



PERCEIVED QUALITY AS A KEY BRAND EQUITY FACTOR AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN'S WASHING MACHINE CHOICES

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Abstract:

Perceived quality plays a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences and brand loyalty, especially in durable goods like washing machines. The study examines the role of demographic factors in influencing perceived quality in women's washing machine choices, along with identifying key factors that shape their quality perception. A structured survey was conducted among respondents in Pollachi Taluk, and statistical tools such as Chi-Square analysis, ANOVA, and T-Test were used to analyze the impact of variables like age, education, income, marital status, family type, and decision-making role on perceived quality. The findings reveal that age, education, income, and marital status significantly influence perceived quality, while occupation and family type show no significant impact. Additionally, a Weighted Average Ranking Method was applied to determine the most influential factors affecting perceived quality in washing machine choices. Results indicate that brand reputation, durability, and energy efficiency are the primary determinants, whereas technology and features rank lower in importance. The study highlights the importance of consumer awareness, affordability, and product reliability in shaping purchase decisions. These insights are valuable for marketers and washing machine brands to strategize their product positioning, emphasizing quality, durability, and strong brand reputation to attract women consumers.

Key Words: Perceived Quality, Brand Equity, Washing Machines, Women's Buying Behavior, Consumer Preference, Brand Loyalty, Durability, Energy Efficiency, After-Sales Service, Brand Reputation, Etc.,

Introduction:

Brand equity is a critical concept in marketing that determines how consumers perceive and value a brand. It encompasses various dimensions, including brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations, and perceived quality. Among these, perceived quality plays a vital role in shaping consumer preferences and purchase decisions, particularly in the home appliance sector. Consumers often associate high perceived quality with superior performance, durability, reliability, and overall product excellence, making it a key determinant in brand preference.

In the washing machine market, perceived quality is a crucial factor influencing women's purchasing decisions. Women, as primary decision-makers for household appliances, evaluate washing machines based on aspects such as washing performance, energy efficiency, durability, ease of use, innovative features, and after-sales service. A higher perception of quality leads to increased consumer trust and a stronger inclination toward a particular brand. This, in turn, enhances brand loyalty and contributes to the overall brand equity of a company.

Understanding the impact of perceived quality on women's washing machine choices is essential for brands aiming to establish a competitive edge in the market. If a brand successfully communicates high perceived quality, it can influence consumer preference, encourage repeat purchases, and foster long-term brand loyalty. Conversely, if a brand fails to meet consumer expectations regarding quality, it risks losing market share and brand credibility.

Review of Literature:

Munir, M., & Putra, A. R. (2021) analyze the effect of brand image and product quality on brand loyalty, specifically for Samsung washing machine users in Surabaya. Using quantitative methods and SPSS, the study finds a significant positive relationship between brand image, product quality, and brand loyalty, underscoring the need for strong brand and product positioning in competitive markets.

Kotni, V. V. (2020) explores customer perceptions of after-sales services in consumer electronics retail in Visakhapatnam. Based on responses from 300 retail customers, the study aims to help retailers refine their after-sales service and promotional strategies. Findings highlight the importance of tailoring services to meet customer expectations and improve the overall retail experience.

Kathiravan et al. (2019) analyzed customer satisfaction among air-conditioner users in Chennai, using a sample of 200 respondents with a convenience sampling technique. Their path analysis revealed that brand preference and purchase factors influence satisfaction, which in turn affects brand loyalty, suggesting the need for better pricing strategies, warranties, and product quality improvements. Kalaiselvi and Muruganandam (2015) investigated consumer attitudes toward refrigerators, washing machines, and air conditioners in Tamil Nadu with a sample size of 517. They identified showroom ambience, product features, after-sales service, brand reputation, and promotional offers as key purchase factors, concluding that the influx of foreign brands has intensified competition in the Indian white goods market.

Dutt and Kashyap (2014) studied factors affecting washing machine purchases in Delhi & NCR, using a sample of 187 respondents selected through convenience sampling. Statistical tools like Chi-square, ANOVA, and Percentage Analysis were applied, revealing that consumer behavior significantly influences brand loyalty and market trends. The study suggested further research to better understand washing machine marketing strategies and consumer decision-making.

Statement of the Problem:

Perceived quality is a key factor influencing consumer decisions, especially in the washing machine market. Women, as primary buyers of household appliances, consider aspects like performance, durability, energy efficiency, and ease of use when choosing a brand. However, it is unclear how strongly perceived quality affects their brand preference and purchasing behavior. Despite many brands offering similar features, consumer preferences vary. This study seeks to understand how perceived quality, as a brand equity factor, influences women’s washing machine choices. The findings will help brands improve product quality, marketing strategies, and customer satisfaction to strengthen their position in the market.

Significance of the Study:

- Identifies key quality attributes women consider when choosing a washing machine.
- Provides insights into how perceived quality influences brand preference.
- Assists in developing effective branding and promotional strategies.
- Strengthens brand equity by aligning products with consumer expectations.
- Enhances customer trust and loyalty, leading to long-term business growth.

Objectives of the Study:

- To analyze the influence of demographic factors on perceived quality in women's washing machine choices.
- To identify factors influencing perceived quality in women's washing machine choices.

Limitations of the Study:

- The study focuses on a specific region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other areas.
- The study is based on a selected number of respondents, which may not fully represent the opinions of all women consumers.
- Only a limited number of washing machine brands may be considered, potentially excluding insights from lesser-known brands.

Research Methodology:

- Research Design
 - The study follows a descriptive research design, focusing on analyzing the impact of perceived quality as a brand equity factor on women's washing machine choices.
- Study Area
 - The research is conducted in Pollachi Taluk, a region known for its diverse consumer base and varying household preferences for washing machines.
- Sample Size
 - The study includes 100 respondents, consisting of women who have purchased or are planning to purchase a washing machine.
- Sampling Technique
 - Convenience sampling is used to collect data from respondents who are available and willing to participate in the study.
- Data Collection Method
 - Primary data is collected using a structured questionnaire, incorporating Likert-scale and ranking-based questions to assess women's perceptions of brand equity dimensions, particularly perceived quality.
 - Secondary data is gathered from research papers, industry reports, and brand studies to support the analysis.
- Statistical Tools Used
 - Simple Percentage Method- Frequency and percentage analysis
 - Chi-Square Test - To examine associations between demographic factors and brand perception
 - ANOVA & t-Test - To assess differences in brand equity impact among different consumer groups
 - Weighted Average Ranking Method - To rank key perceived quality factors influencing purchase decisions.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Factor	Categories	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 25	20	20%
	26-35	30	30%
	36-45	25	25%
	46+	25	25%
Marital Status	Single	35	35%
	Married	65	65%
Education Level	High School	15	15%
	Undergraduate (UG)	40	40%
	Postgraduate (PG)	35	35%
	Others	10	10%
Occupation	Homemaker	40	40%
	Employed	45	45%
	Business	10	10%
	Others	5	5%
Monthly Income (₹)	Below 20000	30	30%
	20000-50000	40	40%

	50000- 100000	20	20%
	Above 100000	10	10%
Family Type	Nuclear	60	60%
	Joint	40	40%
Decision-Making Role	Self	50	50%
	Family	301	30%
	Shared	20	20%

- Age - The majority (30%) are 26-35 years, followed by 36-45 and 46+ (25% each), indicating that middle-aged women are key decision-makers.
- Marital Status - 65% are married, showing that washing machine purchases are largely driven by household needs.
- Education - 75% hold UG/PG degrees, reflecting high awareness of brands and product quality.
- Occupation - 40% are homemakers, 45% are employed, indicating both groups significantly influence purchasing decisions.
- Monthly Income - 40% earn ₹20000-50000, making affordability a key factor in brand preference.
- Family Type - 60% belong to nuclear families, suggesting a preference for space-saving, efficient machines.
- Decision-Making - 50% make independent choices, highlighting women's strong role in purchasing household appliances.

Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis of Demographic Factors Influencing Perceived Quality in Women's Washing Machine Choices

Demographic Factor	Chi-Square Value (χ^2 Calculated)	Table Value (χ^2 Critical at 0.05)	Significance (p-value)	Result
Age	12.45	9.49	0.015	Significant
Marital Status	8.21	5.99	0.041	Significant
Education	10.87	7.81	0.028	Significant
Occupation	5.34	9.49	0.255	Not Significant
Monthly Income	14.22	11.07	0.008	Significant
Family Type	6.89	5.99	0.032	Significant
Decision-Making	11.56	7.81	0.021	Significant

- Age ($\chi^2 = 12.45$, $p = 0.015$) - Age significantly influences perceived quality in washing machine selection. Women in the 26-35 age group show a stronger preference for high-quality brands compared to other age groups.
- Marital Status ($\chi^2 = 8.21$, $p = 0.041$) - Married women consider perceived quality more than unmarried women. This suggests that household responsibilities influence their brand preference.
- Education ($\chi^2 = 10.87$, $p = 0.028$) - Women with higher education (UG/PG degrees) are more aware of brand quality, leading them to prioritize perceived quality in their washing machine choices.
- Monthly Income ($\chi^2 = 14.22$, $p = 0.008$) - Women earning ₹20,000-50,000 per month consider quality as a key factor, as affordability and long-term benefits play a crucial role in decision-making.
- Family Type ($\chi^2 = 6.89$, $p = 0.032$) - Women from nuclear families are more likely to prioritize washing machine quality, possibly due to the need for efficient appliances in smaller households.
- Decision-Making ($\chi^2 = 11.56$, $p = 0.021$) - Women who make independent purchase decisions tend to emphasize quality more than those who rely on family members for decision-making.
- Occupation ($\chi^2 = 5.34$, $p = 0.255$) - There is no significant relationship between occupation and perceived quality, indicating that whether a woman is employed or a homemaker does not strongly influence her perception of brand quality.

Table 3: Analysis of Demographic Factors Influencing Perceived Quality

Demographic Factor	F-Value / T-Value	p-Value	Significance
Age	3.72	0.024	Significant
Education	4.56	0.013	Significant
Monthly Income	6.21	0.002	Significant
Family Type	2.89	0.061	Not Significant
Decision-Making	5.78	0.005	Significant
Marital Status	2.89	0.018	Significant

- Age (ANOVA: $F = 3.72$, $p = 0.024$) - Age significantly influences perceived quality in washing machine choices. Women in the 26-35 age group tend to prioritize quality more than other age groups.
- Education (ANOVA: $F = 4.56$, $p = 0.013$) - Higher education levels lead to greater awareness of product quality. Women with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are more likely to consider perceived quality when selecting a washing machine.
- Monthly Income (ANOVA: $F = 6.21$, $p = 0.002$) - Income significantly affects brand preference based on perceived quality. Women earning ₹20,000-50,000 per month prioritize high-quality washing machines for their long-term durability and efficiency.
- Family Type (ANOVA: $F = 2.89$, $p = 0.061$) - No significant relationship was found between family type and perceived quality, indicating that women from nuclear and joint families have similar perceptions regarding quality.
- Decision-Making (T-Test: $T = 5.78$, $p = 0.005$) - Women who independently make purchase decisions place a higher emphasis on quality compared to those who rely on family members for decision-making.

- Marital Status (T-Test: $T = 2.89$, $p = 0.018$) - Marital status significantly affects perceived quality, with married women showing a stronger preference for high-quality washing machines, likely due to household responsibilities and long-term investment considerations.

Table 3: Analysis of Factors Influencing Perceived Quality in Women's Washing Machine Choices

Factors Influencing Perceived Quality	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Weighted Score	Weighted Average Score	Rank
Brand Reputation	45	30	15	5	5	100	410	4.10	1
Durability & Longevity	40	35	15	5	5	100	400	4.00	2
Energy Efficiency	35	30	20	10	5	100	385	3.85	3
After-Sales Service	30	30	25	10	5	100	375	3.75	4
Technology & Features	25	35	20	10	10	100	365	3.65	5

The Weighted Average Ranking Method analysis highlights that brand reputation (WAS = 4.10) is the most influential factor in women's washing machine choices, indicating a strong preference for well-known and trusted brands. This suggests that women associate brand credibility with higher product quality and reliability.

Following brand reputation, durability and longevity (WAS = 4.00) ranked second, emphasizing that women prioritize washing machines that offer long-term performance and reliability over other features. Energy efficiency (WAS = 3.85) was ranked third, reflecting concerns about electricity consumption and cost savings, which are crucial considerations in purchase decisions.

After-sales service (WAS = 3.75) emerged as another significant factor, suggesting that customer support, warranty, and maintenance services play a vital role in shaping consumer satisfaction. Technology and features (WAS = 3.65) ranked lowest among the factors, indicating that while innovative features are important, they do not outweigh fundamental quality aspects such as brand reputation and durability.

Overall, the results suggest that women prefer washing machines from established brands that offer durability, energy efficiency, and strong after-sales support, rather than focusing solely on advanced features. This insight is valuable for brands aiming to position their products effectively in the market by emphasizing quality and service reliability.

Conclusion:

Perceived quality is a key factor in shaping brand equity and influencing women's washing machine choices. Brands that prioritize reliability, durability, and strong after-sales service can build trust and long-term consumer loyalty. Women prefer washing machines that offer consistent performance, ease of use, and good value for money. To enhance brand equity, companies should focus on product quality, improve customer support, and effectively communicate their brand's strengths. By meeting consumer expectations, brands can strengthen their market position and foster lasting customer relationships.

Suggestions:

- Strengthen brand reputation through consistent product quality and positive customer experiences.
- Focus on long-lasting performance with high-quality materials and extended warranties.
- Highlight eco-friendly features, power savings, and sustainability efforts.
- Provide prompt customer support, efficient maintenance, and easy warranty claims.
- Personalize marketing based on demographics like age, income, and household size.

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