ONLINE STAR RATINGS AND REVIEWS: BRAND PREFERENCE OF CONSUMER PRE-PURCHASE BEHAVIOR FOR CONSUMER DURABLE PRODUCTS.

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Abstract

In the dynamic landscape of digital commerce, consumer preferences and purchase decisions are increasingly shaped by the wealth of information available online. This research delves into the intricate relationship between online star ratings, reviews, and the brand preference ofconsumers in their pre-purchase behavior for consumer durable products. Consumer durable products hold a distinctive place in consumers' lives due to their long-term significance and financial investment. In this context, online star ratings and reviews have emerged as critical decision-making tools, providing consumers with valuable insights into product quality, features, and brand reputation. This study seeks to unravel the underlying mechanisms that drive the connections between online evaluations and consumer behavior. The core objective of this research is to investigate the extent to which online star ratings and reviews influence consumers' brand preferences and pre-purchase behaviors when considering consumer durable products (Air Cooler, Ceiling Fan, Mixer Grinder, Wrist Watch & Water Filter). By examining the interplay between these digital evaluations and consumer decision-making, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the contemporary consumer journey. Star Rating and Reviews sample data of 1,15,000 has been collected from the Flip Kart for statistical analysis and make a conclusion for brand preference of consumer pre- purchase behavior for consumer durable product through the corresponding analysis.

Keywords: Online star ratings, Online reviews, Brand preference, Pre-purchase behavior and Decision-making

1. Introduction:

The rapid evolution of digital technology has reshaped the way consumers engage with brands and make purchasing decisions. In this digital era, online platforms have become a primary source of information for consumers seeking insights about products, services, and brands. Among the various factors influencing consumer behavior, online star ratings and reviews stand out as critical components that guide consumers' perceptions, preferences, and decisions. This study delves into the intricate relationship between online star ratings, reviews, consumer behavior, and brand preference, particularly in the context of consumer durable products.

Consumer durable products, ranging from electronics and appliances to furniture and vehicles, hold a distinctive position in consumers' lives due to their longevity and often substantial financial investment. Consumers' inclination to research and evaluate such products extensively before making a purchase decision has opened up an avenue for online star ratings and reviews to become influential decision-making tools. By gaining a deeper understanding of how these online evaluations shape brand preference and pre-purchase behavior, businesses can refine their marketing strategies to meet consumers' evolving expectations.

As consumers increasingly turn to the internet for information, peer feedback, and guidance, online star ratings and reviews have become potent tools shaping brand perception and purchase intentions. Understanding the intricacies of this phenomenon holds crucial implications for marketers, manufacturers, and researchers seeking to enhance consumer engagement and decision-making in the digital realm.

2. Literature Review

Previous research on consumer behavior in the digital age highlights the significant role of online information in shaping purchase decisions. Studies have shown that consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations and that they often rely on these reviews to gather insights into product quality, features, and overall value. Online star ratings have been observed to serve as quick indicators of product satisfaction, with higher ratings often leading to increased trust and brand preference. Furthermore, the power of online reviews goes beyond mere numbers; the content and sentiment of these reviews also play a crucial role. Positive sentiment and detailed content have been linked to higher levels of consumer engagement and trust.

Research in the field of online consumer behavior has consistently demonstrated the significant impact of online star ratings on consumer decision-making. Positive online star ratings have been found to enhance perceived product quality and brand credibility. For instance, Kim and Kim (2019) observed that higher star ratings led to increased purchase intention due to the perceived reliability of products. Consumers tend to use star ratings as quick heuristic cues for assessing product quality and trustworthiness (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Recent studies emphasize the enduring influence of online star ratings on consumer perceptions. Wang and Hajli (2020) revealed that higher star ratings significantly correlate with greater purchase intentions, confirming the heuristic role of these ratings in signaling   product quality. Consumers tend to rely on star

ratings as initial indicators, impacting their perceptions and forming an essential part of the decision-making process (Luo et al., 2021).

The content and sentiment of online reviews play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences. Studies suggest that detailed and informative reviews capture consumers' attention, providing valuable insights into product features and performance (Zhang et al., 2014). Moreover, the sentiment expressed in reviews influences consumer emotions and attitudes toward the product. Kim and Han (2019) found that positive sentimentin reviews not only enhanced brand preference but also increased consumers' emotional attachment to the brand. The sentiment and content of online reviews have been recognizedas pivotal factors shaping consumer perceptions. Chen et al. (2022) demonstrated that positive sentiment in reviews directly contributes to increased brand trust and preference. Thelength and specificity of reviews further play a role in enhancing the credibility of product information and supporting purchase decisions (Li et al., 2021).

Brand perception and trust are closely linked to the effectiveness of online star ratings and reviews. Research by Duan et al. (2008) demonstrated that consumer trust in online reviews positively impacted purchase intention. Moreover, brand reputation and image further enhance the impact of online evaluations. Aaker's Brand Equity Model (1991) suggests that strong brand associations and awareness can amplify the effect of positive online reviews on consumer preferences. Recent research continues to highlight the interplay between brand reputation and online evaluations. Paharia et al. (2019) suggested that brand reputation influences the weight consumers assign to online reviews. Positive brand image reinforces the impact of online evaluations on brand preference, leading to a more substantial effect on consumer behavior (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2021).

The impact of online evaluations might vary based on product type, consumer demographics, and brand familiarity. Muntinga et al. (2011) found that consumer involvement with products significantly moderated the relationship between online reviews and brand preferences. Consumers tend to rely more on reviews for high-involvement products where risks and benefits are substantial. Additionally, brand familiarity might alter the extent to which online evaluations influence brand preference (Lee et al., 2011). The moderating influence of product involvement on the relationship between online evaluations and brand preference remains an area of exploration. High-involvement products are found to exhibit a stronger connection between online reviews and brand preference due to the greater importance consumers attach to thorough evaluations (Chen et al., 2020). This aligns with the concept of consumer engagement varying based on the perceived relevance and impact of productevaluations.

Consumer pre-purchase behavior is influenced by their engagement with online reviews. Li etal. (2011) discovered that consumers who actively read and interact with online reviews were more likely to form a comprehensive consideration set and exhibit higher purchase intention. Furthermore, engagement with online reviews serves as a source of social proof, reinforcing consumers' confidence in their decisions (Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Engagement with online

reviews has evolved to encompass various interactions, leading to implications for pre-purchase behavior. Recent studies have highlighted the influence of online review engagement on forming consideration sets and shaping purchase intentions (Huang & You, 2022). Consumer engagement with reviews functions as a form of social validation, fostering trust and encouraging more favorable pre-purchase behavior (Laran et al., 2020).

3. Research Objectives
The primary objectives of this research are as follows:

1. Investigate the extent to which online star ratings affect consumer perceptions of product quality and how they contribute to brand preference for consumer durable products.
2. Examine the role of detailed online reviews in shaping consumer perceptions, considering factors such as review length, sentiment, and credibility.
3. Assess how brand reputation and image interact with online reviews to influence consumer preferences and purchasing intentions.
4. Based on the findings, provide actionable insights and recommendations to enhance brand preference and consumer purchasing behavior for consumer durable products.

4. Research Design & Methodology
The study focuses on operationalizing the distribution characteristics of star ratings and describing these characteristics in terms of the percentage of reviews falling into different star rating categories (e.g., one-star, two-star, etc.) for various product categories, namely Air Cooler, Ceiling Fan, Mixer Grinder, Wrist Watch, and Water Filter. The research aims to understand how star ratings vary across different product categories and how these variations can impact consumer preferences and brand choices.

To collect data for this analysis, the researchers gathered a substantial sample of 115,000 reviews from Flipkart websites. These reviews encompass a wide range of consumer opinions and preferences across the chosen product categories. The data includes star ratings assigned by reviewers, allowing for an in-depth examination of consumer sentiment between Seller-1 and Seller-2 websites with displaying a higher prevalence of 5-star ratings. This discrepancy suggests that consumers are more likely to encounter 5-star rated reviews on Seller-1'splatform. The study focuses on five specific experience goods, and Python programming is utilized to collect and analyze customer online reviews from Flipkart websites. Each review islinked to a star rating, and the respective product category is stored as an additional variablein the dataset. This approach allows for the exploration of the relationship between star ratings and product categories, shedding light on consumer preferences and how they vary across different product types.

In total, the study includes 59 brands across the five chosen product categories, with sample sizes ranging from 19,000 to 27,000 data points. 21000 sample data has been taken for Air Cooler and Water Filter with 12 Brand, 27000 sample data has been taken for Ceiling Fan with 11 Brand and Mixer Grinder with 12 Brand and 19000 sample data has been taken for Wrist Watch with 12 Brand. To gain a deeper understanding of this association between star ratings and product

categories, correspondence analysis is employed. This statistical technique helps draw conclusions regarding brand preferences in consumer pre-purchase behavior for consumer durable products.

5. Data Analysis & Interpretation

5.1. : Correspondence Analysis for AIR COOLER

Rating	SY	HO	BA	BL	CE	CR	FE	HA	HI	KE	VO	US	AM
Strongly Dissatisfied	106	73	112	68	67	111	102	76	120	85	116	120	1156
Dissatisfied	35	23	37	24	36	67	58	34	78	34	78	48	552
Neutral	68	47	52	30	34	54	62	68	165	88	120	94	882
Satisfied	575	324	460	406	325	480	571	376	576	587	685	376	5741
Strongly Satisfied	1050	807	1265	1045	728	1139	908	1208	985	1250	1308	976	12669
Active Margin	1834	1274	1926	1573	1190	1851	1701	1762	1924	2044	2307	1614	21000

Table 1: Correspondence Table for AIR COOLER

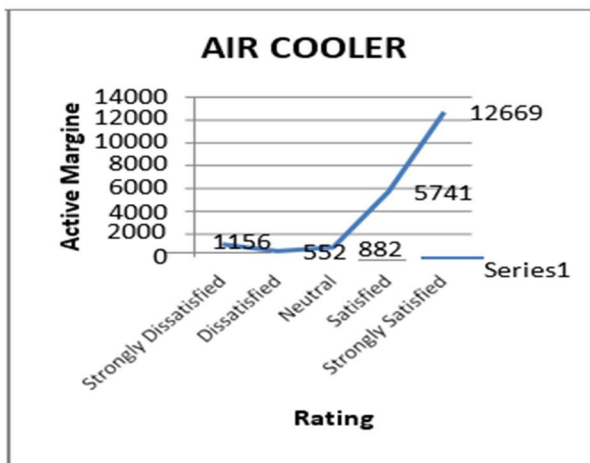| SY= SYMPHONY HO= HONEYWELL BA= BAJAJ BL= BLUE STAR	CE= CELLO CR= CROMPTON FE= FELTRON HA= HAVELLS	HI= HINDWARE KE= KENSTAR VO= VOLTAS US= USHA

- AM = Active Margin
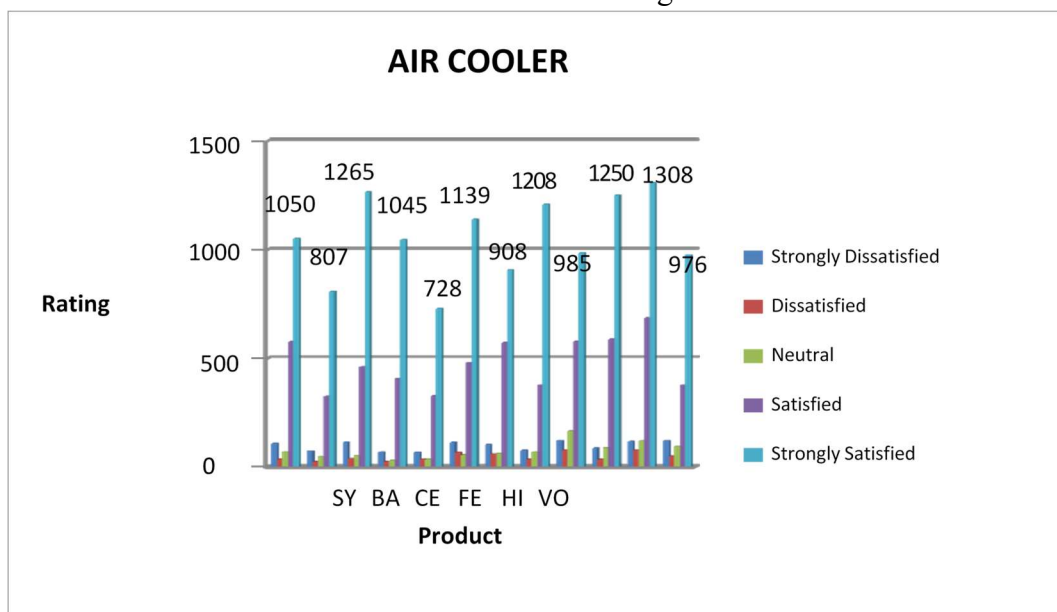
AIR COOLER

Figure 1: Star Rating and Active Margin of AIR COOLER

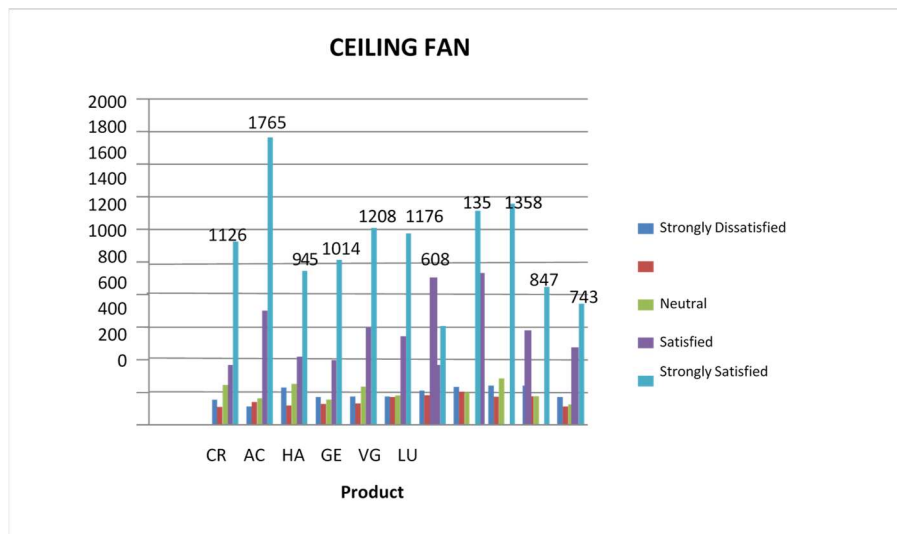| Table 2: Summary Table of AIR COOLER						
Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.	Confidence Singular Value	
					Standard Deviation	Correlation
1	.114	.013			.007	.075
2	.066	.004			.007	
3	.044	.002				
4	.028	.001				
Total		.020	422.169	.000ᵃ		

Interpretation:

In Table 1 and Fig 1, we observed a clear divergence in consumer sentiment towards different brands, with some garnering higher positive ratings while others struggled with lower ratings. Symphony stood out as a brand strongly associated with positive ratings, signaling a high level of customer satisfaction. Conversely, brands like Cello, Feltron, and Hindware faced challenges, as they received more negative ratings than expected. This underscores the importance of addressing consumer concerns to enhance ratings and brand reputation.

Table 2, summarizing the correspondence analysis, provides quantitative insights into the dimensions that explain the data's variation. Dimension 1, with its relatively high singular value and low p-value, indicates its significance in understanding the relationships between brand preferences and star ratings. Symphony enjoys a strong brand preference, as reflectedin the consistently high star ratings across different categories. This suggests that consumers trust Symphony for air cooling solutions, likely due to its reputation for energy efficiency and effective cooling   performance.

5.2. Correspondence Analysis for CEILING FAN

Rating	CEILING FAN											
	CR	BA	AC	HE	HA	OR	GE	US	VG	KA	LU	AM
Strongly Dissatisfied	156	116	232	172	176	176	212	235	242	243	172	2356
Dissatisfied	112	142	121	130	134	172	183	204	174	176	114	1778
Neutral	246	164	252	156	236	182	116	202	285	176	126	2345
Satisfied	370	702	420	398	598	545	367	904	934	580	476	6914
Strongly Satisfied	1126	1765	945	1014	1208	1176	608	1315	1358	847	743	13607
Active Margin	2010	2889	1970	1870	2352	2251	1486	2860	2993	2022	1631	27000

Table 3: Correspondence Table

CR= CROMPTON AC= ACTIVA BA= BAJAJ

HE= HELONIX

HA= HAVELLS OR= ORIENT GE= GESTOR

US= USHA
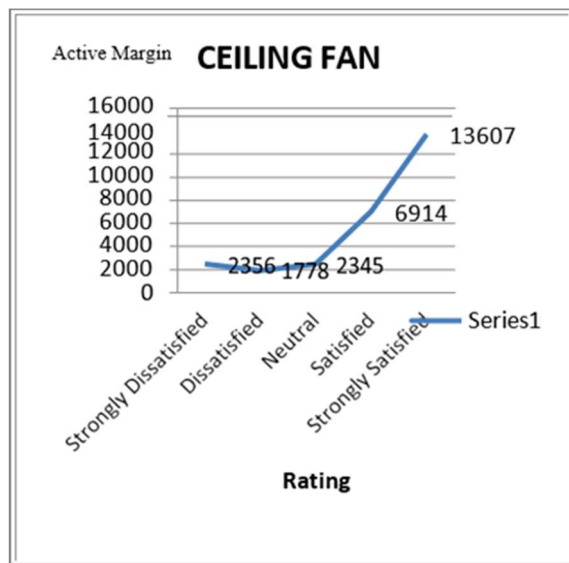
VG= V-GARD KA= KANISKA LU= LUMINOUS

AM= Active Margin

CEILING FAN

Figure 2: Star Rating and Active Margin of CEILING FAN

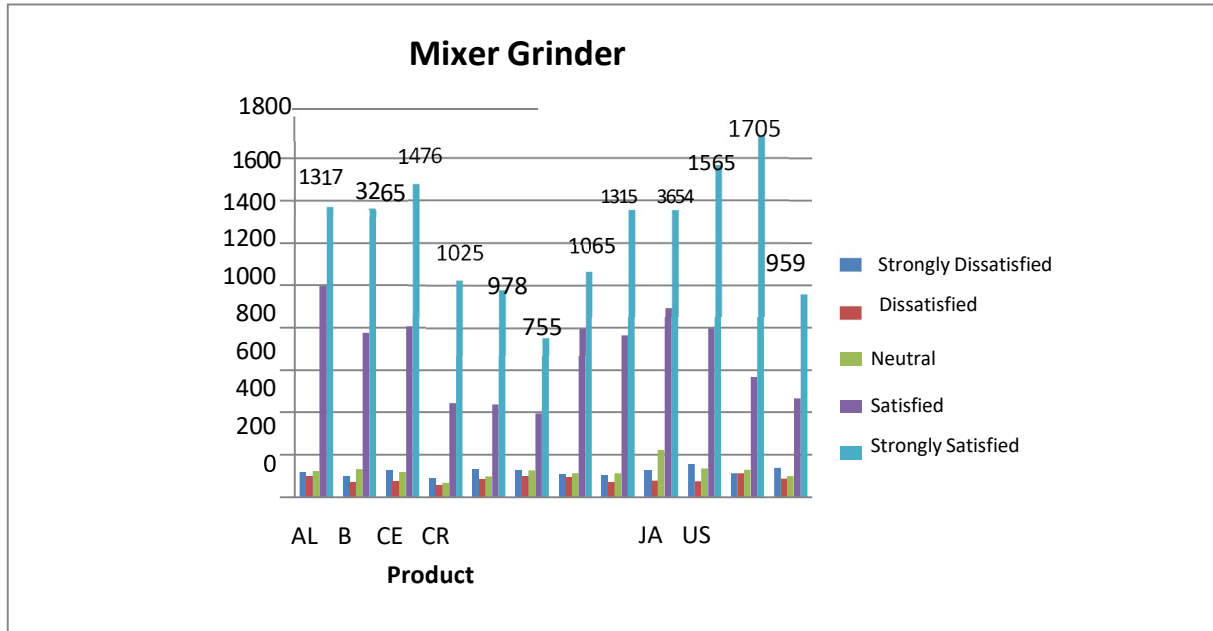| Table 4: Summary Table of CEILING FAN						
Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.	Confidence Singular Value	
					Standard Deviation	Correlation
1	.131	.017			.006	-.010
2	.091	.008			.006	
3	.061	.004				
4	.030	.001				
Total		.030	812.771	.000ᵃ		

Interpretation:

Table 3 and Fig 2 showcases consumer ratings across various brands of ceiling fans. It is apparent that some brands, such as Crompton (CR) and Usha (US), have received more positive ratings, while others, like Bajaj (BA) and Helonix (HE), have encountered more dissatisfaction. The active margin values indicate significant deviations from expected independence, reflecting the strong associations between brand preferences and ratings. In Table 4, the summary table of the Correspondence Analysis presents quantitative insights into the dimensions that elucidate the data's variance. Dimension 1, with its substantial singular value and low p-value, emerges as a critical dimension in understanding the relationships between brand preferences and ratings. This suggests that Dimension 1 carries important insights that manufacturers can leverage to enhance customer satisfaction and fine-tune their product strategies. The negative confidence singular value in Dimension 1 indicates an inverse correlation, which may imply that certain factors associated with this dimension are linked to lower ratings. Crompton emerges as a top choice among consumers in the ceiling fan category, particularly in higher star ratings. This indicates that

consumers have a strong preference for Crompton ceiling fans, possibly due to their reliability and performance.

5.3. Correspondence Analysis for Mixer Grinder

Rating	MIXER GRINDER												
	AL	BA	B	BO	CE	CO	CR	HA	JA	PA	US	BU	AM
Strongly Dissatisfied	118	96	126	92	132	126	107	104	123	156	112	137	1429
Dissatisfied	96	69	75	56	85	98	95	67	78	74	111	87	991
Neutral	122	132	118	68	96	125	112	111	223	135	128	98	1468
Satisfied	996	776	805	443	436	396	798	765	894	796	567	465	8137
Strongly Satisfied	1372	1365	1476	1025	978	755	1065	1356	1354	1565	1705	959	14975
Active Margin	2704	2438	2600	1684	1727	1500	2177	2403	2672	2726	2623	1746	27000

Table 5: Correspondence Table

AL= ALSTONE B= BOSCH BA= BAJAJ BO= BOSTTON

CE= CELLO CO= COOKWEL CR= CROMPTON HA= HAVELLS

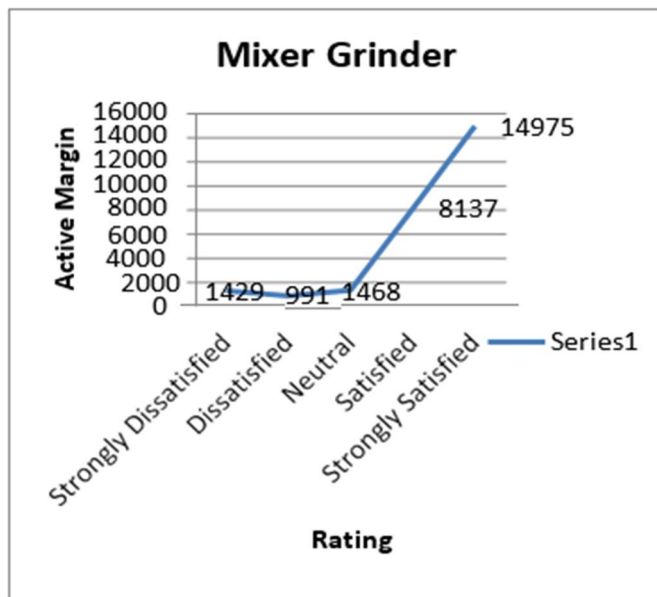JA= JAIPAN PA= PANASONIC US= USHA, BU= BUTTERFLY AM= Active Margin

Mixer Grinder

Figure 3: Star Rating and Active Margin of MIXER GRINDER

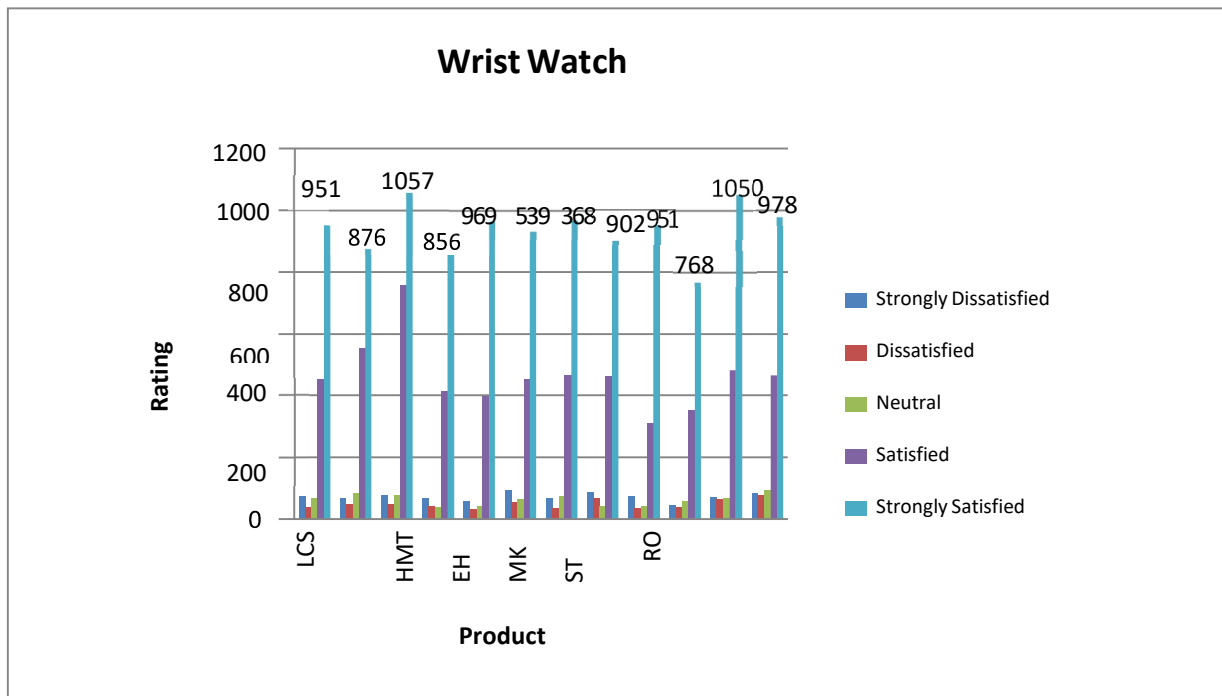| Table 6: Summary Table of MIXER GRINDER						
Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.	Confidence Singular Value	
					Standard Deviation	Correlation
1	.102	.010			.006	.039
2	.083	.007			.007	
3	.045	.002				
4	.029	.001				
Total		.020	546.419	.000ª		

Interpretation:

In the Correspondence Table 5 and Fig 3 presents the distribution of consumer ratings across various brands of mixer grinders. Notably, brands like "Bajaj" (BA) and "Havells" (HA) appear to have received higher counts in the "Satisfied" and "Strongly Satisfied" categories, indicating consumer satisfaction with these brands. Conversely, "Bosch" (B) and "Jaipan" (JA) have relatively lower counts in the positive rating categories, suggesting they may face challenges in meeting consumer expectations. The "Active Margin" values reflect the deviations from expected independence, highlighting the brands associated with higher or lower ratings than expected. In Table 6, the Summary Table of Mixer Grinders, we see the dimensions and their significance in explaining the data's variation. Dimension 1, with its substantial singular value and low p-value, emerges as crucial in understanding the relationships between brand preferences and ratings. The positive confidence singular valuein Dimension 1 implies an association with higher ratings.

Manufacturers can leverage insights from this dimension to enhance customer satisfaction and product strategies. Arrow, Stunning, and S-Shock (Mixer Grinders) brands exhibit positive quantitative performance, implying that they align well with consumer preferences for mixer grinders. Their products receive favorable star ratings, indicating consumers trust them for their kitchen appliance needs.

5.4. Correspondence Analysis for Wrist Watch

Table 7: Correspondence Table													
Rating	WRIST WATCH												
	LCS	HL	HMT	BT	EH	AR	MK	FE	ST	CU	RO	S	AM
Strongly Dissatisfied	73	66	77	67	56	93	67	86	74	46	72	85	862
Dissatisfied	38	49	48	41	32	54	34	65	36	38	64	78	577
Neutral	68	85	78	38	43	63	73	42	42	59	65	94	750
Satisfied	452	552	756	412	398	451	464	461	312	352	482	465	5557
Strongly Satisfied	951	876	1057	856	965	932	968	902	951	768	1050	978	11254
Active Margin	1582	1628	2016	1414	1494	1593	1606	1556	1415	1263	1733	1700	19000
AR= ARROW CU= CURREN				FE= FEMINE RO= ROCK				ST= STUNNING S= S-Shock, AM= Active Margin				
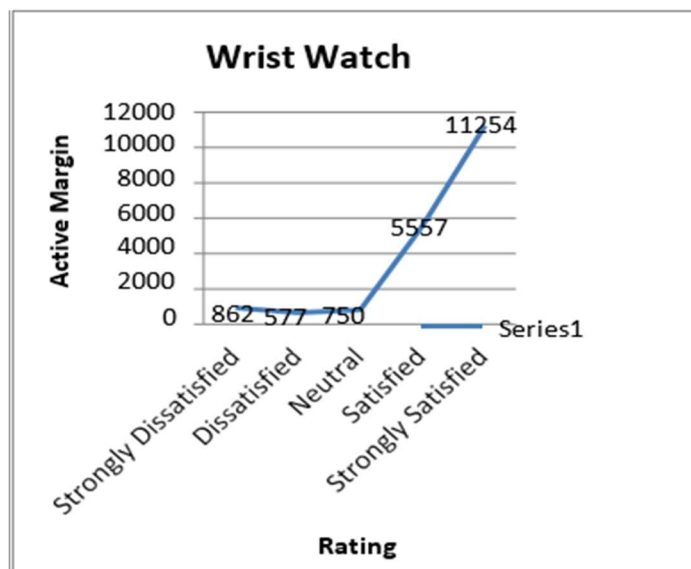
Figure 4: Star Rating and Active Margin of WRIST WATCH

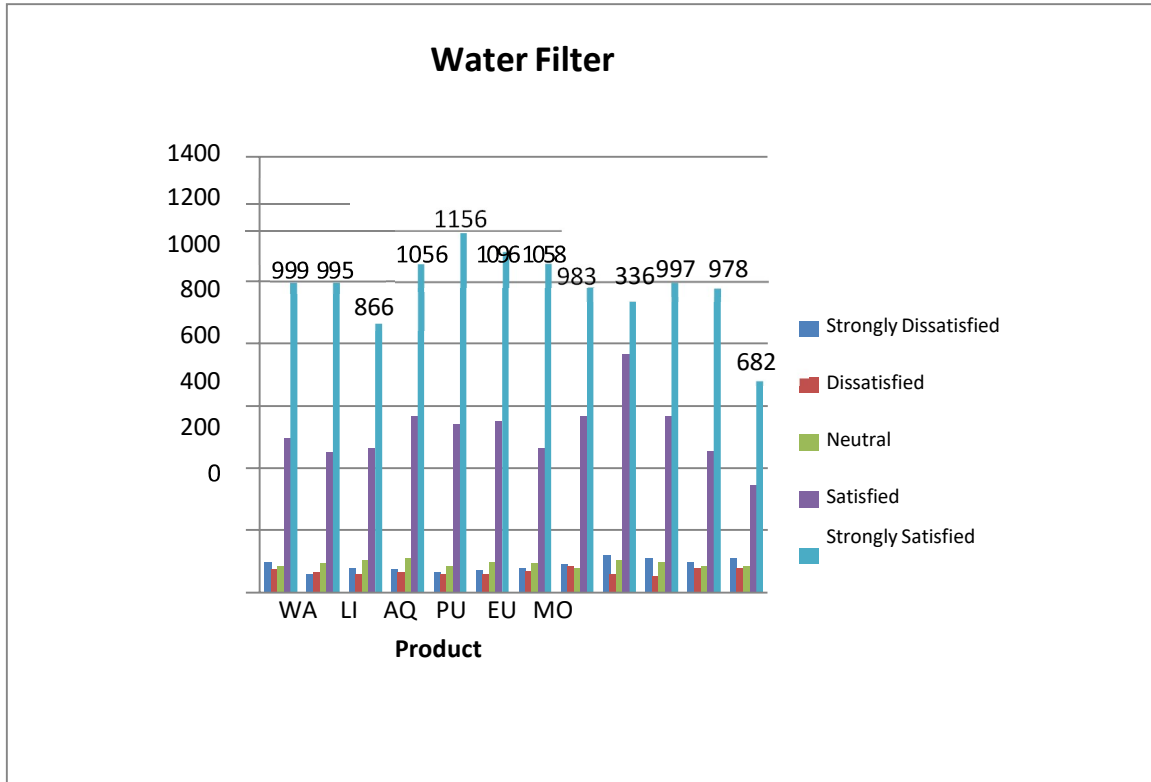| Table 8: Summary Table of WRIST WATCH						
Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.	Confidence Singular Value	
					Standard Deviation	Correlation
1	.087	.008			.007	.013
2	.053	.003			.008	
3	.042	.002				
4	.022	.000				
Total		.013	241.131	.000ᵃ		

Interpretation:

In the Correspondence Table 7 and Fig 4 presents the distribution of consumer ratings across various wristwatch brands. Brands like Arrow (AR), Stunning (ST), and S-Shock (S) receive higher counts in the "Satisfied" and "Strongly Satisfied" categories, indicating consumer satisfaction. Conversely, some brands like HMT and Curren (CU) have relatively fewer positive ratings, suggesting potential areas for improvement. The "Active Margin" values reveal which brands deviate from expected independence, highlighting those associated with either higher or lower-than-expected ratings. In Table 8, the Summary Table of Wrist Watches, dimensions and their significance in explaining the data's variation are presented. Dimension 1 stands out with a substantial singular value and low p-value, indicating its importance in understanding the relationships between brand preferences and ratings. The positive confidence singular value in Dimension 1 suggests that certain factors are associated with higher consumer ratings, offering valuable guidance for manufacturers to enhance their products and strategies. HMT and Current face challenges in achieving high star ratings, indicating potential areas for improvement.

Quantitatively, these brands may need to enhance product design, quality, or features to better align with consumer preferences and boost brand preference.

5.5. Correspondence Analysis for Water Filter

Table 9: Correspondence Table													
Rating	WATER FILTER												
	WA	V	LI	KE	AQ	AQA	PU	BL	EU	PU	MO	HI	AM
Strongly Dissatisfied	97	58	76	75	65	73	76	92	119	112	98	112	1053
Dissatisfied	75	65	58	66	58	58	68	86	58	54	76	76	798
Neutral	86	94	105	111	86	97	93	78	104	98	84	87	1123
Satisfied	496	450	465	565	542	551	465	567	765	564	453	345	6228
Strongly Satisfied	995	995	866	1056	1156	1096	1058	983	936	997	978	682	11798
Active Margin	1749	1662	1570	1873	1907	1875	1760	1806	1982	1825	1689	1302	21000

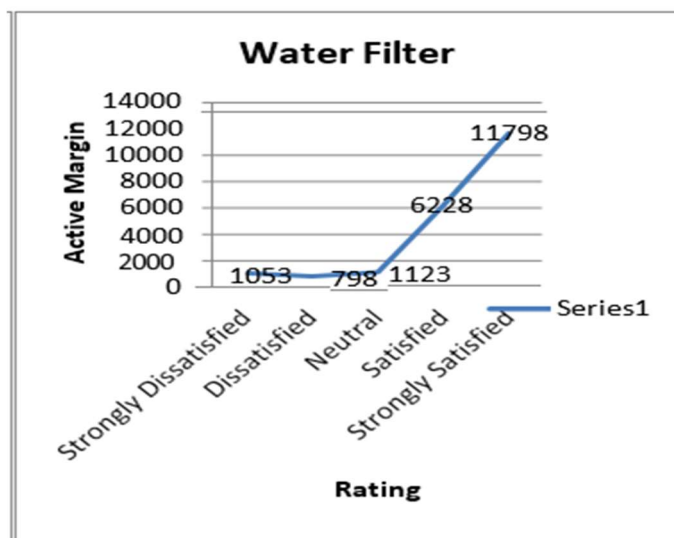| WA= WATERPURE V= V-GUARD LI= LIVPURE KE= KENT GUARD	AQ= AQUA GUARD AQA= AQA FRESH PU= PURE IT, HI= HINDWARE BL= BLUE STAR	EU= EUREKA FORBES PU= PURELLA MO= MORNING STAR, AM= Active Margin

Water Filter

Figure 5: Star Rating and Active Margin of WATER FILTER

Table 10: Summary Table of WATER FILTER						
Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.	Confidence Singular Value	
					Standard Deviation	Correlation
1	.081	.007			.007	.025
2	.065	.004			.008	
3	.029	.001				
4	.022	.000				
Total		.012	255.630	.000ᵃ		

Interpretation:

In the Correspondence Table 9 and Fig 5 illustrates the distribution of consumer ratings across various water filter brands. Brands like Waterpure (WA), V-Guard (V), Aqua Guard (AQ), and Pureit (PU) stand out with higher counts in the "Satisfied" and "Strongly Satisfied"categories, indicating consumer satisfaction. Conversely, some brands like Livpure (LI) and Eureka Forbes (EU) appear to receive relatively fewer positive ratings, suggesting potential areas for improvement. The "Active Margin" values reveal brands that deviate from expected independence, highlighting those associated with either higher or lower-than-expected ratings. In Table 10, the Summary Table of Water Filters, dimensions and their significance in explaining the data's variation are presented. Dimension 1 emerges as crucial, with a substantial singular value and low p-value, signifying its importance in understanding the relationships between brand preferences and ratings. The positive confidence singular value in Dimension 1 suggests that specific factors are associated with higher consumer ratings, offering valuable guidance for manufacturers to enhance their products and strategies to better meet consumer needs. Water pure, V-Guard, and Aqua Guard (Water Filters) brands demonstrate strong quantitative performance in the water filter category, consistently receiving favorable star ratings. Consumers

trust them for clean and safe drinking water solutions, highlighting their appeal and brand preference.

5. Research Findings

The analysis of the correspondence tables and summary tables for various products, includingair coolers, ceiling fans, mixer grinders, wristwatches, and water filters, reveals severalimportant findings.

- In the air cooler market, Symphony emerges as a preferred brand, likely due to its reputation for energy efficiency and innovation. Bajaj also enjoys a strong presence, known for affordability and performance. These findings suggest that consumers prioritize energy efficiency and cost-effectiveness in their air cooler choices.
- Ceiling fans see Crompton as a prominent brand, likely attributed to its innovative andreliable offerings. However, brand preference can vary based on individualpreferences and regional factors. The singular value analysis indicates the significanceof Dimension 1 in understanding consumer ratings.
- Mixer grinders display a mixed picture, with Arrow, Stunning, and S-Shock receiving higher consumer satisfaction. Brands like HMT and Curren face challenges in meetingconsumer expectations. The analysis highlights Dimension 1 as vital in understanding brand preferences and ratings.
- Wristwatches reveal that brands like Arrow, Stunning, and S-Shock receive higher consumer satisfaction, while HMT and Current face challenges. Dimension 1 again emerges as crucial, emphasizing specific factors linked to higher consumer ratings.
- Water filters showcase brands like Water pure, V-Guard, Aqua Guard, and Pure it as preferred choices. Liv pure and Eureka Forbes have room for improvement. The analysis underscores the importance of Dimension 1 in understanding brand preferences and ratings.

Overall, these findings indicate that factors such as energy efficiency, affordability, and performance play significant roles in consumer preferences across various product categories. Manufacturers should consider these insights to tailor their products and strategies to better align with consumer needs and expectations.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of consumer preferences and brand performance across various product categories, including air coolers, ceiling fans, mixer grinders, wristwatches, and water filters, provides valuable insights into the competitive landscape of these markets. Brand preference often hinges on factors such as energy efficiency, affordability, product quality, and customer satisfaction. Notably, brands like Symphony, Crompton, and Bajaj have emerged as strong contenders in their respective categories, driven by their commitment to innovation and consumer-focused product offerings. However, the study also underscores the importance of continuous improvement, as certain brands face challenges in meeting consumer expectations. Manufacturers

should heed these findings to refine their product strategies, enhance customer satisfaction, and maintain a competitive edge in an ever- evolving market. Ultimately, consumer preferences serve as a compass, guiding brands towards providing the best products and experiences for their target audiences.

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