

# EXPLORING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING MOTHERS' BRAND CHOICES ON BABY DIAPER BRANDS (An applied marketing research)

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## ABSTRACT

*Jaffna market is idiosyncratic, and furnish opportunities for marketers to sell their products and services to the potential customers who have returned to their habitual life. Knowing mothers' brand choice is essential for creating strategies for baby items in the market. Using Grounded Theory approach, this study explores how marketing academics and the marketers can gain fresh insights into mothers' behavior of baby diaper products in the post-conflict marketing environment. By using this methodology, researcher analyzed 40 in-depth interviews with mothers in the post conflict marketing environment. This approach allowed the development of new knowledge about the mothers' purchase behavior on diaper brands. The researcher identified unique behavioral patterns in the consumer brand choice, in a post-conflict marketing environment. The findings of the study show that mothers are seeking for a better benefit, such as hygiene, absorbency, comfortable, user-friendly, green ingredients, environmental friendly, price, softness and stretch, fashion and style, safe and secure, size and weight, which are match with their living patterns cultural norms, as well as the baby's care. Especially they more concern on brand benefits, which match the needs of the society. This research has an implication to design a unique strategy to attract the mothers to purchase particular brand in the country.*

**Keywords:** *Baby diaper brands, Grounded theory approach, Mothers brand choice post-conflict marketing environment.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

The need for diapers has been around since the beginning of time. Throughout history, parents have created various versions of diapers using a wide range of materials, depending on the natural resources available. It was not until the 1950's that the disposable diaper came into being as we

know it today. Today there are several diaper brands available that have taken great strides since the diapers' beginning. Technological advances in materials used have taken the disposable diaper to a whole new level.

Brand benefits consists of 'bits' of information that are linked to the brand name in consumer memory and that, when combined with the brand name, make up a

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brand image (Keller, 1993). The brand benefits themselves can come from a variety of sources, including consumer experiences, marketing communication and or word of mouth (Krishnan, 1993). The linkages between a brand benefits of a particular brand and other brands in the market place means that associated attributes can be unique to the particular brand, consumers search for that unique features (Meyers-Levy,1989).

It is a difficult task to identify how consumers perceive the quality of a product. The complex nature of quality perception can be well understood when a product with excellent attributes do not impress the consumers, whereas, a poorly made product impress the consumers as having excellent quality. For buying a certain product the consumer perceived the quality of that product related with the other competitors' product available in the market. As the perception of baby diapers depend on some quality attributes marketers or manufacturers should define quality of baby diapers on the basis of customization.

Disposable diapers are popular choice because of their convenience. Mothers unfold it, insert it into the baby's body, and then clip it. If the diaper is already full, they can just throw the whole thing into the trash bin. Adding to its convenience is the diaper's absorption capacity. Modern diapers have absorbent crystals that can carry more liquid than an ordinary cloth diaper can. Since the

liquid is absorbed, rashes are prevented and constant diaper change is unnecessary. A disposable diaper is more sanitary than its cloth counterpart. Once a diaper is used, it is thrown away and never reused.

Multinational companies are struggling to market their products among the stiff competition. Baby diapers have come as an essential baby care product because of its easiness for child upkeep. Mothers search for new relaxed products to grow their children in their busy life. Each mother has a choice for selecting particular brand of diapers. Understanding the product benefits behind what makes customers decide to purchase baby diapers, gives marketers a valuable opportunity to improve their baby diapers and raise their values.

Also known as disposable nappy, a disposable diaper is a sponge-like garment which is worn by babies or individuals who are unable to control their bowel or bladder movements. They may also be unwilling or unable to use the toilet. An example of this would be the use of disposable diapers by astronauts because many times they need to be stationary for very long hours for instance before they take off from earth while awaiting clearing and launches.

This research allowed the development of new knowledge about the product benefits purchaser shows on the brand selection., and examine exactly these considerations from the mother's perspective, most specially in the Jaffna market in Sri Lanka. Brand

choice refers to the purchase of one brand instead of another where a choice exists. Consumer buying decision eventually is influenced by the number of factors or reasons; this concept of decision making is rooted historically in personal, psychological, demographic, and social concerns of the consumer (Menon & Menon, 1997).

As theory suggests that the consumers are usually choosing a brand they recognize. If the consumers do not choose the brand according to traditional theories, then what are the dominant factors that have a greater effect on the buying behavior of a consumer? A lot of controversies are arising while looking into the literature regarding the "consumer choice decision", whether the decisions are based on some attributes of the product like quality, price, brand credibility, or on the basis of consumer attitude and intention, advertising, group influences, innovations, and brand loyalty, or the decisions are made on the ground of brand awareness.

The marketing mix refers to the set of actions, or tactics, that a company uses to promote its brand or product in the market. The 4Ps make up a typical marketing mix - Price, Product, Promotion and Place. However, nowadays, the marketing mix increasingly includes several other Ps like Packaging, Positioning, People and even Politics as vital mix elements.

Understanding the product benefits behind what makes customers decide to purchase baby diapers, gives marketers a valuable opportunity to improve their baby diapers and raise their values.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In Jaffna market, consumer behavioral aspects have been changed, due to many marketing developments, mothers choose diapers as an essential for comfortable for babies. Working mothers and even housewives also use this product to reduce their problems in caring babies. There are many baby diaper brands available in the market, but mothers choose some brands, they avoid some brands due to some reasons. Studying the factors, which influencing the brand choice help the marketers to, modify their brands. Designing features which match with the needs of the particular context (context specific) give win-win advantages to both to consumers and producers, many researchers, have done research on Factors Attracted New Businesses Towards Jaffna District (Archchutha, Kumaradeepan & Karunanithy, 2014) Factors Affecting the Consumers' Choices of Toothpaste in Jaffna (Vaikunthavasan, 2012), factors influencing customer perceived value of services in medical services (Sivanenthira & Shivany, 2013), factors influencing the retail store (Chamhuri & Batt, 2013), measuring the preference dairy brands (Chimboza & Mutandwa, 2007) But no studies related to explore the factors influencing the brand

choice of baby diaper products, particularly in Jaffna market.

The problem in every firm for what benefit consumer seek for, it is important to know about the actual expectation of the users. In Northern Sri Lanka, Jaffna a unique have unique features, it is good to see the determinate features of a product. Therefore, through the grounded theory methodology this applied research was carried out to get the inside of the users.

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTION**

Based on the research problem of the study the following research question (RQ) is formulated.

What are the factors influencing the brand choices of the baby diapers in Jaffna market?

### **4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

According to Phillips (1988), brand as a whole can be termed as “*a trademark that conveys a promise*”. This promise includes symbolic and functional features which are linked by the market to a brand. Brand in its totality is “*the sum of all marketing mix elements*”.

Kapferer (1997) describes that the brand as a symbol, a sign which is external to the product, and that its function is to reveal the hidden attributes of the product that are hard to be reached and contacted.

Brand forms a strategic position and particular associations in the consumer's mind. Brand choice actually indicates the consumer's selective choice of particular brand i.e. it shows the preference or demand of a specific brand over the competitors' brand. Karjaluo et al. (2005) conducted a research study on mobile industry in Finland to examine the consumers' choice. In this research they studied different aspects and factors that have an influence over new mobile purchase intentions and also those factors which affect mobile phone change among the consumers in Finland. The study revealed that although mobile phone choice is based on personal feelings, opinions and tastes (subjective choice), there are also some other general factors which appear to have an influence on choice. The most prominent factors that influence brand choice when changing the mobile phones are: technical problems, price, innovative services, brand, reliability, basic properties, and design and outside influence. Hsin, Huery and Yating (2009) identified that cellular phone manufacturers ought to build a brand and promote its brand awareness through sales promotion, advertising, and other marketing activities. When brand awareness is high, its brand loyalty will also increase. Consumers will evaluate perceived quality of a product from their purchase experience. As a result, brand loyalty and brand preference will increase and also purchase intention.

Gupta (1988) indicates that marketing mix have a strong relationship with consumers buying patterns, brand choices and incidences of purchase.

Disposable diapers are convenient because they can be purchased at almost all retail stores, such as TCT super market, the large store, Cargills food city, Annai Naga food city, and just in few retail stores that carry a wide variety of disposable diapers.

Disposable diapers are also very convenient while traveling. Traveling with young child can be difficult at times. Throw into the mix having to change a diaper or diapers, things can then become almost chaotic. Disposable diapers are easier to use and dispose of unlike their cloth counterparts.

Another one of the advantages of disposable diapers is wetness protection. Disposable diapers are much more absorbent than their cloth counterpart. A baby can go to sleep with a disposable diaper many more times than a cloth diaper. The disposable diapers will hold over 3 times their weight in water unlike a cloth diaper. Disposable diapers also leak much less than the cloth diaper.

This is especially true at night when a baby is in their diaper for an extended period of time. Many of the disposable diapers today are made with Leak Guard protection that keeps the fluids locked into the diaper and not on the clothes or the bedding.

Some of the other advantages of disposable diapers are their ease of use and their size. Almost all disposable diapers have built in ready to use straps made of velcro that make securing the diaper much easier and quicker than using a cloth diaper with safety pins.

Disposable diapers also come in a variety of sizes. This is probably the best of the advantages of disposable diapers. If you have ever tried putting a cloth diaper that is too big on a baby, it can be disastrous. Disposable diapers are made in different sizes that will fit your baby perfectly as they grow and mature.

## **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY -A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH**

The present study focuses on the qualitative methodology, and the grounded theory approach for exploring the product benefits, which influencing brand selection of baby diaper brands. Analysis of marketing research methods shows that qualitative analysis of environment is the most popular. Qualitative analysis is usually being used in the design of business development strategies (Matekoniene et al., 2002).

There are lack of theories related to the product benefits, influencing the brand selection, and the strategies related to the baby diaper product brand. Therefore, the study intends to explore the factors using the grounded theory approach. The development of marketing academic

knowledge is built upon the advancements of its research methods. This allows a new inside of consumer behavior to be uncovered, previously hidden from the eyes of researchers. Inspired by the theme of 'Doing more with less', this paper examines the qualitative methodological approach of Grounded Theory (GT) in relation to its benefits for marketing academics and researchers, as well as the diaper products and distributors.

Theoretical Sampling, which states that the respondents, from whom the data collection is appropriate to answer the research question, the research can collect the data. In this research population of the study are the mothers who purchase diaper brands in Jaffna market. 40 mothers were selected as the theoretical sample size who would give the insights on the phenomenon. (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Goulding 2000). In the present study, the open coding process lead to researchers selectively interviewing respondents based on where the emerging factors stipulated. According to table 1 irregularity in demographics is a tactic used to acquire respondents whom will offer the most insights for the study.

Table 1: Demographic of respondents

Occupation	Age				Total
	25-34	35-44	45-54	Above 55	
workers	5	4	2	1	15
Non workers	7	7	4	3	25
	12	11	6	4	40

Based on Grounded Theory, in this study, researchers employed the following techniques for concept coding: a) writing memos for every interview summarizing key themes and non-verbal reactions; b) using photographs of brand experience 'maps'; and c) writing a 'researcher diary' that brings together key concepts across all the interviews

## 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Interview data were translated and transcribed into the table to make conclusion to the research question. researchers categorized the theme and highlighted which give the same meaning to explore the factors influencing brand choice of baby diaper products. Initially researchers identified 16 factors from the brands, and the labels of baby diapers, then data coding methods, insights of the mothers were analyzed, then 11 categories were found. Table 2 shows the coding of data for making concepts as well. From the first coding, first order categories were found, and from the second coding, and third coding second and third order categorized were found. The researchers found 11 factors, which influence the brand choice of baby diaper brands, those factors are hygiene, absorbency, comfortable, user-friendly, green ingredients, environmental friendly, price, softness and stretch, fashion and style, safe and secure, size and weight, A baby's urine first channels through a protective liner, also called a top sheet. Pampers' top sheet has a thin layer of mild lotion to help

maintain the health of baby's skin by protecting it from wetness.

The urine then passes through the absorption layer, which is made from cloth-like polyester fibers that are both soft and effective at quickly absorbing liquid and moving it away from baby's skin.

*"We are using pampers on my daughter without the problem. I decide to try these to save some money but bad decision they gave her painful diaper, rash with 2 days of used. They might be okay for some babies but those with sensitive skin. I love pampers but lots of control with quality control. I will never buy this product because I don't like seeking my daughter cry like crazy due to the rashes on from using this diaper"*

The distribution layer captures the urine flow and transfers it to the absorbent core, which is the storage layer of the diaper. In the core, super-absorbent gel absorbs the liquid to lock it away from baby's skin.

*"I am 27 years old and I am a house wife I have only a son. I have only a son. I am using pampers. These diapers work great at night time, make sure to fasten the tapes as high as possible across the front of the diaper. There is a lot of absorbent material in the front of the diaper. If you fasten the tapes to low, the top of the diaper tends to roll over exposing some of the absorbent material and baby clothes will get wet if they pee a lot at night. This is not an issue for us during the day*

*because we change the diapers often enough that it does not get as saturated"*

*"I love pampers but have a lot of problems with quality control it is not brand specific with both these and swaddlers (mainly swaddlers) the tabs tear off while trying to fasten the diaper. This diaper gives many benefits. Such as softness, high absorbency, low leaks (as long as you don't run close on the Wight limits)"*

The outer cover of the diaper, also known as the back sheet, is made of a breathable film topped with soft cloth-like fibers to help prevent wetness from transferring to baby's bed or clothes. A mother responded, that *"Ultra-Diapers extra soft on the inside and the outside so it's more comfortable for my baby. Also added more cushioning on the back since newborns spend most of their time lying down"*

*"I used soft love diapers for my baby. I am working in a private sector and completed my degree. My monthly income more than 80000. The diapers are strong absorbents and water proof and more adjustable sizes are in the brand. I think its soft and healthy. I didn't face any problem with diaper product yet"*

Absorbent core technology has superior absorbency that locks wetness away while staying slim and flexible. So baby stays dry overnight without any bulkiness to restrict movement.

*“I have tried every brand of diaper and pampers is all I will ever buy. I have never had any leakage problems with any of their diapers and never had any problems with diaper rash. My daughter is on the smaller side, so I don't know how it would compare when used on larger infants/toddlers. I love pampers and the rewards program is a great bonus”*

Dry and breathable diapers are clinically proven to help prevent diaper rash. The soft, textured pad pulls pee and runny poop quickly away from baby's skin. The Air circulation liner improves breathability to keep wetness away. “Choosing the right diapers for my baby can be a complex process. Factors such as fit, comfort, ease of use, and environmental concerns all factor into this decision. A significant advantage for branded product users, in this respect, is that their extra-absorbency and moisture indicators can reduce the number of changes a baby needs in a day”.

*“I am 30 years old and I have 2 children. I used pampers pants for my kids. My first son has been pampers baby sin his 31<sup>st</sup> day. It's comfort and secure, breathable and I think its extra protection for my baby. I notice write away that diapers were huge in size but felt really light weight. However with this diapers, it's doesn't matter even during the day when I am changing him every 3-4 hours, his diapers is damp of outside ( Leaving his cloths damp, and smells fairly quickly)”*

*“I worked in a public sector. I have 3 kids and I used velona Diapers. I have lots of advantages when I use this one. It has ultra breathable back sheet, patented tribble elastics patch alovera liners. Its super absorbents overnight. This diapers work great”*

Pampers' most sizeable advantage for parents is the ease of use. With the custom fit designs, Pampers reduce leaks and eliminate the need for constant clothing changes. Cloth diapers do not always have the same comprehensive fit and also do not use special absorption pads that work as effectively as diapers options. A mother responded that

*“I have concerns about the amount of chemicals used in disposable diapers and seek out green diapers as an alternative; however, many green diapers use some of the same chemicals as Pampers and other disposable diapers, including super absorbent polymers in their padding.*

Pampers Baby Dry Diapers are the best diapers. They soak well throughout the night with minimal leakage occurring (1 or 2 times in a month) compared to Huggies Snug and dry and Little movers. I did go away with them as the leakage % was approximately 70% and above for night time usage. Here i am comparing apples to apples. Here i am not talking about overnight diapers at all.

*“It can do what it says stand up to a 12 hours of peeing overnight. It handles big bowel*



*movements well. It's never leaked. My baby has not had any kind of reaction to the diaper. I've used many diapers on my kids (huggies, kirklands, Target before it was up & up, and cloth) and Pampers are my favorite. I love the soft exterior and how light and thin it is. The other diapers absorb just the same, but how they're made causes them to curl up and that's very inconvenient during a dirty diaper change. Pampers never curl and absorb just as much”*

These acrylic polymers facilitate the absorption of urine into the pad, allowing the diaper to hold more liquid than it normally would. From the data given by the mothers, the following factors have been identified.

*“I like this diaper because it doesn't smell chemically like some other brands I've tried but has a nice baby powder scent. The only reason I marked it four stars is because it's supposed to be a 12-hour diaper (not that I would ever leave it on that long), but sometimes my baby wakes up with her clothes smelling like pee because it leaked during the night when she was sleeping”*

### **1. Cost**

One of the biggest factors in choosing the type of diaper is the cost. If mothers' looking at budget, they will need to consider a range of factors. Even cloth diapers, which are traditionally pricier up front, but are then lower in cost later, have the added cost of laundering the diapers.

### **2. Functionality**

Mothers who have ever suffered through a diaper blowout know that functionality is the most important factor for a diaper brand or type.

### **3. Environmentalism**

The biggest environmental impact comes from the manufacturing process, according to the mothers' view, who have more concern on environmentalism, expects the disposable diapers, should be more user friendly, the diapers which can be laundered are welcomed by them.

### **4. Size**

Under this size factor, mothers expect different packing size for their family income and save their money. mothers expect that the size should match with the weight of the babies. Mothers who purchase diapers first time, they try with the weight of the babies, with size of the diapers.

### **5. Reaction**

Some babies simply have more sensitive skin, especially when combined with the chemicals sometimes used in disposable diapers, like chlorine. If baby has a reaction to one type of diaper, it may be time to try another brand or a cloth diaper. They expressed that the products used to launder cloth diapers can also serve as an irritant to your baby's sensitive skin.

### **6. Absorbency**

A good diaper keeps wetness away from

baby's skin, helping to protect against irritation, rashes, and chafing.

### **7. Softness and stretch**

A soft surface gently protects baby's delicate skin, and stretchy sides allow mothers to comfortably adjust the diaper to your baby's unique shape for a custom fit.

### **8. Wetness indicator**

The wetness indicator is a colored line on the diaper that turns from yellow to blue to let mother know when it may be time for a change. It is good for baby's skin, what they expect.

### **9. Shaped for newborns**

A cutout on the front of the diaper goes around baby's umbilical area. This helps keep the area dry and exposed to air to help it help. mothers expect different diaper for newly born babies

### **10. Lotion**

Some disposable diapers have petroleum-based lotions in the liner, and some are scented with light fragrance. Mothers responded that unwanted chemicals which are used to make fragrance should be avoided.

### **11. Stretch sides**

These sides help the diaper to do a better job of molding to a baby's body, which can help stop leaks. Diapers with stretch sides can be more comfortable, too. This feature is found on disposable diapers and on waterproof

cloth diaper covers and all-in-one cloth diaper styles.

### **12. Ultra-absorbent core**

Most disposable diapers have materials in the crotch padding that enhance absorbency.

### **13. Fashion and style**

plenty of diapers specifically for boys or girls, and not just because of where the most absorbency is placed in the diaper. Some manufacturers offer cartoon characters or patterns printed on diapers that are geared toward one gender or the other.

These are the viable reasons as to why disposable diapers are chosen by some parents.

### **14. Convenience**

For starters, disposable diapers are available in almost all retail shops. Regardless of which state that they travel to, you are bound to find disposable diapers. Furthermore, when travelling, using disposable diapers is very convenient. Things can become chaotic if you carry the regular diapers. With disposable diapers, they do not need to walk around with wastes in their bag for cleaning later.

### **15. Leak protection**

As compared to their counterparts, disposable diapers are more absorbency, more than three times before they can be changed, unlike a cloth diaper disposable diapers, can be able to hold three times. Disposable diapers are also known to leak

much less and this can be seen when a baby wears a diaper for long hours. Most disposable diapers today are being manufactured with a leak guard protection which keeps fluids locked into diapers which prevents the diaper from leaking.

#### **16. Easy to use**

This is one of the main benefits of using disposable diapers. Most disposable diapers have straps which make securing the diaper much quicker and easier than tying a cloth diaper with pins. Disposable diapers also come in different sizes which make it possible for use on all baby sizes.

### **7. CONCLUSION**

Through the explorative study, the study found the eleven factors influencing brand choice of baby diaper products. The findings of the study show that mothers are seeking for a better benefit, such as hygiene, absorbency, comfortable, user-friendly, green ingredients, environmental friendly, price, softness and stretch, fashion and style, safe and secure, size and weight, which are match with their living patterns cultural norms, as well as the baby's care. Especially they more concern on brand benefits, which match the needs of the society. This research has an implication to design a unique strategy to attract the mothers to purchase particular brand in specific context. This research can test the identified factors in future through quantitative methodology.

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Table 2: Examples of in-vivo codes, first-order categories and second-order themes

In vivo codes	First order categories	Second order theme
Clean Neat Fresh Pure Dirt less healthy	Clean Hygiene	Hygiene
Absorbent Dry Color indicator Ultra absorbent core Wetness indicators Leak protection Functionality	Absorbent dry	Absorbency
Comfortable Convenient Easy to Use Enjoying Re-adjustable	Comfortable	Comfortable
User Friendly Manageable Useful Easy Operated indicator	Manageable	User Friendly
Green Ingredients Natural Natural Elements	Green Ingredients	Green Ingredients
Environmental Friendly Eco Friendly <u>Alovera jell</u> Margo flavor Environmentalism Environmentally Safe	Eco Friendly	Environmental Friendly
Cost Amount Charge Expenditure Price	Cost	Price
Softness Stretch Smoothness Longish Elasticity	Softness	Softness & Stretch

Fashion Style Usage Method Trendy Technique Variety Flushable Color Gender different Cartoon characters	Fashion	Fashion & Style
Secure Safe Protection Locked Guarded	Safe & Secure	Safe & Secure
Size Weight	Size	Size & Weight