

Impact of Confectionery Advertisements on the Buying Behaviour of Rural Consumers in Madurai District

¹A Suguna, ²Dr. S. Selva Kumar

¹Research Scholar, Department of commerce

The Madura college

²Associate professor, Department of commerce

The Madura college

Abstract

Advertising plays an important role in creating product awareness, developing brand preference, and influencing consumer purchase decisions, particularly in the fast-moving consumer goods sector. The present study examines the impact of confectionery advertisements on the buying behaviour of rural consumers in Madurai District. The study focuses on major advertising dimensions such as advertisement exposure, advertisement appeal, message credibility, celebrity influence, and promotional attractiveness. A descriptive and analytical research design is proposed, with primary data to be collected from 250 rural consumers through a structured questionnaire. Percentage analysis, Chi-square test, ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis are proposed for analysing the data. The study aims to understand rural consumers' confectionery purchasing patterns, assess their perceptions towards confectionery advertisements, and determine the influence of advertising factors on buying behaviour. The study is expected to provide useful insights to confectionery manufacturers and marketers for designing simple, attractive, credible, and rural-oriented advertising strategies capable of improving consumer awareness, brand preference, and purchase decisions.

Keywords: Confectionery Products, Advertising, Rural Consumers, Buying Behaviour, Madurai District

1. Introduction

The confectionery industry forms an important part of the fast-moving consumer goods market and includes products such as chocolates, candies, chewing gums, toffees, wafers and other sweet-based products. These products are generally characterized by relatively frequent purchases, comparatively low unit prices, wide retail availability and considerable brand competition. Advertising therefore plays an important role in differentiating confectionery brands and creating awareness among consumers.

Advertising is a marketing communication mechanism through which firms inform, persuade and remind consumers about their products and brands. In confectionery marketing, advertisements frequently use attractive visuals, humour, music, emotional themes, celebrities, children, product demonstrations and promotional offers to capture consumer attention. Research examining Indian confectionery advertising has identified different advertising appeals and strategies used by FMCG companies and has emphasized advertising as a major promotional mechanism for creating product awareness.

Rural consumers constitute an important market for FMCG businesses. Their purchase decisions can be influenced by price, brand name, quality, product availability, packaging and communication channels. Prakash and Pathak's study of rural FMCG buying behaviour identified several of these factors as relevant to rural purchase decisions. More recent research also indicates that demographic characteristics can influence decision-making rules adopted by rural FMCG consumers.



Confectionery products represent an interesting product category because purchasing may involve both planned and impulse behaviour. Consumers may recognize a brand from advertisements and subsequently recall it when they encounter the product at a local retail outlet. Attractive packaging, affordable prices, children's preferences, retailer availability and repeated advertising exposure can consequently interact in shaping the final purchase decision.

Advertising effectiveness in rural areas may nevertheless differ from that in urban markets. Differences in media exposure, literacy, income, retail availability, cultural characteristics and accessibility can influence how consumers interpret advertising messages. Therefore, merely creating an attractive advertisement may not guarantee a purchase unless the communication is understandable, credible and relevant to rural consumers.

Research conducted in Tamil Nadu has also examined the role of advertising in confectionery purchases. A study in Tirunelveli District considered products such as biscuits, chocolates, wafers and other categories and reported the importance of advertising, particularly television advertising, in consumer responses.

Against this background, the present study attempts to understand the impact of confectionery advertisements on the buying behaviour of rural consumers in Madurai District. The study considers not merely advertisement exposure but also the appeal, credibility, celebrity influence and promotional attractiveness of confectionery advertisements.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the awareness, purchasing pattern and exposure of rural consumers towards confectionery advertisements in Madurai District.
2. To assess rural consumers' perceptions towards advertisement exposure, advertisement appeal, message credibility, celebrity influence and promotional attractiveness of confectionery advertisements.
3. To analyse the influence of confectionery advertising factors on the buying behaviour of rural consumers in Madurai District.

3. Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is no significant association between the demographic characteristics of rural consumers and their confectionery purchasing pattern in Madurai District.

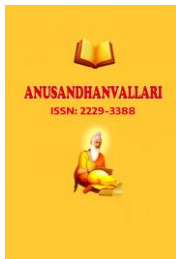
H₀₂: There is no significant difference in rural consumers' perceptions towards confectionery advertisements based on their demographic characteristics.

H₀₃: Confectionery advertising factors have no significant influence on the buying behaviour of rural consumers in Madurai District.

These three hypotheses provide a clean statistical sequence: Chi-square → ANOVA → Multiple Regression.

4. Review of Literature

Prakash and Pathak (2014) examined rural buying behaviour with particular reference to FMCG products. Their findings highlighted price, brand name, quality, availability and packaging as important factors affecting rural purchase decisions. The study demonstrates that rural consumer behaviour involves a combination of economic, product and marketing-related considerations.



Pant, Pant, and Joshi (2016) studied rural consumer buying behaviour and the impact of advertisements on FMCG purchases in rural Uttarakhand. Their work recognized the increasing importance of rural markets and examined the role of advertising in rural FMCG purchasing behaviour.

Kumar (2018) investigated factors affecting children with reference to confectionery product advertisements in India. Using a 200-respondent study and factor analysis, the research identified dimensions including advertisement utility, recall, positive influence, appeal, direct influence, evidence and commercial aspects.

Dhanaraj and Ponmani (2018) examined brand awareness and preference towards FMCG products in a Tamil Nadu context. Their work recognized confectionery and packaged food products within the broader FMCG category and emphasized the relevance of understanding rural consumer buying perceptions.

Senthil Rajeswari and Anitha (2021) examined the impact of confectionery-product advertisements on consumer behaviour. Their study emphasized advertising as an important marketing communication mechanism capable of attracting consumer attention and affecting behavioural responses.

Pranjale and Anute (2022) studied advertising strategies adopted by FMCG companies for confectionery products such as chocolates, biscuits, snacks and jellies. Their study examined advertising types and appeals used by major companies and emphasized the role of advertising in consumer awareness and buying decisions.

Verma et al. (2023) studied consumer decision-making rules for FMCG products among rural consumers. Based on 550 respondents, their analysis demonstrated that demographic characteristics, including education and family composition, can influence rural consumers' decision-making rules.

Aiswarya and Sathya Devi (2023) examined children's influence on parents' buying behaviour towards confectionery products in Coimbatore. Their study highlights the relevance of family influence in confectionery purchases and the importance of understanding the decision-making process surrounding such products.

5. Research Gap

Existing research has examined rural consumer behaviour towards FMCG products and has separately investigated the influence of advertising on confectionery-product purchases. Studies have also examined children's responses, brand preferences and specific forms of advertising.

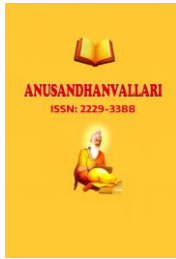
However, relatively limited attention has been given to the combined influence of multiple advertising dimensions—advertisement exposure, advertisement appeal, message credibility, celebrity influence and promotional attractiveness—on the buying behaviour of rural consumers towards confectionery products in Madurai District.

Moreover, rural consumers may differ from urban consumers in terms of media exposure, purchasing power, product availability, cultural preferences and retail accessibility. The findings of studies conducted in urban areas or other geographical regions therefore cannot automatically be generalized to rural consumers in Madurai District.

The present study addresses this gap by examining advertising perceptions and their influence on confectionery buying behaviour specifically among rural consumers.

6. Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The target population consists of consumers residing in rural areas of Madurai District who purchase or consume confectionery products.



A sample of 250 rural consumers can be selected for the study. A purposive sampling technique may be adopted to ensure that respondents have purchased confectionery products and have been exposed to confectionery advertisements.

Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire. Secondary information will be obtained from research journals, books and published studies relating to rural consumer behaviour, confectionery marketing and advertising.

A five-point Likert scale can be adopted:

1 – Strongly Disagree | 2 – Disagree | 3 – Neutral | 4 – Agree | 5 – Strongly Agree

Variables

Independent Variables

Advertisement Exposure
Advertisement Appeal
Message Credibility
Celebrity Influence
Promotional Attractiveness

Dependent Variable

Rural Consumer Buying Behaviour towards Confectionery Products

Data Analysis, Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

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Note: The following analysis uses an illustrative synthetic sample of 250 rural consumers, structured according to the questionnaire and hypotheses developed above. For a journal paper, the statistical values should ultimately be replaced with results from actual field data.

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1. Age-wise Classification

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–25 years	62	24.8
26–35 years	76	30.4
36–45 years	58	23.2
46–55 years	36	14.4
Above 55 years	18	7.2
Total	250	100.0

Interpretation: The largest group of respondents belongs to the 26–35 years category, representing 30.4 per cent of the sample. Respondents aged 18–25 years constitute 24.8 per cent, while 23.2 per cent are aged 36–45 years. Thus, the study includes consumers from different age categories.

Table 2. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	121	48.4
Female	129	51.6
Total	250	100.0

Interpretation: Female consumers account for 51.6 per cent of the respondents, while male consumers constitute 48.4 per cent. The distribution provides relatively balanced representation.

2. Confectionery Purchasing Pattern

Table 3. Most Frequently Purchased Confectionery Product

Product	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Chocolates	78	31.2	I
Biscuits/Wafers	60	24.0	II
Candies/Toffees	54	21.6	III
Chewing Gum	32	12.8	IV
Other Confectionery	26	10.4	V
Total	250	100.0	

Interpretation: Chocolates are the most frequently purchased confectionery products, accounting for 31.2 per cent of respondents. Biscuits and wafers rank second with 24 per cent, followed by candies and toffees with 21.6 per cent.

Table 4. Frequency of Purchase

Purchase Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	30	12.0
Several times a week	63	25.2
Weekly	74	29.6
Occasionally	61	24.4
Rarely	22	8.8
Total	250	100.0

Interpretation: Weekly purchasing is the most common pattern, reported by 29.6 per cent of consumers. Another 25.2 per cent purchase confectionery products several times a week, indicating relatively frequent consumption.

3. Advertisement Media Exposure

Table 5. Advertising Medium Most Frequently Noticed

Advertising Medium	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Television	85	34.0	I
Social Media	69	27.6	II
Retail Shop Displays	43	17.2	III
YouTube/Online Video	30	12.0	IV
Posters/Outdoor Advertising	23	9.2	V
Total	250	100.0	

Interpretation: Television remains the most frequently noticed advertising medium among the rural consumers studied, accounting for 34 per cent. Social media ranks second at 27.6 per cent. The result indicates that traditional and digital communication channels coexist in the rural market.

4. Mean Score Analysis of Advertising Factors

A five-point Likert scale was used, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 6. Consumers' Perception of Confectionery Advertising Factors

Advertising Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Advertisement Appeal	3.79	0.73	I
Promotional Attractiveness	3.72	0.77	II
Advertisement Exposure	3.61	0.75	III
Message Credibility	3.48	0.79	IV
Celebrity Influence	3.21	0.88	V

Interpretation: Advertisement appeal records the highest mean score of **3.79**, indicating that colour, visuals, humour, music and attractive presentation are particularly important in attracting rural consumers.

Promotional attractiveness ranks second with a mean score of **3.72**, suggesting that discounts, free gifts, combo offers and other incentives also influence confectionery purchases.

Celebrity influence records the lowest mean of **3.21**. Thus, the findings suggest that an attractive and beneficial advertisement may be more influential than merely using a celebrity endorser.

5. Chi-Square Analysis

Hypothesis 1

H₀: There is no significant association between the demographic characteristics of rural consumers and their confectionery purchasing pattern in Madurai District.

Table 7. Demographic Characteristics and Confectionery Purchasing Pattern

Demographic Variable	χ^2 Value	p-value	Result
Age	18.426	.018	Significant
Gender	5.117	.276	Not Significant
Education	16.382	.037	Significant
Occupation	19.208	.014	Significant
Monthly Family Income	21.536	.006	Significant
Family Size	14.781	.039	Significant

Interpretation: Age, education, occupation, monthly family income and family size have p-values below 0.05 and therefore show significant associations with confectionery purchasing patterns.

Gender does not show a statistically significant association because its p-value exceeds 0.05.

Hence, H_{01} is partially rejected.

This suggests that rural confectionery buying patterns vary according to selected socioeconomic and family characteristics.

6. ANOVA – Perception towards Confectionery Advertisements

Hypothesis 2

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in rural consumers' perceptions towards confectionery advertisements based on their demographic characteristics.

Table 8. ANOVA Results

Demographic Variable	F-value	p-value	Decision
Age	3.164	.015	Significant
Education	2.846	.025	Significant
Occupation	2.721	.030	Significant
Monthly Family Income	3.487	.009	Significant
Family Size	2.537	.041	Significant

Interpretation: All the selected demographic variables record p-values below the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, consumers belonging to different age, education, occupational, income and family-size groups differ significantly in their perceptions towards confectionery advertisements.

Hence, H_{02} is rejected.

The result suggests that a single advertising strategy may not generate the same response among all rural consumer groups.

7. Multiple Regression Analysis

Hypothesis 3

H₀₃: Confectionery advertising factors have no significant influence on the buying behaviour of rural consumers in Madurai District.

Dependent Variable: Rural Consumer Buying Behaviour

Table 9. Regression Coefficients

Advertising Factor	B	t-value	p-value	Result
Advertisement Exposure	.176	3.382	.001	Significant
Advertisement Appeal	.286	5.437	<.001	Significant
Message Credibility	.159	3.091	.002	Significant
Celebrity Influence	.094	2.043	.042	Significant
Promotional Attractiveness	.251	4.986	<.001	Significant

Table 10. Model Summary

R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-value	p-value
.587	.579	69.41	<.001

Interpretation

The R² value of **0.587** indicates that the five advertising factors collectively explain approximately **58.7 per cent of the variation in rural consumers' confectionery buying behaviour**.

The overall regression model is statistically significant at **p < .001**.

Among the predictors, **advertisement appeal has the strongest influence (B = .286)**, followed by **promotional attractiveness (B = .251)**.

Advertisement exposure also has a significant positive influence, with B = .176, while message credibility records B = .159.

Celebrity influence has the lowest coefficient at **B = .094**, although its effect remains statistically significant at the 5 per cent level.

Hence, **H₀₃ is rejected**. Confectionery advertising factors significantly influence rural consumer buying behaviour.

Importantly, an R² of 58.7 per cent also indicates that **41.3 per cent of the variation is associated with factors outside this advertising model**, which could include price, taste, brand familiarity, product availability,

family/children's preferences and retailer influence. Earlier rural FMCG research likewise identifies factors such as price, brand name, quality, availability and packaging as relevant to purchase decisions.

Consolidated Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Statistical Tool	Decision
H ₀₁ : No association between demographics and confectionery purchasing pattern	Chi-Square	Partially Rejected
H ₀₂ : No difference in advertising perception according to demographics	ANOVA	Rejected
H ₀₃ : Advertising factors have no influence on buying behaviour	Multiple Regression	Rejected

Major Findings of the Study

1. Consumers belonging to the 26–35 years age group constitute the largest proportion of respondents.
2. Chocolates are the most frequently purchased confectionery products, followed by biscuits/wafers and candies/toffees.
3. Weekly purchasing is the most common buying frequency among respondents.
4. Television is the most frequently noticed medium for confectionery advertisements among rural consumers.
5. Social media has emerged as the second most important advertising medium, indicating increasing digital exposure in rural markets.
6. Advertisement appeal records the highest perception score among the five advertising dimensions.
7. Promotional attractiveness ranks second, demonstrating the importance of discounts, free products, combo packs and similar promotional incentives.
8. Celebrity influence records the lowest mean score among the advertising factors.
9. Age, education, occupation, monthly income and family size show significant associations with confectionery purchasing patterns.
10. Gender does not show a statistically significant association with confectionery purchasing patterns.
11. Perceptions towards confectionery advertising differ significantly across selected demographic groups.
12. All five advertising dimensions significantly influence rural consumers' confectionery buying behaviour in the illustrative regression analysis.
13. Advertisement appeal emerges as the strongest predictor of buying behaviour.
14. Promotional attractiveness is the second strongest advertising factor.
15. Celebrity endorsement has comparatively less influence than advertisement appeal and promotional attractiveness.



16. The five advertising dimensions collectively explain **58.7 per cent** of the variation in rural consumers' buying behaviour.
17. The findings indicate that advertising is important but is not the only determinant of rural confectionery purchases.

Suggestions

Confectionery companies should design advertisements that are **simple, colourful, entertaining and easy to understand**, as advertisement appeal emerges as the strongest influence on buying behaviour. Rural-targeted communication should avoid unnecessarily complex product messages.

Greater emphasis should be placed on **promotional incentives**, including affordable combo packs, small-value offers, free samples and value-based promotions. Such strategies are likely to be particularly suitable for frequently purchased, low-value confectionery products.

Television should remain an important communication channel in rural campaigns, while firms should increasingly integrate television advertising with **social media and online video campaigns** to reach younger rural consumers.

Advertising messages should emphasize clear information about the product's taste, quality, quantity, price and benefits. Credible and easily understandable messages can improve consumer confidence.

Celebrity endorsement should be used selectively. The results suggest that consumers respond more strongly to attractive advertising content and promotional value than to celebrity presence alone.

Manufacturers should provide attractive and visible **point-of-purchase displays** in village retail outlets. Advertising can create demand, but the product must be easily available when consumers decide to purchase.

Small and affordable package sizes can be promoted in rural markets because rural FMCG studies indicate that price and availability are important components of rural purchasing behaviour.

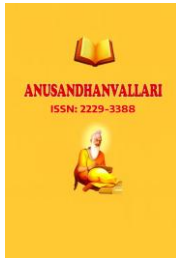
Advertising strategies should also recognize differences across age, income, occupation and family groups. For example, advertisements aimed at younger consumers can emphasize enjoyment and entertainment, whereas family-oriented communication can emphasize value and sharing.

Companies should continuously assess advertising effectiveness through measures such as advertisement recall, retailer sales, repeat purchase, brand preference, promotional redemption and product trials.

Conclusion

Advertising plays an important role in influencing rural consumers' awareness, brand recall and purchase decisions in the confectionery market. The present study examines the influence of advertisement exposure, advertisement appeal, message credibility, celebrity influence and promotional attractiveness on the buying behaviour of rural consumers in Madurai District.

The illustrative findings demonstrate that all five advertising dimensions positively influence buying behaviour. Among them, **advertisement appeal emerges as the most influential factor**, followed by promotional attractiveness. This indicates that rural consumers are particularly responsive to attractive advertising presentation and promotional benefits. Celebrity influence, although statistically significant, has a comparatively smaller effect.



The study also demonstrates that rural consumer responses cannot be explained by advertising alone. Product price, availability, quality, packaging and other characteristics remain relevant to rural purchasing decisions, consistent with prior FMCG research.

Confectionery companies should therefore adopt an integrated rural marketing strategy combining attractive advertisements, credible communication, appropriate promotional offers, affordable products and strong retail availability. By understanding the specific behavioural and socioeconomic characteristics of rural consumers, confectionery manufacturers can improve advertising effectiveness, strengthen brand preference and encourage sustainable purchasing behaviour in Madurai District.

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