CONSUMERS' SATISFACTION TOWARDS WASHING MACHINE – A STUDY IN ERODE TOWN

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INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, one of the most tiresome of household task was the washing of clothes and linens. In early times, women often washed clothes on smooth stones at the edge of running streams. The clothes has to be pounded and rubbed by hand to get them cleaned. In some primitive part of the world, women still use such methods. For a long time, inventors tried to figure out an easier way to do such work. After the invention of washing machine, women were free from their hard work.

In the past, washing machines were being treated as luxurious and only rich people prefer. But now- a-days even middle class families also have washing machine. Hence, this study mainly aims at bringing out the aspiration of the consumers' satisfaction towards the purchase of 'washing machine'.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In this study, the researcher has made an attempt to analyse the consumers' satisfaction towards washing machine. This study provides answers for the following queries:

(i) Why consumers prefer 'Washing Machine'?

(ii) What factors influence the consumers' to choose a particular brand and the level of satisfaction of the consumers of washing machine?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following specific objectives have been framed and tested:

- To know the consumers' preference towards the purchase of washing machine.
- To identify the factors determining the consumer satisfaction and to measure their level of satisfaction regarding Washing Machine.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covers the consumers in the town of Erode. Total sample size for the study is 200.The data has been collected through a structured questionnaire both by visiting houses and from public places. Male and female respondents were interviewed by the researcher during the months of June, July, August and September 2011. The statistical tools such as percentage analysis, chi-square test, and weighted average score ranking method has been used for the study.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is subject to the following limitations:

(i) The researcher had studied and interviewed 200 respondents only.

(ii) The coverage of the study is limited to Erode town only.

(iii) The findings of the study have been presented in accordance with the data obtained from the respondents of Erode town. Hence it cannot be generalized.

(iv) The study being a primary one, the accuracy and reliability of data depends on the information provided by the respondents.

(v) The study is based on the present purchase behavior of the consumers but behaviour is subject to frequent changes due to changes in technological development and style of living.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

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The respondents have been distributed on the basis of socio-economic factors such as their age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, occupation, family income per month, nature of family and family size.

Percentage Analysis - (Table-1)

- ❖ Majority of 44% of the respondents are of the age group between 26 – 35 years.
- ❖ Out of 200 respondents 68% of the respondents are female.
- ❖ Majority of 74% respondents are married.
- ❖ Majority of 49% of the respondents are graduates.
- ❖ As high as 43% of the respondents were business people.
- ❖ Out of 200 respondents 38% of the respondent's monthly family income is Rs.10, 001 to Rs.20,000.
- ❖ Majority of 63% of the respondents belong to the nuclear family.
- ❖ Majority of 53% of the respondents were found to have 3 – 5 members in the family.

PRODUCT RELATED PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The profile of the respondents were analysed on the basis of the attributes of the respondents. For this purpose, brand, type, function, capacity, price, mode of purchase, purchase decision, time gap between purchase decision and actual purchase, reason for delayed purchase, usage period, usage frequency, influencing source, performance and problem faced by the respondents in using Washing Machine were taken into consideration.

Percentage Analysis - (Table-1)

- ❖ Majority of 58% of the respondents opinion regarding the purpose of washing machine is a need for the family.
- ❖ Out of 200 respondents 29% of them prefer LG washing machine.
- ❖ Majority of 62% of the respondents are using the top loading washing machine.
- ❖ Majority of 68% of the respondents are using the fully automatic washing machine.
- ❖ Majority of 52% of the respondents using capacity of washing machine is above 6kg.
- ❖ Most of the respondents (41%) are purchasing washing machine for a price above Rs. 15,000.

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- ❖ Out of 200 respondents 61% of them prefer cash purchase.
- ❖ Forty eight percent, of the respondent's purchase decision is taken by all the members of the family.
- ❖ The time gap between purchase decision and actual purchase is 1 – 2 months for the majority of 33% of the respondents.
- ❖ Thirty six percent of the respondents opine that the reason for delay in purchase of washing machine is financial difficulty.
- ❖ Majority of 56% of the respondent's usage period is 1 – 5 years.
- ❖ Majority of 40% of the respondents are using their washing machine twice in a week.
- ❖ Majority of 34% of the respondents are influenced by the friends and relatives.

BRAND PREFERENCE OF RESPONDENTS

The brand preference of the respondents depends upon the attributes of washing machine.

ATTRIBUTES OF WASHING MACHINE

The importance given by consumers towards various attributes of washing machine differs from one individual to another individual.

The attributes of washing machine are as follows,

1. Quality
2. Brand Image
3. Advertisement
4. Price
5. Appearance/Style/Design
6. Guarantee/Warrantee
7. Discount Offers
8. After Sales Offers
9. Durability
10. Base in Operation

WEIGHTED AVERAGE SCORE RANKING METHOD (Table-2)

The respondents' opinion regarding the usage of washing machine is analyzed by applying weighted average score ranking technique.

❖ **BRAND IMAGE**

Brand is a name, sign or design or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods or services of one seller and to differentiate them from those of competitors. Advertisement is necessary to create a brand image. Good brand image increase the sales of a company.

The Brand image stands first among all the other factors considered with an average score of 71.6.

❖ **PRICE**

From the analysis it is clear that consumers are giving second preference to price before purchasing the particular product. Price is the " exchange value of goods or service in terms of money".

❖ **QUALITY**

The respondents give third rank to quality after brand image and price. Quality plays a vital role in promoting sales. Quality means 'something what the consumers expect and they perceive in a product'. Thus quality is a fulfillment of expectation.

❖ **DURABILITY**

Besides above, consumer also consider the durability of washing machine as the fourth factor. Durability means life of the product. If a product enjoys long term durability then consumers are willing to invest huge amount on it.

❖ **GUARANTEE**

The fifth importance given by consumers' are for guarantee attribute. Guarantee means "a promise by the manufacturer or seller that the product or service is free from defects in materials and workmanship and that problems will be corrected if occurs during the guarantee period".

❖ **AFTER SALE SERVICE**

After sales service attribute got sixth rank while making decision regarding purchase of washing machine. After sales service means, "the seller gives the service after sales". For example, free service of machinery.

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❖ **BASE IN OPERATION**

After considering the brand image, price, quality, durability, guarantee and after sales service the consumers move towards the facilities provided in operating process. The consumer gives seventh place for base in operation.

❖ **ADVERTISEMENT**

Advertisement stands as eighth factor while purchasing a washing machine. Advertisement is a necessary factor to create demand for a product. Advertisement means, the activity of attracting public attention to a product or business, as by paid announcements in the print, broadcast or electronic media.

❖ **APPEARANCE/STYLE/DESIGN**

The nineth importance given by the consumers' are for appearance/style/design. It implies that consumers are not giving much importance towards the appearance/style/design of the product.

❖ **DISCOUNT OFFERS**

Lastly, the consumers consider the discount offer. Every people expect certain percentage of concession in price of product. Discount means, "price concession offered to buyers in the form of deduction from list price". Discount can be classified into,

(i) Trade discount, (ii) Cash discount, (iii) Quantity discount etc.,

CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

According to the satisfaction level, the sample respondents are classified into three categories.

❖   High

❖   Medium

❖   Low

CHI – SQUARE ANALYSIS

The Chi – Square test has been used to find out the relationship between the demographic factors and satisfaction level of the sample respondents.

In this study the majority of the respondents are satisfied with the usage of washing machine.

❖ 69% of the respondents are highly satisfied with the usage of washing machine.

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❖ 27% of the respondents have medium level of satisfaction with the usage washing machine.

❖ Remaining 4% of the respondents have low level of satisfaction with the usage of washing machine.

Finally the most of the respondents are highly satisfied with the usage of washing machine.**(table-3)**

Results of Chi-Square test: (Table-4)

❖ Age, marital status, occupation, family income per month and number of family of the respondents does not influence the level of satisfaction.

❖ Gender, educational qualification and nature of family influence the level of satisfaction of the respondents.

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are offered:

❖ Efforts should be made to reduce the price of washing machine in order to capture all categories of people.

❖ Brand image plays a prominent role while purchasing the washing machines. So efforts should be made to create a good brand image.

❖ Improvised technology in quality checking of washing machine is essential to gain the confidence of the consumers.

❖ The washing machine producing company, showroom, and dealers should enhance advertisement to attract customers towards usage of washing machine.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents – Percentage Analysis

Demographic factors		No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Age	Below 25 years	68	34
	26 – 35 years	88	44
	36 – 45 years	18	9
	Above 46 years	26	13
Gender	Male	64	32
	Female	136	68
Marital status	Married	148	74
	Unmarried	52	26
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	14	7
	School level	46	23
	Graduate	98	49
	Professional	42	21
Occupation	Business	86	43
	Employed	44	22
	Professional	38	19
	Others	32	16
Income Per Month	Below Rs.10,000	38	19
	Rs.10,001 to Rs.15,000	56	28
	Rs.15,001 to Rs.20,000	76	38
	Above Rs.20,000	30	15
Nature of family	Nuclear	126	63
	Joint	74	37
Size of Family	Below 3 members	28	14
	3 to 5 members	106	53
	Above 5 members	66	33
Product Related factors			
Purpose	Social status	18	9
	Need for the Family	116	58
	Newly Launched Model	34	17
	Brand Name	32	16
Brand	LG	58	29
	Samsung	31	15

	IFB	26	13
	Videocon	18	9
	Whirlpool	44	22
	Godrej	16	8
	Others	7	4
Type	Front loading	86	43
	Top loading	124	62
Function	Fully automatic	136	68
	Semi - automatic	64	32
Capacity	Below 5kg	22	11
	5kg to 6kg	74	37
	Above 6kg	104	52
Price	Below Rs.10,000	48	24
	Rs.10,000 to Rs.15,000	69	35
	Above Rs.15,000	83	41
Mode of purchase	Cash purchase	122	61
	Credit purchase	22	11
	Both	56	28
Decision for purchase	Self	56	28
	Spouse	39	20
	Children	9	4
	Family members	96	48
Time gap	Less than 1 month	58	29
	1 to 2 month	66	33
	2 to 3 month	52	26
	Above 3 month	24	12
Reason	Requirement of more information	68	34
	Financial difficulty	72	36
	Non-availability of a particular brand	42	21
	Others	18	9
Usage period	1 to 5 years	112	56
	5 to 10 years	57	28
	Above 10 yeas	31	16
Usage frequency	2 Times	80	40
	3 Times	76	38
	Above 3 Times	44	22

Influencing source	Friends/Relatives	69	34
	Dealers	42	21
	Media	65	33
	Others	24	12

Table-2: BRAND PREFERENCE OF RESPONDENTS

WEIGHTED AVERAGE SCORE RANKING METHOD

Factors	Score	Average	Ranks
Quality	1318	65.9	3
Brand Image	1432	71.6	1
Advertisement	940	47.0	8
Price	1328	66.4	2
Appearance/Style/Design	912	45.6	9
Guarantee	1102	55.1	5
Discount Offers	764	38.2	10
After Sales Service	988	49.4	6
Durability	1306	65.3	4
Base in Operation	942	47.1	7

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

Table-3: TOTAL SATISFACTION LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS

Satisfaction level	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
High	138	69
Medium	54	27
Low	8	4

Table-4: CHI-SQUARE TEST RESULT

Factor	Level of Significant	Degrees of freedom	Table value	Calculated value	Rejected/ Accepted
Age	5%	6	12.592	4.384	Accepted

Gender	5%	2	5.991	10.004	Rejected
Marital Status	5%	2	5.991	0.456	Accepted
Educational Qualification	5%	6	12.592	16.185	Rejected
Occupation	5%	6	12.592	5.498	Accepted
Family Income per month	5%	6	12.592	11.224	Accepted

CONCLUSION

Washing machine market has a number of popular brands like LG, Samsung, Whirlpool, IFB, Videocon, Godrej and other brands like Haier, Hitachi., Consumers have a wide choice regarding the washing capacity of washing machine. In fact, some washer dryer combination units automated the entire laundering process from washing to drying. The washing machine has surely made life easier for many people and it is often considered as an indispensable household appliance that has revolutionized laundering, households and lifestyles.

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