



## Evaluating the Impact of Consumers' Attitudes and Subjective Norms on Purchase Intentions in FMCG Purchases

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### Abstract

*Consumer attitude is the subject of great importance and holds significance in terms of its utilization in understating consumer psychology. Marketers and researchers now a day are continuously using their resources to explore the consumer attitudes. In recent years, various studies have included consumers' attitudes toward purchase decisions as matter of prime focus. However, few studies have tried to enter the complex psychology of consumers during the purchase of frequently purchased items such as products included FMCG category. The present research utilized the Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour as a framework to examine consumers' FMCG purchase behaviour. The study was carried out by examining the impact of attitudes and subjective norms on purchase Intention with 400 respondents from four different cities of Uttarakhand state in India. The study results found a significant relationship between these variables and hence elaborated that these factors play primary role in predicting a purchase.*

**Keywords:** Consumer Black Box, Consumer Psychology, Purchase Intention, Orientation.

### Introduction

It is a universally accepted fact that all of us possess attitude about a specific place, object, service, process or a person. The attitude construct is still a topic of a major focus of theories and research in the social and behavioural sciences. There is a lot of evidence in its support with the emergence of literature, books, chapters and continuing research on the topic related to attitude. Social psychologists and other researchers have written a lot about on attitude and its related aspects and topics in order to gain deep insights into it. Over the past decades the role of studying consumer attitudes has seen a shift from traditional and durable segments to less durable product categories. Researchers globally have found that the frequently purchased good like Fast Moving Consumer products (FMCG) industry have experienced continued growth, increased diversity, and became one of the fastest growing production sectors in the world. The evolving marketplace of the industry has started recognizing the importance of understanding the attitudes, beliefs, and values of today's consumers for a more profitable, satisfactory, and higher quality of products which is a matter of great attention for research. It is the attitude of consumers which along with other supporting factors lead to the formation of intention which ultimately forms behaviour.

### Literature Review

The studies result with extensive focus on consumer attitude gave an introduction to the tri components- affect, cognition and conation. Moreover, it is said that attitude is a result of continuous learning and has a strong influence of a number of

factors like personal experience of the individual, views and suggestions of family and friends, and the impact of marketing strategy. There are number of studies which have provided a strong support for the relationship between these three components of attitude<sup>1</sup>.

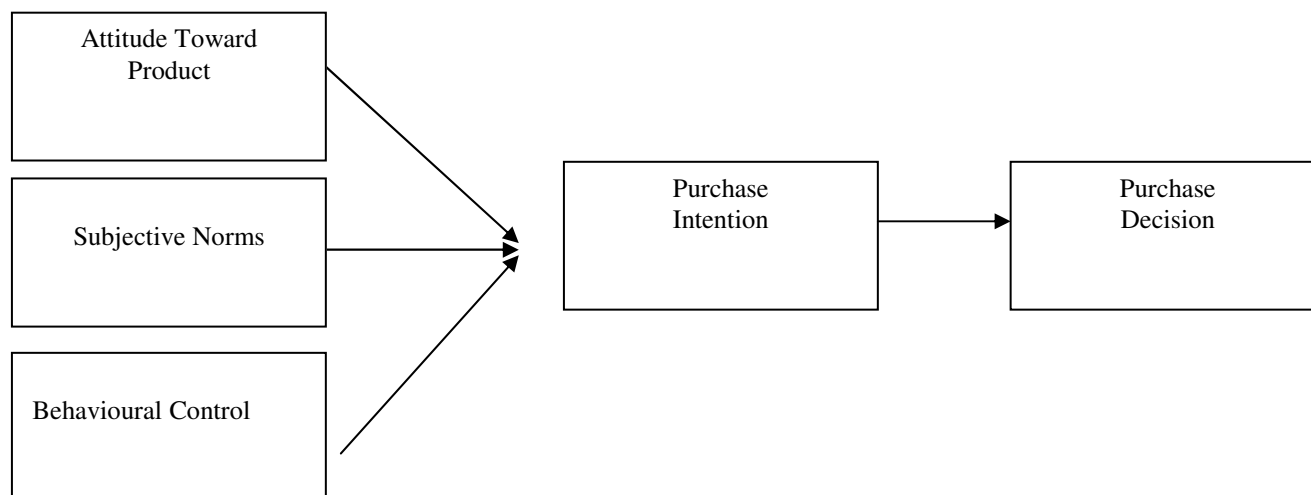
Further studies on attitudes included work from Eagly and Chaiken<sup>2</sup> and found that attitude is a psychological frame of mind that is expressed by evaluating a particular aspect with some degree of favour or disfavour. Dabholkar<sup>3</sup> Curran and Meuter<sup>4</sup> in their respective studies came up with almost same conclusions that attitudes have affective, behavioural and cognitive components. The different studies highlighted that belief leads to attitude which in turn leads to behaviour. The conclusion of these and all other related studies can be summed up to say that attitudes lead to purchase intention which in turn leads to behaviour. Hofmann et.al<sup>5</sup> conducted their studies and brought out conclusions that implicit attitudes are intrinsic and are automatic or involuntary because they are stored in long term memory of the consumer while the explicit attitudes are more deliberate and can be considered as propositional in nature and easier to change. The study result in the end found that both the implicit and explicit attitudes vary in their strength of relationship with each other. Wilson et al<sup>6</sup> in their study brought out that attitudes are affect- and cognitive-based. Converse<sup>7</sup> concluded that the association between an attitude object and its evaluation varies in strength. The study findings show that attitudes and non-attitudes lie on continuity. The stronger the association between attitude and its evaluation lies in a long-term memory of customer, the stronger will be its influence on the customer's behaviour<sup>8</sup>. Suggested through their findings that

strong feelings toward a object act as a source of learning that has a direct impact on resultant behaviour. Kotler<sup>9</sup> conducted observation studies and found that people possess attitudes towards everything like politics, purchases, religion, food, music etc. It was concluded with the results that attitudes put people into a frame of mind either liking or disliking an object, going toward or moving away from it and also direct people to behave in a consistent way towards similar objects. Patel<sup>10</sup> in his study underlined the role of culture in formation of consumer behaviour. The study explored the impact of religion on shopping behaviour and indicated that shopping behaviour of people varies across different religious group affiliation and degree of faith manifested. Ikechukwu et. al.<sup>11</sup> attempted to provide insights into the concept of consumer attitudes toward marketing efforts of firms. The study identified the effect of consumer attitude and the way the attitudes connect to the behaviour of consumers. The study concluded that firms should provide credible evidence of their product benefits, correct their customer misconceptions, and provide benefits with free offerings, engage new technologies, and bring in new innovations in value defining, developing, and delivering processes. Pande and Soodan<sup>12</sup> in their study also confirmed the role played by attitudes, beliefs and subjective norms in predicting the purchase behaviour of personal care products' consumers. McConnell and Leibold<sup>13</sup> concluded that when the consumer's behaviour in question is less compliant to conscious control, then implicit attitudes are better predictors of behaviour. Morwitz et. al.<sup>14</sup> concluded that individuals are more likely to choose options toward which they hold positive and accessible attitudes, and are less likely to choose options for which they hold negative and accessible attitudes. Chandon et. al.<sup>15</sup> undertook a comparative study based on the incidence, timing, and profitability of grocery purchases and found that measuring intentions increases the likelihood of repeat purchase incidence and shortens the time until the first repeat purchase but that these two mere measurement effects decay rapidly after a gap of

three months. Alibabic<sup>16</sup> examined consumer attitudes, behaviours and perception related to food products in different markets in the northwestern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study proved significant difference in the attitudes and behaviour of consumer with respect to their gender.

**Conceptual Framework:** The present research utilized the Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of Planned Behaviour<sup>17</sup> as a framework to examine consumers' FMCG purchase behaviour. According to the theory of planned behaviour, human action is influenced by three main factors which lead to intention. A combination of all these factors which include attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norm, and perception of behavioural control facilitates the formation of a behavioural intention. Attitude toward the behaviour is an overall evaluation of the behaviour in question. It is generally assumed that attitude has two different components the first is belief about consequences of the behaviour and secondly, subjective norms which are a person's own estimate of the pre defined social rules to perform the target behaviour. Perceived behavioural control is the extent to which a person is able to perform the behaviour. The behaviour gets stronger due to influence of a firm intention. The intention in turn gets firm due to more favourable attitude, subjective norm and greater perceived behavioural control. As intention is immediate antecedent of behaviour, therefore it can be said that intentions directly lead to behaviour. Some behaviour is not easy to perform and pose difficulties in their execution. Therefore it is useful to consider perceived behavioural control in addition to intention as it can serve as a supportive aspect in response to actual behavioural control and contribute to the prediction of the behaviour in question.

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of consumer attitude which evolve in the mind of consumers before shopping, and lead to purchase intentions and finally to purchase behaviour.



Source: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, I. 1991)

**Figure-1**  
**Research Model (Modified for the Study)**

## Methodology

Present research is longitudinal in nature and tried to focus on pre and post purchase aspects of consumer decision making. The study was dedicated to gain insights into attitude and purchase behaviour of consumers. The research instrument used for the study included structured questionnaire with FMCG products as attitude object. A second questionnaire was developed on the basis of attitudes of the consumers and was administered to check their resultant behaviour. Therefore, the study involved two structured questionnaires for collecting primary data from a sample size of 400 consumers. A pretest of both the questionnaires was conducted with 57 consumers to begin with and the results of the pretest were used to modify the final questionnaires.

**Subject:** The population of the study was the customers who are planning to purchase the FMCG products. (Personal care, household care, food and beverages) The respondents were contacted at the point of purchase (PoP) i.e. major retail outlets located in the proposed areas. The same respondents were contacted again to get responses with respect to their behaviour.

**Procedure:** The study was done with the help of two structured questionnaires. One of the questionnaires was administered before the time of purchase and second questionnaire was administered to the same respondent who had participated in earlier process of data collection. The respondents were contacted through e-mail, social media links and personal contacts after their FMCG purchases. A total of 400 consumers of FMCG from major cities of Uttarakhand state in India (Dehradun, Srinagar, Haridwar, Haldwani and Kashipur) were selected with the help of cluster sampling method.

**Measures:** The study included multiple measures to explore consumer attitude toward aspects of purchase decision making. The questionnaire was designed on likert five point scale so as to minimize the measurement errors. Statistical tools were used to analyze the data with the help of SPSS 17.0.

**Hypothesis:** i. There is no significant relationship between consumer attitude and subjective norms. ii. Pre purchase consumer attitude has no significant relationship with purchase intention.

The demographic statistics shown in the Table-1 depicts the number of respondents in each variable. Out of total respondents, (n=400) number of males was 64.75% as compared to 35.25% female respondents. The study tried to include respondents falling in different age groups with 16.75% of total respondents from the age group of 18-24 years, 20.50% of the total respondents from the age group between 25-31 years. 28.50% respondents belonged to the age group of 32-38 years. Similarly, 15.25%, 9.50%, 5.75% and 3.75% respondents were from the age groups 39-45 years, 46-52, 53-59 and above 60 years respectively.

**Table-1**  
**Showing Demographic Statistics of Respondents**

Demographic Statistics of Respondents		Total N=400	(In %)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	259	64.75
	Female	141	35.25
<b>Age</b>	18-24 Years	67	16.75
	25-31 Years	114	28.50
	32-38 Years	82	20.50
	39-45 Years	61	15.25
	46-52 Years	38	9.50
	53-59 Years	23	5.75
	60 Years and above	15	3.75
<b>Occupation</b>	Business	46	9.25
	Service-Govt. or Private	151	32.0
	Student	97	30.50
	Home maker	106	28.50
<b>Monthly Income</b>	Below Rs. 25,000	136	34.0
	Rs. 25,000- 40,000	95	23.75
	Rs. 40,000-55,000	64	16.0
	Rs.55,000-70,000	53	13.25
	Rs. 70,000-85,000	31	7.75
	Above Rs. 85, 000	18	4.5

The study respondents also varied in terms of their monthly income. The first income group was having an income range below Rs. 10,000 contributed 23.67% as respondents. 28% respondents were from the group having monthly income from Rs.10,000-20,000 and third income group was having 22.70% of total respondents from income group Rs. 20,000-30,000 The fourth income group was having monthly income Rs. 30,000-40,000 contributed 14.97% respondents. Fifth income group which was having monthly income more than 40,000 contributed only 10.62% to the total number of respondents.

## Results and Discussion

**Reliability of the Data:** The reliability of the measurement instruments was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. Reliability analysis shows the value of Cronbach's alpha for Attitudes was .719. In case of Subjective Norms, it was .822 and for Purchase Intentions it was .744 which lies between the accepted ranges of .05 to .09.

**Table-2**  
**Showing Cronbach  $\alpha$  for Different Attributes (Reliability Analysis)**

Factors	Cronbach $\alpha$	No. of Items
Attitudes	.719	23
Subjective Norms	.822	04
Purchase Intentions	.744	05

Hence the constructs of the questionnaire has enough reliability to proceed further for analysis

**Hypothesis Testing:**  $H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between consumer attitude and subjective norms.

**Table-3**  
**Showing Correlations between Attitude and Subjective Norms**

Correlations			
		Overall Attitude	Overall Subjective Norms
Overall Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.990**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	23	4
Overall Subjective Norms	Pearson Correlation	.990**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	4	4

\*\*, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table-3 shows the relationship between Overall attitudes and Overall Subjective norms. The coefficient of correlation was found to be .990 ( $r = .990$ ) and the significance level for the said relationship is 0.010 ( $p = 0.010$ ). This shows that there is a positive correlation between consumer attitude and subjective norms. Hence, the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) is rejected since the relationship is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Rejection of hypothesis implies that consumer attitudes and subjective norms are related to each other.

$H_{02}$ : Pre purchase consumer attitude has no significant relationship with purchase intention.

**Table-4**  
**Showing Correlations between Attitudes and Purchase Intentions**

Correlations			
		Overall Attitude	Overall Purchase Intentions
Overall Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.164**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	400	400
Overall Purchase Intentions	Pearson Correlation	.164**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	400	400

\*\*, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table-4 highlights the relationship between pre purchase consumer attitude and purchase intention. In this case, the coefficient of correlation was found to be .164 ( $r = .164$ ) and the significance level for the said relationship is 0.001 ( $p = 0.001$ ). This shows that there is a positive correlation between consumer attitude and purchase intentions. Hence, the null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) is rejected since the relationship is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Rejection of hypothesis implies that consumer attitudes and purchase intentions are related to each other and hence it is evident that purchase intentions are formed as a result of attitudes of consumers.

## Conclusion

The research findings show that there exists a positive relationship between consumer attitudes and subjective norms and it was proved with the help of hypothesis rejection. The reason for this positive relationship can be attributed to the fact that consumer attitudes develop as a result of existing social norms which prevail in the society. In case of FMCG purchase decisions which include frequent and low involvement decisions, this relationship is very useful in deriving meaningful conclusion. It can be said about subjective norms that they help to shape consumer attitudes. Consumer attitudes are a result of a number of factors and subjective norms also contribute significantly to the attitude development. Further, the assumption focused on establishing a relationship between pre purchase consumer attitude and purchase intention with the help of second hypothesis. The second hypothesis was also rejected which implies that there lies a significant relationship between consumer attitudes and purchase intention. It is therefore clear that attitudes and subjective norms act as antecedents of purchase intentions which ultimately lead to purchase decisions.

The rejection of both hypothesis proved that attitudes develop as a result of social norms and hence both the variables are interrelated. Also, attitudes give rise to purchase intentions and it can be said about attitudes and purchase intentions that more favourable the attitude, more positive the intention. A more positive intention will lead to more favourable purchase. Collectively, in a single line it can be concluded that these three variables of decision making are interrelated and impact consumer black box at each and every step of decision making process.

**Limitations:** The Research findings attempted study the psychology of consumers purchasing FMCG products. The study was carried out in Uttarakhand state of north India and the findings of the study provide valuable insights into the complex decision making factors which are responsible to impact purchase decisions. But the research is not far away from some common limitations like non inclusion of gender differences and its impact on purchase decisions. Also the study was carried out in a limited area with limited time therefore the intended population may not be representative and hence poses a limitation.

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