Introduction:

A consumer refers to a current or potential buyer or user of the products. This is typically through purchasing or renting goods or services. The idea that customers prefer one product or one service over another is not new. Consumers are always willing to move to new products/brands because of changing lifestyles, rising disposable income, etc. The ability to identify and measure the elements of such preferences is of recent origin.

When we look at the market in India, we find consumers are more conscious before purchasing a FMCG product. This is because they consumer have alternative options to select another branded product available in the same market. With competition on the rise each brand attempts to remain at the top of the head. A small negligence in the market could lead to heavy loss of the brand image.

FMCG goods - which stands for Fast Moving Consumer Goods are supplied through retail marketing. FMCG generally include a wide range of frequently purchased consumer products such as toiletries, soap, cosmetics, tooth cleaning products, shaving products and detergents, as well as other non-durables such as glassware, bulbs, batteries, paper products, and plastic goods. FMCG may also include pharmaceuticals, consumer electronics, packaged food products, soft drinks, tissue paper, and chocolate bars.

Retail Market focuses on the daily needs and demand of a consumer. A focussed marketing plan is essential to fulfil these needs. A consumer buys FMCG products for they have a relatively low cost, leave alone a fast turnover rate. In order to fulfil the needs of the consumer one needs effective selling and marketing and distribution network as consumer needs have to be satisfied at right time & place. Even when the consumer decides to buy the product, the brand is at the back of his mind. In addition to the brand a consumer even checks the quality, its components, attached benefits and date of packaging of the product.

Why Consumer prefers Branded Products?
If given the choice to buy a consumer always prefers a branded product to a lower priced "non-brand" product. Consumers are not concerned about the money they spend for purchasing a branded product like Loreal, Park Avenue, Lakme, Reebok Sportswear, Red Tape Shoes, and Arrow Menswear. The reason why they do not prefer a cheaper non-branded product is because they believe they are of poor quality and affect his status in the society. On the other hand, branded products are presumed to be reliable and high in value. When a customer trusts a brand name product he is most likely purchase the product/service repeatedly. Repeat sales raise the revenue of the company and in turn profits. They leave generic brands way behind in this sense.

Some other causes identified behind buying branded products are:

- Presumed poor quality of non-branded products
- Cheaper product image that non-branded products carry
- Less number of users for non-branded products
- Non-existent after sales service of non-branded products
- Low quality of non-branded products
- Non-availability of non-branded products across the country
- Social status attached to branded products

**Rationale for the Study:**

- The study aims at finding out Customer Perception of branded products in FMCG segment. The changing lifestyle and huge disposable income makes consumers prefer branded products over non-branded ones.
- In the present day competitive business world, branded goods come in wide variety making it possible for them to face the stiff competition in every segment. Here, companies have to identify its competitors and evolve and adopt a strategy to remain visible. Bringing about brand awareness s a tool used to influence consumer behaviour and change customer perception.

**Need for the Study:**
Companies can make sound marketing decisions based on their knowledge about consumer requirements and perception. A sound understanding of consumer perception is critical to influence consumers and that is the difference between favourable or unfavourable product image. A study on consumer perception helps to understand the behaviour of the customer by indicating consumer expectations. Consumer perception is also important to understand the factors that influence product loyalty. Through perception study a company finds possible ways to promote its products through effective fulfilment of customer expectations.

Scope of the Study:

- The study aims at ascertaining customer perception on branded goods segment. The study is restricted to the information regarding the customer’s likes and dislikes, personal decisions and family decisions and loyalty of the customers. The study has been restricted to branded products in FMCG segment. The customer perception shall be done with the help of primary data (questionnaire) and secondary data (research articles, books, journals, etc.)