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Research Paper

A STUDY ON MARKETING FUNNEL AND ITS UTILITY WITH REFERENCE TO CERTAIN IDENTIFIED PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

Marketing funnel is a consumer focused marketing model which tracks a consumer's journey towards the purchase of a product or services in a funnel. The research work tries to study certain identified brands that are currently available in the selected market under the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) category. The main objective of the study is to find out the customer's stages for each of the brands in the marketing funnel and the barriers behind the progress of the consumer in the marketing funnel. The product brands are Nestle (Maggi-Hot Heads), Ohlay Drink, Cherio (Mixed Fruit Medley/ Mango Lush), Real (Active 100 Percent Coconut Water) and Homa Cream Bun. It was an exploratory cum descriptive study and a total of 400 samples were taken for the study. Data was collected through a well structures questionnaire from the consumers of the selected products. The field survey revealed that each of the product brand were in different stages of the marketing funnel. The study tried to recommend respective marketing solutions for moving each of the respective product to cross over any barrier so as to move on to the next higher stage in the marketing funnel.

KEYWORDS: conceptual, funnel, prognostic, prospect.

JEL Classification: M31 (Marketing)

INTRODUCTION

Marketing funnel is a consumer focused marketing model which demonstrates a hypothetical consumer journey towards the purchase of a product or services. The term Marketing Funnel is also referred to as "customer funnel", "purchase funnel", "sales funnel" or "conversion funnel" alternatively. The Marketing funnel categorizes the percentage of the potential target market at each stage in the decision process, from a stage of mere awareness to a stage of high loyalty. The model states that any consumer must move through each stage of the funnel before becoming a faithful customer in the last stage. Often this model is used conceptually in marketing to help the promotional campaigns that targets different stages in the journey of a customer journey. It is a prognostic investigatives model used in business as a forecaster in the marketing or sales chain and provides as a guide in a tracking mechanism.

The concept of marketing funnel makes an effort to determine the percentage of the potential target market at each stage in the decision process, i.e. from merely awareness to ultimate loyal customer. Some marketers even lengthen the

funnel to make provisions for additionally loyal customers who are ardent brand promoters or even act as partners to the firm. By estimating the rate of conversion - the percentage of customers at one stage who move to the next- the funnel allows marketers to spot heldup stage or barrier to building a loyal customer franchise. If the recent users by percentage is appreciably lower than triers, for instance something might be wide of the mark with the product or service that act as a barrier in repeat buying.

Funnel analysis uses a sequence of events that lead toward a defined goal of ultimately purchasing a product by the customer. The funnel in guise represents the buyer journey, because a prospect either moves on to the next stages of the funnel where their interest increases or they way out the funnel when they lose interest. It is the challenge of the business establishment to pave the way to increase the number of prospects that enter the top of the marketing funnel and decrease the percentage of prospects that moves out from each stage of the marketing funnel. A Model Marketing Funnel diagram is given below as shown in Fig 1.



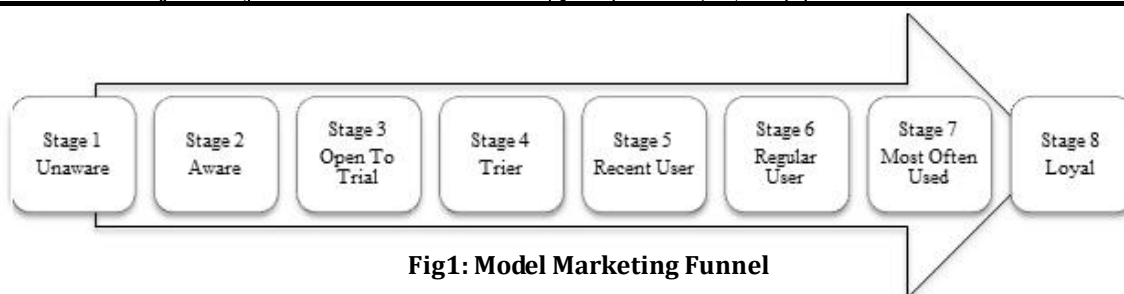


Fig1: Model Marketing Funnel

In the Marketing funnel basically there are eight stages. They are unaware, aware, open to trial, trier, recent user, regular user, most often used and loyal. The details of the stages are discussed. The *first stage* is the Unawareness Stage. Here consumers are unaware of the product or service because there is lack of publicity or the product is very new to the market. The *second stage* is the Awareness Stage. Here potential customers are drawn into this stage through marketing communications. The *third stage* is the Open to Trial Stage. Here prospective customers are identified. Marketers can educate prospects about products and offers. The *fourth stage* is the Trier Stage. Here prospects demonstrate that they can contemplate on buying a brand's product. It provides an opportunity to marketers to press their product as the best choice for a buyer (Non Rejector). The *fifth stage* is the Recent User Stage. Here the buyer has tried once in the past three months. The *sixth stage* is the Regular User Stage. This stage is characterized by the process of improving, maintain and foster relationship with the customers to make more and larger transactions. The *seventh stage* is the Most Often Used Stage. Here the prospect decides to purchase and turns to be a consumer. A satisfactory experience by the buyer leads to repeated sales by referrals. The *eighth stage* is the Loyal. Here customers develop a preference for a brand. At this stage marketers can create an intimate link to a brand through relationship building efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hall (2003) in the paper titled 'Try Funnel Approach To Marketing' suggest certain strategies through funnel approach in marketing for the heating, ventilation and refrigeration industry. The study found that developing strategies for visualizing, measuring and managing a company's marketing and sales goals through the use of marketing funnel helps in reaping the benefits of business planning, growth and enhances company sales.

Adams (2007) in the paper titled 'Marketing lessons from a Boy Scout trip' tries to explore how and why funnel marketing works for contractors. It describes how funnel enables a business enterprise to narrow its target audience for the final close of a deal. The paper also explored on the problems with marketing model for plumbers. The paper stressed on the importance of determining the most effective media for sending the marketing message to the audience.

Godes (2008) through a case study of the company named Avaya tries to explore ways for improvement in the relationship between Sales and Marketing. The study recommends for a unified funnel and a demand generation framework. The identified funnel communicates the idea that besides the marketing funnel and the sales funnel being connected vertically where Marketing's leads flow seamlessly into Sales' funnel, they should also be integrated horizontally.

The study suggests the idea that Sales and Marketing should each play a role in each phase of the process from email marketing solutions right through to the close. It also suggests that the two vital functions are best integrated by encouraging them to work simultaneously, not just sequentially.

Hudson (2009) in the paper titled 'The Marketing Funnel' delved on the scope of using the Funnel concept for providing information related to formulation of marketing strategies for the plumbing industry. The paper suggested for a total focus on the customer, but with an updated technology. The paper found that direct mail makes a huge impact and the use of targeted focus is superior to other methods by the use of marketing funnel. The study also suggested that smaller advertisements with fewer colours can easily outperform the conventionally outmoded, inflated and exceptionally costly methods of the past.

Wiesel, Pauwels and Arts (2011) in their research work tried to empirically investigate the marketing communication effects on off-line and online purchase funnel metrics. It also tried to study the magnitude and timing of the profit impact of firm-initiated and customer-initiated contacts. The study found evidence of many cross-channel effects, in particular, off-line marketing effects on online funnel metrics and online funnel metrics on off-line purchases. The study also found that marketing communication activities directly affect both early and later purchase funnel stages (website visits, online and off-line information, and quote requests). The study further found that online customer-initiated contacts have substantially higher profit impact than off-line firm-initiated contacts.

Perkins (2013) in the article titled "Out with the sales funnel, in with the cocktail shaker", forwards his opinion on sales and marketing frameworks. The author delves on the most popular sales funnel framework, where customers come into the top of the funnel, then generate good sales and finally marketing people slowly inspire them and push them down the funnel until they are ready to buy. The author suggests for another framework that of a cocktail shaker (in the line of a marketing funnel) in which customers get dumped in, spinned around in information for a period of time and then get poured out.

Jason (2013) in the paper titled 'Lead Nurturing: Finding the Sweet Spots in the Marketing Funnel' tried to delve on lead nurturing of the marketing funnel which can help in overcoming the challenges faced by business-to-business marketing. The study forwarded suggestions to provide an organisation with an understanding of its prospects' needs with the help of marketing funnel. The study found that in the process of tracking prospects, website activity is a way to gain lead nurturing in the funnel.

Lang (2015) in the paper titled ‘Marketing Funnels: Boosting sales without active selling’ tried to suggest ways to enhance sales of both products and services in online platform. It suggests for the application of marketing funnel practices by focusing on two different types of marketing funnel, one is for product and the other is for services. The suggestions include the advertising of product and the availability of websites as a source of information which is also known as Lead Magnet. He suggested for the creation of extra video series aside from the Lead Magnet and the use of webinar Funnel accompanied by live question and answer sessions after the webinar which ultimately helps in effective selling of products..

Riston (2016) in the paper titled ‘If you think the sales funnel is dead, you’ve mistaken tactics for strategy’ tried to explore and understand the need for marketers to influence the journey of consumers towards final purchase with the help of marketing funnel. He felt that it as a challenge for marketers to track the customers as they might be continuously bombarded by media and other promotional tactics of competitors from angles. The study recommended for changes in the sales funnel and stressed on the value of sales funnel as a cornerstone of marketing strategy and success. The paper found an enduring value to a firm derived by the application of sales funnel.

NEED OF THE STUDY

If the concept of marketing funnel is applied sincerely for the marketing of products and services, it can result into unbelievable dividends. As per the literature reviewed it has been found that the application of marketing funnel is more used for selected durable goods and in other cases the concept is studied taking a macro view of the market and generalizing its rationale to use as a model for market study. But the application of marketing funnel concept in the FMCG sector is quite less. More specifically research work on the use of this model in the identified specific geographical region is rare. With the identified gap, it has been felt necessary to conduct a study with the main objective of finding out the customer’s stages for some specific brands in the marketing funnel and the barriers behind the progress of the consumer in the marketing funnel.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The research work tries to study certain identified products that are available in the market. The items selected are product under the FMCG category. The main objective of the study is to find out the customer’s stages for the identified products in the marketing funnel and the barriers behind the progress of the consumer in the marketing funnel. The study further tries to recommend respective solutions for moving each of the product to the next succeeding stage of marketing funnel. The list of products selected under the FMCG category are given below.

List of products selected under the FMCG category

Brand Name	Function Benefits
Amul (Rosogola)	Ready to Eat Sweets
Maybelline Colossal Kajal (Super Black)	Eye-liner (Kajal)
Sunfresh Diary Whitener	Milk Powder
Nestle (Everday Masala Fusion)	Milk Powder
Nestle (Maggi –Hot Heads)	Noodles
Ohlay Drink	Soft Drink
Cherio (Mixed Fruit Medley/ Mango Lush)	Fruit Juice
Real (Active 100 Percent Coconut Water)	Coconut Drink
Homa Cream Bun	Bun

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a combination of exploratory and descriptive research. The sample size taken for the study is 400 which are the walking customers visiting the retail outlets in the Guwahati city. They are selected on a random basis. A structured questionnaire has been used. The questionnaire is basically to find out the awareness level of the customers on the selected product that are available in the Guwahati market and also to analyze the particular stage of marketing funnel into which the majority of the customer can be included under each respective selected product brand. Simple counts and percentages have been used to find out summary data information and customers representation at each chamber of the marketing funnel.

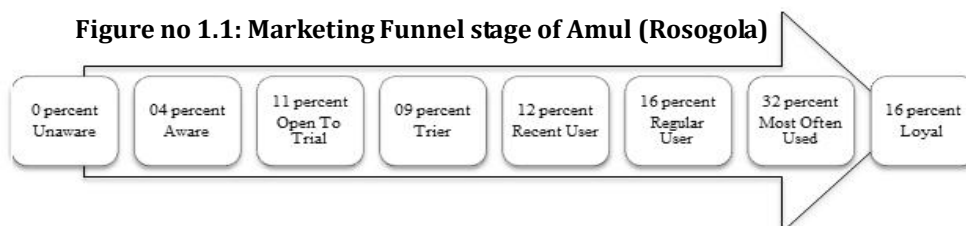
SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to applying the marketing funnel model only. The product category is FMCG. The study is confined to the Guwahati city. The time period of the study was from January 2017 to May 2017.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The first identified product where the concept of Marketing Funnel is applied is *AMUL (ROSOGOLA)*. By the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents for the identified product, the findings in the form of percentage of users in respective chambers are given below in Figure no 1.1.

Figure no 1.1: Marketing Funnel stage of Amul (Rosogola)



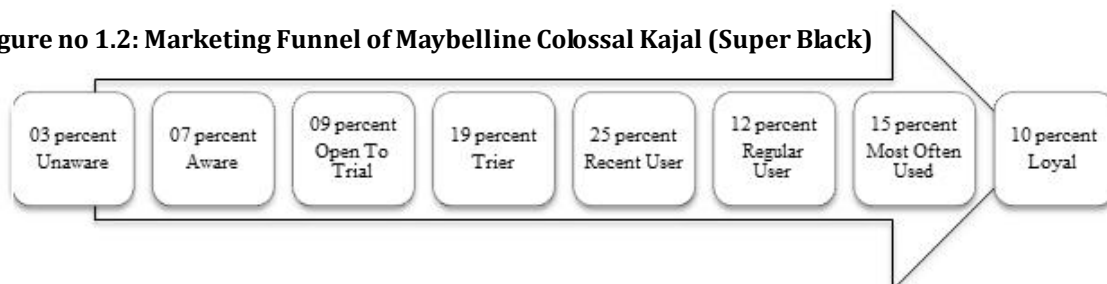
Interpretation: From Figure no 1.1 (as above) showing the stages of the marketing funnel it has been found that the chamber titled 'most often user' has recorded the highest percentage of respondents which is 32 percent in total. And this chamber is followed by the chamber titled 'regular user' which constitute a total of 16 percent.

Recommendation: From the above findings, it is the task of the marketers of AMUL (ROSOGOLA) to convert the majority segment of the Marketing Funnel under category of 'most often user' (which comprises 32 percent) to 'loyal customers' and the 'regular users' (which comprises 16 percent) to the category of 'most often user'. As majority

segments of the customers are under the category of most often user to convert them into loyal customers the marketers should provide the sample of the product along with some specific product in small packaging so that people tend to have Amul Rosogola in their next purchase.

The second identified product where the concept of Marketing Funnel is applied is *MAYBELLINE COLOSSAL KAJAL (SUPER BLACK)*. The product was launched in the Guwahati city in the month of February, 2016. By the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents for the identified product, the findings in the form of percentage of users in respective chambers are given below in Figure no 1.2.

Figure no 1.2: Marketing Funnel of Maybelline Colossal Kajal (Super Black)



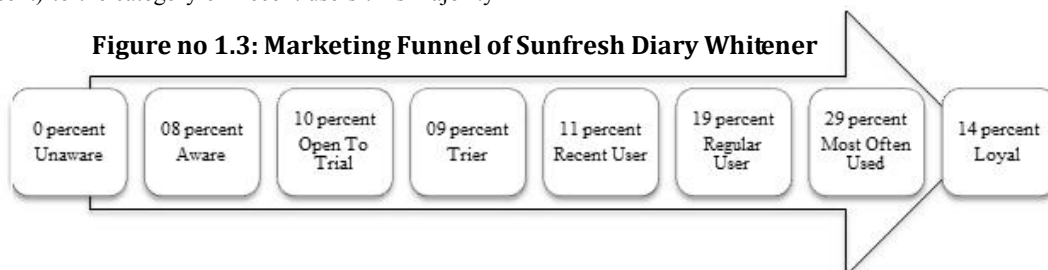
Interpretation: From the Figure no (as above) showing the stages of the marketing funnel it has been found that the chamber titled 'recent user' has recorded the highest percentage of respondents which is 25 percent in total. And this chamber is followed by the chamber titled 'Trier (Non rejector)' which constitute a total of 19 percent.

Recommendation: From the above findings, it is the task of the marketers of *Maybelline Colossal Kajal (Super Black)* to convert the majority segment of the Marketing Funnel under category of 'recent users' (which comprises 25 percent) to 'regular users' and the 'triers' (which comprises 19 percent) to the category of 'recent users'. As majority

segments of the customers are under the category of recent users to convert them into regular user the marketers should provide proper demonstration with attractive advertisement.

The third identified product where the concept of Marketing Funnel is applied is *SUNFRESH DIARY WHITENER*. The product was launched in the Guwahati city in the month of June-July, 2016. By the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents for the identified product, the findings in the form of percentage of users in respective chambers are given below in Figure no 1.3.

Figure no 1.3: Marketing Funnel of Sunfresh Diary Whitener



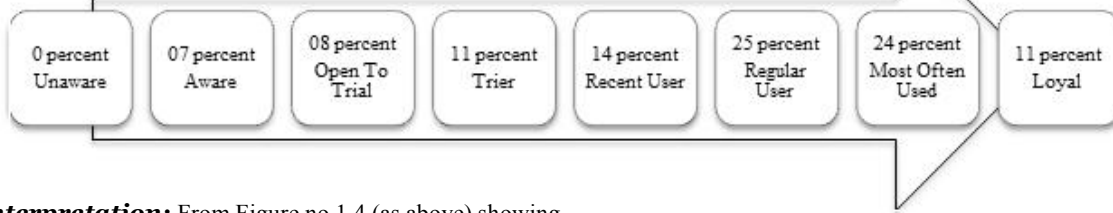
Interpretation: From Figure no 1.3 (as above) showing the stages of the marketing funnel it has been found that the chamber titled 'most often used' has recorded the highest percentage of respondents which is 29 percent in total. And this chamber is followed by the chamber titled 'regular user' which constitute total of 19 percent.

Recommendation: From the above findings, it is the task of the marketers of *Sunfresh Diary Whitener* to convert the majority segment of the Marketing Funnel under category of 'most often users' (which comprises 29 percent) to 'loyal' and the 'recent users' (which comprises 19 percent) to the category of 'most often users'. As majority of customers for these products falls under the category of most often user to

convert them into loyal customer the marketer should go for good customer relationship marketing and also inform the customers about the quality of the product that differ from their competitors and try to influence the customers through different attractive campaigns.

The fourth identified product where the concept of Marketing Funnel is applied is *NESTLE (EVERDAY MASALA FUSION)*. The product was launched in the Guwahati city in the month of March-April, 2016. By the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents for the identified product, the findings in the form of percentage of users in respective chambers are given below in Figure no 1.4.

Figure no. 1.4: Marketing Funnel of Nestle (Everday Masala Fusion)



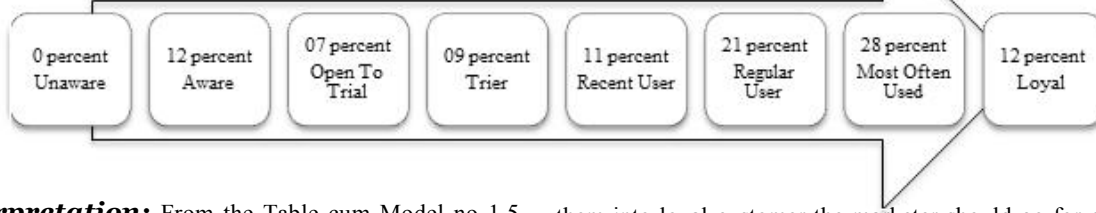
Interpretation: From Figure no 1.4 (as above) showing the stages of the marketing funnel it has been found that the chamber titled ‘regular user’ has recorded the highest percentage of respondents which is 25 percent in total. And this chamber is followed by the chamber titled ‘most often user’ which constitute total of 24 percent.

Recommendation: From the above findings, it is the task of the marketers of Nestle (Everday Masala Fusion) to convert the majority segment of the Marketing Funnel under category of ‘regular users’ (which comprises 25 percent) to ‘most often users’ and the ‘most often users’ (which comprises 24 percent) to the category of ‘loyal’. As majority of customers for these products falls under the category of

most often user to convert them into loyal customer the marketer should go for good customer relationship marketing and also inform the customers about the quality of the product that differ from their competitors and try to influence the customers through different attractive campaigns.

The fifth identified product where the concept of Marketing Funnel is applied is *NESTLE (MAGGI –HOT HEADS)*. The product was launched in the Guwahati city in the month of March-April, 2016. By the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents for the identified product, the findings in the form of percentage of users in respective chambers are given below in Figure no 1.5.

Figure no. 1.5: Marketing Funnel of Nestle (Maggi –Hot Heads)



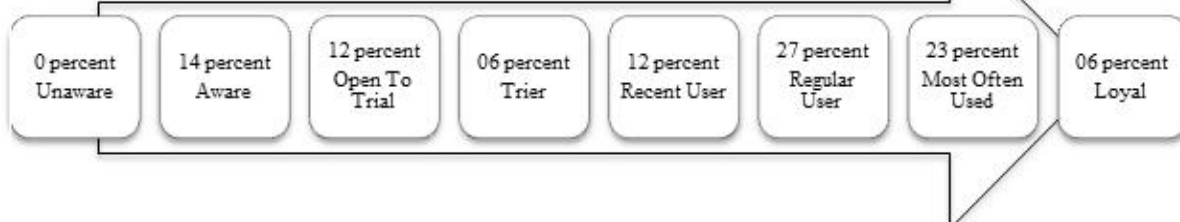
Interpretation: From the Table cum Model no 1.5 (as above) showing the stages of the marketing funnel it has been found that the chamber titled ‘most often used’ has recorded the highest percentage of respondents which is 28 percent in total. And this chamber is followed by the chamber titled ‘regular user’ which constitute total of 21 percent.

Recommendation: From the above findings, it is the task of the marketers of Nestle (Maggi –Hot Heads) to convert the majority segment of the Marketing Funnel under category of ‘most often users’ (which comprises 28 percent) to ‘loyal’ and the ‘regular’ (which comprises 21 percent) to the category of ‘most often users’. As majority of customers for these products falls under the category of most often user to convert

them into loyal customer the marketer should go for good customer relationship marketing and also inform the customers about the quality of the product that differ from their competitors and try to influence the customers through different attractive campaigns.

The sixth identified product where the concept of Marketing Funnel is applied is *OHLAY DRINK*. The product was launched in the Guwahati city in the month of may-june, 2016. By the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents for the identified product, the findings in the form of percentage of users in respective chambers are given in Figure no 1.6.

Figure no. 1.6: Marketing Funnel of Ohlay Drink



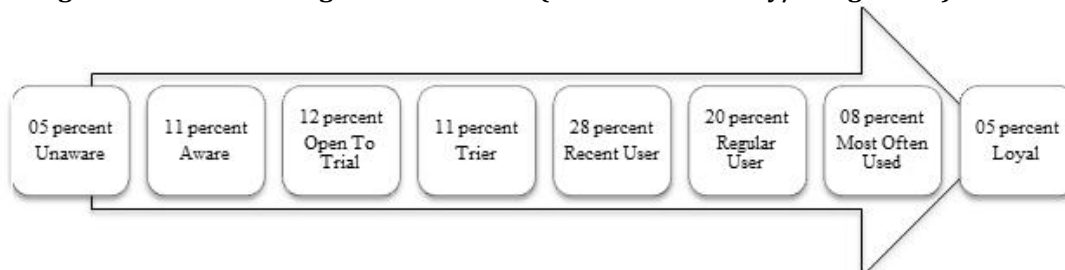
Interpretation: From Figure no 1.6 (as above) showing the stages of the marketing funnel it has been found that the chamber titled ‘regular user’ has recorded the highest percentage of respondents which is 27 percent in total. And this chamber is followed by the chamber titled ‘most often user’ which constitute total of 23 percent.

Recommendation: From the above findings, it is the task of the marketers of Ohlay Drink to convert the majority segment of the Marketing Funnel under category of ‘regular users’ (which comprises 27 percent) to ‘most often users’ and the ‘most often users’ (which comprises 23

percent) to the category of 'loyal'. As majority of customers for these products falls under the category of *regular user*, to convert them into most often user marketers are required to make a strong case for why their product is the best choice for a buyer.

The seventh identified product where the concept of Marketing Funnel is applied is *CHERIO (MIXED FRUIT MEDLEY/MANGO LUSH)*. The product was launched in the Guwahati city in the month of June-July, 2016. By the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents for the identified product, the findings in the form of percentage of users in respective chambers are given below in Figure no 1.7.

Figure no 1.7: Marketing funnel of Cherio (Mixed Fruit Medley/Mango Lush)



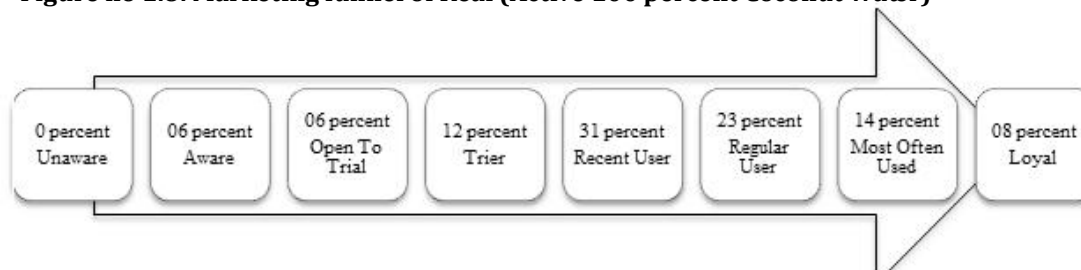
Interpretation: From Figure no 1.7 (as above) showing the stages of the marketing funnel it has been found that the chamber titled 'recent user' has recorded the highest percentage of respondents which is 28 percent in total. And this chamber is followed by the chamber titled 'regular user' which constitute total of 20 percent.

Recommendation: From the above findings, it is the task of the marketers of *Cherio (Mixed Fruit Medley/Mango Lush)* to convert the majority segment of the Marketing Funnel under category of 'recent users' (which comprises 28 percent) to 'regular users' and the 'regular users' (which comprises 20

percent) to the category of 'most often users'. As majority segments of the customers are under the category of recent users to convert them into regular user the marketer should go for attractive advertisements.

The eighth identified product where the concept of Marketing Funnel is applied is *REAL (ACTIVE 100 percent COCONUT WATER)*. The product was launched in the Guwahati city in the month of July-August, 2016. By the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents for the identified product, the findings in the form of percentage of users in respective chambers are given below in Figure no 1.8.

Figure no 1.8: Marketing funnel of Real (Active 100 percent Coconut Water)



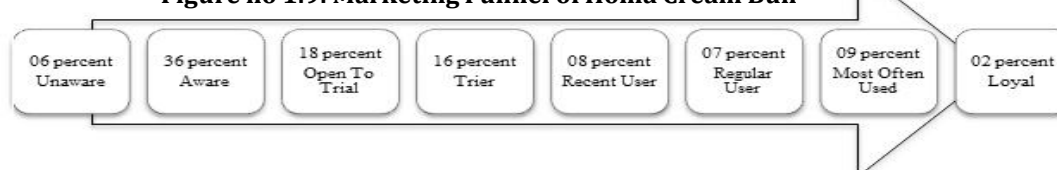
Interpretation: From the Figure no (as above) showing the stages of the marketing funnel it has been found that the chamber titled 'recent user' has recorded the highest percentage of respondents which is 31 percent in total. And this chamber is followed by the chamber titled 'regular user' which constitute total of 23 percent.

Recommendation: From the above findings, it is the task of the marketers of *Real (Active 100 percent Coconut Water)* to convert the majority segment of the Marketing Funnel under category of 'recent users' (which comprises 31 percent) to 'regular users' and the 'regular users' (which

comprises 23 percent) to the category of 'most often users'. As majority segments of the customers are under the category of recent users to convert them into regular user the marketer should go for attractive advertisements.

The ninth identified product where the concept of Marketing Funnel is applied is *HOMA CREAM BUN*. The product was launched in the Guwahati city in the month of September-October, 2016. By the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents for the identified product, the findings in the form of percentage of users in respective chambers are given below Figure no 1.9.

Figure no 1.9: Marketing Funnel of Homa Cream Bun



Interpretation: From Figure no 1.9 (as above) showing the stages of the marketing funnel it has been found that the chamber titled 'aware' has recorded the highest percentage of respondents which is 36 percent in total. And this chamber is followed by the chamber titled 'open to trier' which constitute total 18 percent.

Recommendation: From the above findings, it is the task of the marketers of *Homa Cream Bun* to convert the majority segment of the Marketing Funnel under category of 'aware' (which comprises 36 percent) to 'open to trier' and the 'Open to trier' (which comprises 18 percent) to the category of 'trier'. As majority segments of the customers are in stage of aware to convert them into open to trial the marketers should proper advertisements.

RECOMMENDATION

- (i) For *Amul (Rosogola)*: As majority segments of the customers are under the category of most often user to convert them into loyal customers the marketers should provide the sample of the product along with some specific product in small packaging so that people tend to have amul rosogola in their next purchase.
- (ii) For *Maybelline Colossal Kajal (Super Black)*: As majority segments of the customers are under the category of recent users to convert them into regular user the marketers should provide proper demonstration with attractive advertisement.
- (iii) For *ITC (Sunfresh Diary Whitener) / Nestle Everyday Masala Fusion / Maggi Hot Head*: As majority of customers for these products falls under the category of most often user to convert them into loyal customer the marketer should go for good customer relationship marketing and also inform the customers about the quality of the product that differ from their competitors and try to influence the customers through different attractive campaigns.
- (iv) For *Cherio (Mixed Fruit Medley / Mango Lush) / Real Juice*: As majority segments of the customers are under the category of recent users to convert them into regular user the marketer should go for attractive advertisements.
- (v) For *Homa Cream Bun*: As majority segments of the customers are in stage of aware to convert them into open to trial the marketers should proper advertisements.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

In selecting the sample, there may be chances of sampling errors. Due to lapse of time the various stages identified for each of the selected products from the field work may change.

CONCLUSION

Marketing Funnel is a useful tool in the hands of marketers. It is beneficial for the marketers as it helps them to know the stage of the marketing funnel where the respondents fall and find out the bottle neck stage or barrier for further advancement in the funnel. Finding solutions can help to take the customers on to the next stage of the funnel to build strong loyal customer and ultimately help marketers for selling products and services.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further study can be carried out in the durable goods category. Moreover different geographical areas can be taken for conducting studies on the application of marketing funnel in future.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Brand Name	Aware	Open to Trial	Trier (Non rejectors)	Recent Users	Regular user	Most often used	Loyal
Amul (Rosogola)							
Maybelline Colossal Kajal (Super Black)							
Sunfresh Diary Whitener							
Nestle (Everday Masala Fusion)							
Nestle (Maggi -Hot Heads)							
Ohlay Drink							
Cherio (Mixed Fruit Medley/ Mango Lush)							
Real (Active 100 Percent Coconut Water)							
Homa Cream Bun							

Authors' bio-sketch

Dr. Shazeed Ahmed is at present working as an Assistant Professor at Assam Institute of Management (A Management Institute under the Government of Assam Society Act); has been in Academics and Industry for a total of seventeen years; a first class MBA (Marketing) and PhD holder from Gauhati University; recipient of the 'Best Student Research Paper Award' at the 5th Annual International Conference Biz-Strategy 2015 at Singapore being organised by the Global Science and Technology Forum, Singapore; recipient of the University Gold Medal in MA (Distance Education) from IGNOU in 2012; His interested areas of research are Service Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Retailing and Rural Marketing.

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