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A Study on the Indian Hair-Care Market: Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Strategies and Emerging Trends

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ABSTRACT

The Indian hair-care cleansing products market forms an important part of the country's personal care and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry. hair-cleansing product is a frequently purchased product, and consumer choices are influenced by cleansing performance, price, fragrance, ingredients, packaging, brand reputation and availability. The market includes mass-market, premium, herbal, anti-dandruff, specialised and salon-oriented categories. As consumers become more informed and digital platforms expand, competition increasingly depends on product quality, transparent communication, innovation and convenient distribution.

This paper studies the structure and changing nature of the Indian hair-care cleansing products market. It discusses consumer buying behaviour, market segmentation, the marketing mix, competitive forces, digital promotion, distribution channels, sustainability and quality standards. It uses secondary information from industry sources and a descriptive research approach. A small consumer questionnaire of 22 respondents, described in the underlying school project, provides limited supporting observations. However, the revised individual response dataset was not available; therefore, no percentages or market-wide statistical conclusions are claimed from that survey.

The study finds that consumers seek value for money rather than price alone. Quality and perceived effectiveness remain central to purchase decisions, while social media, online reviews and e-commerce increasingly influence product discovery. Rural demand, smaller packs, specialised formulations and digital commerce create opportunities, but manufacturers face intense competition, changing preferences, distribution costs and environmental concerns. The paper concludes that long-term success in this market depends on customer understanding, reliable quality, responsible claims, accessible pricing, innovation and sustainable business practices.

Keywords: Indian hair-care cleansing products market, FMCG, consumer behaviour, marketing mix, competition, digital marketing, distribution, sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is the process through which businesses understand customer needs, create value, communicate with consumers and make goods or services available. In the personal care industry, marketing is especially important because many products serve similar basic purposes. Companies must therefore build trust, explain product benefits clearly and provide a satisfactory overall experience.

hair-cleansing product is a routine hair-care product used by consumers across different age groups, income levels and regions. It is generally classified as a convenience product because it is purchased regularly and is available through supermarkets, neighbourhood shops, pharmacies, beauty stores and

online platforms. Although cleansing is its basic function, consumers may also look for benefits such as freshness, fragrance, manageability, scalp care or solutions for particular hair concerns.

The Indian market is diverse. Consumers differ in income, climate, hair-care habits, cultural preferences, access to retail outlets and awareness of ingredients. Some consumers prefer affordable everyday options, while others are willing to pay more for specialised or premium formulations. This creates opportunities for companies operating at different price points.

The market is also changing due to urbanisation, rising digital access, e-commerce, social media and increasing interest in personal grooming. Consumers can compare prices, read reviews and learn about ingredients before purchasing. As a result, businesses need to compete not only through advertising but also through consistent product performance and honest information.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To understand the Indian hair-care cleansing products market as part of the FMCG and personal care sector.
- To examine the main factors that influence consumer purchase decisions.
- To study market segmentation, pricing, promotion and distribution practices.
- To understand competition and the impact of digital commerce.
- To identify key challenges, opportunities and future trends in the market.
- To suggest practical recommendations for responsible and sustainable growth.

1.2 Scope of the Study

The paper focuses on the hair-cleansing category in India. It considers market structure, consumer preferences, marketing practices, distribution, competition, regulation and sustainability. It does not evaluate or name any individual hair-care brand. The analysis combines the school project's general market observations with published industry information. Market estimates from different research providers may use different definitions and should not be compared without checking their coverage.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE Indian hair-care cleansing products market

The hair-cleansing category belongs to the wider hair-care market, which also includes conditioners, hair oils, styling products, hair colourants and treatments. Within the hair-cleansing category, products may be grouped into standard cleansing hair-cleansing products, anti-dandruff products, medicated products, children's hair-cleansing products, specialised scalp-care products and premium or salon-oriented products.

The Indian hair-care cleansing products market has developed alongside changes in household consumption, retail networks and personal grooming habits. Greater product availability has made hair-cleansing product accessible in cities, towns and many rural areas. Small packs and sachets have historically helped make the category affordable to consumers who prefer low upfront spending. Larger bottles offer convenience and may provide better value per unit for households that purchase in bulk.

Market research providers report different estimates because they may include different product types, sales channels, time periods and price measures. One GlobalData summary reported that the Indian hair-care cleansing products market reached INR 88.02 billion in sales value in 2024, with a reported compound annual growth rate of 9.13% over 2019–2024. This is a third-party estimate, not an official government figure, and its definition of the category should be considered when using it (GlobalData, 2026).

The wider beauty and personal care sector has also shown growth. Euromonitor's 2025 review describes rising retail sales and greater consumer interest in ingredient transparency, science-led performance, wellness and innovation. These wider trends are relevant to hair care, although they should not be treated as hair-cleansing product-only statistics (Euromonitor International, 2025).

2.1 Main Characteristics of the Market

- Frequent purchasing: hair-cleansing product is replenished regularly, creating repeat-purchase opportunities.
- Wide price range: The market serves consumers looking for economical, mid-range and premium options.
- Strong competition: National, international and smaller businesses compete for consumer attention.
- Product variety: Different formulations address varied hair-care routines and consumer preferences.
- Retail dependence: Physical stores remain important, while online channels are gaining influence.
- Brand and trust effects: Familiarity, perceived quality and recommendations can affect repeat purchases.

2.2 Factors Supporting Market Development

Demand is supported by population size, household spending, increased personal grooming, wider retail access and greater awareness of hair-care routines. Digital content has also made consumers more aware of product types and ingredients. At the same time, growth is not identical across all regions or consumer groups. Affordability, local retail access and purchasing power continue to shape demand.

3. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND MARKET SEGMENTATION

Consumer behaviour refers to the way people identify needs, compare alternatives, make purchases and evaluate their experience. In the hair-care cleansing products market, a purchase may be routine, but the decision can still be influenced by several factors. Consumers may stay with a familiar option if it meets their expectations, or switch when they see a better price, a new benefit, a recommendation or an attractive promotion.

3.1 Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

- Quality and performance: Consumers expect effective cleansing and a product that suits their routine.
- Price and value: Buyers compare pack size, price, offers and expected use. The cheapest option is not always seen as the best value.
- Ingredients and claims: Interest in herbal, mild, specialised or clearly explained ingredients can influence choice.
- Fragrance and experience: Scent, texture, ease of use and rinsing can affect satisfaction.
- Brand reputation: Familiarity, trust and previous experience may reduce the perceived risk of trying a product.
- Packaging: Design, convenience, clear labels and pack sizes influence shelf appeal and usability.
- Availability: Consumers are more likely to purchase products that are easy to find in their usual shopping locations.
- Recommendations and reviews: Family, friends, influencers and online ratings can affect product discovery.

3.2 Market Segmentation

Businesses divide a broad market into smaller groups with similar needs. This is called market segmentation. In the hair-cleansing category, segmentation may be based on demographic, geographic, psychographic and behavioural factors.

- Demographic segmentation: Age group, household income, family size and life stage.
- Geographic segmentation: Rural, semi-urban and urban markets, as well as regional climate and local preferences.
- Psychographic segmentation: Lifestyle, grooming habits, interest in natural ingredients and willingness to pay for specialised care.
- Behavioural segmentation: Purchase frequency, preferred pack size, brand loyalty, benefits sought and response to promotions.

A clear understanding of segments helps businesses decide which consumers to serve, what benefits to communicate and which distribution channels to prioritise. However, segmentation should not rely on stereotypes. Actual customer research is needed to understand differences within each group.

4. MARKETING MIX IN THE hair-cleansing product INDUSTRY

The marketing mix is commonly explained through four elements: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. These elements work together. A good formulation may not succeed if it is priced beyond the target consumer's budget or is difficult to find. Similarly, strong advertising cannot maintain trust if the product does not deliver what it promises.

4.1 Product

Product decisions include formulation, quality, fragrance, packaging, pack size, labelling and product range. Businesses may offer variants for everyday cleansing, dandruff concerns, dry hair, oily scalp, children or specialised care. Product development should begin with genuine consumer needs and appropriate testing. Claims about performance should be clear, truthful and supported by suitable evidence.

4.2 Price

Pricing must balance affordability, consumer value and business costs. Companies consider raw materials, manufacturing, packaging, transport, retailer margins, competitor prices and consumer purchasing power. Common approaches include competitive pricing, value-based pricing and introductory offers. Smaller packs can reduce the amount paid at one time, while larger packs may offer convenience or a lower cost per unit. Pricing decisions should be transparent and should not mislead consumers about discounts or pack value.

4.3 Place (Distribution)

Distribution ensures that products are available where and when consumers want them. A typical channel may include manufacturer, distributor, wholesaler, retailer and consumer. Products may be sold through kirana stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, beauty stores, department stores and e-commerce platforms. Reliable inventory management is important because stock-outs can cause consumers to switch to another option.

An omnichannel approach connects physical and digital channels. Consumers may discover a product online, compare options on a marketplace and purchase it from a nearby store, or complete the entire purchase online. Businesses need consistent information, suitable delivery arrangements and reliable customer service across channels.

4.4 Promotion

Promotion includes advertising, sales promotion, public relations, digital marketing, influencer communication and in-store displays. Its purpose is to inform consumers, explain benefits, encourage trial and maintain brand awareness. In personal care, visual demonstrations and educational content are common, but promotional claims should not exaggerate results or create unrealistic expectations.

An effective promotional plan identifies the target audience, selects suitable media, communicates a clear message and evaluates results. Businesses should measure more than views or likes; they should also consider consumer understanding, repeat purchases, customer feedback and the credibility of the message.

5. COMPETITION AND INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Competition in the Indian hair-care cleansing products market is intense because consumers have many alternatives and switching costs are generally low. Established companies may benefit from brand recognition, broad distribution, advertising budgets and product variety. Smaller businesses may compete through local knowledge, focused product ranges, price flexibility or distinctive formulations.

5.1 Competitive Factors

- Brand awareness and reputation.
- Product performance and consistency.
- Price, pack size and perceived value.
- Range of variants and speed of innovation.
- Retail availability and strength of distribution.
- Advertising reach, digital engagement and consumer reviews.
- Packaging quality, sustainability and customer service.

5.2 Porter's Five Forces

Porter's Five Forces is a framework used to understand competition within an industry.

- Rivalry among existing firms – High, because many businesses compete through price, advertising, product benefits and retail presence.
- Threat of new entrants – Moderate. New businesses can enter through contract manufacturing and online channels, but building trust and distribution takes time and investment.
- Bargaining power of buyers – High. Consumers have many choices and can compare prices and reviews easily.
- Bargaining power of suppliers – Moderate. Ingredient and packaging suppliers can affect cost, quality and continuity of production.
- Threat of substitutes – Moderate. Consumers may use alternative hair-cleansing methods or change their hair-care routines, although hair-cleansing product remains a widely used category.

This framework suggests that businesses need a clear value proposition, dependable quality and strong consumer relationships. Competing only through lower prices may reduce profitability and make it difficult to invest in improvement.

6. DIGITAL MARKETING AND CHANGING DISTRIBUTION

Digital platforms have changed how consumers discover, evaluate and purchase personal care products. Search engines, social media, video platforms, online marketplaces and quick-commerce services can

influence product awareness and purchase convenience. Digital content allows businesses to explain ingredients, demonstrate packaging and respond to customer questions.

NielsenIQ's 2026 report on commerce trends notes that around half of Indian consumers use social media to research products before purchasing, and just over half are likely to purchase through social platforms. The report also identifies growing interest in online and quick-commerce channels. These figures relate to broader consumer and commerce behaviour, not only hair-care purchases (NIQ, 2026).

6.1 Opportunities in Digital Promotion

- Educational content explaining product use, ingredients and hair-care routines.
- Short videos and demonstrations that communicate information clearly.
- Online reviews and ratings that help consumers compare alternatives.
- Creator partnerships, provided sponsorships and paid promotions are disclosed.
- Customer service through messaging and social media channels.
- E-commerce listings with accurate descriptions, clear images and transparent pricing.

6.2 Distribution Changes

Traditional retail remains important, particularly for consumers who prefer to inspect products or make small, frequent purchases. Modern trade provides organised shelf space and opportunities for promotions. E-commerce offers assortment, comparison and home delivery. Quick commerce supports urgent replenishment in some urban areas. NielsenIQ reported that e-commerce reached an 18% share of FMCG sales in the top eight metros in its Q4 2025 snapshot; this is an FMCG-wide figure and should not be interpreted as the share for hair-cleansing product alone (NIQ, 2026).

Businesses should choose channels based on consumer needs, cost and operational capability. Wider availability is useful only when stock levels, product information, delivery quality and returns are managed effectively.

7. QUALITY, REGULATION AND CONSUMER TRUST

Quality and safety are essential in personal care. Consumers expect products to be manufactured consistently, labelled correctly and suitable for their intended use. Manufacturers need appropriate quality-control processes covering raw materials, production, packaging and finished goods. Clear labelling helps consumers understand what they are purchasing and how to use it.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) publishes a product manual for hair-cleansing product under Indian Standard IS 7884:2023. The manual describes the standard and includes guidance related to testing and certification processes. It identifies checks such as physical characteristics and pH among the technical testing areas (BIS, 2024). Businesses must ensure that applicable legal and regulatory requirements are followed; a school-level paper should not be treated as legal advice.

7.1 Importance of Responsible Marketing

Marketing messages should be truthful, understandable and supported by evidence. Claims such as "natural", "herbal", "clinically tested" or "dermatologically tested" should not be used in a way that misleads consumers. Influencer advertisements and paid partnerships should be clearly identified. Businesses should also avoid creating unnecessary fear or promising guaranteed results for normal hair-care concerns.

7.2 Building Consumer Trust

- Use clear and accurate ingredient and usage information.
- Provide batch, manufacturer and other required label details.

- Maintain consistent product quality across batches.
- Respond to complaints and safety concerns responsibly.
- Avoid exaggerated claims and misleading comparisons.
- Protect consumer information collected through online platforms and surveys.

8. SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE MARKET TRENDS

Sustainability is becoming an important issue across the personal care industry. hair-cleansing product packaging often uses plastic, and the category also involves water, energy, transport and manufacturing inputs. Businesses can review packaging design, material use, production efficiency and waste management. Recyclable materials, refill systems and lighter packaging may help reduce environmental impact when they are practical and supported by suitable collection and recycling systems.

Consumers are also showing interest in ingredient transparency, specialised care and products that fit personal routines. The wider beauty and personal care sector is seeing demand for science-led performance, wellness-oriented innovation and more informed purchasing. These developments create opportunities, but companies must ensure that new claims are evidence-based and that innovation provides real consumer value (Euromonitor International, 2025).

8.1 Likely Areas of Development

- More specialised scalp-care and targeted hair-care formulations.
- Greater attention to ingredient transparency and product education.
- Growth in online discovery, marketplace sales and quick-commerce replenishment.
- More pack-size choices for different budgets and household needs.
- Packaging improvements and practical refill or recycling initiatives.
- Continued competition between large companies and smaller focused businesses.

The future market is likely to reward companies that combine innovation with affordability, trust and accessibility. Sustainability should be treated as a long-term business responsibility rather than only a promotional message.

9. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

This paper follows a descriptive research approach. Descriptive research is used to understand existing conditions, opinions and behaviour rather than to prove a cause-and-effect relationship. The study combines secondary research from industry publications and official information with limited primary-research observations from a school-level consumer questionnaire.

9.1 Sources of Data

Secondary data includes published information from NielsenIQ, Euromonitor International, the Bureau of Indian Standards and market-research summaries. The underlying school project also describes a structured questionnaire with eight close-ended questions and a sample of 22 respondents. The questionnaire covered age group, gender, frequently used hair-cleansing category, purchase frequency, purchase factors, awareness, satisfaction and willingness to recommend.

9.2 Sampling and Limitations

The questionnaire used convenience sampling, meaning respondents were selected based on accessibility rather than through a random process. The sample of 22 people is small and cannot represent all hair-care consumers in India. The revised individual response dataset was not supplied with the project, and

the percentages in the original charts were not recalculated. Therefore, this paper does not present numerical survey percentages or claim that the small sample represents the national market.

9.3 General Observations

- Quality was identified in the project's interpretation as the most influential purchase factor, followed by price and brand reputation.
- Consumers were described as preferring value for money rather than simply choosing the lowest-priced option.
- Social media was identified as an important promotional channel in the project's interpretation.
- Packaging and availability were identified as areas where improvement could influence product trial and repeat purchase.
- Interest in herbal formulations and improved packaging appeared among the consumer expectations discussed in the project.

These observations should be treated as indicative findings from a limited school-level exercise, not as statistically representative evidence. They broadly align with the wider industry trend towards quality, value, digital discovery and greater attention to ingredients, but the sources do not prove that every Indian consumer shares these preferences.

10. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

10.1 Major Findings

- The hair-cleansing category is an important part of India's FMCG and personal care market.
- The market includes several price segments and specialised product categories.
- Consumers consider quality, price, ingredients, fragrance, reputation, packaging and availability.
- Competition is strong, and businesses must maintain product quality while differentiating their offers.
- Digital platforms increasingly influence product discovery, comparison and purchasing.
- Physical retail remains important, while e-commerce and quick commerce add convenience in selected markets.
- Quality standards, clear labelling and responsible claims are essential for consumer trust.
- Sustainability and packaging improvements are becoming relevant to long-term competitiveness.

10.2 Recommendations

- Conduct regular consumer research across different age groups, income groups and regions.
- Prioritise consistent quality and test product performance before making promotional claims.
- Offer suitable pack sizes and transparent pricing for different household budgets.
- Improve availability through a balanced mix of traditional retail, modern trade and online channels.
- Use digital marketing to educate consumers rather than relying only on celebrity or influencer promotion.
- Clearly disclose paid partnerships and ensure all product claims are accurate and evidence-based.
- Explore packaging that uses less material and supports realistic recycling or refill systems.
- Monitor customer feedback, complaints, repeat purchases and stock availability to improve business decisions.

10.3 Conclusion

The Indian hair-care cleansing products market is dynamic and highly competitive. Its development is

influenced by changing lifestyles, personal grooming habits, consumer income, product innovation, retail expansion and digital technology. Consumers have a wide range of options and increasingly evaluate products through quality, price, ingredients, convenience and trust.

The study shows that sustainable success cannot depend on advertising or low prices alone. Businesses need to understand different consumer groups, deliver consistent quality, communicate honestly and make products accessible through suitable distribution channels. Digital commerce creates new opportunities, while regulation, environmental responsibility and consumer expectations create important responsibilities.

In conclusion, the Indian hair-care cleansing products market offers opportunities for businesses that combine customer understanding, innovation, value for money and responsible marketing. A strong focus on quality, transparent information, distribution and sustainability can support long-term growth in this important FMCG category.

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