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## A study on the significance of brand preference in agrochemicals among farmers in southern Tamil Nadu

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**Abstract**

The study was undertaken to know the awareness level of the farmers towards brands and their preference in making use of that product for better pest management. The vital purpose of the study is to identify the farmer's attitude and evaluate their preferences towards the brand and find out the factors in which it decides the buying decisions regarding agrochemicals. Primary data were obtained from the sample farmers from seven districts of Southern Tamil Nadu through personal interview with the help of pre-tested and well structured interview schedule. Index, Contaf and Nativo for powdery mildew; Nipit and Furry for nematodes; Result, Tilt, Bumper and Nativo for false smut and sigatoka leaf spot; Atonik and Bahar for plant growth regulators. Study concluded that 65 per cent of farmers have preferred the Nipit and 25 per cent of farmers have preferred Furry for controlling of nematodes. With respect to powdery mildew disease, 80 per cent of farmers have preferred Index because of its quick action and less cost. 75 per cent of farmers have preferred Result for the control of false smut sigatokka leaf spot disease. Atonikas is preferred plant growth regulators for 90 per cent of the famers.

**Keywords:** Agrochemicals, brand preference, nematicide, fungicide, PGR, survey

**Introduction**

Branding is a process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. It aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts loyal customers. Manufacturers offer their products to farmers through dealers under different brand names. In the modern marketing management, the concept of brand image has gained tremendous attention. In the agricultural marketing also, brand development assumes importance. There are several brands in agrochemical products. As an awareness and creeps in farmers, manufacturers engage themselves in a tough competition with their rivals in order to imbibe brand loyalty in the farmers. A good brand image has to be maintained to keep up brand loyalty. Thus, brand image becomes one of the important factors that determine the market share. It is therefore essential for the marketing personnel in distribution channel to have a sufficient knowledge on the behavior of farmers.

Goswami and Sharma (2009) discussed about marketing strategies of agro products with specific reference to rural India. For successful and effective marketing of agro-chemicals, the manufacturers must rely on the number of factors such as non-user and user of a specific input, brand loyalty, source of purchase of agro-chemical, factors influencing decision making in purchasing agro-chemicals, choice of advertisement preferred by farmers, promotional activities which affect decisions in purchase and major sources of data or information. Keller (2008) [4] and Bibby (2011) [1] were noticed that the agro-chemical firms advertise in different forms for promoting the sales. The various types of promotional activities that are adopted in different firms are, such as video on wheels, farmer meeting, field demonstration, kisan mela and jeep campaigning whereas Cravens and Nigel (2003) [2] was concluded that factors which influence the farmers are name of the company, price, own experience of farmers, quality, outcomes acquired by use of specific agrochemical to specific crop and propaganda of retailer for a specific brand of agro chemicals.

Controlling pest and disease was one of the important criteria, which is essential for increasing crop yield. There are number of brands available in agrochemicals. The farmers have different purchase pattern towards price, package, availability, utility and quality etc. The farmers' select particular brand of agrochemicals for various reasons and they give weightage to a particular brand or motive may vary from person to person. Hence, a question arises in the mind of researcher regarding the factors that are influencing the farmers to select a particular brand from the agriculture market. Hence present study is designed to analyze the brand preference of pesticides among farmers in Southern Tamil Nadu and to find out the factors influencing the farmers in preferring the particular brand regarding the purchase decision. This study will reveal the customers attitude and evaluate their preferences towards brand and find out the factors in which it decides the buying decisions regarding agrochemicals. Hence, the outcome of the study would suggest right solutions to identify the branding preferences of farmers in Southern Tamil Nadu.

### Materials and Methods

Primary data were obtained from the sample farmers through personal interview with the help of pre-tested and well structured schedule. This study adopts qualitative analysis and makes use of descriptive research design. The study was carried out in selected districts viz., Dindigul, Theni, Madurai, Pudukottai, Virudhunagar, Ramanathanpuram and Tirunelveli of southern Tamil Nadu. The sample size of this study for qualitative analysis accounted 10 farmers from Madurai, 7 farmers from Dindigul, 17 farmers from Tirunelveli, 1 from Virudhunagar, 11 from Theni, 5 from Ramanathapuram and 9 from Pudukottai Districts have been selected on various brands preferred for specific disease regarding agrochemicals for the study. There are 11 products viz., Index, Contaf and Nativo for Powdery Mildew; Nipit and Furry for Nematodes; Result, Tilt, Bumper and Nativo for False Smut and Sigatoka Leaf Spot; Atonik and Bahar as Plant Growth Regulators were selected for study. Based on preference of the farmers on the above category data was collected and analyzed.

### Results and Discussion

#### A. Branding preference for nematode management

The study indicated that the about 65 per cent of farmers have preferred the agro chemical Nipit for nematode control. Nipit has better protection control for more than 70 per cent of the crops from Nematode damage compared to the Furry. About 25 per cent of farmers have preferred Furry for better controlling of nematodes due to its quick reaction. Remaining 10 per cent of farmers said that they could not able to find any difference between Nipit and Furry.

#### B. Branding preference for powdery mildew management

Eighty per cent of the farmers have preferred Index because of its quick action. They are not satisfied with remaining products. Besides, they received good quality produce by Index. Moreover, the cost of Index is less than other products. Another 15 per cent of farmers have preferred Contaf, because it can also control some other fungal diseases. Remaining 5 per cent of farmers have preferred Nativo for its broad spectrum activity. They are not interested in other products.

#### C. Branding preference for false smut and sigatokka leaf spot management

Among the sample farmers 75 per cent of farmers have preferred Result due to good control of false smut and

reduced discolouration in paddy and it gives shiny grains. In Banana, it controlled sigatokka leaf spot disease effectively. Another 15 per cent of farmers have preferred Contaf because of its less cost. Remaining 10 per cent of farmers have preferred Nativo and Tilt, because it could control some other fungal diseases also.

#### D. Branding preference of plant growth regulator

Ninety per cent of farmers have preferred Atonik, because of its effectiveness in controlling the flower dropping. Hence, the plant gets more number of flowers and fruits and more vegetative growth with greenish colour. Yield also increased compared to other products. Remaining 10 per cent of farmers have preferred Bahar because of less cost.

The modern market is a highly competitive and transitional one. A company must first decide what it can sell, how much it can sell and what approaches must be used to entice the farmers. The farmers today do not accept any product, which does not give them complete satisfaction and hence many products do not find a place in the market. Hence, it can be found that the modern market is consumer oriented and only the consumers determine the success of the product. Today consumer market is flooded with various brands of agro chemicals. Every branded agro chemicals stands out distinctly when grouped with other branded chemicals. Farmers have specific preference or choice. Farmers analyze the price, quality, advertisement etc. before they buy the product and hence, it is up to the different brands of agro chemical manufacturers to concentrate on those aspects and workout better strategy to attract more farmers for their brands. Hence, manufacturers should feel the pulse of farmers. They should plan their production and distribution activities as per the needs and convenient of the farmers. In agro chemicals industry, there is a space for branding and branding preference which influences the purchase decision of the farmers.

In future the agro chemical manufacturers must implement certain strategies to enhance their loyalty of brand namely viz., to evolve an unbeatable product, provide quality and standard products, provide farmers an incentive to purchase the product again, make easier for farmers to buy their brand than the rivalry brands, know their farmers expectations and handle them best of other customers and to become a champion to serve farmers. Thus brand loyalty will always increase the purchase intention of customers. Branding strategies have become an accepted part of marketing activity. Agrochemicals are often relatively does not have clear brands associated with producers or suppliers. It has become common to find generic brands associated with particular supply regions or varieties of products, but these are normally developed by groups of suppliers, or merely used as labels to identify particular attributes of the products.

In this paper a simple model of farmers preference is adapted to the information environment associated with purchasing decisions, and a qualitative framework is developed to indicate the conditions under which brand is likely to be successful. This model is used to test the preference of farmers based on the extent and nature of branding in the market for selected agrochemical products to control certain pest and disease attack.

Quality is always important for any production. But it is more important in case of agrochemicals for reason that it is more related to health. Hence, it is suggested to the manufacturer of branded agrochemicals to have focus on the quality aspect and make farmer to feel reliable. Manufacturers have to

produce good quality of agrochemical that is not harmful to health. It is found from this study that majority of farmers feel that the price of branded chemical is high. This use an indication that farmers may at any time be dissatisfied with pricing aspect in the long run. Hence, the manufacturer of branded agrochemicals shall keep the pricing strategies to suit the market environment so as to remain in the market for a long period. Like any other product of agrochemicals also needs better advertisement. The advertisement will not only create awareness but also influences the farmers to buy the product. However, the chemicals are not advertised for many brands available in the market. Hence, it is suggested that advertisement may be given more important for various branded items and can be advertised through different media. Among the various brands of agrochemicals available in the market, preference is made according to the need base and especially preferred brand by majority of the respondents are similar with the location and the problem. This is information for the manufacturers of other brands of agrochemicals than the preferred one in the present survey. They have to analyze the market and to develop such marketing strategies for capturing and key share in the market. Otherwise they lose their market share slowly in the long run.

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