

CONSUMERS PREFERENCES AND IMPACT OF REGIONAL PACKAGED DRINKING WATER IN AND AROUND ERNAKULAM DISTRICT, KERALA

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Abstract: The pure drinking water is becoming basic need of a common man. Earlier bottled drinking water was privileged to high class, foreign tourists and highly health conscious people. This decade has witnessed increasing popularity among average consumers, increasing living standards, disposable income. Consumer purchases are influenced strongly by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Packaged Drinking Water Industry in Ernakulam District is currently dominated by its top six Brands, including Bisleri, Kinley, Aquafina, Green valley, Bleu and Bailey. But with these companies struggling to penetrate into smaller, non tier cities and rural areas due to poor infrastructure and distribution Channel, there is an opportunity for small regional players to penetrate the rural markets of Ernakulam. In this study, the researchers examine the Impact of Regional Packaged Drinking water in and around Ernakulam region and identify the various factors influencing the purchase of packaged drinking water in the study area. This study reveals that there is huge competition in market and some brand holds the major share.

Keywords: Packaged Drinking Water, Disposable Income, Market Penetration.

Introduction: Water is the most important requirement for life. The drinking-water needs for individuals vary depending on the climate, physical activity and the body culture. But for average consumers it is estimated to be about two to four litres per day. The growing numbers of cases of bone diseases, increasing water pollution, increasing urbanization, increasing scarcity of clean and safe drinking water quality etc. have made the bottled water business just like other consumer items. Scarcity of potable and wholesome water at railway stations, tourists' spots, and role of tourism corporations etc. has also added to the growth. Pure and safe drinking water has always been a necessity. The conventional style of serving drinking water in our society has however changed quite dramatically during the last decade. Bottled water consumption has grown exponentially over the past ten to fifteen years. Even though, people are aware about the fact that Consumption of water in plastic bottle is not safe, everybody prefers packaged / bottled drinking water due to its easy portability. Before few years, bottled water was considered as the rich people's choice, but now it is penetrated even in rustic areas. "Bisleri" is the market leader in bottled water in India with a 63% market share within organized packaged drinking water category.

Nowadays, bottled water industry colloquially called, the packaged drinking water industry, is a symbol of new life style emerging in the Society. Bottled water has become an essential component of modern life. It is the main source of drinking water for many among the urban community. The demand for purified bottled water has been on a steady rise in recent years. Large segment of the population is struggling to get use this by paying handsome prices. Initially, in cities, the packaged drinking water was sought to be to bridge the gap in water supply. Even though the local municipalities, Panchayath and the State Water Authorities are bound to supply safe drinking water to citizens for their use, they sometimes could not able to meet the growing demands. With the dwindling share of good house hold wells and increased dependency to the piped water had led to the scarcity of quality potable water in cities. When more and more flats are build, the available ground water resources in the near vicinity will be low to meet the growing demand. Moreover, the higher earning groups prefer to have bottled water for their daily use even if potable water is available for them considering it as more safe. When the supply fails to meet the demand, especially during the summer months, spurious bottled water also enters the market.

Statement of the Problem: Consumer purchases are generally influenced by cultural, financial, social, personal and psychological factors. Consumers' perception and buying behaviour of bottled water in Ernakulam District is not fully studied. Researches and studies in this area are not much done to reveal the consumer behaviour and preferences. Therefore, this market will be sampled as a relevant and accessible segment to investigate the following research problem for this research. Factors such as age and income may strongly influence the buying behaviour towards bottled drinking water. Since water is an indispensable component to human physiology, its quality is just as important as its quantity.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To find out the impact on consumer preferences towards regional packaged drinking water in Ernakulam area.
2. To study the market shares of available packaged drinking water brands.
3. To analyse the marketing strategies used by various packaged drinking water brands.

Research Methodology: Both primary and secondary data are used in this study. A structured questionnaire was distributed among the respondents in the district who consume the packaged drinking water and also to the dealers of bottled water brands to collect primary information. The secondary sources of information have been collected from text books, research papers, websites and from other publications. A sample of two hundred was taken for the study.

Sample Design: The study is conducted on respondents residing in and around Ernakulam. Sample size is 200 respondents who consume the packaged drinking water. Sampling technique used in this study is Non-Probability sampling in which convenience sampling is used.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1: The Consumer Preferences in Packaged Water Brands

S.No	Criteria	Respondents	%
1.	Aquafina	46	23
2.	Bisleri	43	21.5
3.	Kinley	41	20.5
4.	Green valley	27	13.5
5.	Bleu	13	6.5
6.	Daily	8	4
7.	Others	22	11
	TOTAL	200	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: This table shows that 23% of the respondents prefer Aquafina, 21.5% prefer Bisleri, 20.5% prefer Kinley and 35% of the respondents prefer regional brands of packaged drinking water like Green valley, Bleu, Daily and other local brands. Among 200 respondents, 106 people prefer national water brands.

Table 2: Consumers Spending Over Packaged Drinking Water

S.No	Criteria	Respondents	%
1	Yes	196	98
2	No	4	2
	TOTAL	200	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows that all the 196 respondents have bought regional bottled water either on any occasion in their homes or during travel. It interprets that almost all people have bought local packaged drinking water brands at one point of time or other. Only 4 respondents never tried local Brands.

Table 3: Consumer's Satisfaction over Regional Packaged Drinking Water

S.No	Criteria	Respondents	%
1	Yes	171	85.5
2	No	29	14.5
	Total	200	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table interprets that 85.5% of the respondents are satisfied with the quality and price of regional bottled water brands.

Table 4: Consumers' Preferences for Bulk Orders to Regional Packaged Drinking Water Brands

S.No	Criteria	Respondents	%
1	Yes	117	58.5
2	No	83	41.5
	Total	200	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows that 58.5% of the respondents prefer regional brands for bulk orders during any occasions like marriages, conferences and other public functions, due to easy availability and competitive price.

Summary of Findings:

1. The study reveals that most of the consumers prefer bottled water having a national brand image like Aquafina, Bisleri, Kinley etc considering it as more safe and trustworthy.
2. Consumers prefer regional brands only if their favorite brand or national brands are not available.
3. The market share of regional packaged drinking water is less compared to National brands but shows a tremendous growing graph. Moreover, the regulatory mechanism should also be made stringent as availability of quality drinking water in the city is minimal.
4. The distributors for regional bottled water brands is less in Ernakulam area of one / two litre bottles. However they prefer to sell 20 litre cans to the houses, offices, hotels and to the public functions as it will increase their revenue.
5. This study also reveals that in tourist centres of Ernakulam district the sale of one litre bottled water of regional brands is high. Similarly in the six major railway stations in the district, the regional brand *Green Valley* have more share than other brands including *Rail Neer*.
6. Quality and source is the major factor the consumers prefer than the price.
7. About 85.5% of the respondents are satisfied with the value, service and availability of regional packaged drinking water brands.
8. According to market share, Aquafina is the leading brand having 23% market share, followed by Bisleri 21.5%, Kinley 20.5%, Green Valley 13.5%, Bleu 6.5%, Daily 4%, and others 11%.
9. The dealers prefer to sell local brands due to high profit margin and compelled to store the national brands due to consumer preference and brand loyalty.

Conclusion: There is a huge competition in the market in this field. So the local players in this industry get increased day by day. They have to survive in the regional market for that they should have good supply chain and should stick to the quality than other regional brands. The manufacturers of regional bottled water brands need to spend money on sales promotion to attract more and more customers and dealers. Profit margin of the dealers by selling of regional brands should be more in the market. This study, made as a detailed report, shows the impact of regional packaged drinking water. It will be useful in finding out the basis on which dealers and customers prefer buying packaged drinking water. It has been conducted with utmost consideration to the adequacy of data and quality of information. All the efforts have been put to make the report correct, genuine, and fulfilling the objectives of the reports.

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