

CONSUMER MARKET TRENDS AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN THE FAST-MOVING CONSUMER GOODS (FMCG) INDUSTRY IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Fast Moving Consumer Goods, as an industry in Pakistan, is very much shaped by speed through consumption cycles, dynamic consumer preferences, and very much resides itself into an improved market competition. This particular paper examines the essential consumer market dynamics and strategic management implications in the Pakistani FMCG sector. It researches the changes in consumer behavior, the growing role of digitalization, and the increasingly demanding trends for sustainability and locally manufactured products. The economic ups and downs, the changing demographics, and an increased adoption of e-commerce have all altered purchasing patterns. Strategy formation needs to be agile and innovative for effective competition in the market within the FMCG sector. This research delves into the role of data-driven decision making, supply chain optimization, and brand differentiation in formulating successful business strategies. Furthermore, the study investigates the extent to which multinational and local FMCGs adopt digital marketing, customer engagement techniques, and retail transformation initiatives into their operations in order to enhance their penetration of the market. Research was further evaluated to determine challenges relating to regulatory barriers, inflation, and changing consumer loyalty and thus would offer insights into effective strategic responses. Case studies of leading FMCG firms in Pakistan will illustrate best practices in market adaptation, innovation, and sustainability. The findings are thus valuable to all industry stakeholders like manufacturers, retailers, and policymakers, on how to manage market complexities while capitalizing on emerging opportunities. The research will ultimately contribute to the larger debate on consumer market dynamics and strategic management in developing economies when it integrates theoretical perspectives and empirical analysis. Every business could use the lessons that will be drawn in such a way as to build their competitive strategies in the changing FMCG landscape within Pakistan.

Keywords: FMCG Industry, Consumer Market Trends, Strategic Management, Digital Transformation, Market Competition, Supply Chain Optimization

INTRODUCTION

With a population of over 210.8 million, Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world, making it a popular destination for manufacturers of consumer goods. The country's fast-moving consumer goods industry is one of its largest, with both domestic and foreign manufacturers such as Nestle, Procter & Gamble, Reckitt Benckiser, Unilever, National Foods, APAL, and many more. The emphasis of this study is on promotional expenses and how they affect consumers' purchasing decisions. This study uses primary and secondary data. The secondary data comes from financial reports, from which we extracted promotional expenses and profitability. With the use of these numbers, we were able to determine the relationship between promotional expenses and profitability for the previous ten years for Nestle Food Pakistan and Unilever Food Pakistan. The main data source is 236 respondents completed a questionnaire about the factors they consider while choosing a purchase. The questionnaire was developed using three factors: (i) indirect persuasion, or advertising; (ii) the art of retailing; and (iii) branding. Advertising consists of TV commercials, print ads, digital ads, and celebrity endorsements. The degree of influence these components have on a consumer's decision to buy is covered in their individual chapters, as are the

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aspects of retailing and branding (Hassan et al., 2021). The internal environment of an organization is influenced by various factors related to its financial functionality, including structure, processes, people, systems, and resource constraints. The utilization of Business Intelligence (BI) is highlighted as a crucial tool for understanding and organizing these forces, providing strategic insights for adaptability, changeability, and management decisions aimed at maximizing profitability. The authors argue that BI allows businesses to forecast economic situations by visualizing data at a strategic level, facilitating decision-making based on priority and criteria. The significance of BI in the organizational intelligence environment is emphasized, complementing human brains with tools and techniques (Duedahl et al., 2005). Shopping is a significant aspect of consumers' lives and continues to expand, prompting ongoing research and exploration in this field. Impulse buying, identified as a crucial form of consumer purchasing behavior, has been recognized in the literature (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986). Impulse purchases play a significant role in consumer behavior, with approximately nine out of ten shoppers making impulsive buying decisions at times (Silvera et al., 2008; Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Iqbal et al., 2023). The factors driving such impulsive purchases are crucial to comprehend. Presently, nearly 70% of buying decisions occur at retail outlets or selling points, contributing to a substantial volume of sales across diverse product categories (Heilman et al., 2002; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982). The research conducted by Gardner and Rook in 1988 reveals that consumers tend to experience stronger emotions in relation to impulse purchases compared to planned buying. Packaging is acknowledged as a crucial marketing tool by marketers, with the ability to generate promotional value and convenience (Kotler, 2004). The purpose of product packaging includes protecting the product, ensuring its safety after purchase, building brand recognition, and persuading customers to choose a specific brand. Kacen and Lee (2002) suggest that various aspects of a country's culture influence consumers' impulsiveness. Recognizing the significance of these cultural factors, it is crucial to explore how branding affects impulse buying in real-world scenarios, particularly from diverse cultural perspectives such as Pakistan (Fareed & Iqbal, 2024).

Problem Statement

In addition to examining the effects of advertising, retailing, branding, and cultural factors on consumers' impulsive purchasing behavior, this study also examines the effects of promotional spending on Pakistan's consumer goods business, with a particular focus on major firms like Nestle Food Pakistan and Unilever Food Pakistan.

Research Statement

This research endeavors to examine the complex factors that influence customers' impulsive buying tendencies within the framework of Pakistan's consumer goods sector. Particularly, the study investigates how promotional spending affects impulsive purchase behaviors, in addition to examining the effects of branding, retailing, advertising, and cultural factors. This study aims to offer a thorough grasp of the factors influencing consumer behavior and corporate strategy in the Pakistani market by focusing on prominent participants in the industry, including Unilever Food Pakistan and Nestle Food Pakistan (Smith, 2017; Jones et al., 2003).

Significance

This study investigates the variables that affect customers' propensity for impulsive purchases in Pakistan's consumer goods market (Iqbal et al., 2024). Pakistan is an important market for companies like Nestle, Procter & Gamble, and Unilever, with a population of over 210.8 million. The financial reports of

significant firms like Nestle Food Pakistan and Unilever Food Pakistan are analyzed by the study using primary and secondary sources. In order to provide a more detailed view of the elements impacting customer choices, the research divides them into three categories: branding, retailing, and advertising. The report also highlights how business intelligence (BI) helps manage and comprehend financial functionality, which makes flexible decision-making for optimizing profitability possible. Along with acknowledging the cultural implications on customers' impulsiveness, the research also takes into account the emotional and situational components of impulse purchase.

Research Questions

- To what extent do these advertising components contribute to the overall influence on consumers' impulsive purchasing decisions, and are there variations in effectiveness among different media?
- In what ways does BI provide strategic insights that enhance adaptability, changeability, and decision-making for optimizing profitability in the consumer goods sector, as argued by the authors?
- How does the utilization of Business Intelligence (BI) contribute to understanding and managing the internal environment of consumer goods companies in Pakistan?

In the past, organizations encountered several difficulties. Transactions recorded manually, data manipulation, and report creation via computerized systems led to a number of problems, including repetition of data, lack of accuracy, and internal control, time loss, ruined paper, and system failure, among other things. In 1940, administrative and clerical tasks were performed using computers. Financial records are consistently used as a gauge and assessment of the company's status. Intelligence is the combination of information analysis, evaluation, and interpretation tailored to the specific challenges that an organization may face in order to give them a competitive edge and lucrative business operations. BI tasks include impact analysis and forecasting the future using previous and current performance. According to Buckhout et al. (1999), the decision-making process revolves around the prudent allocation and use of funding sources. It has to do with raising the necessary funds to invest in the business's resources and operations, making the appropriate guesses about the insufficient and restricted funding in between difficult uses, and ensuring that the resources are being used effectively and efficiently to meet the organization's goal. However, "decision making includes all areas of management, financial implications of investment, and production," according to Bacon (1992). Modern, highly developed enterprises are always characterized by a rapidly expanding trend of expansion. Increased sales cause the need for capital to rise along with an increase in receivables and stock. Thus, the decision-making strategy's functionality is false (Zaheer et al., 2023).

The most important tactic for competing in the highly competitive advantage is to comprehend and maintain a record of all the data generated by day-to-day activities for upcoming events. Business Intelligence is not just a tool; it's an approach. By using business intelligence (BI), organizations can better understand growth in systematic sale levels, guide trade policies, determine required capital, increase stock levels in response to elevated receivables ratios, and create strategies for resource allocation, investment policies, and reinvestment to draw in new business and maintain existing ones with value-adding features (Apte et al., 2003). BI serves as a conduit between various departmental activities to obtain information about daily operations to improve working capital management, enabling the FMCG sectors to closely examine business performance. These industries can combine, among other things, data assimilation, a controlling system with a variety of key performance indicators (KPIs),

scrutiny, consistent reporting, and other features with business intelligence (BI) all within a service-oriented architecture that is essential for a superior business administration to direct managers in the strategic direction of quality information and to establish the principles, values, and procedures that ensure compliance with the objectives (Rajteric, 2010).

Comparisons are made in order to determine which element must come into play first, based on significance—that is, how much more important or dominant one element is over another factor in relation to the criterion or feature that they are compared to. For instance, one might answer the following question by comparing a drink on the left with one at the top: How much more often or strongly is that drink drunk in the US than the one at the top? Next, select the right number from the scale for the judgment. For instance, if you enter 9 in the (coffee, wine) position, it indicates that you consume 9 times as much coffee as wine. These techniques are employed to create efficient. Businesses with a repository of combined, unstructured and semi-structured data from marketing, finance, production, human resources, customer service, and other departments—as well as data from external sources—are better able to conduct cross-sectional analyses of their performance, which allows for a closer examination of exploratory analysis through the use of business intelligence methodologies (Mohammad, 2012). Using BI in conjunction with insightful historical data makes it easier to formulate strategic decisions (investment, financing, profit sharing, keeping customers, and so on) by amplifying patterns to comprehend the business procedures. FMCG should promote a thoughtful and flexible code of conduct, meet customer demands by maintaining capital and balancing supply, conduct research and development to explore more competitive pricing models, serve new markets by sustaining existing ones, and acquire a competitive edge in the market. Every firm will benefit greatly from and be profitable from the use of BI with cloud. A novel approach to BI is cloud BI. In lieu of installing complicated and costly software, BI will operate in the cloud. No hardware needs to be installed or purchased. As an organization's computing needs increase over time, the cloud will allocate additional resources on its own. Because of this, cloud BI is an increasingly potent tool.

Chaudhry et al. (2016) looked into the importance of business intelligence systems on Pakistani decision-making as well as major failure reasons. Just 2% of SMEs use the BI framework for their basic leadership; the others use a variety of devices for practical administration. Early research on impulsive buying behavior, particularly before the 1980s, appears to be contradictory since it placed more emphasis on categorizing the behavior's various features than on defining the phenomenon itself. And why it is that customers are so often addicted to this kind of conduct. Because of this, earlier research has concentrated on low involvement products in limited quantities (Nawaz et al., 2022). Subsequent research in this field indicates that it is a matter of human traits, independent of how one reacts to low-cost product offerings. Past research has generally indicated that this conduct tends to satiate emotional/hedonic wants for pleasure, social connections, and satisfaction (Piron, 1991; Arif et al., 2023). This implies that social and emotional factors can encourage impulsive purchasing behavior.

According to a research conducted in India in November 2013 on the topic of advertising and its effect on consumer purchasing behavior, advertisements are made with the intention of persuading viewers to buy a product, use a service, or otherwise act upon information, etc. Through the use of 110 respondents' responses, their study examines the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables, namely emotional response with attitudinal and behavioral aspects of consumer buying behavior. This study's main goal is to evaluate the impact of advertising on consumers' attitudes toward purchases. Their research paper's findings indicate that advertising is impacted by the role that supplementary information plays in customer purchasing decisions.

The use of celebrity endorsements in FMCG advertising is currently one of the most well-established strategies. In actuality, celebrity endorsers are frequently utilized in practically all television commercials to promote various businesses. Marketers feel that celebrities have a good impact on the process of marketing their brands or products, thus they invest a significant amount of money each year in contracts with celebrity endorsers (Iqbal, 2022). Marketers employ celebrity endorsements to facilitate effortless brand remember, particularly in contexts involving purchases especially e-commerce or through digital marketing (Fahim et al., 2020; Fareed et al., 2023). While a plethora of study has been done on celebrity endorsements, it appears that less has been done on the connection between consumer sentiments and celebrity endorsers. The purpose of the study, according to the authors, was to determine how purchase intentions are affected when celebrity endorsers appear in ads. In 2014, Douglas D. Davis from Virginia Commonwealth University and Charles A. Holt from the University of Virginia conducted a study in Virginia that highlights the significance of marketing strategies and shopping when the price-setting institution that is usually used to model retail exchange is changed to permit discounts from the list price for individual buyers. In this more complex situation, a range of purchasing and marketing methods can be reasonable, unlike the straightforward price-fixing game. The model's qualitative predictions are validated by the experimental data.

According to a 2016 study by Mr. Mudassir Hussain and M. Waheed Akhtar, branding has a significant impact on impulse buying behavior in the FMCG sector of Pakistan. The study's findings show that branding has a good proportion of variance in impulse buying behavior and has a significant impact. Based on this data, it makes sense to draw the conclusion that marketers may effectively encourage and maintain impulsive purchasing behavior through clever labeling, attractive packaging, and branding. Since the data used in this study came from a single industry in a single nation, more research is necessary before any broad conclusions can be made about the link examined. The primary function of consumers is the act of shopping. Academics proposed that the fastest way to distinguish between planned and impulsive purchases is the speed at which decisions are made. According to (Piron, 1991), an impulse purchase meets four requirements. According to Hodge (2004), impulse purchase is "on spot decided," unplanned, and results from a reaction to a stimuli. It also entails an emotional and cognitive reaction. Moreover, extant literature views impulse buying as "a response to inexpensive offerings," as supported by earlier study regarded the phenomenon as a singular feature or characteristic (Rook, 1987). Impulsive behavior is seen as a "lifestyle trait" among customers. Several studies reveal that the consumer feel more strongly about impulsive purchases than about deliberate purchases (Gardner & Rook, 1988).

DISCUSSION

This study paper discusses several important facets of Pakistan's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) business, with a particular emphasis on promotional costs and how they affect customers' decisions to buy. The research integrates primary and secondary data, focusing on prominent market participants including Nestle Food Pakistan and Unilever Food Pakistan. An examination of the cultural, retail, branding, and advertising aspects that affect impulsive purchasing behavior is part of the investigation. The study also explores how business intelligence (BI) functions in financial functioning, strategic management, and decision-making in the consumer products industry (Kashif & Iqbal, 2022). There are opportunities and challenges for businesses located in an ever-evolving consumer landscape in the FMCG market in Pakistan. New consumer preferences arising out of urbanization, moving lifestyles, and digital influence are evolving purchasing behaviors. Variables such as the rise of e-commerce, growth of social media marketing, and digital payment solutions have hastened trends related to online shopping, making

it ever more important for companies to develop strong digital footprints. Consumers now also want greater convenience, better affordability, and product transparency, which are compelling FMCG companies to respond via personalized marketing and product innovation. A fine understanding of these trends would enable businesses to stay ahead in a highly competitive market.

In the FMCG domain, strategic management begs a data-oriented approach to decision-making, whereby companies can foresee market shifts and consumer expectations more effectively. Companies should pump funds into advanced analytics, AI, and automation for the betterment of supply-chain functioning and product delivery. With the rise in consumer preference for eco-friendly packaging and ethically-sourced products, sustainability is now a critical factor. This has led the FMCG sector to consider the possible avenues of sustainable manufacturing, activities to reduce waste, and responsible sourcing. The organizations that thrust such practices into their daily operations will foster brand loyalty and grow with the evolving consumer sentiments. The industry is still affected by all sorts of issues, like inflation and shifting raw material prices, as well as the inevitable constraints imposed by regulatory forces. Hence, local and multinational FMCG companies have to navigate these obstacles by diversifying their product portfolios, fostering innovation, or establishing strong partnerships across the supply chain. In addition to these challenges, the government policies and trade regulations determine the future of the industry, which also emphasizes the need for policy advocacy as part of strategic planning. The FMCGs continue to adapt to changing economic conditions and use technology-driven solutions to realize sustainable growth and longevity in an increasingly dynamic market.

The study investigates the link between promotional spending and profitability, utilizing financial records from prominent FMCG firms in Pakistan over the previous 10 years, such as Nestle Food Pakistan and Unilever Food Pakistan. Three primary categories are identified by the research as variables affecting customer choices: retailing, branding, and advertising (including TV commercials, print advertisements, digital marketing, and celebrity endorsements). A detailed investigation is conducted into how these elements affect impulsive purchase behavior.

The study emphasizes how vital business intelligence (BI) is as a tool for organizing and comprehending internal elements that impact organizational efficiency. BI is promoted as a way to maximize revenue by offering strategic insights, flexibility, and changeability. Acknowledging the importance of cultural influences, the research investigates the relationship between branding and impulsive purchasing in various cultural contexts, focusing on Pakistan. It seeks to comprehend how cultural factors influence impulsive buying decisions. The study tackles important research concerns about the efficacy of advertising elements, the function of BI in strategic decision-making, and the ways in which BI helps Pakistani consumer goods businesses comprehend and manage their internal environments. The part on literature evaluation offers valuable perspectives on the development of impulsive purchase behavior, decision-making procedures, and the historical background of business intelligence. It builds the present study's basis by referencing earlier studies. While admitting the importance of impulsive buying in consumer behavior, the study addresses it. Considerations are examined in connection to impulsive purchases, including situational and emotional elements, packaging, and the impact of celebrity endorsements. The research highlights the important influence of branding on impulsive purchasing behavior, building on previous findings. Effective branding, eye-catching packaging, and astute labeling are recommended as strategies to support and sustain impulsive buying.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study sheds light on the complex variables affecting consumers' impulsive purchasing

decisions in Pakistan's FMCG market. It emphasizes how crucial branding, advertising, cultural aspects, and promotional spending are. Business intelligence integration is positioned as a key instrument for controlling and comprehending the corporate environment, which facilitates strategic decision-making targeted at optimizing profitability. The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry in Pakistan is undergoing serious transformation due to changing consumer tastes, digitalization, and economic constraints. Companies more successful at adapting to such changes with data analytics, consumer insights, and innovative marketing strategies will be best poised to maintain their competitive edge. Increasing convenience, affordability, and sustainability demand from consumers will continue to push FMCG firms to adjust their product offerings and operational efficiencies to meet market demands. Strategic management in this sector must emphasize agility and resilience towards economic volatility and regulatory constraints. Firms that brew supply chain optimization with digital marketing and localized product strategies can gain a larger market share and customer loyalty through the additional benefits of technology, such as artificial intelligence, automation, and e-commerce platforms. A company that does not attempt to innovate will soon fade into obscurity in this fast-paced market. Contrastingly, FMCG industries thrive in Pakistan as long as innovations are reconciled against sustainability and cost efficiencies. Maintaining consumer confidence and ensuring market stability may depend upon developing long-term strategies with CSR, ethical sourcing, and digital transformation. Continuous market trend analysis and proactive business models will provide opportunities and aid in counteracting challenges to ensure that FMCGs maintain growth in a competitive environment.

Policy Implications

The study paper investigates the variables influencing customers' impulsive purchase habits in Pakistan's consumer goods market, concentrating on significant businesses like Nestle Food Pakistan and Unilever Food Pakistan. It looks at how impulsive buying habits are affected by branding, retailing, advertising, promotional spending, and cultural variables. The report also emphasizes how crucial business intelligence (BI) is for controlling internal environments and choosing profitable strategies. The degree to which advertising elements affect consumers' impulsive buying decisions, how business intelligence (BI) offers strategic insights for flexibility and decision-making, and how BI helps comprehend and manage the internal environment of Pakistani consumer goods companies are among the research questions. The report makes many policy recommendations, such as integrating BI technologies, strategically allocating promotional funds, and emphasizing branding.

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