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Determinants of Brand Preference of Two-wheelers: The Case of Rural and Semi-urban Areas in Baddi, Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to examine the factors that affects the preference for different brands of rural and the semi-urban consumers of Baddi, Himachal Pradesh and thus tries to bring to fore the similarities or dissimilarities, if any, in their preferences. The primary data collected from a sample size of 400 respondents selected through random sampling technique were put into microscopic analysis by employing percentage analysis and Spearman Rank Correlation approach. The research findings indicate that price, reference group, popularity and brand name have been the major factors that affect brand preference for two-wheelers in semi-urban areas whereas factors such as colour variety, durability, and reference group affect brand preference in rural areas. There is a difference in the factors affecting brand preferences of two-wheelers when it comes to semi-urban and rural areas.

Keywords: Brand preference, Rural consumers, Semi-urban consumers.

1. INTRODUCTION

India is one of the fastest growing nations of the world. India being a highly populated country, offers a lot of opportunities to the marketers. 2/3rd of the total population of India lives in the semi-urban and rural areas according to the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). “GO RURAL” is can be the right strategy for the marketer to get a major share of rural consumer. There are a lot of opportunities which these markets offer to the marketers. Urban markets has reached its saturation level for various categories of consumer goods and since the rural income is increasing, marketers are trying to discover strength of the large rural and semi-urban markets, hence the concept rural marketing enhanced.

According to a Tata Strategic Management Group report, it has been observed that 1/3rd of consumer durables are sold in rural segments. Two-wheelers & electronic goods are likely to grow in near future in rural and semi-urban areas.

The urban markets are becoming saturated and the rural and semi-urban markets are highly untapped. These are the reasons that emphasizes the need to explore them. Rural and semi-urban consumers are keen on branded goods nowadays, so the market for products and services seems to have begun to grow rapidly. The consumer durables sector in India is one that will be passing through some very interesting times.

Marketers have not differentiated between semi-urban and rural areas. They have focussed on urban and rural areas only. Since, semi-urban and rural areas are demographically different in terms of income, literacy, infrastructure therefore the consumer behaviour of consumers of semi-urban and rural areas are also different. Semi-urban areas are areas which have population between 10,000-1,00,000, have better connectivity with the markets, more disposable income, better infrastructure than rural areas and Rural areas are areas which have population of less than 10,000 and more than 3/4th of the population is dependent on agriculture as defined by RBI.

Consumers brand preferences helps in understanding consumer behaviour. A deeper understanding of such preference can help marketers' design better marketing program and build a long term relationship with consumers

In Himachal Pradesh, the urban markets are becoming saturated. Therefore, the rural and semi-urban markets has got a bright future .90% of the population of Himachal Pradesh lives in rural areas and the semi-urban population is also rising in Himachal Pradesh according to census 2011.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Pandey & Pandey, 2013) analysed the lifestyle changes with demography and the behaviour of consumer changes with the influence of media. They have emphasised in their study that the lifestyle of a consumer influence their buying behaviour to a great extent. Therefore, while determining the brand preference of a consumer we must take their lifestyle into consideration.

(Lahoti, Y.L., & Jacob, A.S., 2013) aimed to identify and ascertain the extent of problems of consumer behaviour have an impact on the marketing of consumer durables. In a rural family for material comfort products; husband and his parents are dominating and influential.

(Kumar, N.A., & Joseph, J., 2014) intended to identify the level of influence of various factors on the purchase of FMCG products-soaps & detergents among the rural/semi-urban consumers. From the study it was evident that quality of personal care brands were given more emphasis and the difference in educational level of respondents is significant in case of certain factors namely quality, pricing and the retailer.

Income had a significant difference across Marital Status and Gender of respondents in influencing their purchase decision.

(Bisht, M., Saklani, K., & Anand, S., 2010) examined the brand preference of the durable products in rural areas of Dehradun District. In the study it was stated that brand and price play an important role in their choice.

(Luis Méndez, J., Oubina, J., & Rubio, N., 2011) aimed to analyse the relative importance of brand-packaging, price and taste in the formation of brand preference for manufacturer and store brands in food product categories. It was found that the consumer are aware of taste of a product according to its brand.

(Çelik, A. K., Eygü, H., & Oktay, E., 2015) the main objective of this paper was to determine factors that may possibly contribute to young consumers' smartphone brand preference. Results reveal that monthly household income, price of current smartphone, product design, product weight, and after purchase services have both increasing and decreasing influence regarding a specific brand preference.

(E. Schultz, D., & P. Block, M., 2014) have aimed to investigate whether or not ongoing sales promotion contributed to the declines in "no brand preference" (NBP). Four leading sales promotional tools, based on consumer influence, were coupons, home samples, in-store samples and retail shopper cards. Shopper cards had most influence on purchase of secondary, not primary brands in categories. Shopper cards are a clearly underused promotional tool in building brand preference and sales.

(Pandey, M.K., 2012) emphasized to find out the factors which influence the buying behaviour of customer keeping in mind the brand of the products. It was found that customers prefer to buy product which is of good quality. The taste and preference of the customer changes with change in income.

(Roopa, J., 2014) aimed to analyse the important factors and sources of information in purchase of consumer durables. Majority of consumers agree to the fact that advertisement plays a very important role in purchase. Most of customers purchase of consumer durables is based only on advertisements. In addition to advertisements customers give equal priority for the facilities given by the service provider, quality of the product, brand when it comes to selection of product. Television & outdoor advertising contribute the major share in creating awareness.

(Hasan, A., 2014) studied which consumer durable brand is the most preferred by the consumers and why particular consumer durable brand was preferred. The paper has found that quality, technological innovations, and multitude of brands across price points for price sensitive consumers are the three dominant factors which influence the consumer preference for consumer durable brands.

All these studies have either spoken about rural or urban areas. Not much has been done on semi-urban areas, which are different from rural and urban areas. Thus, this study will focus on semi-urban and rural areas with respect to brand preference of two-wheelers.

3. OBJECTIVE

- To compare the factors affecting brand preferences of two-wheelers in semi-urban and rural areas.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study semi-urban and rural areas of Baddi, Himachal Pradesh with a sample size of 400 were taken. The samples were collected through questionnaires from the semi-urban and rural consumers. The sampling technique was probabilistic.

Baddi is recognized as an industrial town & Nagar panchayat. It is situated in Southwestern Solan district of Himachal Pradesh. This area was chosen for the study as it is a mix of both semi-urban and rural areas which is important for the study.

Variables like Quality, Brand name, Reliability, Popularity, Colour-variety, and Durability, Price and Reference group were taken for the study apart from variables like age, gender, income. Spearman Rank correlation was used for analysis.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the semi-urban and rural consumers is listed vide Table 1 below.

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents from both the areas. 200 samples were collected from semi-urban areas and 200 from rural areas. The samples comprises of respondents from different age group, educational background, occupation and family income.

Table 1

<i>Demography</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Semi-Urban</i>		<i>Rural</i>	
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Male	111	55.5	112	56.0
	Female	89	44.5	88	44.0
	Total	200	100.0	200	100.0
Age	Upto 20	6	3.0	19	9.5
	21-25	34	17.0	37	18.5
	26-30	22	11.0	33	16.5
	31-35	41	20.5	33	16.5
	36-40	38	19.0	30	15.0
	41-45	30	15.0	26	13.0
	46-50	13	6.5	10	5.0
	51 and above	16	8.0	12	6.0
	Total	200	100.0	200	100.0
	Level of education	Illiterate	3	1.5	24
Upto 5		2	1.0	24	12.0
Upto 10		23	11.5	67	33.5
Upto 12		51	25.5	48	24.0
Graduate and above		121	60.5	37	18.5
Total		200	100.0	200	100.0
Occupation	Agriculture	6	3.0	60	30.0
	Business	61	30.5	60	30.0
	Salaried	99	49.5	49	24.5
	Others	34	17.0	31	15.5
	Total	200	100.0	200	100.0

(Contd..)

Demography	Categories	Semi-Urban		Rural	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Family income	Upto 9,999	9	4.5	36	18.0
	10,000-19,999	15	7.5	44	22.0
	20,000-29,999	24	12.0	49	24.5
	30,000-39,999	30	15.0	29	14.5
	40,000-49,999	32	16.0	13	6.5
	50,000-59,999	42	21.0	13	6.5
	60,000-69,999	18	9.0	7	3.5
	70,000-79,999	15	7.5	3	1.5
	80,000-89,999	2	1.0	1	.5
	90,000 & above	13	6.5	5	2.5
Total		200	100.0	200	100.0

Classification of Respondents According to the Brands Preferred of Two Wheeler

Interpretation: In semi-urban areas, 22 respondents preferred TVS, 36 preferred Bajaj, 35 preferred Hero, 52 preferred Honda, 13 preferred Mahindra, 10 preferred Yamaha, 23 preferred Suzuki and 9 respondents preferred other brands.

Table 2
Classification of respondents according to the brands preferred of two wheeler (in Nos.)

Location	TVS	Bajaj	Hero	Honda	Mahindra	Yamaha	Suzuki	Others	Don't Have	Total
Semi-urban	22	36	35	52	13	10	23	9	0	200
Rural	42	32	49	31	18	11	12	4	1	200

In rural areas, 42 respondents preferred TVS, 32 preferred Bajaj, 49 preferred Hero, 31 preferred Honda, 18 preferred Mahindra, 11 preferred Yamaha, 12 preferred Suzuki, 4 respondents preferred other brands and 1 did not have any preference.

Factors Affecting Preference for Different Brands of Two-wheelers

The extent of relationship of various factors among rural and semi-urban consumers' brand preference was studied with respect to consumer durable two-wheelers vide Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, Table 7 below. Brands that were taken in the study are TVS, Bajaj, Hero, Honda, Mahindra, Yamaha and Suzuki. Since the data was not normally distributed, Non Parametric correlation viz. Spearman Rank correlation was used.

Interpretation: We find from the table above that the factors Brand-name, Durability, Colour variety, Price are statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ with 'r' values .711, .539, .645, .639 respectively in semi-urban areas. In rural areas, the data is insignificant.

It is observed that the factors which have the highest effect on preference for TVS in semi-urban areas are Brand-name, colour variety and price as these factors have a strong correlation which is evident from the 'r' values that lie between 0.60-0.79, whereas, in rural areas the data is insignificant.

Table 3
Factors Affecting Preference for TVS

<i>Brand preference (General)</i>	<i>Factors affecting brand preference (Specific to brand)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Semi-urban)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Rural)</i>
Quality	Quality affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.121	.230
Brand-name	Brand-name affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.711**	.111
Reliability	Reliability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	-.076	.060
Durability	Durability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.539**	-.052
Colour variety	Colour variety affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.645**	.257
Popularity	Popularity affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.253	.150
Price	Price affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.639**	.139
Reference group	Reference group affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	-.038	-.035

*Correlation significant at 0.05 (2 tailed); **Correlation significant at 0.01 (2 tailed).

N(Semi-urban) = 22; N(rural) = 42.

• .00 – .19 “very weak”; • .20 – .39 “weak”; • .40 – .59 “moderate”; • .60 – .79 “strong”; • .80 – 1.0 “very strong”

Table 4
Factors Affecting Preference for Bajaj

<i>Brand preference (General)</i>	<i>Factors affecting brand preference (Specific to brand)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Semi-urban)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Rural)</i>
Quality	Quality affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	-.304	.015
Brand-name	Brand-name affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.200	.243
Reliability	Reliability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.438**	.176
Durability	Durability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.258	.296
Colour variety	Colour variety affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.320	.447**
Popularity	Popularity affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.080	.067
Price	Price affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.185	-.182
Reference group	Reference group affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.389*	-.258

*Correlation significant at 0.05 (2 tailed); **Correlation significant at 0.01 (2 tailed).

N(Semi-urban) = 36; N(rural) = 32

• .00 – .19 “very weak”; • .20 – .39 “weak”; • .40 – .59 “moderate”; • .60 – .79 “strong”; • .80 – 1.0 “very strong”

Interpretation: We find from the table above that the factors Reliability, Reference group are statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ with ‘r’ values .438, .389 respectively in semi-urban areas. In rural areas, the factor Colour variety is statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ with ‘r’ value .447 respectively.

It is observed that the factors which have the highest effect on preference for Bajaj in semi-urban areas are reliability and reference group as these factors have a moderate correlation which is evident from the ‘r’ values that lie between 0.40 – 0.59, whereas, in rural areas the only factor that affects preference for Bajaj is colour variety with a moderate correlation lying between 0.40 – 0.59. Even with moderate correlation, these are the factors with the highest correlation in the respective areas.

Table 5
Factors Affecting Preference for Hero

<i>Brand preference (General)</i>	<i>Factors affecting brand preference (Specific to brand)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Semi-urban)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Rural)</i>
Quality	Quality affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.241	.352*
Brand-name	Brand-name affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.428**	.414**
Reliability	Reliability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.139	.256
Durability	Durability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.162	.334*
Colour variety	Colour variety affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.280	.446**
Popularity	Popularity affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.595**	.335*
Price	Price affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.546**	.128
Reference group	Reference group affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.752**	.403**

*Correlation significant at 0.05 (2 tailed); **Correlation significant at 0.01 (2 tailed).

N(Semi-urban) = 35; N(rural) = 49.

• .00 – .19 “very weak”; • .20 – .39 “weak”; • .40 – .59 “moderate”; • .60 – .79 “strong”; • .80 – 1.0 “very strong”

Interpretation: We find from the table above that the factors Brand-name, Popularity, Price, Reference group are statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ with ‘r’ values .428, .595, .546, .752 respectively in semi-urban areas. In rural areas, the factors Quality, Brand-name, Durability, Colour variety, Popularity, Reference group are statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ with ‘r’ values .352, .414, .334, .446, .335, .403 respectively.

It is observed that the factors which have the highest effect on preference for Hero in semi-urban areas are popularity, price and reference group as these factors have a moderate to strong correlation which is evident from the ‘r’ values that lie between 0.40 – 0.79, whereas, in rural areas the major factors that affect preference for Hero are colour variety, reference group and Brand-name with moderate correlations lying between .40 – .59. Even with moderate correlation, these are the factors with the highest correlation in the rural areas.

Table 6
Factors Affecting Preference for Honda

<i>Brand preference (General)</i>	<i>Factors affecting brand preference (Specific to brand)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Semi-urban)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Rural)</i>
Quality	Quality affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.456**	.155
Brand-name	Brand-name affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.421**	-.009
Reliability	Reliability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.360**	.311
Durability	Durability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.140	.431*
Colour variety	Colour variety affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.175	.482**
Popularity	Popularity affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.366**	.293
Price	Price affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.403**	.129
Reference group	Reference group affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.593**	.414*

*Correlation significant at 0.05 (2 tailed); **Correlation significant at 0.01 (2 tailed).

N(Semi-urban) = 52; N(rural) = 31.

• .00 – .19 “very weak”; • .20 – .39 “weak”; • .40 – .59 “moderate”; • .60 – .79 “strong”; • .80 – 1.0 “very strong”

Interpretation: We find from the table above that the factors Quality, Brand-name, Reliability, Popularity, Price, Reference group are statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ with ‘r’ values .456, .421, .360, .366, .403, .593 respectively in semi-urban areas. In rural areas, the factors Durability, Colour variety, Reference group are statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ with ‘r’ values .431, .482, .414 respectively.

It is observed that the factors which have the highest effect on preference for Honda in semi-urban areas are quality, Brand-name and reference group as these factors have a moderate correlation which is evident from the ‘r’ values that lie between 0.40 – 0.59, whereas, in rural areas the major factors that affect preference for Honda are colour variety, reliability and durability as these factors have a moderate correlation which is evident from the ‘r’ values that lie between 0.40 – 0.59. Even with moderate correlation, these are the factors with the highest correlation in the respective areas.

The sample size for brands Mahindra, Yamaha are very small as $N < 20$. Hence, no conclusions are drawn.

Table 7
Factors Affecting Preference for Suzuki

<i>Brand preference (General)</i>	<i>Factors affecting brand preference (Specific to brand)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Semi-urban)</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient ('r') (Rural)</i>
Quality	Quality affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	-.089	-.129
Brand-name	Brand-name affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	-.052	.162
Reliability	Reliability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.378	.123
Durability	Durability affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.608**	-.294
Colour variety	Colour variety affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.454*	.090
Popularity	Popularity affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.537**	.081
Price	Price affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.661**	.085
Reference group	Reference group affecting brand preference of Two-wheelers	.515*	.095

* Correlation significant at 0.05 (2 tailed); ** Correlation significant at 0.01 (2 tailed).

N(Semi-urban) = 23; N(rural) = 12.

• .00 – .19 “very weak”; • .20 – .39 “weak”; • .40 – .59 “moderate”; • .60 – .79 “strong”; • .80 – 1.0 “very strong”

Interpretation: We find from the table above that the factors Durability, Colour variety, Popularity, Price, Reference group are statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ with ‘r’ values .608, .454, .537, .661, .515 respectively in semi-urban areas. In rural areas, the sample size was very small, hence cannot be determined.

It is observed that the factors which have the highest effect on preference for Suzuki in semi-urban areas are price, popularity and reference group as these factors have a moderate to high correlation which is evident from the ‘r’ values that lie between 0.40-0.79, whereas, in rural areas the sample size was very small, hence cannot be determined.

6. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that semi-urban and rural areas are different when it comes to consumer behaviour.

The research findings indicate that price, reference group, popularity and brand name have been the major factors that affect brand preference for two-wheelers in semi-urban areas whereas factors such as

colour variety, durability, and reference group affect brand preference in rural areas. From the above analysis it is seen that factors that affect brand preferences in both regions are different.

7. RESEARCH IMPLICATION

In order to take up various marketing campaigns, the marketer should understand the consumer behaviour of the target consumers. Consumer brand preferences help in understanding consumer behaviour. In order to build long term relationships and to design marketing schemes in a better way, marketers should study the preferences of consumers. Rural and semi-urban population comprises of almost 2/3rd of the total population. Companies that recognize this enormous opportunity can garner their share of growth. This study will help companies to position their products in these areas.

8. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There were only a few factors and products taken for the study. Researchers can include more factors and products for better results. The respondents were from the town Baddi only which is situated in Himachal Pradesh, and the results may not be applicable in the other areas of Himachal Pradesh. The sample size taken for this study is 400 which is very small and results of the study cannot be generalized for the entire population. There can be different results if different sample size and sample population is taken

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