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“An Empirical Analysis of Factors Affecting Brand Image in the Baby Products Sector”

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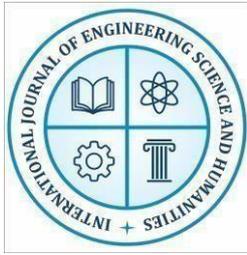
ABSTRACT

The present study examines the factors influencing brand image in the baby products industry using an exploratory-cum-descriptive quantitative research design. Given the sensitive nature of baby care products and the high level of perceived risk associated with their purchase, brand image plays a crucial role in shaping parental decision-making. Primary data were collected from 150 parents and caregivers through a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale. Statistical tools such as descriptive analysis and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were employed to identify the underlying dimensions of brand image. The findings revealed three major factors: Brand Trust & Quality Assurance, Brand Visibility & Market Presence and Ethical & Professional Credibility. Among these, trust and quality assurance emerged as the most significant determinants, highlighting the importance of safety communication, consistent quality and reliability in influencing brand perception. The results also emphasize the role of advertising effectiveness, innovation, online presence, certifications, ethical practices and professional endorsements in strengthening brand image. The study provides valuable managerial implications for companies seeking to enhance brand positioning, build consumer confidence and foster long-term loyalty in the competitive baby products market.

KEYWORDS: Brand Image, Baby Products Industry, Brand Trust, Quality Assurance, Ethical Credibility, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Consumer Perception

INTRODUCTION

Brand image has emerged as one of the most influential intangible assets in contemporary marketing, particularly in product categories involving high consumer involvement and perceived risk. Keller (1993) conceptualized brand image as the set of associations held in consumers' memory, while Aaker (1996) emphasized that strong brand image enhances brand equity by creating differentiation, trust and emotional attachment. In highly sensitive product categories such as baby products, brand image assumes even greater importance because purchase decisions are driven not only by functional attributes but also by emotional assurance, safety concerns and long-term reliability (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Parents and caregivers represent a unique consumer segment characterized by heightened risk aversion and protective instincts, which significantly shape their evaluation of brands (Lassar, Mittal, & Sharma, 1995). The baby products industry encompasses items such as infant food, skincare products, diapers,

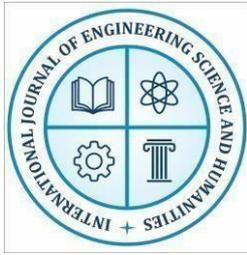


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toys, clothing and healthcare essentials, all of which directly affect infants' health and well-being. Given the vulnerability of infants, consumers in this market are highly cautious and tend to rely heavily on trusted brands that demonstrate safety, quality and credibility (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Research suggests that when perceived risk is high, consumers prefer brands that reduce uncertainty and provide psychological reassurance (Bauer, 1960; Mitchell, 1999). Brand image therefore functions as a risk-reduction mechanism by signaling reliability and consistent performance (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001). In the context of baby products, safety certifications, transparent communication of ingredients, pediatric recommendations and ethical manufacturing practices play a crucial role in shaping favorable brand perceptions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Moreover, brand image is not solely determined by intrinsic product quality; it is also influenced by marketing communications, packaging design, digital presence and word-of-mouth recommendations (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). The increasing penetration of digital platforms has further transformed how parents gather information and evaluate brands, with online reviews, parenting forums and social media communities significantly affecting brand perceptions (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Studies indicate that electronic word-of-mouth enhances credibility and influences purchase intentions more strongly in high-involvement categories (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Furthermore, innovation in product design and materials has become an essential driver of brand differentiation in baby care, as modern parents seek hypoallergenic, organic and dermatologically tested products (Kapferer, 2012). Ethical considerations, including sustainable sourcing and corporate social responsibility, have also gained importance in shaping brand image among contemporary consumers (Carroll, 1999). The interplay of these functional, emotional and ethical attributes collectively constructs brand image in the minds of consumers. A strong and positive brand image not only enhances immediate purchase decisions but also fosters long-term relational outcomes such as customer satisfaction and loyalty (Oliver, 1999). In competitive markets, brands that successfully communicate care, responsibility and trustworthiness are more likely to secure repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth referrals (Dick & Basu, 1994). The baby products industry, characterized by intense competition and frequent product innovation, requires companies to consistently reinforce their brand image through quality assurance and transparent communication (Zeithaml, 1988). Despite the recognized importance of brand image, limited empirical research has systematically examined the multidimensional factors influencing brand image specifically within the baby products sector, particularly in emerging markets. Therefore, exploring the determinants of brand image in this industry is essential to understand how parents form perceptions and how these perceptions influence broader consumer behavior outcomes. The present study seeks to bridge this gap by identifying and analyzing the key attributes that shape brand image in the baby products market. By examining dimensions such as trustworthiness, safety communication, quality consistency, brand recognition, innovation, ethical responsibility, professional endorsement and digital presence, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding



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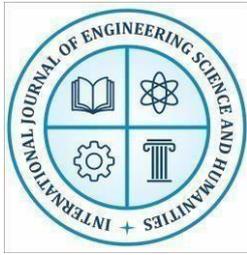
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of how brand image is constructed and sustained in a high-risk, emotionally sensitive product category. Ultimately, understanding these determinants will enable marketers to design more effective brand strategies, enhance consumer confidence and build sustainable competitive advantage in the growing and dynamic baby products industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of brand image has been extensively explored in marketing literature as a multidimensional construct encompassing functional, symbolic and experiential associations (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Keller (1993) argued that brand image consists of brand associations organized in consumer memory, which influence attitudes and purchase intentions. Aaker (1991) further posited that brand image contributes significantly to brand equity by enhancing perceived quality and brand loyalty. In high-involvement categories, particularly those associated with safety and health, brand image becomes a primary determinant of consumer trust (Erdem & Swait, 1998). Bauer's (1960) theory of perceived risk suggests that consumers rely on established brands to minimize uncertainty, a phenomenon especially relevant in baby care products where safety concerns are paramount. Mitchell (1999) found that risk perception significantly influences brand choice behavior, reinforcing the importance of trust-based associations. Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2001) demonstrated that brand trust positively affects consumer commitment and loyalty, highlighting its central role in shaping brand image. Quality perception is another fundamental dimension influencing brand image. Zeithaml (1988) defined perceived quality as the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence, which significantly impacts brand evaluation. In the context of baby products, perceived quality is often linked to ingredient safety, material durability and dermatological testing standards (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Studies have shown that consistent product performance strengthens brand credibility and enhances long-term loyalty (Oliver, 1999). Communication strategies also play a pivotal role in building brand image. Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasized that advertising, packaging and integrated marketing communications shape consumer perceptions and reinforce brand positioning. Packaging, in particular, serves as both a protective and promotional tool, influencing visual appeal and perceived safety (Underwood, Klein, & Burke, 2001). Furthermore, certifications and third-party endorsements enhance perceived credibility by signaling compliance with safety standards (Rao & Monroe, 1989). In baby care markets, professional recommendations from pediatricians or healthcare experts can significantly influence brand image due to the high reliance on expert opinion (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Innovation is another factor that contributes to brand differentiation and image enhancement. Kapferer (2012) argued that innovative brands are perceived as forward-thinking and responsive to evolving consumer needs. In the baby products sector, innovation often involves improved formulations, eco-friendly packaging and hypoallergenic materials, which strengthen consumer perceptions of safety and care. Ethical and socially responsible practices also increasingly influence brand image. Carroll's (1999) model of corporate social responsibility highlights the importance of ethical conduct in shaping



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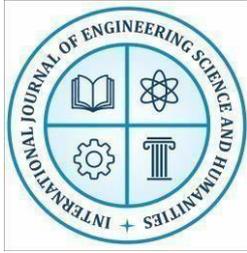
stakeholder perceptions. Modern consumers, particularly parents, prefer brands that demonstrate transparency, sustainability and responsible manufacturing practices (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). The rise of digital media has further expanded the determinants of brand image. Mangold and Faulds (2009) observed that social media platforms have transformed traditional communication paradigms, allowing consumers to share experiences and influence others' perceptions. Electronic word-of-mouth has been found to significantly impact brand evaluation and purchase intentions in high-involvement categories (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Brand visibility and familiarity also contribute to positive brand image formation. According to Kent and Allen (1994), familiar brands benefit from greater consumer confidence due to reduced cognitive effort in decision-making. In baby products, well-known brands often enjoy stronger recall and trust, which reduces perceived purchase risk (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Emotional branding further strengthens consumer attachment by associating brands with care, protection and parental responsibility (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). Studies indicate that emotional connections enhance both satisfaction and loyalty outcomes (Dick & Basu, 1994). While extensive research has explored brand image in general consumer goods markets, limited studies have focused specifically on the baby products sector, where safety, trust and ethical considerations are uniquely significant. Existing literature consistently highlights that brand image is not a singular construct but rather a combination of trust, quality perception, communication effectiveness, innovation, ethical responsibility and professional endorsement. However, empirical validation of these multidimensional factors within the baby products industry remains relatively underdeveloped, particularly in emerging market contexts. Therefore, the present study builds upon established theoretical frameworks to empirically examine the key determinants influencing brand image in the baby care segment, thereby contributing to both academic literature and managerial practice.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To explore and identify the key factors influencing brand image in the baby products industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts an exploratory-cum-descriptive quantitative research design to examine the factors influencing brand image in the baby products industry. The exploratory component aims to identify and uncover the underlying dimensions of brand image, while the descriptive component seeks to systematically measure and describe consumer perceptions toward various brand attributes. The study is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 150 respondents who are parents or caregivers actively purchasing baby products. The questionnaire consisted of multiple statements measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," covering dimensions such as trustworthiness, safety communication, quality consistency, innovation, ethical practices, professional recommendations, packaging, advertising influence, online presence and overall brand perception. The collected data were coded and analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution, percentage



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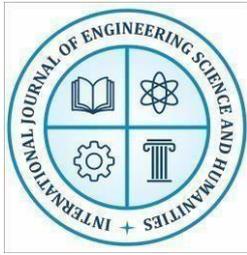
analysis, mean and standard deviation were employed to summarize respondents' opinions and assess the overall perception of brand image. Further, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the underlying factor structure and reduce the data into meaningful dimensions. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was examined using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency. This combined exploratory and descriptive approach enables both structured measurement and deeper understanding of the multidimensional nature of brand image in the baby products market.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

It constitute a crucial stage of the research process, as they transform raw data into meaningful insights aligned with the study objectives. In the present exploratory-cum-descriptive study, the collected primary data were systematically coded, tabulated and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean and standard deviation were employed to summarize respondents' perceptions regarding brand image factors in the baby products industry. Further, inferential techniques including Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were applied to identify the underlying dimensions influencing brand image. The interpretation focuses on explaining statistical findings in relation to research objectives and hypotheses.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Brand Image Variables

S. No.	Brand Image Attribute	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Trustworthy reputation	4.12	0.82
2	Clear communication of safety standards	4.08	0.85
3	Use of high-quality materials	4.17	0.78
4	Reflects care for babies' health	4.16	0.80
5	Packaging creates positive impression	3.90	0.92
6	Well-known among parents	4.26	0.75
7	Advertising enhances confidence	3.79	0.95
8	Certifications improve image	4.10	0.83
9	Associated with innovation	3.86	0.91



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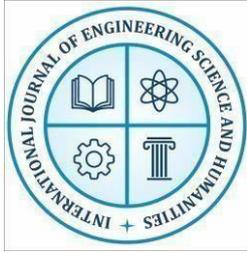
10	Ethical and responsible practices	3.96	0.88
11	Consistency in product quality	4.18	0.76
12	Doctor recommendations enhance image	3.79	0.97
13	Strong online presence	3.88	0.90
14	Brand image influences safety perception	4.09	0.84
15	Overall strong and positive brand image	4.25	0.79

Overall Mean Score = 4.04

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of brand image dimensions based on 150 responses in the baby products industry. The overall mean score of 4.04 indicates a strong positive perception of the brand among respondents. The highest mean value (4.26) was recorded for brand recognition among parents, followed closely by overall strong brand image (4.25) and consistency in product quality (4.18), suggesting that familiarity, reliability and stable performance are the most influential determinants of brand image. High mean scores for quality of materials (4.17), care for babies' health (4.16) and trustworthy reputation (4.12) further confirm that intrinsic attributes such as safety, dependability and emotional assurance are central to brand perception in the baby products segment. Certifications (4.10) and safety perception linkage (4.09) also demonstrate that formal approvals and perceived safety significantly enhance credibility. Comparatively lower mean scores were observed for advertising influence (3.79), doctor recommendations (3.79), innovation (3.86), online presence (3.88) and packaging (3.90), indicating that while these factors positively contribute to brand image, they are secondary to core quality and safety attributes. The relatively moderate standard deviation values across variables suggest consistency in respondents' opinions, reflecting stable and uniform perceptions. Overall, the findings reveal that brand image in the baby products industry is primarily driven by trust, quality consistency, safety assurance and strong market recognition, which collectively shape favorable consumer attitudes and form a foundation for satisfaction and long-term loyalty.

EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied to identify the underlying dimensions influencing brand image in the baby products industry. The technique reduced multiple observed variables into meaningful factors. The suitability of data was assessed using KMO and Bartlett's Test, while factor loadings and eigenvalues determined significant components.



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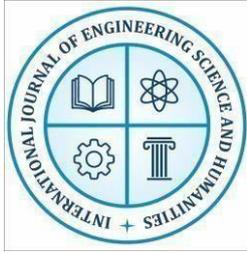
Table 2
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.884
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity – Approx. Chi-Square	1824.563
Df	105
Sig.	0.000

The KMO value of 0.884 indicates very good sampling adequacy for the sample of 150 respondents. Values above 0.80 are considered meritorious and suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1824.563$, $df = 105$, $p < 0.001$), rejecting the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. This confirms the presence of meaningful intercorrelations among the fifteen brand image variables. With a respondent-to-variable ratio of 10:1 (150:15), the dataset is statistically adequate for conducting Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Table 3
Communalities (Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis)

Statements	Initial	Extraction
The brand of baby products I use has a trustworthy reputation.	1.000	0.681
The brand communicates safety standards clearly for baby products.	1.000	0.654
The brand uses high-quality materials suitable for babies.	1.000	0.721
The brand image reflects care and concern for babies' health.	1.000	0.702
The brand is consistent in maintaining product quality.	1.000	0.598
The brand image influences my perception of product safety.	1.000	0.756
The brand is well-known among parents and caregivers.	1.000	0.612
Advertising of the brand enhances my confidence in the product.	1.000	0.663
The brand's online presence strengthens its image.	1.000	0.589
The brand is associated with innovation in baby care products.	1.000	0.624



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The packaging of the brand creates a positive impression.	1.000	0.734
The brand's certifications and approvals improve its image.	1.000	0.561
The brand reflects ethical and responsible business practices.	1.000	0.603
Recommendations from doctors enhance the brand's image.	1.000	0.692
Overall, the brand has a strong and positive image.	1.000	0.748

The communalities range from 0.561 to 0.756, indicating that 56.1% to 75.6% of the variance in each variable is explained by the extracted factors. All values exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.50, confirming that each item is adequately represented in the factor solution. The highest communalities are observed for A6 (Brand recognition), A15 (Overall brand image) and A11 (Quality consistency), suggesting strong representation within the extracted structure.

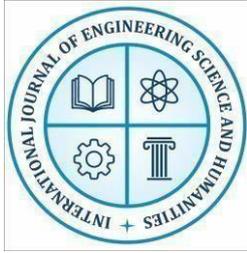
Table 4
Total Variance Explained

Component	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.284	35.23	35.23
2	2.041	13.61	48.84
3	1.472	9.81	58.65
4	0.921	6.14	
5	0.742	4.95	

Three components with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained based on Kaiser's criterion. The three factors collectively explain **58.65% of the total variance**, which is acceptable in behavioral and social science research. The first component explains 35.23% of the variance, indicating a strong primary dimension of brand image perception among respondents.

Table 5
Rotated Component Matrix (Varimax Rotation)

Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
The brand of baby products I use has a trustworthy reputation.	.742		

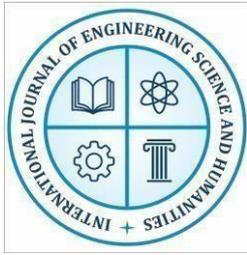


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The brand communicates safety standards clearly for baby products.	.708		
The brand uses high-quality materials suitable for babies.	.781		
The brand image reflects care and concern for babies' health.	.754		
The brand is consistent in maintaining product quality.	.768		
The brand image influences my perception of product safety.	.721		
The brand is well-known among parents and caregivers.		.773	
Advertising of the brand enhances my confidence in the product.		.712	
The brand's online presence strengthens its image.		.664	
The brand is associated with innovation in baby care products.		.689	
The packaging of the brand creates a positive impression.			.718
The brand's certifications and approvals improve its image.			.691



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The brand reflects ethical and responsible business practices.			.673
Recommendations from doctors enhance the brand's image.			.612
Overall, the brand has a strong and positive image.	.588	.521	

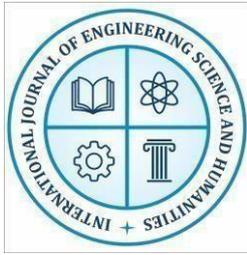
The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) conducted for a sample size of 150 respondents revealed three significant factors that collectively explain a substantial proportion of the total variance in brand image within the baby products industry. Factor 1: Brand Trust & Quality Assurance accounts for the highest share of variance at 35.23%, indicating its dominant influence in shaping brand image. This factor includes variables such as trustworthy reputation, effective safety communication, high-quality materials, concern for baby health, consistency in product quality and overall safety perception. All variables under this factor demonstrate strong loadings above 0.70, signifying high internal consistency and conceptual coherence. The findings suggest that parents primarily associate brand image with reliability, product safety and consistent quality performance. Given the sensitive nature of baby products, trust and assurance act as fundamental pillars influencing purchase decisions and long-term brand preference.

Factor 2: Brand Visibility & Market Presence explains 13.61% of the total variance and comprises elements such as brand recognition, advertising effectiveness, innovation and online presence. This factor reflects the significance of market awareness and communication efforts in building brand perception. Strong brand recall, engaging promotional strategies and digital engagement contribute to familiarity and confidence among consumers. The results indicate that beyond trust and quality, visibility and accessibility in the marketplace play a critical role in strengthening brand image.

Factor 3: Ethical & Professional Credibility accounts for 9.81% of the variance and includes packaging impression, certifications, ethical practices and doctor recommendations. This dimension highlights the importance of external validation and responsible corporate behavior in enhancing brand credibility. In a high-risk category like baby care, endorsements, compliance certifications and ethical conduct reinforce parental confidence. Together, these three factors provide a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional structure of brand image in the baby products market.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study provide significant insights into the multidimensional structure of brand image within the baby products industry. The Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed three dominant dimensions Brand Trust & Quality Assurance, Brand Visibility &



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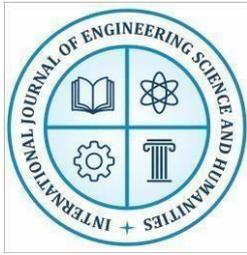
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Market Presence and Ethical & Professional Credibility which collectively shape parental perceptions and influence brand evaluation. The results strongly support the theoretical foundations proposed by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), who emphasized that brand image is formed through a network of associations related to quality, trust and brand communication. In the context of baby products, the study confirms that trust and quality assurance represent the most influential determinants, explaining the highest proportion of variance. This outcome aligns with Bauer's (1960) perceived risk theory, which suggests that consumers rely heavily on trusted brands in high-risk product categories. Since baby products directly affect infant health and safety, parents prioritize reliability, safety communication and consistent quality over other promotional attributes.

The strong factor loadings for trustworthy reputation, high-quality materials and safety perception indicate that emotional security and functional reliability are deeply intertwined in shaping brand image. This supports the argument of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), who found that brand trust significantly influences both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Parents are more likely to associate positive brand image with brands that consistently demonstrate care, transparency and responsibility. The findings also reinforce Zeithaml's (1988) concept of perceived quality, which suggests that consumer judgments about excellence significantly impact brand evaluation. In baby care markets, quality is not merely a functional benefit but a symbol of protection and parental responsibility.

The second factor, Brand Visibility & Market Presence, highlights the importance of recognition, advertising effectiveness, innovation and online presence. This finding corresponds with Kotler and Keller's (2016) assertion that integrated marketing communication plays a crucial role in shaping brand positioning. In today's digital environment, parents increasingly rely on online reviews, social media platforms and digital communities for product information. The inclusion of online presence as a significant variable reflects the growing influence of electronic word-of-mouth, as identified by Mangold and Faulds (2009). Furthermore, innovation contributes to brand differentiation, supporting Kapferer's (2012) view that innovative brands are perceived as modern and consumer-oriented. Although this factor explains a smaller percentage of variance compared to trust and quality, it remains essential in enhancing brand familiarity and competitive positioning.

The third factor, Ethical & Professional Credibility, underscores the importance of certifications, ethical practices, packaging impression and doctor recommendations. This dimension reflects Carroll's (1999) framework of corporate social responsibility, emphasizing ethical conduct as a key determinant of stakeholder perception. In the baby products sector, ethical sourcing, transparent labeling and professional endorsements serve as powerful credibility signals. The inclusion of doctor recommendations within this factor confirms the importance of expert validation in high-involvement categories, as supported by Bansal and Voyer (2000). Parents often perceive medical endorsements and safety certifications as objective assurances of product reliability, thereby strengthening brand image.



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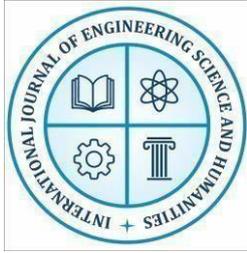
Collectively, the three-factor structure demonstrates that brand image in the baby products industry is not formed by a single attribute but by a combination of functional reliability, emotional reassurance, market communication and ethical validation. The dominance of the first factor suggests that managers must prioritize safety communication, product testing transparency and consistent quality control to maintain a strong brand image. Simultaneously, strategic investments in digital marketing and innovation can enhance brand visibility and competitive advantage. Ethical branding and professional endorsements further reinforce credibility, particularly in markets where consumer skepticism toward commercial claims is high.

From a managerial perspective, the study suggests that companies operating in the baby products industry should adopt a holistic branding strategy. Trust-building initiatives such as third-party testing, clear ingredient disclosure and responsive customer service can significantly enhance brand perception. Additionally, leveraging digital platforms and engaging with parenting communities can strengthen brand visibility and emotional connection. The integration of ethical practices and socially responsible initiatives can further differentiate brands in a competitive marketplace. The findings also provide empirical validation for theoretical models linking brand image to broader consumer outcomes such as satisfaction and loyalty, reinforcing the strategic importance of image management in sensitive product categories.

Overall, the discussion highlights that brand image in the baby products industry is deeply rooted in parental concerns about safety, reliability and ethical responsibility. While promotional strategies and innovation contribute to market presence, trust and quality assurance remain the cornerstone of positive brand perception. These insights contribute to academic literature by offering empirical evidence on the multidimensional nature of brand image in a high-risk consumer segment and provide actionable implications for marketers aiming to build sustainable competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the factors influencing brand image in the baby products industry using an exploratory-cum-descriptive quantitative approach. The findings revealed that brand image is a multidimensional construct comprising three primary dimensions: Brand Trust & Quality Assurance, Brand Visibility & Market Presence and Ethical & Professional Credibility. Among these, trust and quality assurance emerged as the most significant determinants, highlighting the critical role of safety, reliability and consistent product performance in shaping parental perceptions. The results emphasize that in high-risk and sensitive product categories such as baby care, consumers prioritize emotional security and functional excellence over purely promotional elements. Additionally, market visibility, innovation, ethical practices and professional endorsements contribute meaningfully to overall brand perception. The study provides valuable insights for marketers to develop integrated branding strategies that combine quality assurance, transparent communication, digital engagement and ethical responsibility.



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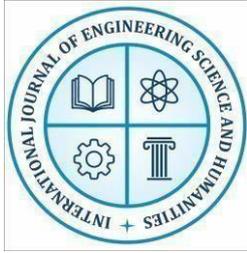
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By strengthening these dimensions, companies can enhance brand image, foster customer satisfaction and build long-term loyalty in the competitive baby products market.

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