

**CONSUMER PREFERENCE OF COOL DRINKS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUSCAT,
SULTANATE OF OMAN**

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Summary:

A number of brands are available in the market. Among them, three popular brands are considered for this study. They are Mountain, dew Pepsi and coca-cola. The present study was conducted in Muscat as it is the capital city and also one of the biggest cities of the country. The study focuses on the reasons for consumer preference of cool drinks. From the study, it is found that taste, quality and time are the main factors influencing the purchase of soft drinks.

Key words: Soft drinks, purchasing behavior, Brand Preference

INTRODUCTION:

The Omani soft drink market is a growing market and it will still continue to grow in the future also. This statement finds evidence in (hbmedia)¹, which states that Oman Refreshment Company (ORC), a franchisee of PepsiCo International has recently purchased a manufacturing line from Sidel to meet the two digit market growth of soft drinks of the country. The market share of any soft drink varies from location to location and season to season. Any soft drinks market share varies from country to country and season to season.

According to a recent survey conducted in USA and published in (Oman Observer)² about the calorie content in soft drinks warns the people about the dangers of liquid calories. According to

senior study author Elissa Epel, professor of psychiatry at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) also published in (Oman Observer)³, carbonated soft drinks increase cell ageing as well as it leads to several diseases and obesity. Even though, many studies have shown that soft drinks poses several health problems, it's market share still continues to increase. To add to the woe, carbonated soft drinks have come to play a very important role in one's day- to – day life when people move out of their houses to places of employment, picnic or parties. They prefer to have carbonated soft drinks to quench their thirst, as a wide range of soft drinks are readily and easily available.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The study is conducted to find out the motives of consumer preference of certain selected soft drink brands in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. The soft drink market is flooded with foreign as well as indigenous products. There is fierce competition among the suppliers of soft drinks. In this situation, an analysis about consumer preference for soft drinks has become essential as soft drinks are consumed more like tea or coffee.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To find out the reasons for brand preference
2. To analyze the factors influencing the consumers for purchasing soft drinks.
3. To find out whether the brand and quality affects purchasing behaviour.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The main aim is to find out the preferred brand of cool drinks by the consumer in Muscat city, the capital city and the biggest city of Sultanate of Oman. This study is helpful to the producers to identify the consumer perception, taste, beliefs and behaviour for improving their products to introduce new tactics in order to increase their sales.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on primary data as well as secondary data. Primary data is collected from the respondents in the Muscat area only. The data necessary for this study has been collected by preparing and distributing the questionnaires to 200 respondents. The respondents included

people who are doing business, professionals, Private and Government sector employees, college students and house wives.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY:

1. The sample group was restricted to Muscat city only
2. The sample size is limited to 200 respondents only, so the results obtained cannot be generalized.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Dr.Sumeet Agarwal and Mrs. M. Madhuri Devi (2015), studied the customer preferences of soft drinks relating to the brands in the market. They conducted the study to find out the the flavour which is more popular, which is the most compelling factor for the consumer to consume soft drinks, rating of the product, how often consumer consumes the soft drinks, size preferred in terms of packing, sources used to purchase etc. They found out that advertisement, brand, size, colour, taste were the reasons for the consumers to purchase the product. They further concluded that retailer's or anyone's reference to purchase has no impact on the purchase of soft drinks by the consumers.

V. Anojan & T. Subaskaran (2015) conducted a study in the northern province of Srilanka to find out the customer preferences and customer's buying behaviour of all the soft drinks in that area. They tested by taking two main variables such as consumer's preference and consumer's buying behaviour which again included sub variables. They collected information from 300 respondents in the northern province of Srilanka. They analysed the results using Regression and Correlation and concluded that there is significant relationship between consumer's preference and buying behaviour.

Santhosh .T.M (2013) in his study "A Study On Consumers' Preferences Towards Soft Drink Products" analysed the factors affecting the choice of soft drinks and also to bring out the customers buying pattern of Coca Cola soft drinks. The researcher collected data from 150 respondents and found that majority of the respondents buy soft drinks on a monthly basis for its taste and family use. He also found out that majority of the respondents are satisfied with the price of all coca cola soft drinks.

Sachin Singal (2009), made a comparative study on consumption patterns of soft drinks and fruit juices in North West Delhi region which covered areas of Paschim Vihar, Pitam Pura, Rohini area, Punjabi Bagh by taking in to consideration the following factors like : Changing consumption pattern, health factor, status consciousness, varying lifestyle etc. The study concluded that majority of the people consume soft drinks to put off their thirst and fruit juices due to its health benefits.

Arunee Nakmongkol (2009) researched on the customer's behaviour towards carbonate soft drinks at Siam Paragon, Muangthong Thanee and Chachoengsao areas of Thailand. The researcher identified that thirst and price are the most important factors for consumer's purchase of a particular soft drink brand and all the other factors such as brand, size, colour etc. The study concluded that on an average the customers are satisfied, but still the soft drinks manufacturers has to concentrate on low sugar products as the customers are more concerned with health in order to increase the market share.

Sathya.S (2005)in her study "Consumer awareness and brand preference for health drinks" found that the brand attitude of the consumers of health drinks depends on the benefit expected from it and studied the consumer awareness about various brands of health drinks and brand loyalty of health drinks. The study also concentrated on consumer purchase decisions and was observed that purchase decision for health drinks are influenced by a number of quality factors, which lead them to select a particular brand in preference to others.

Nirmala.R(2002) has conducted research on "A study on Brand loyalty and brand preference towards health beverages in Coimbatore city". Her study mainly focuses on to know the brand loyalty towards a particular brand and the usage period of that particular brand. It is found that the consumers give more importance to quality though rate is high and they are satisfied with various aspects in selecting a brand.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The statistical tools are used for this study:

1. Simple percentage
2. Chi-Square analysis

Table No. 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic factors		Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	112	56
	Male	88	44
	Total	200	100
Age	Below 25 years	48	24
	26 – 35	58	29
	36 – 45	54	27
	Above 46 years	40	20
	Total	200	100
Occupation	Business people	58	29
	Employees	70	35
	Professional	20	10
	Others	52	26
	Total	200	100
INCOME	Below 500	70	35
	501- 10,00	62	31
	1001 – 1500	52	26
	Above 1500	16	8
	Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Out of 200 respondents, 112 respondents are male and remaining 88 respondents are female

The above table shows the age group of respondents. The maximum number of respondents belongs to the age group of 26-35 constituting 29% of the sample, 48 respondents are aged below 25 while 54 are aged around 36-45, remaining 40 respondents are aged above 46

The above table portrays that majority of the respondents i.e. (35%) are employees, (29%) of the respondents are business people, and (10%) are professional people.

Out of 200 sample respondents, (35%) come under low income group of less than 5000, and (31%) of the respondents come under the group of 5000-10,000, (26%) of the respondents come under the income group of 10,000-15,000, and rest of them (8%)are above Rs.15,000 income group. It is viewed that a sizeable number of respondents belong to the lower middle-income group.

TABLE NO.2
RESPONDENTS BRAND PREFERENCE OF SOFT DRINKS

BRAND	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Mountain dew	106	53
Pepsi	52	26
Coca-cola	18	9
Others	24	12
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Out of 200 respondents, (53%) respondent prefer Mountain dew, (26) respondents prefer Pepsi, (9%) of the respondents prefer coca-cola, (12%) of the respondents are like other brands

TABLE NO. 3
RESPONDENTS NEED FOR SOFT DRINKS

Need for soft drinks	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Quench the thirst	64	32
To have a different taste	22	11
A comfort in summer heat	102	51
To feel the thrill in cold	12	6
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

From Table 3, we can understand that majority of the customers like to have soft drinks during summer.

TABLE NO. 4
RESPONDENTS OCCASION OF USING SOFT DRINKS

OCCASION	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE(%)
While traveling	92	46
Depending on mood	80	40
On special occasion	24	12
Others	4	2
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Out of 200 respondents, 92 respondents drink soft drinks while travelling from one place to another and 80 people drink it when their mood permits, 24 people drink soft drinks only during special occasion.

TABLE NO.5
RESPONDENTS FREQUENCY TO PURCHASE SOFT DRINKS

FREQUENCY	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Daily	10	5
Twice / Thrice a week	106	53
Once in a week	84	42
Every fortnight	0	0
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Majority of the respondents purchase twice or thrice in a week and 84 respondents use soft drinks once in a week.

TABLE NO. 6**RESPONDENTS OPINION ON INFLUENCE OF SEASONS TO CONSUME SOFT DRINKS**

SEASONS	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Spring	14	7
Summer	124	62
Winter	8	4
All seasons	54	27
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

It is indicated from the table that a sizeable majority of the respondents consume soft drinks in summer seasons while around 27% of the sample in all seasons, 7% in spring and 4% in winter. It is inferred that summer season consumption form a sizeable majority.

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS**TABLE 7****AGE AND CONSUMER PREFERENCE**

Ho: There is no significant influence of age on the consumer preference

Age group	Brand				
	Mountain dew	Pepsi	Coca-Cola	OTHERS	TOTAL
Up to 25 Years	20	10	8	10	48
26 to35 Years	32	10	8	8	58
36 to 45 Years	40	6	2	6	54
Above 46	14	26	-	-	40
Total	106	52	18	24	200

Source: primary data

Result: The calculated value of chi-square is: 59.11 and the tabulated value of Chi-squares at 9 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance is 16.9, since the calculated value is less than the table value, the hypothesis is accepted. And it may be inferred that age has no influence on brand preference.

TABLE: 8**GENDER AND CONSUMER PREFERECE**

Ho: There is no significant influence of gender on consumer preference:

Gender	Brand				
	Mountain dew	Pepsi	Coca-Cola	Others	Total
Male	50	32	10	20	112
Female	56	20	8	4	88
Total	106	52	18	24	200

Source: primary data

Result:

The calculated value of chi-square is: 9.427, and the tabulated value of Chi-square 3 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance is 7.815, since the calculated value is less than the table value, the hypothesis is accepted. And it may be inferred that Gender has no influence on consumer preference.

TABLE:9**PRICE AND CONSUMER PREFERENCE**

Ho: There is no significant influence of price on consumer preference

Brand	Opinion on price			Total
	Costly	reasonable	Economical	
Mountain dew	50	30	26	106
Pepsi	12	16	24	52
Coca-Cola	8	4	6	18
Others	10	8	6	24
Total	80	58	62	200

Source: primary data

The calculates value of chi-square is 14.01 and the tabulated value of Chi-square with 9 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance is 16.92, since the calculated value is less than the

table value, the hypothesis is rejected. And it may be inferred that price has no significant influence on brand preference.

TABLE: 10**QUALITY AND CONSUMER PREFERENCE****Ho: There is no significant influence of quality on consumer preference**

Brand	Quality				Total
	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	
Mountain dew	20	32	40	14	106
Pepsi	10	10	6	26	52
Coca-Cola	8	8	2	0	18
Others	10	8	6	0	24
Total	48	58	54	40	200

Source: primary data

The calculated value of chi-square is 1.831, and the tabulated value of Chi-square with 9 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance is 16.92, since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the hypothesis is rejected. It is inferred that quality significantly influences consumer preference of brand.

TABLE: 11**OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AND CONSUMER PREFERENCE****Ho: There is no significant influence of occupational status on consumer preference**

Occupational status	Brand				Total
	Mountain dew	Pepsi	Coca-Cola	Others	
Business people	32	10	8	8	48
Employees	40	26	0	4	70
Professional	6	6	4	4	20
Others	28	10	6	8	52
Total	106	52	18	24	200

Source: primary data

The calculated value of chi-square is 21.28, and the tabulated value of Chi-square with 9 degrees of freedom at 5% level of significance is 16.92, since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the hypothesis is rejected. And it may be inferred that occupational status has no influence on consumer preference of brand.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

1. Age, occupational status and gender does not influence the purchase of cool drinks, only quality and time influences the consumer to purchase cool drinks
2. Majority of the respondents taken for the study like Mountain dew
2. Consumers prefer to drink cool drinks mostly during summer season to quench their thirst.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. The quality of the soft drinks is considered to be main factor of purchasing. So, the quality should be improved further.
2. The price of the soft drinks should be minimized so that more people can use it
3. The taste of the soft drinks is one key factor in using the soft drinks and the taste of the soft drinks should be maintained,
4. Advertisement of the soft drinks should be more effective and educative.

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