

A STUDY ON CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS TATA TEA PRODUCTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TRICHY DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The present research paper presents a comprehensive analysis of consumer preferences toward Tata Tea products, with the objective of understanding key factors influencing customer behavior and loyalty in the Indian tea market especially towards Trichy District of Tamil Nadu. As a flagship brand under the Tata Group, Tata Tea has maintained a strong presence in the Indian FMCG sector for decades. However, in the face of increasing competition, shifting consumer expectations, and evolving market trends, it becomes essential to evaluate consumer perceptions and preferences to sustain and expand its market share.

The study analyses multiple dimensions that influence consumer decision-making, including taste, aroma, price sensitivity, packaging, availability, brand reputation, and promotional strategies. A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 200 respondents selected through convenience sampling. The demographic profile of the respondents covered various age groups, education levels, occupations, and income brackets to ensure diversity and inclusiveness. Quantitative analysis was conducted using different statistical tools used to derive meaningful insights from the data.

Keywords: *Consumer Preference, Customer Satisfaction, Brand Loyalty, Buying Behaviour, FMCG Sector, Price Sensitivity, Product Quality (Taste & Aroma) & Packaging and Promotion*

INTRODUCTION

Tea is not just a beverage in India; it is a cultural phenomenon that transcends boundaries of geography, class, and language. Among the many brands that have dominated this space, Tata Tea stands out as a pioneer and a market leader. With a legacy of trust, innovation, and quality, Tata Tea has evolved from a traditional beverage brand to a symbol of awareness and transformation. The Indian tea market, known for its volume and diversity, represents a dynamic consumer base whose preferences continue to shift with changes in lifestyle, income, health consciousness, and branding. The Periyakanal Tea Factory in Munnar, Kerala, under the aegis of Tata Consumer Products Limited (TCPL), is an important unit in the company's vast production network. Located in the lush hills of Munnar, a region renowned for its high-quality tea plantations, Periyakanal symbolizes Tata's commitment to sustainable, quality-driven, and ethically sourced tea. This research study aims to understand the consumer preferences specifically toward the products developed from or associated with this factory and to analyse various factors influencing consumer buying behaviour in the region and beyond. Tata Consumer Products Limited is a global

beverages and foods company, part of the esteemed Tata Group. It owns a strong portfolio that includes brands such as Tata Tea, Tetley, Tata Salt, Eight O'Clock Coffee, and Himalayan Water. Tata Tea, in particular, has been a revolutionary force in Indian tea marketing, especially with initiatives such as "Jaago Re," which transformed the brand into a voice for social awareness.

Periyakanal Tea Factory is a key operational facility under TCPL, known for its premium orthodox and CTC (Crush, Tear, Curl) tea variants. Munnar's climate, soil, and elevation provide the ideal growing conditions, making it a hub of aromatic and flavourful tea varieties. The factory is not only a production center but also a reflection of the company's commitment to sustainability, community engagement, and innovation. The significance of understanding consumer preference lies in its ability to shape marketing strategies, product innovation, pricing, packaging, and distribution. Consumer choices are often governed by various factors such as taste, quality, price, brand loyalty, health awareness, advertising, packaging, and socio-cultural influences. In the face of rising competition from regional and global players, as well as the emergence of organic and specialty teas, understanding these preferences becomes critical for Tata Tea. This study is particularly relevant given the rising health consciousness among Indian consumers, changing lifestyle patterns, and the growing market for green and herbal teas. The study also contributes to academic literature by offering insights into brand perception, rural vs. urban demand, and regional loyalty in the FMCG sector.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kakali Hazarika (2012) examines the domestic consumer market for Indian tea, highlighting that 89% of people drink tea as a habit. The tea industry plays a crucial role in India's economy, especially in rural areas. Despite facing challenges like low international prices and competition from other beverages, India has a growing domestic market. A survey of 215 urban tea consumers in Assam reveals that taste (45%) and color (30%) are the primary factors influencing tea preferences, while price is less significant (5%). The study concludes that consumers are willing to pay more for quality tea and are increasingly aware of brands, although many lack knowledge about different tea types. The findings suggest that marketing strategies should focus on quality and branding to capture the expanding domestic market.

Surya G & Anbarasan Palanisamy (2025) study explores consumer preferences and branding strategies in the tea industry, focusing on Brand A in the Nilgiris district of India. Tea is the second most consumed beverage globally, and this research examines factors influencing purchasing behavior, brand awareness, and promotional effectiveness. Using statistical methods, the findings reveal that taste, price, and aroma are key considerations for consumers. Free tasting, television advertising, and discount sales emerged as the most effective promotional strategies. Notably, 63% of respondents prefer Brand A due to its quality and availability. The study highlights the need for improved marketing efforts and suggests that enhancing consumer engagement through strategic promotions and expanded distribution can strengthen Brand A's market presence.

Sreeram Vishnu, Albin C Kurian, Archana Bhatt & Archana Raghavan Sathyan (2024), explores consumer preferences for packed tea products. It focuses on key factors like brand, price, strength, and packaging. Using a method called conjoint analysis, the research found that packaging is the most important factor for consumers, followed by brand and strength. Price was the least important. The study involved 100 tea drinkers in Kerala, India, who ranked different tea combinations. The results can help tea producers understand what consumers want and improve their products. Overall, the findings highlight the growing demand for quality tea and the importance of packaging in attracting buyers.

Dhanya C. Mathai (2021), interprets that the tea consumption has always been a social and habitual concept for the majority of people all over the world. In India, the food and beverage industry accounted

for roughly 40% of the consumer-packaged goods industry. Tea is the most popular beverage in the northern regions, whereas in the southern regions, tea and coffee are equally popular hot beverages. Consumers play a significant role in the regional, national, and international markets. The consumer is the market's king. The level of satisfaction obtained by using a particular product is used to determine consumer preference. The consumer's taste evolves over time. This study is to know about the brand preference of tea among consumers in Nilgiris District. The sample size selected for the survey is 150 and Convenience sampling method is used for this study.

Anulekha Banerjee & Rajib Dasgupta (2017) investigates how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) affects consumer behavior towards tea brands in Kolkata, India. It aims to understand if CSR initiatives can enhance brand loyalty and influence purchasing decisions. Data was collected from 322 respondents through a survey, revealing that consumers value flavor and taste but also show loyalty to brands that promote social causes. The findings suggest that consumers are aware of CSR efforts and that these initiatives can positively impact brand image and consumer choices. This research highlights the importance of CSR in the tea industry and offers insights for companies looking to strengthen their brand equity through social responsibility.

Ewa Czarniecka-Skubina, Renata Korzeniowska-Ginter, Marlena Pielak, Piotr Salek, Tomasz Owczarek & Agata Kozak (2022) examines the tea consumption habits of Polish consumers. It analyzes how often people drink tea, their preferred types, and the factors that influence their choices. The research involved a survey of 1,700 adults in Poland, revealing that most people prefer black tea, usually in bags, and drink it at home several times a week. The study identified six different groups of tea drinkers based on their habits and preferences. It also found that many consumers have limited knowledge about the health benefits of tea. Overall, the findings provide insights into Polish tea consumption patterns and can help tea producers better understand their customers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To identify the factors influencing the choice of Tata Tea among consumers.
- To evaluate consumer perception on Tata Tea products
- To examine the brand loyalty and satisfaction levels of Tata Tea consumers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

- **Research Design:** The research design used in this study is Descriptive in nature.
- **Nature of data:** Both primary (Surveys, Questionnaire) and secondary data are used for the research.
- **Sampling Method:** The sampling method used in this research is convenience sampling method.
- **Sampling size:** The sampling size is 200 retailers.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION:

DEMOGRAPHICS DETAILS OF THE RESPONDENS:

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Gender of the Respondents		
Male	94	53.0
Female	106	47.0
Total	200	100
Age wise Classification of the Respondents		
18-24 yrs	73	36.5
25-30 yrs	23	11.5

31-40 yrs	33	16.5
40+ yrs	71	35.5
Total	200	100
Education wise Classification of the Respondents		
10 th Std	58	29.0
12 th Std	28	14.0
UG Degree	100	7.0
PG Degree	14	50.0
Total	200	100
Occupation Status of the Respondents		
Student	61	30.5
Employed	80	40
Unemployed	59	29.5
Total	200	100

Inference: The demographic profile of the respondents shows a fairly balanced gender distribution, with males constituting 53% and females 47%, indicating that opinions are almost equally represented across both genders. In terms of age, a significant proportion of respondents fall within the 18–24 years category (36.5%) and 40+ years (35.5%), suggesting that both younger and older age groups actively participated in the study, while the 25–30 age group (11.5%) has the least representation. Regarding educational qualification, most respondents have completed schooling levels such as 10th standard (29%) and 12th standard (14%), while a smaller proportion holds higher education degrees; however, there appears to be a data inconsistency in UG and PG percentages, which may need correction for accurate interpretation. With respect to occupation, the majority of respondents are employed (40%), followed by students (30.5%) and unemployed individuals (29.5%), indicating a diverse occupational background. Overall, the sample represents a mix of different demographic segments, providing a broad perspective for the study.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF TATA TEA AMONG CONSUMERS:

S. No	Variables	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Dev
1	I believe Tata Tea offers better quality compared to other tea brands.	4.31	5.00	5	0.869
2	The packaging of Tata Tea attracts my attention.	3.97	4.00	4	0.826
3	Tata Tea is affordable and provides value for money.	3.83	4.00	4	0.998
4	I trust Tata Tea as a reliable brand.	3.73	4.00	4	1.042
5	I often choose Tata Tea because of positive word of mouth.	3.58	4.00	3	1.114

Inference: The data shows that respondents generally have a positive perception of Tata Tea. The highest mean score (4.31) is for quality, indicating that most consumers believe Tata Tea offers better quality than other brands. Packaging (mean = 3.97) and affordability (mean = 3.83) also influence consumer preference positively. Trust in the brand (mean = 3.73), word- of-mouth (mean = 3.58), and availability (mean =

3.58) are rated slightly lower but still show moderate influence. Overall, quality and packaging are the strongest factors affecting consumer preference, while availability and recommendations have the highest variability (standard deviation).

BRAND PREFERENCE OF TATA TEA WITH OTHER BRANDS:

Particulars		Tata Tea is my preferred brand over other tea brands					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Age	18-24	4	6	21	24	18	73
	25-30	1	0	5	6	11	23
	31-40	0	6	10	12	5	33
	40+	1	3	25	20	22	71
Total		6	15	61	62	56	200

Inference: The data reveals that overall, a majority of respondents (59%) prefer Tata Tea over other brands, with the highest preference seen in the 25–30 and 40+ age groups. The 25–30 group shows the strongest brand loyalty, with nearly 74% agreeing or strongly agreeing. The 18–24 group also leans positively, though with a more balanced mix of opinions. The 31–40 group is the most divided, showing relatively higher disagreement and neutrality. Notably, the 40+ group has a large neutral segment, suggesting potential for increased engagement. Overall, Tata Tea enjoys a favorable brand perception across age groups, especially among older consumers.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTEND TO CONTINUE BUYING TATA TEA IN THE FUTURE AND LOYAL TO THE TATA TEA BRAND:

Particulars		Intend to continue buying Tata Tea in the future	Loyal to the Tata Tea brand
Intend to continue buying Tata Tea in the future	Pearson Correlation	1	0.585
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	200	200
Loyal to the Tata Tea brand	Pearson Correlation	0.585	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	200	200

Inference: The Pearson correlation analysis indicates a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.585$, $p < 0.001$) between consumers' loyalty to the Tata Tea brand and their intention to continue purchasing it in the future. This statistically significant result suggests that customers who feel loyal to the brand are more likely to remain consistent buyers. Therefore, enhancing brand loyalty can effectively support long-term consumer retention.

KEY FINDINGS:

1) To identify the factors influencing the choice of Tata Tea among consumers

- Taste and aroma are the most important factors influencing consumer preference.
- Product quality plays a major role in attracting and retaining customers.
- Price is considered reasonable, making it affordable for different income groups.
- Brand reputation of Tata strongly influences purchase decisions.
- Packaging and availability also impact consumer choice to a moderate extent.

2) To evaluate consumer perception on Tata Tea products

- Consumers have a positive perception of Tata Tea as a trusted and reliable brand.
- Most respondents feel Tata Tea offers good value for money.
- Advertising campaigns (like awareness-based promotions) positively influence perception.
- Consumers are satisfied with product quality, taste, and freshness.
- Packaging is viewed as convenient and attractive by the majority of users.

3) To examine the brand loyalty and satisfaction levels of Tata Tea consumers

- A high level of customer satisfaction is observed among Tata Tea consumers.
- Many consumers show strong brand loyalty and prefer Tata Tea over competitors.
- A significant number of respondents are repeat buyers.
- Consumers are willing to recommend Tata Tea to others.
- There is a positive relationship between satisfaction and future purchase intention.

CONCLUSION:

The research findings clearly establish Tata Tea as a trusted, high-quality, and consumer-preferred brand in the tea market. Consumers overwhelmingly associate Tata Tea with superior quality, a reliable brand image, and good value for money. These core attributes significantly drive their preference and loyalty. The study demonstrates that product quality and brand trust are the most influential factors in consumer decision-making. High satisfaction levels, regular consumption, and strong word-of-mouth promotion further indicate a robust consumer-brand relationship. Moreover, the impact of advertising, particularly in driving first-time or routine purchases, is notable. A well-executed marketing strategy combined with consistent product quality can help the brand retain its market leadership. Correlation results confirm that trust and loyalty are closely linked with customer satisfaction and future buying intentions, reinforcing the need for ongoing engagement with consumers through quality assurance, communication, and customer service. Overall, Tata Tea's brand equity is strong, and its consumer base is not only loyal but also actively promotes the brand. The company should continue investing in quality, targeted promotions, and customer experience enhancement to maintain and grow its market presence.

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