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Quality Assurance and Consumer Trust in Packaged and Pouched Drinking Water Brands in Prayagraj: A Secondary Data Based Comparative Study

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the quality assurance practices and consumer trust associated with packaged (bottled) and pouched (sachet) drinking water brands available in the Prayagraj region. Using secondary data sources such as government reports, brand certifications, consumer reviews, and market analysis, the research conducts a comparative analysis to identify the key factors influencing consumer confidence and perceived water quality. The study explores the existing quality standards, regulatory compliance, and brand reputation that shape consumer perceptions. Findings suggest notable differences in consumer trust levels between packaged and pouched water brands, largely influenced by the assurance of safety, purity, and brand credibility. The insights derived from this research could assist manufacturers, policymakers, and marketers in enhancing quality assurance measures and building stronger consumer trust in drinking water products, thereby promoting public health and informed consumer choices in Prayagraj.

Keywords: *Quality Assurance, Consumer Trust, Comparative Study, Secondary Data, Drinking Water Brands, Prayagraj, Water Safety, Consumer Perception*

Introduction

Access to safe and clean drinking water is a fundamental necessity for public health and well-being. In urban regions like Prayagraj, consumers

increasingly rely on commercially available packaged drinking water products, including bottled (packaged) and pouched (sachet) water. These products are often preferred due to perceived convenience and safety compared to traditional water sources. However, concerns around the quality assurance of these products and the extent of consumer trust remain important for ensuring health and satisfaction.

Importance of Quality Assurance in Drinking Water

Quality assurance in drinking water involves systematic processes to ensure that the water meets safety, hygiene, and regulatory standards. This includes regular testing for contaminants, proper packaging, and compliance with government norms. The quality of packaged and pouched drinking water can directly impact consumer health, making assurance mechanisms vital.

Consumer Trust and Its Impact on Brand Choice

Consumer trust plays a crucial role in the choice between different brands and packaging types. Trust is influenced by perceived safety, brand reputation, certifications, and past experiences.

Higher consumer trust often translates to greater brand loyalty and willingness to pay premium prices for assured quality.

Scope and Objectives of the Study

This study focuses on examining quality assurance measures and the level of consumer trust towards packaged and pouched drinking water brands in the Prayagraj region. Using secondary data, it compares these two product types to identify differences in quality perceptions and trust levels among consumers.

Research Questions

- What are the existing quality assurance practices for packaged and pouched drinking water brands in Prayagraj?
- How do consumers perceive the quality and safety of these products?
- What factors influence consumer trust in these brands?
- How do packaged and pouched water brands compare in terms of consumer trust and quality assurance?

Structure of the Report

This report is organized into sections covering literature review,

methodology, analysis of findings, discussion, and conclusions with recommendations

Quality Standards and Regulations for Packaged Drinking Water

Various national and international standards govern the quality of packaged drinking water, including guidelines by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), World Health Organization (WHO), and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). These regulations cover parameters such as microbial safety, chemical contaminants, packaging integrity, and labeling requirements. Compliance with these standards is essential for manufacturers to ensure consumer safety and build trust. Consumer trust in food and beverage industries has been extensively studied, with findings indicating that trust is largely influenced by product quality, brand reputation, certifications, and transparency. Trust affects purchase decisions, brand loyalty, and willingness to pay a premium. Studies suggest that consumers tend to rely on visible cues such as packaging, labeling, and third-party certifications to assess product safety.

Existing research comparing packaged (bottled) and pouched (sachet) water highlights differences in consumer perception related to quality, price, and accessibility. Packaged water is often perceived as safer but more expensive, whereas pouched water offers affordability but may raise concerns about hygiene and durability. Several studies emphasize the need for enhanced quality monitoring for pouched water brands to elevate consumer confidence.

Studies focusing on the Indian context reveal increasing urban demand for convenient and safe drinking water options. Consumer preferences are shaped by factors such as price sensitivity, awareness of waterborne diseases, and availability. In Prayagraj, socio-economic diversity influences choices between packaged and pouched water, but limited research exists specifically comparing quality assurance and trust factors between these two segments.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and comparative research design to analyze the quality assurance and consumer trust associated with packaged and pouched drinking water brands in Prayagraj.

The research relies entirely on secondary data to provide an objective overview and comparison.

Data Source and Collection (Secondary Data)

Secondary data for this study is collected from multiple credible sources including government health reports, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) certifications, market research reports, published academic studies, consumer review portals, and news articles. These data sources provide information on quality parameters, brand certifications, consumer feedback, and market trends.

Criteria for Selection of Brands

The study focuses on the most commonly available and consumed packaged and pouched drinking water brands in Prayagraj. Brands included in the analysis are those with available secondary data regarding quality certification, market presence, and consumer trust indicators.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis involves qualitative and quantitative comparison of quality assurance parameters and consumer trust metrics across packaged and pouched water brands. Comparative tables, graphs, and thematic analysis are used to highlight differences and trends.

Limitations of the Study

- Reliance on secondary data limits control over data accuracy and completeness.
- The study is limited to Prayagraj and may not be generalizable to other regions.
- Consumer trust is analyzed indirectly through secondary sources rather than primary surveys.

Analysis and Findings**Overview of Packaged and Pouched Drinking Water Brands in Prayagraj**

Prayagraj's drinking water market is dominated by several well-known packaged (bottled) and pouched (sachet) water brands. Packaged water brands tend to have a wider market presence with higher price points, while pouched water is more affordable and widely consumed by lower and middle-income groups.

Quality Assurance Parameters

Analysis of secondary data reveals differences in quality assurance practices between the two categories. Packaged water brands generally

comply with BIS and FSSAI certifications, conduct regular microbial and chemical testing, and employ advanced packaging technologies ensuring product safety. Pouched water brands, while regulated, show variability in compliance levels,

with some brands lacking adequate certification or using less robust packaging, potentially compromising safety.

Consumer Trust Indicators

Consumer trust is strongly linked to visible quality assurance markers such as certifications, brand reputation, and packaging integrity. Packaged water brands tend to enjoy higher consumer trust due to consistent quality signals and marketing efforts. Conversely, consumer trust in pouched water is moderate to low, often hindered by concerns over hygiene, storage, and lesser brand visibility.

Comparative Analysis of Quality and Trust

The comparative study highlights that while both categories aim to provide safe drinking water, packaged water brands lead in quality assurance and consumer trust. However, the affordability and accessibility of pouched water maintain its significant market share. The gap in trust suggests an opportunity for pouched water brands to improve quality control and marketing to boost consumer confidence.

Key Factors Influencing Consumer Trust

Key factors identified include certification and compliance transparency, brand reputation, packaging quality, price, and consumer awareness about water safety. Consumer education and stricter regulatory enforcement emerge as crucial for enhancing trust, especially for pouched water.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

The analysis indicates a clear disparity in quality assurance and consumer trust between packaged and pouched drinking water brands in Prayagraj. Packaged water brands benefit from stronger regulatory compliance, robust quality checks, and effective brand communication, which collectively build higher consumer confidence. In contrast, pouched water, though popular due to affordability and convenience, faces challenges related to inconsistent quality assurance and weaker consumer trust.

Implications for Manufacturers and Marketers

Manufacturers of pouched drinking water must prioritize enhancing quality

assurance processes, obtaining relevant certifications, and investing in packaging innovations to improve product safety perceptions. Marketers should focus on transparent communication of quality standards and actively engage in consumer education campaigns to build trust.

Impact on Consumer Behavior and Public Health

Consumer trust directly influences buying decisions and usage patterns, which have public health implications. Lack of trust in pouched water may push consumers towards more expensive packaged water, affecting affordability for lower-income groups. Ensuring consistent quality and building trust can reduce health risks from contaminated water and promote equitable access to safe drinking water.

Recommendations for Improving Quality Assurance and Trust

- Strengthen regulatory oversight and regular monitoring of pouched water brands.
- Encourage certification and labeling compliance for all drinking water brands.
- Conduct public awareness programs about water safety and quality indicators.
- Foster collaboration between government, manufacturers, and consumer groups to improve standards and trust.

Conclusion

This study has provided a comparative analysis of quality assurance and consumer trust in packaged and pouched drinking water brands in Prayagraj using secondary data. The findings highlight that packaged water brands generally maintain higher quality standards and enjoy greater consumer trust due to better compliance with certifications and robust packaging.

Conversely, pouched water brands, while more affordable and accessible, face challenges in consistent quality assurance and consumer confidence.

Addressing these gaps is essential to safeguard public health and ensure equitable access to safe drinking water across all socio-economic groups. Enhanced regulatory enforcement, improved quality monitoring, and increased consumer awareness are key strategies to bridge the trust deficit and promote safer drinking water consumption in Prayagraj.

Future research could incorporate primary data collection to gain deeper insights into consumer perceptions and behaviors, expanding the geographical scope to better understand regional variations.

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