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Branding influence on farmers decisions to purchase agrochemicals in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Study was conducted to analyze the brand preference of agrochemicals among farmers in Tamil Nadu and to find out the factors influencing the farmers in preferring the particular brand regarding the purchase decision. Collection of primary data followed by field level demonstrations was collected from 93 farmers covering 7 districts of Tamil Nadu. The present study indicated that about 65 per cent of farmers have preferred the agro chemical Rimon and 25 per cent of farmers have preferred chemical Coragen for better control against *Spodoptera* pest. Rimon and Coragen were found to be most preferred agro chemicals by the sample farmers to control larva infestation. With respect to downy mildew disease, 75 per cent of farmers have preferred agrochemical brand named Curzate due to its quick action and good quality produce after harvest. Further, the cost of Curzate is lesser than other chemical products available in the market. Remaining 25 per cent of farmers have preferred the chemical Moximate to control downy mildew disease. They conceded that the chemical Moximate could also control some other fungal infections. Regarding rhizome rot in turmeric, 65 per cent of farmers have preferred chemical Rodomil Gold. About 20 per cent of farmers preferred Matco for control of rhizome rot in turmeric. The lowest of 15 per cent of farmers have shown preference towards Kemoxyl due its low cost and good control of rhizome rot. In this study it was also concluded that the farmers have preferred plant growth promoter like Fruit Energy (65%) and Isobion (35%) as it effectively controls the flower dropping. Fruit Energy showed better control of flower dropping and fruit set, besides darker fruit color, shine as well as fruit weight. Among the fungicide used for onion seed bulb treatment, Sprint was favoured by 65% of farmers, owing to its characteristics such as 'wetable slurry' formulation, which sticks well to the seed bulb and shows better control of fusarium rot, eventually resulting higher yield by 20 per cent.

Keywords: Agrochemicals, brand preference, insecticide, fungicide, PGR, survey

Introduction

Agriculture is the primary growth engine of the Indian economy as nearly 70 per cent of the population of the country depends on agriculture. Pests are an ecological problem and therefore our control strategies must be ecologically sound. Without the use of pesticides, the production and quality of food would be severely jeopardized with estimates that food supplies would immediately fall to 30 to 40% due to the ravages of pests. Agricultural chemicals are vital to our welfare and the protection of the health of our families and pets. Unless and until, better, more efficient and more cost effective means of pest control are developed, pesticides will remain a major weapon in our constant battle against pests. Currently, there are 226 pesticide products registered in India. Pesticides produced in India can be broadly divided into two categories technical grade and formulated. Technical grade pesticides are highly toxic and contain hazardous material whereas formulations are obtained by processing the technical grade with emulsifiers or other agents. More than 60 technical grade pesticides are manufactured mainly by multinationals. A formulations market is highly fragmented and includes small formulators.

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. The farmers have different purchase pattern towards price, package, availability, utility and quality etc. The farmer weightage gives to a particular or motive may vary from person to person. Hence, study was conducted to analyze the brand preference of agrochemicals among farmers in Tamil Nadu and to find out the factors influencing the farmers in preferring the particular brand regarding the purchase decision.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted purposively in Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Namakkal, Salem, Erode, Coimbatore and Nagapattinam districts of Tamil Nadu for conducting field demonstrations and observing their branding preference to control various pest and diseases prevalent in the above said

districts and usage of plant growth regulators for enhancing growth and yield attributes. Descriptive research design is used in this study, since it is helpful to influence the views of farmers for examining the impact of brand loyalty on purchase intention. The sample size of this study for qualitative analysis accounted 10 farmers from Dharmapuri, 7 farmers from Krishnagiri, 15 farmers from Namakkal, 9 from Salem, 15 from Erode, 17 from Coimbatore and 20 from Nagapattinam Districts have been selected to conduct demo on various brands preferred for specific disease and pest regarding agrochemicals for the study. The sampling units for this study are five agro chemical product companies in Tamil Nadu. There are 11 products selected from various categories of agrochemicals to be used for various crops and to control major pests and disease problems in the study regions (Table 1). The details of the samples used for the study were,

Table 1: There are 11 products selected from various categories of agrochemicals to be used for various crops and to control major pests and disease problems in the study regions

1.	Rimon (Novaluron 10 EC)	Spodoptera management
2.	Coragen (Chlorantraniliprole 18.5 SC)	
3.	Ridomil gold (Metalaxyl 4% + Mancozeb 64% WP)	Rhizome Rot management
4.	Matco (Metalaxyl 8% + Mancozeb 64% WP)	
5.	Kemoxyl (Metalaxyl 8% + Mancozeb 64% WP)	
6.	Curzate (Cymoxanil 8% + Mancozeb 64%)	Downy Mildew management
7.	Moximate (Cymoxanil 8% + Mancozeb 64%)	
8.	Fruit Energy (Amino Acid Bio-stimulant)	Plant Growth Regulator
9.	Isobion (Natural Bio-Stimulant)	
10.	Sprint (Mancozeb 50% + Carbendazim 25% WS)	Onion Bulb (Seed) Treatment
11.	Saaf (Carbendazim 12% + Mancozeb 63% WP)	

For evaluating the specific objectives of the study, necessary 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. According to Bernd (2009) [3], qualitative research involves studies that do not attempt to quantify their results, through statistical summary or analysis. This study adopts qualitative researches, since it focuses on a much little sample and the outcomes by definitions that are not possible to reproduce. This study makes use of descriptive research design. Bradbury and Reason (2002) [1] mentioned that, descriptive research design may target to gather data without having any clear objective, such kinds of descriptive studies are more exploratory than conclusive.

Results and Discussion

Branding Preference of agrochemicals for spodopteran control

Twenty field demonstrations on pulses were conducted across the seven selected districts. The farmers were selected from seven districts of Tamil Nadu and conducted survey along with demonstration of larvicide namely Rimon and Coragen to identify the branding preferences to control the pest. Among the demonstration conducted in the farmers field, the results revealed that about 65 per cent of farmers have preferred the agro chemical Rimon for spodoptera control. Rimon has better protection control for more than 80 per cent of the crops from spodopteran damage compared to the Coragen. About 25 per cent of farmers have preferred Coragen for better controlling of larva due to its quick reaction. Rimon had showed additional advantage of resulting in bigger sized seeds from pulse crops, while Coragen, resulted in reduction in seed size of the pulses.

Branding preference of agrochemical for downy mildew control

The sample farmers were selected to conduct field demonstration (17 Nos.) on two different brands viz., Moximate and Curzate for controlling the downy mildew disease on onion (7 Nos.), coriander (3 Nos.), bitter gourd (3 Nos.), gourds (3 Nos.) and tomato (1 No.). Among them 75 per cent of farmers have preferred Curzate due to brand establishment since, Moximate, which has the same active ingredient, was introduced only after ten years. The Curzate had advantage of early brand establishment through vigorous sales promotional activities which resulted in better farmer awareness. The cost of Curzate was also lower compared to Moximate. Although, Moximate was of higher cost, 25 per cent of farmers have preferred Moximate, since it could control some other fungal infections additionally.

Branding preference agrochemical for controlling Rhizome rot

Fifteen farmers were selected to conduct a field demonstration for Ridomil Gold, Matco and Kemoxyl for controlling rhizome rot disease in turmeric. Among the sample farmers 65 per cent of farmers have preferred Ridomil Gold due to its quick action against turmeric rhizome rot. During 'finger induction' stage of turmeric, Ridomil Gold used for soil drenching to overcome rhizome rot was effectively controlled as reported by sample farmers. Another 20 per cent of farmers have preferred Matco due to its lower cost. Remaining 15 per cent of farmers have preferred Kemoxyl, as it controlled the diseases well and also lower cost among the available brands.

Branding preference of plant growth promoter for boosting crop growth

Seventeen farmers from selected districts of Tamil Nadu were

selected and conducted field demonstrations on growth promoters *viz.*, Fruit Energy and Isobion for increasing the plant growth. Demonstration was conducted on Cysanthemum (2 Nos.), Tomato (6 Nos.), Jasmine (7 Nos.) and Bittergourd (2 Nos.). Among the sample farmers 65 per cent of farmers have preferred Fruit Energy due to its effective control against flower dropping. The plant gets more number of flowers, fruits and also get more vegetative growth with greenish colour. The fruits harvested were found to be shinier and possess more weight. This resulted in higher yield compared to other products. Remaining 35 per cent of farmers have preferred Isobion due to its low cost with moderate performance.

Branding preference of onion bulb treatment

The selected farmers (24 Nos.) to conduct demonstrations on onion bulb treatment with Sprint and Saaf for increasing the keeping quality. In this study, products related to onion seed bulb treatment are surveyed between the two brands *viz.*, Sprint and Saaf. Among these, Sprint was favoured by 65% of farmers owing to its characteristics such as 'wetttable slurry' formulation which sticks well to the seed bulb and shows better control of fusarium rot, eventually resulting higher yield by 20 per cent. Saaf is also a 'wetttable powder' which does not stick well to the bulb treatment leads to lower preference by the sample farmers.

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 so many products do not find a place in the market. So it can be said that the modern market is consumer oriented and only the consumers determine any product success or failure. Today consumer market is flooded with various brands of agro chemicals. Ambler and Styles (1996) ^[1] revealed that the brand relies on the quality of its goods in the market and content of satisfaction of the consumer in its services and products. Such offers the trust of consumers in the brand. Apart from this, it was noted that if consumers trust a quality of brand it makes a positive connection or link to the brand and consumers would have a reason for becoming loyal to the brand. Each 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 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. Loyal to any brand of agro chemical has been the major factor to assess its

importance among farmers. Brand loyalty has been impacted by numerous factors of which certain are psychological and some are economical in nature to farmers. Before handling with brand preference reasons, it is valuable to investigate the farmer's extent who are brand loyal. It can be concluded that brand loyalty is regarded as the major target for an agro chemical company which sets for a branded product. If the agro chemical manufacturers need to develop the purchase intention they must spend on perceived quality and brand associations. In order to get successful they must recognize those features related to quality for which farmers are expecting. It can be concluded that brand preference has a major role in developing the purchase intention of farmers.

Goswami and Sharma (2009) and Lee *et al.*, (2001) ^[4] discusses 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. 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 are merely used as labels to identify particular attributes of the products.

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