

Factors Influencing Selection of Dairy Products by Retailers with Special Reference to Amul - A Study in Raipur

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Abstract

This report summarizes the comprehensive analysis of the behavior of retailers, product range, and promotion strategies by the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies in the dairy products industry. The study was done during a two-month internship at Amul, with an objective to get practical knowledge about the distribution, marketing, and sales activities of FMCG companies through General Trade, Modern Trade, and Horeca channels. These considerations include profit margins, available products, reliable supply chain, and brand equity to arrive at a conclusion. Thereby, findings suggest the preference of retailers for trusted brands by the consumers having quality assurance and consistent supplies because of the perishability aspect related with dairy products such as milk, curd, and paneer.

In addition, kiosk events, wall paintings, and shutter advertisements have proven to have a positive effect on the visibility of the brand and engagement of the consumers with the brand, thus affecting the decision of retailers to stock. Shelf space allocation was also observed to depend on consumer demand, brand promotions, and product differentiation in competitive retail environments. Through market visits and retailer feedback, the study provided actionable recommendations to strengthen Amul's brand presence and optimize product turnover. This internship emphasized the importance of close relationships and support mechanisms from strong retailers in fostering brand loyalty and market growth in the FMCG industry.

Keywords: Distribution Efficiency, Brand Loyalty in Dairy, Retailer Relationship Management.

Introduction

Overview of the Dairy Industry in India

The dairy industry in India plays a vital role in the country's economy, with India being one of the largest producers of milk and dairy products in the world. This sector contributes significantly to rural livelihoods, with millions of households engaged in milk production and associated activities. The Indian dairy market has grown tremendously over recent decades due to rising incomes, urbanization, and changing dietary habits. Dairy products have transitioned

from being basic commodities to essential components of the Indian diet, catering to a wide range of nutritional needs across demographics.

The industry has witnessed a significant shift towards organized dairy players who provide a variety of processed products, such as milk, yogurt, butter, cheese, and flavored milk, aimed at fulfilling diverse consumer demands. Trends like the growth of value-added products, enhanced quality standards, and increasing preference for branded dairy items have gained traction. Health consciousness among consumers is driving the demand for fresh, unadulterated dairy products, prompting companies to innovate and ensure higher quality standards. The sector is also seeing rising competition, with both established and emerging brands striving to expand their footprint across urban and rural markets.

The Indian dairy industry, the largest globally, contributing approximately 5% to its GDP. With over 220 million metric tons of milk produced annually, India surpasses all other nations in dairy output. This dynamic sector is driven by robust demand for milk and milk-based products, fueled by population growth, urbanization, and shifting dietary preferences toward health-conscious consumption. The industry, valued at \$225 billion in 2023, is projected to grow at a CAGR of 10-12%, presenting immense opportunities for manufacturers and retailers alike.

Key Players in the Dairy Industry

1. Global Players

- **Nestlé:** A Swiss multinational known for its milk powder, baby food, and dairy-based products.
- **Danone:** A French company focusing on health-oriented dairy products such as yogurt and probiotic drinks.
- **Lactalis:** The largest dairy company globally, producing milk, cheese, and butter.
- **Fonterra:** A New Zealand cooperative with expertise in milk powder and dairy exports.

2. Indian Players

- **Amul:** Managed by the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), Amul leads India's dairy market with products ranging from milk and butter to chocolates and ice creams.
- **Mother Dairy:** A subsidiary of NDDB, known for its focus on fresh milk and dairy-based beverages.

Raipur Players

1. **Amul:** A key player in the region, leveraging its vast distribution network.
2. **Mother Dairy:** Known for its consistent supply of fresh milk and other dairy items.
3. **Vachhan:** A local brand recognized for its regional presence and quality products.
4. **Devbhog:** A Chhattisgarh state initiative focusing on providing affordable and high-quality dairy products to local markets.

This overview highlights the interplay of global, national, and regional players in catering to the diverse and growing demands of Raipur's dairy industry.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore the factors influencing the selection of dairy products by retailers, with a special focus on Amul's fresh dairy segment. Retailers are essential stakeholders in the dairy supply chain, and their decision-making processes impact the availability and visibility of products. This project aims to understand the motivations, preferences, and challenges retailers encounter when choosing which dairy products to stock, and how these decisions affect Amul's market performance.

Specific objectives include:

- Identifying the primary factors influencing retailer preferences, such as product quality, pricing, brand reputation, promotional activities, and profit margins.
- Assessing Amul's strengths and weaknesses in comparison to its competitors in the fresh dairy segment.
- Providing actionable insights and recommendations to help Amul better cater to retailer expectations, enhance brand visibility, and improve its market share in the fresh dairy product segment.

Scope of the Study

This study aims to analyze the key factors that influence retailers' selection of dairy products, with a particular focus on the role of Amul as a prominent brand in the Indian dairy sector. By investigating factors such as brand loyalty, product availability, distribution efficiency, promotional support, and product variety, the study seeks to uncover insights into retailers' decision-making processes when choosing between different dairy brands. The research encompasses various retail segments, including General Trade (traditional stores and small shops), Modern Trade (supermarkets and hypermarkets), and Horeca (hotels, restaurants, and cafés) to provide a comprehensive view of the dynamics across different retail channels positioning of Amul relative to its competitors. This research is particularly relevant to understanding the distribution and promotional strategies that Amul employs to maintain its market leadership, as well as identifying potential areas for improvement to enhance its brand presence and retailer engagement.

Data for this study is gathered through structured questionnaires and interviews with retailers, focusing on their experiences and preferences in stocking Amul and other dairy brands. The research analyzes both quantitative data, such as brand preference ratings and frequency of product restocking, and qualitative data, including open-ended feedback on challenges and opportunities. By doing so, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations for Amul and other dairy companies to refine their marketing, distribution, and retailer engagement strategies. This research will also serve as a valuable resource for future studies focused on retailer-brand relationships, the competitive landscape in India's dairy market, and the evolving needs of retailers in a highly dynamic industry.

. Literature Review

Retailer Behavior and Dairy Product Selection

According to a study by Sharma and Singh (2019), Retailer behavior in the FMCG and dairy sectors has been widely studied, as their decisions directly affect product availability and consumer accessibility. Retailers play a crucial role in determining which products reach end consumers and are motivated by a combination of profit margins, customer

demand, and supplier relationships. According to a study by Sharma and Singh (2019), factors like product availability, ease of supply, and support from manufacturers significantly impact retailer decisions. In the dairy sector, perishable products, such as fresh milk, curd, and paneer, require efficient handling and timely replenishment, which makes reliable supply chains a critical factor in retailers' product selection.

In a study focusing on Indian retailers, Kumar et al. (2020) found that retailers in General Trade and Modern Trade channels are increasingly selective in their product choices to cater to shifting consumer preferences. The study suggests that retailers prioritize products with consistent demand, reliable supply, and minimal storage challenges, all of which are essential in the context of dairy products due to their short shelf life. Research indicates that factors like product differentiation, consumer loyalty, and ease of inventory turnover are pivotal in influencing retailers' decisions in the competitive FMCG market.

Importance of Brand and Product Quality

Brand equity and product quality play a substantial role in retailer preferences, as established brands with a strong reputation for quality often experience higher demand and trust from consumers. A study by Mehta and Khanna (2021) highlights that retailers tend to prefer stocking brands that consumers recognize and trust, as this translates to faster inventory turnover and higher sales. Quality assurance, especially in perishable products like dairy, becomes a priority for retailers to maintain consumer confidence and avoid issues related to product returns or spoilage.

In the dairy sector, brand reliability is paramount due to the perishability and safety concerns associated with dairy products. Research conducted by Verma et al. (2018) indicates that established dairy brands, such as Amul, enjoy preference among retailers due to consistent quality and consumer trust. This study highlights that the perceived quality of dairy products—spanning aspects such as freshness, taste, and nutritional value—greatly influences retailers' decisions to stock and promote certain brands. Additionally, brands that offer quality assurance and handle complaints promptly are favored by retailers, as these factors help mitigate risks associated with perishables.

Promotional Impact

Promotions, discounts, and visibility-enhancing strategies significantly influence retailers' stocking decisions, as they can drive increased consumer demand and offer higher sales potential. Various studies highlight the role of promotional efforts in swaying retailer behavior, with discounts and bundled offers being particularly effective. According to Patil and Joshi (2020), retailers tend to prioritize brands that actively engage in promotions, as these efforts contribute to quicker inventory turnover, especially for high-demand and competitive products like dairy.

Furthermore, visibility-boosting measures, such as in-store displays, wall paintings, and shelf signage, are instrumental in enhancing product presence and driving impulse purchases, as noted in a study by Rao and Menon (2019). The research indicates that promotional activities directly correlate with retailers' willingness to stock a brand, particularly when these promotions are backed by strong consumer demand. In the context of Amul, promotional tools such as shutter advertisements, kiosk events, and discount schemes help retailers create a more compelling shopping experience, thereby attracting more customers to the dairy section and increasing sales.

Shelf Space Allocation and Competitor Analysis

Shelf space allocation plays a pivotal role in product sales within retail environments, as products placed at eye level or in highly visible locations tend to receive higher consumer attention. Studies in retail psychology suggest that the placement of products, particularly in competitive categories like dairy, can significantly impact purchasing behavior. According to Kumar and Kapoor (2018), retailers prioritize shelf space for brands that guarantee a consistent consumer pull and require minimal promotional intervention, which makes shelf space a limited and asset in the FMCG sector.

Competitor presence also shapes retailer preferences and stocking strategies. As discussed by Gupta and Sharma (2020), dairy brands that actively engage in competitive pricing, promotional offers, and brand visibility are more likely to secure advantageous shelf positions. Retailers often allocate shelf space based on brand performance and customer demand, meaning that brands like Amul, which invest in promotional activities and enjoy consumer loyalty, have an edge over lesser-known brands. The study also emphasizes that retailers continuously assess competitor strategies, adjusting their shelf space allocation to maximize profits and cater to shifting consumer preferences.

Availability and Distribution Efficiency

Availability and distribution efficiency are critical components that directly influence retailers' stocking decisions and consumer satisfaction. According to Chopra and Meindl (2013), effective supply chain management ensures that products are available at the right place and time, minimizing stockouts and maintaining retailer loyalty. In the FMCG industry, particularly in the dairy sector, maintaining a consistent and reliable supply chain is essential due to the perishable nature of the products (Bowersox et al., 2010). Dairy brands like Amul have adopted an extensive and structured distribution network to ensure that their products are available consistently across urban, semi-urban, and rural markets (Bhasin, 2020).

Studies by Mishra (2015) indicate that retailers prioritize brands that can assure continuous availability since disruptions can impact both consumer trust and sales. Additionally, distribution efficiency reduces operational costs and allows brands to pass on the benefits to retailers in the form of better margins or promotional support. As Jain and Gupta (2017) highlight, the ability of brands to adapt to market demand, improve last-mile logistics, and maintain inventory efficiency is fundamental to sustaining competitive advantage in the FMCG sector

Product Range and Innovation

A diverse product range and continuous innovation are essential for capturing consumer interest and retaining retailer support. Companies in the dairy industry, such as Amul, have broadened their product portfolios to include a variety of dairy products, including milk, butter, cheese, and value-added items such as flavored yogurts and low-fat options (Sharma & Singh, 2019). Diverse product offerings allow brands to cater to different consumer segments, thereby increasing their appeal to retailers who seek to meet the varied preferences of their customers (Batra, 2016).

Innovation in dairy products has also been driven by changing consumer preferences, particularly toward health-conscious and convenience-oriented options (Patil & Wadhwa, 2018). Research by Saxena (2020) shows that retailers value brands that actively innovate, as it helps in attracting new customers and increasing the frequency of purchases.

Product innovation, including packaging that extends shelf life and flavors tailored to local tastes, enables brands to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive market. For instance, Singh and Kaur (2021) found that Amul's focus on introducing new products and flavors aligned with market trends has strengthened its brand image and retailer confidence, thereby increasing product turnover and retailer satisfaction.

Retailer Relationships and Support

Strong relationships and active support from brands significantly enhance retailers' commitment and preference for specific products. Studies by Kumar and Sharma (2016) emphasize that brands that invest in relationship-building with their retail partners often experience greater brand loyalty and cooperative behavior from retailers. For example, Amul's retailer support through branded displays, refrigerators, and frequent promotional activities has been identified as a key factor in fostering retailer loyalty and strengthening brand presence in competitive markets (Verma, 2019).

According to research by Kotler and Keller (2015), retailer support can include various forms, such as credit facilities, promotional discounts, in-store branding, and regular communication with sales representatives. These support mechanisms contribute to higher retailer satisfaction and incentivize them to prioritize certain brands over competitors. Srivastava and Mishra (2018) found that retailers are more likely to promote brands that offer attractive profit margins and consistent marketing support, such as point-of-sale materials and targeted advertising campaigns, which boost in-store sales.

Moreover, brands that maintain open communication channels with retailers are better positioned to respond to market feedback and adapt their strategies. Narayanan and Malik (2020) suggest that such collaborative partnerships are particularly valuable in the dairy industry, where short shelf life and the perishability of products necessitate a well-coordinated approach. Retailers benefit from the added promotional support and feel more secure in stocking the brand, which can directly impact product visibility and sales performance in highly competitive retail environments.

Research Methodology

Research Design

1. Research Approach:

A mixed-method approach was used, which incorporated qualitative insights with quantitative data to provide a holistic view of the decision-making of retailers.

2. Data Sources:

a. Primary Data: Collected from market visits, structured interviews, and surveys with retailers.

3. Data Collection Methods:

a. Structured Interviews: Conducted face-to-face interviews with retailers to gather insights into their selection process, preferred brands, and challenges.

b. Surveys/Questionnaires: A standardized questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on factors influencing the choice of dairy products.

c. Market Visits: Observed retailing setup, shelf space arrangements and in-store product placement to highlight Amul's promotional tools against other competitors.

4. Sampling Method and Sample Size:

a Sampling Procedure: Through purposive sampling, three different market channels namely, General Trade, Modern Trade, Horeca retailers were chosen as a representative sample.

b Sample size: Responses gathered from 385 retailers were from diverse channels. Specifically, from General Trade, Modern Trade and Horeca 185, 100, 100 retailers respectively.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Data collected from surveys were analyzed with statistical tools to find the pattern in retailer preferences and to quantify the importance of different factors.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** The structured interviews and market visits provided the insights to complement the quantitative findings, giving depth to the conclusions of the study.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Comparative analysis was conducted between Amul and competitors to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and improvement areas.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1 Demographic Profile of Retailers

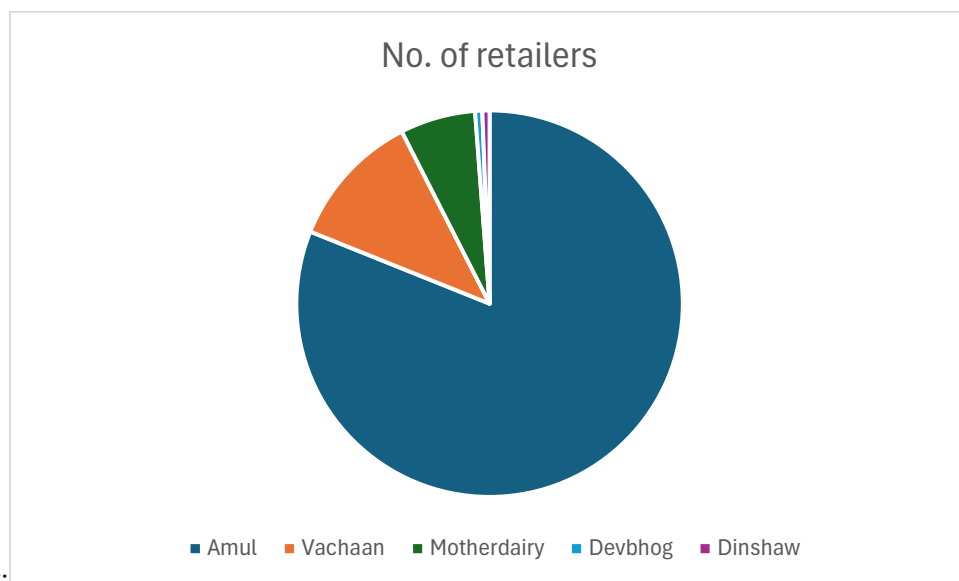
The retailers included in the study represented a mix of small, medium, and large outlets catering to urban and semi-urban customers. Below is a breakdown:

Sample Size – A study of 385 retailers in Raipur.

Retailer type	No. of retailers	percentage
general trade	185	48.05
modern trade	100	25.97
horeka	100	25.97



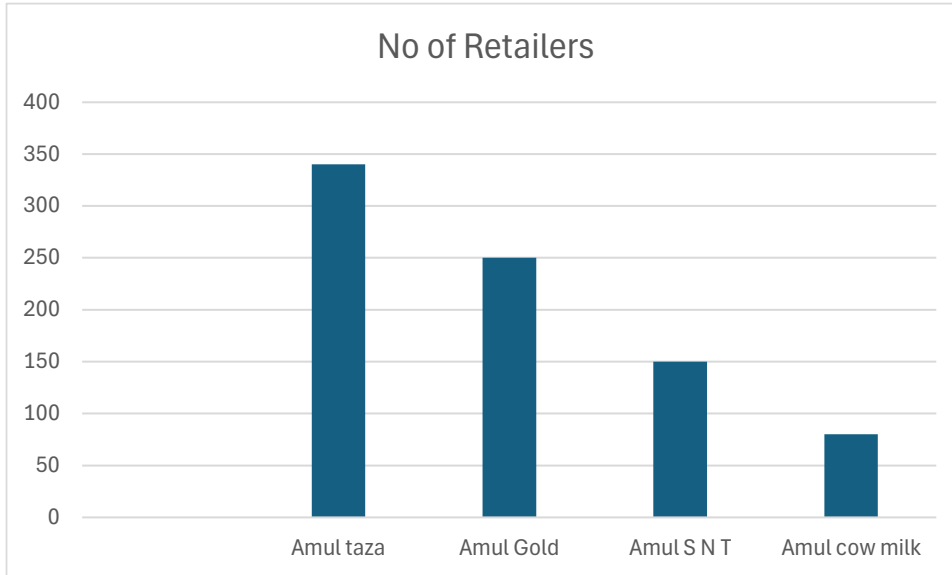
5.2 Key Factors Influencing Dairy Product Selection



1. Brand Loyalty:

Observation: 80% of retailers reported Amul as their preferred brand due to its strong market presence and consumer demand.

2. Product Range:



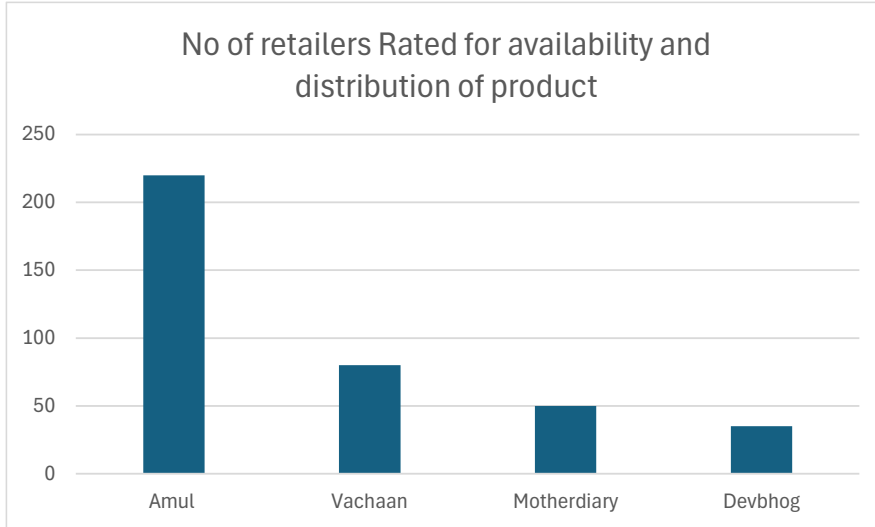
Observation: Retailers appreciate Amul's extensive product range, covering different varieties and range of milk in which Amul taza is the most demanding product in the milk category

3. Pricing and Margins:

Product	Retailer Price
Amul taza(500l)	26.96
Vachaan taza(500l)	26.50
Motherdiary(500l)	26.75
Devbhog(500l)	25.9

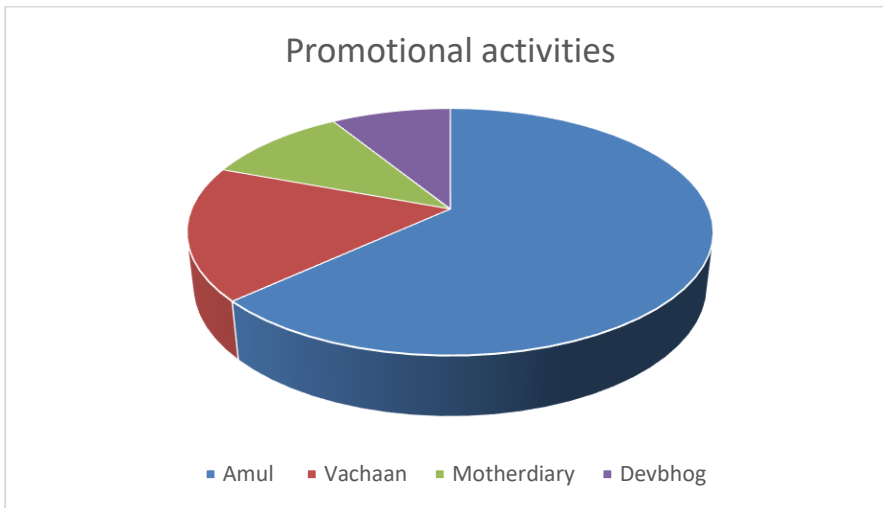
Observation: Competitive pricing is crucial, with 70% of retailers emphasizing it as a key determinant. While some competitors offer higher margins, retailers prefer Amul's reliability.

4. Availability and Distribution:



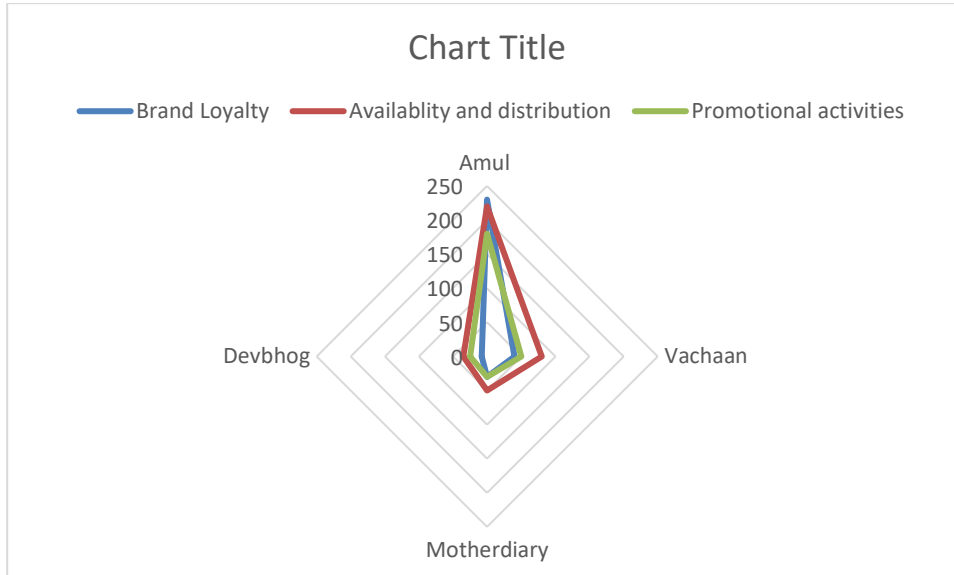
Observation: Amul's consistent supply chain efficiency was noted by 85% of retailers as a key factor in their preference.

5. Promotional Support:



Observation: 60% of retailers recognized Amul's promotional activities (e.g., shutter advertisements, wall paintings) as beneficial in attracting consumers.

5.3 Comparative Analysis with Competitors



The comparison highlights that while Amul leads in brand Loyalty, Availability and Distribution and promotional activities.

Summary of Comparative Analysis

In summary, Amul’s leadership in brand loyalty, availability and distribution, and promotional activities establishes it as the preferred choice among retailers. While competitors attempt to offset these strengths through higher trade margins and discounts, these measures are not as effective as Amul’s well-established brand, reliable distribution, and impactful promotional strategies.

- **Brand Loyalty:** Amul’s brand equity ensures consistent consumer demand, giving it a stable place in retailer stock lists without requiring high-margin incentives.
- **Availability and Distribution:** Amul’s robust distribution network supports consistent product availability, a critical factor for retailers managing perishable dairy products.
- **Promotional Activities:** Amul’s comprehensive promotional strategies, from in-store branding to outdoor advertising, drive consumer awareness and bolster retailer confidence.

Overall Recommendation: To sustain its competitive advantages, Amul should continue investing in brand-building activities and distribution network upgrades while exploring innovative promotional strategies to remain top-of-mind with consumers and preferred among retailers

Findings

Brand Loyalty and Consumer Demand

Amul enjoys high **brand loyalty**, with 80% of retailers prioritizing it due to its established reputation for quality. Consumer demand for Amul products ensures consistent sales, making it a preferred choice despite occasional higher trade margins from competitors. Retailers trust Amul for its long-standing commitment to quality, which outweighs other brands' temporary offers.

Product Range and Innovation

Retailers value Amul's **diverse product portfolio**, ranging from essentials like milk and butter to premium products like paneer and ice cream. Amul's focus on **innovation**—introducing products like lactose-free milk and flavored yogurt—has strengthened its appeal to health-conscious consumers and younger demographics. This wide range reduces retailers' need to stock multiple brands, streamlining inventory management.

Pricing and Profit Margins

Amul's **affordable pricing** balances quality and cost, attracting a broad customer base. While competitors may offer higher margins or discounts, 70% of retailers prefer Amul's steady sales. Retailers suggest more frequent discount schemes could further enhance turnover and incentivize stocking.

Availability and Distribution Efficiency

Amul's **reliable distribution network** stands out, with 85% of retailers expressing satisfaction with consistent product availability. Its frequent delivery schedules, especially critical for perishable items, give it a competitive edge. Retailers also noted Amul's strategic presence in urban and semi-urban markets, outperforming competitors like Mother Dairy in consistency.

Promotional Activities and Visibility

Amul excels in **comprehensive promotional efforts**, including outdoor advertisements and in-store branding. These strategies enhance brand visibility and drive sales, with 60% of retailers reporting positive impacts. Retailers suggest expanding into **digital marketing** to target younger audiences and complement traditional methods.

Retailer Support and Relationship Building

Amul fosters **strong retailer relationships** through active engagement, product updates, and merchandising support. Training initiatives help optimize product displays, improving sales. Retailers recommend occasional **incentive schemes** to further enhance loyalty and motivation, leading to greater sales efforts for Amul products.

This summarized analysis highlights Amul's dominance through its brand strength, product diversity, efficient distribution, and strong retailer support, offering valuable insights for the dairy sector.

Recommendations

Digital Marketing Expansion

To engage younger, digitally savvy consumers, Amul should strengthen its **digital marketing** presence. This includes targeted campaigns on platforms like Instagram and Facebook, influencer collaborations, and short, engaging content that highlights health-conscious and innovative products. Expanding into digital media can increase brand recall and attract new customer segments.

Seasonal Discounts and Bundled Offers

Introducing **seasonal promotions** and bundled product discounts can boost sales during high-demand periods, such as festivals or summer. These offers can incentivize retailers and attract more customers, giving Amul a competitive edge in pricing while maintaining profitability.

Retailer Loyalty and Incentive Programs

Developing a **loyalty program** can motivate retailers to prioritize Amul. This could include point-based rewards, sales competitions, and exclusive benefits for high-performing retailers, strengthening relationships and increasing retailer commitment.

Enhanced Distribution in Semi-Urban and Rural Markets

Amul should optimize its **distribution network** in semi-urban and rural areas to ensure consistent product availability. This includes improving delivery schedules, investing in logistics solutions, and creating a feedback mechanism to address supply chain issues promptly.

Innovative Product Offerings

Amul can continue its leadership in product innovation by launching **health-focused products** such as organic, lactose-free, and high-protein dairy items. Regular market research and prominent digital promotion of these offerings can help capture emerging trends and expand Amul's consumer base.

These recommendations aim to enhance Amul's market performance, foster retailer loyalty, and capitalize on emerging consumer trends while maintaining its competitive edge in the dairy sector.

Conclusion

The study on "Factors Influencing Selection of Dairy Products by Retailers with Special Reference to Amul" highlights the intricate dynamics of retailer behavior in the dairy sector, with Amul positioned as a dominant player. The findings emphasize key factors such as brand loyalty, product variety, pricing strategies, and promotional activities that drive retailers' decisions to stock Amul products over competitors.

Amul's strong market presence is attributed to its wide product portfolio, reliable distribution network, and consistent promotional efforts. Retailers consistently expressed satisfaction with Amul's brand trust, quality assurance, and consumer demand, which make it a preferred choice despite competitive trade margins. However, areas like seasonal discount schemes, digital marketing expansion, and retailer incentive programs present opportunities for further growth.

By addressing the highlighted challenges and leveraging its existing strengths, Amul can enhance retailer engagement, improve sales outcomes, and sustain its leadership in the competitive dairy market. This research provides actionable insights for Amul and other dairy industry stakeholders, aiming to align retailer support strategies with evolving market demands.

Limitations of the Study

1. **Geographic Scope:**

The study focused primarily on specific markets such as General Trade, Modern Trade, and HoReCa channels within a limited geographic region, restricting the generalizability of findings to other regions or markets with different consumer dynamics and retailer behaviors.

2. **Retailer Bias:**

Data collection relied heavily on retailer interviews, which may be influenced by personal biases, recall limitations, or perceptions shaped by recent experiences. This could affect the objectivity of the insights gathered.

3. **Time Constraints:**

The study was conducted over a limited time frame, which restricted the ability to observe seasonal trends, long-term promotional impacts, or shifts in consumer and retailer behaviors.

4. **Competitor Analysis:**

While comparisons with competitors were included, the study did not provide an exhaustive analysis of all competing brands due to data unavailability or limitations in accessing proprietary business strategies of competitors.

5. **Consumer Perspective:**

The research primarily captured the perspectives of retailers and did not delve deeply into end-consumer preferences and decision-making processes, which could provide additional insights into factors influencing retailer stocking decisions.

6. **Evolving Market Dynamics:**

The dynamic nature of the dairy industry, including rapid changes in consumer preferences, market

competition, and economic conditions, means that findings may not fully capture emerging trends or future scenarios.

7. Limited Quantitative Analysis:

The study relied predominantly on qualitative data, with limited quantitative measures to substantiate the impact of specific factors such as trade margins, promotional activities, or distribution efficiency on retailer preferences.

8. Supply Chain Insights:

While distribution efficiency was evaluated, detailed operational insights from Amul's supply chain management were not accessible, limiting the depth of analysis in this area.

These limitations highlight areas for further research, such as incorporating a broader geographic and demographic scope, deeper consumer insights, and extended observation periods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing retailer decisions in the dairy sector.

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