

# A STUDY OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION REGARDING THE QUALITY OF BRANDED DURABLE PRODUCTS

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## Abstract

*Marketing means "identification and satisfaction of customer needs." Customer orientation is thus the core of marketing. This study was conducted to find out the level of customer satisfaction regarding quality of five branded durable products. The products selected were: Television, Ceiling Fan, Air Cooler, Refrigerator and Washing Machine. A structured questionnaire, finalized after pilot testing among 25 (10% of the sample size), was distributed among 250 selected consumers drawn from five cities of Rajasthan (Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Udaipur). The level of satisfaction was measured on a three point scale and weights were assigned to the three levels of satisfaction (High – 3, Moderate – 2 and Low – 1). Average Weighted Value and Total Weighted Value were calculated. The hypothesis was that there is no significant difference in the level of satisfaction regarding the quality of the five selected branded products.*

*The hypothesis was tested by using the chi square test. The responses were also classified on the basis of age, gender, income and occupation of the respondents. The research revealed that the consumers of selected durable products are highly satisfied with the quality of branded products and that customer satisfaction differs in the five selected durable products. The study also revealed that differences exist in the level of satisfaction of customers regarding quality of branded durable products on the basis of age, gender, income and occupation of the customers.*

## Introduction

One of the desired associations a firm seeks for its brand is the customer's perception of high quality. For, if the brand is perceived to be of premium quality, the customer will be willing to pay a higher price for the product. "Perceived quality" refers to how customers evaluate different brands on the basis of quality. In the final analysis, high perceived quality means higher returns on investment.

In this study an effort has been made to examine the relationship between the brand image and the buyer's perception of quality and the customer satisfaction regarding the quality of branded durable products. Studies have revealed that price, brand image, store reputation and promotion are indicators of quality. Among these factors, brand is the strongest indicator of quality. Buyers visualise a significant difference in the quality of different brands. The main factors considered while buying a product are:

- Brand Image
- Price

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- Product Features
- Promotion
- Brand Loyalty
- Store Reputation
- Store Quality

In this study, the following products were selected for the study:

- (1) Television
- (2) Refrigerator
- (3) Ceiling Fan
- (4) Air Cooler
- (5) Washing Machine

250 selected consumers were asked to give their opinion about their perception of the quality of products. The following companies along with the products manufactured by them were selected in this study:

S. No.	Name of the Companies	Type of Products
A	BPL	Television, Refrigerator
B	LG	Television, Refrigerator, Washing Machine
C	Onida	Television, Washing Machine
D	Philips	Television
E	Samsung	Television, Refrigerator, Washing Machine
F	Sony	Television
G	Videocon	Television, Refrigerator, Washing Machine
H	Electrolux	Refrigerator, Washing Machine
I	Godrej	Refrigerator, Washing Machine
J	Whirlpool	Refrigerator, Washing Machine
K	Bajaj	Ceiling Fan, Air Cooler
L	Kenstar	Ceiling Fan, Air Cooler
M	Khaitan	Ceiling Fan, Air Cooler
N	Omega	Ceiling Fan, Air Cooler
O	Orient	Ceiling Fan, Air Cooler
P	Usha	Ceiling Fan, Air Cooler
Q	Symphony	Air Cooler

## Review of Literature

After conducting exploratory work a review of literature on the subject was made.

Gardner's (1971) study on toothpaste, men's shirt and men's suit showed that the brand's name greatly influenced the perception of product quality, the willingness to buy and the attitude towards the product. There was a notable difference between the presence and the absence of brand name for the three dependent variables for all the three products. The study revealed that a brand name always resulted in a higher perceived level of product quality.

An experimental study by Mehta (1972) on the "Impact of Price and Brand on Consumer's Choice" showed that:

- (a) The name of a well-known brand does induce the consumer to be favourably disposed towards that brand in terms of quality and price perception.
- (b) The consumers also seem to be willing to pay a higher price for the well-known brand, and
- (c) A marketer does have considerable flexibility in pricing his product, provided, he can create a psychological image about quality. This perhaps explains why many foreign-controlled companies have been able to buy the output of Indian companies in products like car batteries, tonics and menthol lozenges, razor blades, cables, etc., and market them at a much higher price as their own products, making huge profits thereby. Not only foreign companies, even major Indian companies are engaged in similar practices. They are purchasing products manufactured by small-scale industries and are marketing their products under their own brand names. This has given a boost to many small industries. An example is NELCO, a Tata company, which purchases its calculators from small units, and then advertises, markets and distributes them under its own brand name, charging the consumer a much higher price (Business India, May 12-25, 1980).

Rao (1972) conducted an exploratory study to determine the influence of brand name on consumer's preference and their perception of the characteristics of the users, of a product with a certain brand name. The study revealed that products with meaningful, fitting, non-Indian names were considered to be of good quality.

Brand name serves as "shorthand" for quality by providing consumers with a bundle of information about the product (Jacoby et al., 1978).

Della Bitta et al. (1981) proposed that a strong brand name helped to control or stabilise the quality perception of a branded product even when its price was discounted.

According to several authors, as consumers with positive images of a brand are more likely to purchase it, a major purpose of advertising strategy is to develop a positive brand image. Advertising does play an important role in establishing a favourable brand image. In the absence of other information about a new brand, people may use the amount of advertising as a signal of quality.

In forming an impression about the quality of merchandise, a respondent, in a study by Maxursky and Jacoby (1986), selected brand name more frequently than any other information.

In the presence of brand name information, price becomes less important as the quality indicator (Zeithami, 1988).

Many people tend to associate a positive attribute with larger brand than to associate it with smaller brands (Barnard and Ehrenberg, 1990).

In the study conducted by Dawar and Parker (1994) on a sample representing 38 nationalities, it was found that brand name was universally used more than price, physical appearance and the retailer's reputation as signals of product quality. Moreover, brand name as a signal, had a greater predictive value, and the consumers believed that brand image was predictive of the product characteristics such as product quality.

Tulin Endem (1998) noted that brands can signal a certain level of quality, so that satisfied buyers can easily choose the product again. The multi-cue studies indicated that the brand name is used more than the price and store reputation as signal of product quality (Gardner, 1971; Dawar and Parker, 1994; Dodds et al., 1992). In fact, the value of the brand or the brand equity is strongly related to the perceived brand quality (Aaker, 2000). Studies on branding, brand image and perceived product quality lead to the conclusion that brand is the integrating factor around which all marketing and communication should be built (Schultz, 1998).

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), the manufacturers whose products enjoy a favorable image generally find that their new products are accepted more readily than those of the manufactures who have a less favourable or a neutral image. Obviously, consumers have greater confidence that they will not be disappointed after buying a well-known brand. Moreover, in the absence of actual experience with a product, consumers often evaluate quality on the basis of cues that are external to the product itself, such a price, brand image, retail store image, or even the country image.

One study (quoted by Kotler and Armstrong, 2004) found that 72 percent of the customers would pay a 20 percent premium for their brand of choice rather than opting for the closest competing brand and 40 percent of them said they would pay a 50 percent premium.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objective is to find out the customer satisfaction regarding quality of branded durable products and whether the impact of brand on consumers differs according to age, gender, income and occupation of consumers.

### **Quality Consciousness in Selected Companies**

That many companies are conscious of quality is evident from the following claims of various companies:

#### **Philips**

"We empower people to benefit from innovation by delivering on our brand promise of sense and simplicity." This brand promise encapsulates our commitment to deliver solutions that are advanced, easy to use, and designed around the needs of all our users.

The Mission statement is "improve the quality of people's lives through timely introduction of meaningful innovations."

#### **Videocon**

"The Videocon Groups is a company dedicated to maintaining the highest international standards of excellence through quality, technology and innovation. For over a decade now, Videocon has been bringing the latest

and the very best in consumer electronics and home appliances. Successfully adapting to the best of international technology to suit Indian needs, and crafting it to improve the quality of life-as million of satisfied customers will agree."

The Mission statement is "To delight and deliver beyond expectations through ingenious strategy, intrepid entrepreneurship, improved technology, innovative products, insightful marketing and inspired thinking about the future."

#### **Electrolux**

"Axel Wenner-Gren, the founding father of Electrolux, established the principles by which the company still thrives. His dream to improve quality of life has had fundamental impact on homes around the world. "Thinking of you" expresses the Electrolux offering: To maintain continuous focus on the consumer, whether it's a question of product development, design, production, marketing, logistics or service."

#### **Whirlpool**

"The company's brand and image speaks of its commitment to the homemaker from every aspect of its functioning. The products are engineered to suit the requirements of 'smart, confident and in-control' homemaker who knows what she wants. The product range is designed in a way that it employs unique technology and offers consumer relevant solutions."

#### **Bajaj Electricals**

Bajaj Electricals perpetually strive to improve the quality and make no compromise on this issue. People at all levels-whether they are employees or vendors, or dealers- should be made to consider quality as a way of life. The emphasis on quality is not restricted to company's products and services only, but to all spheres of its activities.

#### **Khaitan**

"Our products are testaments to our belief in excellence and are duly subject to the most stringent quality standards in the world. And as proof of our mettle and faith in our own quality, we took what may be regarded as the boldest-ever step in the fan industry: the introduction of the Replacement Bond. It ensures that the customer always comes first. This confidence in our fans is a result of dedicated service commitment to quality and careful attention to detail."

#### **Orient**

"Their manufacturing capabilities are enhanced by a strong process-driven environment. Their Quality Management System at the Faridabad and Kolkata facilities, are certified by Det Norske Veritas (DNV) as per ISO 9001: 2000. Six Sigma practices at both manufacturing units ensure defects are kept to the minimum. Consumer-led insight has always been at the core of Orient Fans design philosophy."

#### **Symphony**

The company emphasizes maximum customer satisfaction through optimum product performance and a high degree of reliability. Building quality into the design of the product and ensure a degree of reliability which will obviate the need for further servicing or repairing by any outside agency, so that the customer enjoys trouble-free performance from the product. The mission of Symphony is **design, quality and service.**

### Hypothesis of the Study

The hypothesis is that there is no significant difference in the level of satisfaction regarding the quality of the branded products.

### Research Methodology

The research is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire finalized after pilot testing. The 250 selected respondents belonged to five cities of Rajasthan (Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Udaipur). A cross section of the population has been taken to ensure that consumers of the two sex groups and of all age groups, income groups and occupation groups are in the sample. Secondary data was also collected through the companies manufacturing the five selected durable products. The data collected through the questionnaire was edited, tabulated, analysed and interpreted. The hypotheses have been tested by using the Chi-square test. Thereafter, conclusions have been drawn and suggestions have been offered to make brand management strategies more effective.

The satisfaction level was classified as high, moderate and low. To calculate the satisfaction level weights were assigned as under:

Level	Weight
High	3
Moderate	2
Low	1

The weighted value was calculated by multiplying the weights with the number of respondents.

### Profile of the Respondents

A brief profile of sample respondents is given below:

**Table 1: Classification of Respondents**

Age	No. of Respondents
up to 25 years	117
26 to 40 years	79
41 to 60 years	52
61 or above	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>
Gender	No. of Respondents
Males	146
Females	104
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>
Income	No. of Respondents
Up to 15000	76
15001 to 25000	78

25001 to 35000	47
35001 or above	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>
Business	57
Salaried Employee	153
Housewife	25
<b>Other</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>

## Findings of the Study

### 1. Consumer Perception of Brand and Quality

**Table 2: Consumers Perception of Brand and Quality**

Perception	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Higher the reputation of the brand, the superior will be its quality.	206	82	44	18	250	100
The upcoming brands are of better quality.	150	60	100	40	250	100
The older established brands are more reliable and are generally of better quality.	205	82	45	18	250	100
Country of origin of the brand gives quality indication.	150	60	100	40	250	100
The quality of multinational brands are superior to the quality of Indian brands.	114	46	136	54	250	100
It is risky to buy a little-known brand.	188	75	62	25	250	100
Brand which are enjoying greater market share are of superior quality.	171	68	79	32	250	100
The larger the size of the manufacturing company, the better will be the product quality.	151	60	99	40	250	100

The respondents were asked to indicate their perception of brand and quality i.e., the higher the reputation of the brand, the superior will be its quality; the upcoming brands are of better quality; the older established brand are more reliable and are generally of better quality; the country of origin of the brand gives quality indication; the quality of multinational brands are superior to the quality of Indian brands; it is risky to buy a little-known brand; brands which are enjoying greater market share are of superior quality, and the larger the size of the manufacturing company, the better will be the product quality. The research revealed that 82% (206/250) consumers agreed with the statement – Higher the reputation of the brand, the superior will be its quality, whereas 18% (44/250) did not agree. 60% (150/250) consumers agreed with the statement that upcoming brands are of better quality, whereas 40% (100/250) did not agree. 82% (205/250) consumers

agreed with the statement - The older established brands are more reliable and are generally of better quality, whereas 18% (45/250) did not agree. 60% (150/250) consumers agreed with the statement – Country of origin of the brand gives quality indication whereas 40% (100/250) consumers did not agree. 54% (136/250) consumers agreed with the statement – The quality of Indian brand is superior to the quality of multinational brands, whereas only 46% (112/250) consumers did not agree. 75% (188/250) of consumers agreed with the statement – It is risky to buy a little-known brand, whereas 25% (62/250) did not agree. 68% (171/250) of consumers agreed with the statement – Brand which are enjoying greater market share are of superior quality, whereas 32% (79/250) consumers did not agree. 60% (151/250) of consumers agreed with the statement – The larger the size of the manufacturing company, the better will be the product quality, whereas 40% (99/250) consumers did not agree.

It is concluded that the majority of consumers are fully satisfied by all these statements – The higher the reputation of the brand, the superior will be its quality; the upcoming brands are of better quality; the older established brands are more reliable and are generally of better quality; the country of origin of the brand gives quality indication; the quality of Indian brands is superior to quality of multinational brands, it is risky to buy a little-known brand; brands which are enjoying greater market share are of superior quality and the larger the size of the manufacturing company, the better will be the product quality.

## 2. Satisfaction Regarding Quality of Branded Product

**Table 3: Satisfaction Regarding Quality of Branded Product**

Products	Level of Satisfaction						Total		Weighted Value
	Highly		Moderately		Lowly		No.	%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>Air Color</b>	16	32	26	52	8	16	50	100	108
<b>Washing Machine</b>	33	66	15	30	2	4	50	100	131
<b>Ceiling Fan</b>	22	44	26	52	2	4	50	100	120
<b>TV</b>	32	64	16	32	2	4	50	100	130
<b>Refrigerator</b>	30	60	18	36	2	4	50	100	128
<b>Total</b>	133	53	101	40	16	6	250	100	617

In this research an attempt was made to find out the satisfaction level regarding quality of branded products. The level of satisfaction was classified as high, moderate and low. Table 3 shows that level of satisfaction regarding quality of air cooler, washing machine, ceiling fan, television and refrigerator. It was found that 16 (32%) of consumers were highly satisfied with quality of branded air cooler, 26 (52%) moderately and 8 (16%) lowly. In case of washing machine 33 (66%) of consumers were highly satisfied, 15 (30%) moderately and 2 (4%) lowly. In case of ceiling fan 22 (44%) of consumers were highly satisfied, 26 (52%) moderately and 2 (4%) lowly. In case of television 32 (64%) of consumers were highly satisfied, 16 (32%) moderately and 2 (4%) lowly. In case of refrigerator 30 (60%) of consumers were highly satisfied 18 (36%) moderately and 2(4%) lowly. On the whole out of 250 consumers 133 (53%) were highly satisfied regarding quality of branded products. The weighted value of satisfaction for air cooler is 108, for washing machine it is 131, for ceiling fan it is 120, for television 130 and for refrigerator 128. A comparative analysis of the 5 selected durable products shows that satisfaction regarding branded washing machine and television is more than the satisfaction regarding air cooler, ceiling fan and refrigerator.



It is concluded that the consumers of 5 selected durable products are highly satisfied with the quality of branded products. However, satisfaction level is relatively higher in case of washing machine and television as compared to air cooler, ceiling fan and refrigerator.

**3. Satisfaction Regarding Quality of Branded Products – Socio Demographic Analysis**

**Table 4: Average Weighted Values**

Socio Demographic Factors	Group I	Group II	Group III	Group IV	Total Average Weighted Values
Age	248.6	239.2	255.7	200	944.60
Gender	248.6	244.2			492.8
Income	235.5	248.7	253.1	255.1	992.4
Occupation	259.6	241.2	276.0	206.7	983.5

Table 4 reveals that satisfaction regarding quality of branded products varies among different socio-demographic factors (age, gender, income and occupation).

**Hypothesis Testing**

The hypothesis (H0) and alternate hypothesis (Ha) of this study are noted below:

H<sub>0</sub>–There is no significant difference in the level of satisfaction regarding the quality of the branded products.

H<sub>a</sub>– There is significant difference in the level of satisfaction regarding the quality of the branded products.

**Table 5: Satisfaction Regarding Quality of Branded Products**

Products	Level of Satisfaction						Weighted Value
	Highly		Moderately		Lowly		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Air Cooler	16 (16.66)	32	26 (16.67)	52	8 (16.67)	16	108
Washing Machine	33 (16.66)	66	15 (16.67)	30	2 (16.67)	4	131
Ceiling Fan	22 (16.66)	44	26 (16.67)	52	2 (16.67)	4	120
Television	32 (16.66)	64	16 (16.67)	32	2 (16.67)	4	130
Refrigerator	30 (16.66)	60	18 (16.67)	36	2 (16.67)	4	128

Note: Expected frequency is given in brackets.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Degree of Freedom} &= (\text{Row}-1) \times (\text{Column} \times 1) \\
 &= (5-1) \times (3-1) \\
 &= 4 \times 2 \\
 &= 8
 \end{aligned}$$

Table value at 5% level of significance = 15.5

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Calculated chi-square value} &= 109.454 \\
 &= 109.454 > 15.5
 \end{aligned}$$

Thus, Ho (null hypothesis) is rejected and Ha (alternative hypothesis) is accepted.

### **Conclusion and Suggestion**

The study aimed at finding out the level of satisfaction with regard to quality of branded products. Consumers of five selected durable products are highly satisfied with the quality of branded products. However, satisfaction level is relatively higher in case of washing machine and television as compared to air cooler, ceiling fan and refrigerator. The level of satisfaction differs according to the gender, income, age and occupation of consumers.

The manufacturers of refrigerators, air coolers and ceiling fans should pay attention to the satisfaction of the customers. Although the satisfaction level of all the five selected durable products is high, yet, relatively satisfaction level is lower in case of air coolers, ceilings fan and refrigerators. Thus, the manufacturers of these three products should try to increase the satisfaction level of their customers through better quality products and services.

In case of durable products, price is not very important. Consumers are willing to pay more for the high quality of the products. Even promotion schemes are relatively not very important. Thus, in case of durable products emphasis should be on quality and technology rather than on price and promotion.

The study has revealed that the preferred features of the branded products differ in the different age groups. For instance, 16% to 19% of the respondents in the first three age groups considered price as the most preferred feature, while for 15% to 33% of respondents brand name was most preferred feature in the first three age groups. In the formulation of advertising and marketing strategies this fact may be taken into account while trying to influence a particular segment based on age. Similarly, the opinion of respondents in respect of factors influencing purchase decisions, quality of products, ranking of branded products differs in the different income groups, occupation groups and among males and females. In devising marketing strategies in respect of television, refrigerator, washing machine, ceiling fan and air cooler, these differences based on age, income, occupation and gender must also be considered.

The manufacturer of durable products must give top priority to the brand value as the consumers generally considered branded products excellent or good. Quality of products must be given top-most importance. The company must seek for its brand, customer's perception of high quality. If the customers perceive that the durable products are of high quality, they will pay a premium for it. The firm will have greater trade leverage and channel members would have greater interest in dealing with such brands. A high quality brand also provides an adequate reason for the customer to buy it.

### **Scope for Further Research**

There is no end to research. Every research opens new areas and raises new questions to be answered. This research was confined to only five durable products, namely, Television, Refrigerator, Washing Machine, Air Cooler and Ceiling Fan. In the future, researches may be conducted to find out the impact of brand image on consumer perception of product quality in relation to other durable products and non-durable products including FMCG products. Secondly, this research was confined to Rajasthan. In the future such researches can be conducted at other places also. Thirdly, the consumer's perception regarding quality of industrial products can also be studied. The impact of brand image on the psychology of teenagers can be another area of research.

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