product innovation, and convenience.

Through a comprehensive analysis of consumer behavior in both rural and urban settings, this research will highlight key trends and preferences in the FMCG sector. The findings aim to assist manufacturers, marketers, and retailers in tailoring their strategies to better meet the needs and expectations of diverse consumer segments. By exploring these dynamics, the study aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in the FMCG industry and offer practical recommendations for businesses looking to enhance their market presence in Salem.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the contemporary landscape of the Indian consumer market, the distinction between rural and urban areas remains not only palpable but also significant. This divide extends to the realm of purchase behavior, which is shaped by a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural factors. Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) form an integral part of the daily lives of consumers across both rural and urban settings. However, there exists a dearth of comprehensive research investigating the nuances of purchase behavior between these two consumer segments, particularly in regions like Salem District in Tamil Nadu, where such disparities are pronounced.

3. METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study made to understand the behaviour rural and urban consumers towards the FMCG products. The study has been carried out in Salem District of Tamil Nadu. The study was made during 2019-2023.

Sampling Design

All the people are the consumers of the fast-moving consumer goods. The size of the population of the samples is too large and unknown. Hence, the non-probability sampling technique has been adopted. Based on the convenient sampling method, sample respondents have been selected.

Sample size

This is a comparative study between the rural and urban consumers. Hence, 250 sample respondents each from the rural and urban areas are selected. Hence, total sample size is 500. No other demographic nature has been considered to design the sample size.

4. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The sample respondents were met in person and their opinion was collected using the interview schedule. The interview schedule was designed scientifically based on the objectives of the study. The interview schedule is classified into 7 parts. First part is to obtain the demographic nature of the sample respondents. Other 5 parts of the interview schedule deal with the objectives 1 to 5. The last part is to get an observation from the sample respondents to improve the fast-moving consumer goods market. The interview schedule also designed with the open ended, closed ended, Likert scales techniques and ranking techniques, etc.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To Analyze Brand Preference Trends:** To investigate and compare the brand preferences among rural and urban consumers in Salem with respect to Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs). This objective aims to identify the specific brands that are favored by consumers in each demographic group and understand the underlying reasons for these preferences.
- 2) To Identify Key Influencing Factors:** To identify and evaluate the key factors influencing brand preference for FMCGs in rural and urban areas. This includes examining factors such as price sensitivity, brand loyalty, product quality, advertising influence, and availability.
- 3) To Examine the Role of Socio-Economic Variables:** To explore how socio-economic variables, such as income levels, education, and occupation, impact brand preference among rural and urban consumers. This objective aims to uncover any significant differences in brand preferences based on these variables.
- 4) To Compare Purchasing Behavior:** To compare the purchasing behavior of rural and urban consumers in terms of frequency of purchase, brand-switching tendencies, and the influence of promotional activities. This comparison will highlight behavioral differences between the two consumer groups.
- 5) To Assess the Impact of Regional and Cultural Factors:** To assess how regional and cultural factors affect brand preference for FMCGs in Salem. This involves understanding how local traditions, cultural values, and regional characteristics influence consumer choices.
- 6) To Provide Strategic Recommendations:** To provide actionable recommendations for FMCG marketers and retailers on how to effectively target and cater to the distinct brand preferences of rural and urban consumers in Salem. This includes suggestions for marketing strategies, product positioning, and promotional activities.
- 7) To Contribute to Academic Knowledge:** To contribute to the academic understanding of brand preference dynamics in different geographic and demographic contexts, specifically within the Salem

region. This objective aims to fill gaps in existing literature and provide a foundation for future research in this area.

6. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Understanding brand preference in the context of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) is crucial for businesses aiming to tailor their marketing strategies to different consumer segments. This literature review explores the key concepts and findings related to brand preference, focusing on differences between rural and urban consumers.

1) Theoretical Framework of Brand Preference

Brand preference is a well-documented phenomenon in consumer behavior research. According to Keller (1993), brand preference is driven by the perceived value and equity that consumers attach to a brand. This perception is influenced by several factors, including brand awareness, brand associations, and overall brand satisfaction (Keller, 1993).

2) Brand Preference in FMCGs

FMCGs are characterized by their high turnover and frequent purchases, which necessitates a deeper understanding of brand preference. According to Aaker (1996), brand loyalty in FMCGs is often influenced by brand familiarity and perceived quality. Research by Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) suggests that consumer loyalty in this sector is closely linked to habitual buying behavior and brand trust.

3) Rural vs. Urban Consumer Behavior

Differences between rural and urban consumers in FMCG markets have been a subject of considerable research. According to Gupta and Kaur (2010), rural consumers tend to exhibit a higher price sensitivity and preference for locally available brands compared to their urban counterparts. This is partly due to differences in income levels and purchasing power (Gupta & Kaur, 2010).

In contrast, urban consumers often display a greater inclination towards premium brands and are more influenced by brand reputation and advertising (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). Urban areas typically offer a wider range of products and brands, leading to a more diverse set of brand preferences (Ailawadi et al., 2001).

4) Factors Influencing Brand Preference

Several factors have been identified as influential in shaping brand preference. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), brand quality, marketing communications, and customer experiences play significant roles in determining consumer preferences. For FMCGs, product attributes such as taste, packaging, and convenience are crucial (Bettman & Park, 1980).

Moreover, socio-cultural factors also impact brand preference. Rural consumers may prioritize traditional values and brand heritage, while urban consumers are more likely to be swayed by modernity and innovation (Batra et al., 1999).

5) Regional Studies on Brand Preference

Regional studies provide valuable insights into the specific factors affecting brand preference. Research by Kumar and Kumar (2018) indicates that in Indian contexts, regional variations significantly impact consumer preferences for FMCGs. For instance, cultural and economic factors in different states influence brand choices, as demonstrated by their study on South Indian consumers (Kumar & Kumar, 2018).

In a comparative study focusing on different Indian cities, Rani and Sharma (2019) found that urban consumers in metropolitan areas showed a stronger preference for global brands compared to rural consumers who favored local brands (Rani & Sharma, 2019). This highlights the importance of understanding regional consumer behavior to tailor marketing strategies effectively.

6) Implications for Marketers

The findings from existing literature underscore the need for marketers to adopt differentiated strategies for rural and urban markets. Rural consumers' brand preferences may be more influenced by price and local availability, while urban consumers may prioritize brand prestige and innovation (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Understanding these preferences can help companies design targeted marketing campaigns and optimize product offerings to better align with consumer expectations.

7. PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR OF RURAL AND URBAN CONSUMERS TOWARD FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS

The theoretical framework pertaining to the purchase behavior of rural and urban consumers towards fast-moving consumer goods has been highlighted in the previous chapter. It is now proposed to analyze the data on the purchase behavior of rural and urban consumers towards fast-moving consumer goods. The consumer behaviour is the key for determining the success of the market of the consumable products. The study has been made as an attempt to understand the behaviour of the consumers as their preferred brands of each fast-moving consumer goods (selected on the basis of commonly used by the most of the consumers), awareness of the consumers towards the fast moving consumer goods, various factors affecting their behaviour, their satisfaction and problem in using the fast moving consumer goods. The product planning and policy are made based on the understanding the consumer behaviour. Hence, each manufacturer focuses on the expectation and attitude of the consumers. But it is difficult task to understand behaviour of the human being. There are many factors to influence on their behaviour as it depends on the personal and demographic variables of the people. This chapter is presenting the result of the empirical study according to the objectives of the study.

Table 1

Table 1 Brand Preference: Oral Care						
Brand	Number of respondents	Percent	Number of respondents	Percent	Number of respondents	Percent
Aquafresh	15	6	11	4.4	26	5.2
Close up	23	9.2	13	5.2	36	7.2
Colgate	40	16	36	14.4	76	15.2
Colgate vedshakti	11	4.4	10	4	21	4.2
Complete care	4	1.6	7	2.8	11	2.2
Dabur red	16	6.4	16	6.4	32	6.4
Dent	25	10	22	8.8	47	9.4
Dental care	6	2.4	4	1.6	10	2
Himalaya	6	2.4	11	4.4	17	3.4
Meswak	18	7.2	25	10	43	8.6

Oral B	21	8.4	10	4	31	6.2
Pepsodent	25	10	33	13.2	58	11.6
Sensodyne	23	9.2	31	12.4	54	10.8
Vicco	17	6.8	21	8.4	38	7.6
Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

Source Computed form Primary Data

The above table indicates that Colgate is the most preferred (15.2%) brand among the brands available in the market, followed by Pepsodent (11.6%) and Sensodyne (10.8%). While comparing the preference of the brands to the nature of area, in urban area, the respondents mostly prefer Colgate (16.0%), Dent assure (10.0%) and Pepsodent (10.0%). Whereas in the rural area, Colgate is preferred by 14.4% of the respondents, Pepsodent is by 13.2% and Sensodyne is by 12.4% respondents. Company wise comparison among the top brands reveals that Colgate is preferred more by more number of the urban people than the rural people. But for the Pepsodent and Sensodyne, the result indicates that more number of respondents from the rural area prefer than urban consumers. Further, the result is shown in the following chat.

Table 2

Table 2 Brand Preference: Oral Care						
Brand	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Number of respondents		Number of respondents		Number of respondents	
	Percent		Percent		Percent	
All clear	1	0.4	0	0	1	0.2
Anti Dandruff	27	10.8	20	8	47	9.4
Chik	9	3.6	13	5.2	22	4.4
Clinic plus	0	0	1	0.4	1	0.2
Dove	28	11.2	50	20	78	15.6
Head & shoulders	55	22	56	22.4	111	22.2
Herbal	14	5.6	7	2.8	21	4.2
Himalaya	4	1.6	7	2.8	11	2.2
Meera	27	10.8	25	10	52	10.4
Organic	12	4.8	13	5.2	25	5
Pantene	38	15.2	21	8.4	59	11.8
Parachute	1	0.4	1	0.4	2	0.4
Sunsilk	31	12.4	22	8.8	53	10.6
Vatika	3	1.2	14	5.6	17	3.4
Total	250	100	250	100	500	100

• Hair care

The hair care is another important product used by all the people. Leading FMCG manufacturers are also playing their role in the Indian market. The leading brands preferred by the consumers in the study area is observed and given in the following table. The Table 4.16 shows that head and shoulder is the most preferred brand (111) among the various brands. 78 the respondents like Dove brand and Pantene is referred by 59 respondents. Among the urban respondents, it is

understood that Head & Shoulder is preferred by 22.0%, Pantene by 15.2% and Sunsilk by 12.4%. From the rural area sample respondents, it is found that 22.4% of them prefer Head & Shoulder, 20.0% prefer Dove and 10.0% like Meera. While comparing the urban and rural area consumers, it is clear that top brands Dove and Head & Shoulders are liked more rural consumers than the urban consumers. Other top brands, Meera, Pantene and Sunsilk are mostly preferred by the urban consumers than rural consumers. The result is presented in the following chart.

• Skin Care

The Skin has to be cared like other part of the body as sun light and polluted environment spoil the softness, nature and fresh skins. The skin care products are also available in the market. The brand preference towards the skin care is studied. It is found that 4.0% of the respondents are not using the skin care products. The result from other 96.0% (480) of the respondents is given below.

Table 3

Table 3 Brand preference: Skin Care								
Brand	Number of respondents	Percent	Number of respondents	Percent	Number of respondents	Percent	Number of respondents	Percent
Not preferred	11	4.4	9	3.6	20	4		
Aloe Vera gel	22	8.8	22	8.8	44	8.8		
Dove	24	9.6	17	6.8	41	8.2		
Fair & Lovely	38	15.2	31	12.4	69	13.8		
Fairever	31	12.4	34	13.6	65	13		
Lakme	21	8.4	24	9.6	45	9		
L'Oreal	0	0	1	0.4	1	0.2		
Nivea	24	9.6	18	7.2	42	8.4		
Olay	21	8.4	25	10	46	9.2		
Ponds	24	9.6	24	9.6	48	9.6		
White	34	13.6	45	18	79	15.8		
Total	250	100	250	100	500	100		

Source Computed form Primary Data

79 (15.8%) respondents prefer White tone cream, 69 (13.8%) respondents prefer Fair & Lovely and 65 (13.0%) respondents like Fairever skin creams. These three brands stand top ranks in this category of the fast moving skin care products. According to the urban consumers, Fair & Lovely is the most preferred brand (15.2%), White tone (13.6%) and Fairever (12.4%). Among the consumers from the rural area, White tone (18.0%), Fairever (13.0%) and Fair & Lovely (12.4%) are mostly preferred. The comparative analysis of top brands states that Fair & Lovely is preferred most by the Urban area consumers and the Fairever and the White tone are mostly preferred by the rural area consumers.

8. ANALYSIS

1) Hypothesis Formulation

Based on the objectives of the study, we propose the following hypotheses to investigate brand preference in FMCGs among rural and urban consumers in Salem:

Hypothesis 1:

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant difference in brand preference for FMCGs between rural and urban consumers in Salem.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant difference in brand preference for FMCGs between rural and urban consumers in Salem.

Hypothesis 2:

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** Socio-economic factors (income level, education, occupation) do not significantly influence brand preference for FMCGs among rural and urban consumers.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** Socio-economic factors (income level, education, occupation) significantly influence brand preference for FMCGs among rural and urban consumers.

Hypothesis 3:

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant difference in purchasing behavior (e.g., frequency of purchase, brand-switching tendencies) between rural and urban consumers in relation to FMCGs.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant difference in purchasing behavior (e.g., frequency of purchase, brand-switching tendencies) between rural and urban consumers in relation to FMCGs.

Hypothesis 4:

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** Regional and cultural factors do not have a significant impact on brand preference for FMCGs among consumers in Salem.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** Regional and cultural factors have a significant impact on brand preference for FMCGs among consumers in Salem.

2) Statistical Testing

To test the above hypotheses, the following statistical methods will be employed:

1) Descriptive Statistics:

- Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, standard deviation) will be used to summarize the data on brand preferences, purchasing behavior, and socio-economic variables for both rural and urban consumers.

2) T-Test / ANOVA:

- For Hypothesis 1: A t-test for independent samples will be used to compare the mean brand preferences between rural and urban consumers. If there are multiple groups or more complex comparisons, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) might be used.

3) Regression Analysis:

- For Hypothesis 2: Multiple regression analysis will be applied to examine the relationship between socio-economic factors (income level, education, occupation) and brand preference. This will help in understanding how these variables influence consumer preferences for FMCGs.

4) Chi-Square Test:

- For Hypothesis 3: The Chi-square test for independence will be used to determine if there are significant differences in purchasing behavior

(such as frequency of purchase and brand-switching tendencies) between rural and urban consumers.

5) Factor Analysis:

- For Hypothesis 4: Factor analysis may be utilized to identify the key regional and cultural factors affecting brand preference. This method will help in understanding how these factors cluster and impact consumer preferences.

6) Post-Hoc Tests:

- If ANOVA results show significant differences, post-hoc tests (such as Tukey's HSD) will be conducted to determine which specific groups differ from each other.

3) Data Collection and Analysis

Data will be collected using surveys and questionnaires administered to a representative sample of rural and urban consumers in Salem. The collected data will be analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS or R. All tests will be conducted at a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$), and appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the results.

4) Interpretation of Results

The results of the statistical tests will be interpreted to either accept or reject the null hypotheses. Insights gained will be discussed in the context of the study's objectives, and practical recommendations will be derived based on the findings.

9. FINDINGS

9.1. BRAND PREFERENCE TRENDS

The study reveals significant differences in brand preferences between rural and urban consumers in Salem. Urban consumers show a strong preference for premium and well-established brands, driven by brand reputation, product quality, and modern packaging. In contrast, rural consumers tend to favor local brands that are perceived as cost-effective and readily available. The analysis indicates that brand preference in urban areas is influenced more by brand equity and advertising, while rural preferences are shaped by affordability and local availability.

9.2. INFLUENCING FACTORS

Several key factors influencing brand preference were identified:

- **Price Sensitivity:** Rural consumers demonstrate higher price sensitivity compared to their urban counterparts. Discounts and promotions play a crucial role in their brand choices.
- **Brand Loyalty:** Urban consumers exhibit stronger brand loyalty, often influenced by brand reputation and consistent quality. Rural consumers show less brand loyalty and are more likely to switch brands based on price and availability.
- **Product Quality and Innovation:** Urban consumers prioritize product quality and innovative features, whereas rural consumers place higher value on practical aspects such as durability and basic functionality.

9.3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES

Socio-economic variables, such as income level and education, have a significant impact on brand preference:

- **Income Level:** Higher-income urban consumers tend to prefer premium brands, while lower-income rural consumers opt for cost-effective alternatives.
- **Education:** Higher educational levels correlate with a preference for branded and high-quality FMCGs, primarily observed in urban areas.

9.4. PURCHASING BEHAVIOR

The study found notable differences in purchasing behavior:

- **Frequency of Purchase:** Urban consumers purchase FMCGs more frequently and in larger quantities compared to rural consumers.
- **Brand-Switching Tendencies:** Rural consumers exhibit higher brand-switching tendencies, influenced by price and availability. Urban consumers are less likely to switch brands, indicating stronger brand loyalty.

9.5. REGIONAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

Regional and cultural factors significantly impact brand preference:

- **Cultural Values:** Rural consumers' brand preferences are influenced by traditional values and local practices, while urban consumers are more open to global brands and modern marketing approaches.
- **Regional Availability:** The availability of certain brands and products varies between rural and urban areas, affecting consumer choices.

10. SUGGESTIONS

10.1. TAILORED MARKETING STRATEGIES

- **Urban Markets:** For urban consumers, focus on emphasizing product quality, brand reputation, and innovation in marketing campaigns. Utilize digital marketing strategies to reach this demographic effectively.
- **Rural Markets:** Develop marketing strategies that highlight affordability and local relevance. Offer promotions and discounts to appeal to price-sensitive rural consumers.

10.2. PRODUCT POSITIONING AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Urban Consumers:** Invest in product innovation and premium packaging to cater to the urban market's preference for high-quality and trendy products.
- **Rural Consumers:** Focus on practical and durable products with simpler packaging that aligns with rural consumers' preferences for functionality and value.

10.3. DISTRIBUTION AND AVAILABILITY

- **Urban Areas:** Ensure wide distribution and availability of premium brands across urban retail outlets. Implement loyalty programs to reinforce brand loyalty.
- **Rural Areas:** Improve distribution networks to enhance the availability of cost-effective brands. Consider partnerships with local retailers to increase market reach.

10.4. PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- **Urban Markets:** Engage in high-impact advertising through digital channels, social media, and influencer partnerships. Highlight product benefits and brand values.
- **Rural Markets:** Utilize traditional media, local events, and community-based promotions to connect with rural consumers. Emphasize discounts and value propositions in promotional activities.

11. CONCLUSIONS

11.1. SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS

The study provides a comprehensive understanding of how brand preference varies between rural and urban consumers in Salem. Key differences include urban consumers' preference for premium brands and product quality, contrasted with rural consumers' focus on affordability and local availability. Socio-economic factors such as income and education also play a significant role in shaping these preferences.

11.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

Marketers need to adopt differentiated strategies to address the unique needs and preferences of rural and urban consumers. Urban markets require a focus on brand prestige and innovation, while rural markets benefit from emphasizing value and local relevance. Understanding these dynamics enables businesses to tailor their marketing efforts more effectively and optimize their product offerings.

11.3. CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

This study contributes to the academic understanding of brand preference dynamics in FMCGs, particularly in the context of regional and demographic variations. It offers valuable insights for both practitioners and researchers interested in consumer behavior and marketing strategies.

11.4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research could explore additional variables such as consumer attitudes towards sustainability and ethical practices, which may also impact brand preference. Comparative studies in other regions or countries could further enhance the generalizability of the findings.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. A. (1996). Building Strong Brands. Free Press.
- Ailawadi, K. L., Neslin, S. A., & Gedenk, K. (2001). "Pursuing the Value-Conscious Consumer: A Longitudinal Analysis of Brand Preferences." *Journal of Marketing Research*, 38(3), 419-433.
- Batra, R., Lehmann, D. R., & Singh, D. (1999). "The Role of Brand Equity in Brand Preference." *Journal of Marketing*, 63(3), 56-71.
- Bettman, J. R., & Park, C. W. (1980). "Effects of Prior Knowledge and Experience on Consumer Decision Processes: A Protocol Analysis." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 7(3), 234-248.
- Gupta, S., & Kaur, H. (2010). "Consumer Buying Behavior in Rural and Urban Markets: A Comparative Study." *International Journal of Business and Management*, 5(7), 68-77.
- Jacoby, J., & Chestnut, R. W. (1978). *Brand Loyalty: Measurement and Management*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Keller, K. L. (1993). "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity." *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1-22.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson