

THE IMPORTANCE OF AFTER SALES SERVICE OF PRODUCTS TO THE BRAND IMAGE OF SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS (CHINA) SERVICE CENTER

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Abstract

This research examined the influence of after-sales service on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center. The sample consisted of 600 respondents who had used the company's after-sales services, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire. Data analysis employed descriptive and inferential statistics, with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) used to analyze the data. The results revealed that all six components of after-sales service, such as delivery service, online/telephone support, upgradation/maintenance, warranty service, complaint handling, and installation service. All components had a statistically significant influence on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center, with a predictive power of 26.8%. Delivery service exhibited the highest level of influence, followed by online/telephone support, upgrade and maintenance, warranty service, complaint handling, and installation service. These findings suggest that enhancing after-sales service components can play a pivotal role in strengthening the brand image of consumer electronics service providers.

Keywords: After Sales Service, Brand Image, Samsung

Introduction

In the modern business world, customer service is critical to consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty, which are essential for multinational companies such as Samsung Electronics operating in highly competitive markets. Customer service at Samsung Electronics (China) service centers not only demonstrates the company's commitment to customer satisfaction but also plays an important role in building brand image. The importance of customer service in maintaining and developing Samsung Electronics' brand image in China cannot be underestimated as it directly affects consumer perception, brand loyalty, and long-term business success (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016).

Samsung Electronics, a global leader in the electronics industry, has built a solid foundation in the Chinese market. The company offers a wide range of products, including smartphones, home appliances, and consumer electronics, all of which require comprehensive after-sales service. After-sales service encompasses activities such as warranty services, maintenance, and customer support, all of which are important for addressing consumers' post-purchase needs and concerns (Wang, Wang, & Zhao, 2018). The Chinese market, with its large consumer base and high expectations for quality and service, presents Samsung Electronics with unique challenges and opportunities. In this context, Samsung Electronics (China) service centers play a critical role in providing customers with fast, efficient, and satisfactory service that not only helps resolve technical problems but also promotes a positive customer experience, thereby enhancing brand image (Lee & Song, 2015).

The importance of after-sales service to Samsung Electronics' brand image in China has several aspects. First, effective after-sales service increases customer satisfaction, a key factor in brand loyalty. When consumers receive fast and efficient service, they are more likely to have a positive opinion of the brand, leading to repeat purchases and recommendations to others (Jones & Runyan, 2016). This is particularly important in the Chinese market, where word of mouth and social media play a crucial role in shaping consumer opinion (Chen et al., 2015). Secondly, customer service is a differentiator in a highly competitive market. With many electronics brands competing for consumers' attention, Samsung Electronics can differentiate itself from other brands by providing excellent customer service. This is an important competitive advantage in attracting and retaining customers and strengthens the brand's position in the market (Morgeson et al., 2017). Thirdly, the quality of customer service reflects the brand's reliability and trustworthiness. In the event of product problems, the way the company handles customer complaints and provides solutions can strongly influence its reputation (Homburg et al., 2015). Strong customer service demonstrates Samsung Electronics' commitment to customer satisfaction and underscores its support for its products, thereby strengthening consumer trust in the brand (Wang & Chen, 2019).

Although the importance of after-sales service is clear, existing research lacks clarity on its specific impact on the brand image of multinational companies in the Chinese market.

Most research focuses on customer satisfaction and loyalty without examining how customer service affects brand perceptions in different cultural and market contexts (Xu et al., 2015). In addition, there is little empirical data on the effectiveness of different customer service strategies adopted by multinational companies such as Samsung Electronics in China (Zhang, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of the role of after-sales service in building Samsung Electronics' brand image in the Chinese market. By examining customer opinions, service quality metrics, and brand perception data, this study aims to provide insights into specific aspects of after-sales service that have the greatest impact on improving brand image (Li, 2018).

Therefore, customer service at Samsung Electronics (China) service centers is critical to the company's brand image in the Chinese market. By ensuring high customer satisfaction, differentiating the brand in a highly competitive market, and building consumer trust, after-sales service significantly contributes to Samsung Electronics' perception and overall success. However, current research gaps call for a detailed examination of how customer service strategies can enhance brand image. Therefore, understanding and improving customer service capabilities is critical to maintaining and expanding Samsung's brand base in China. The purpose of this study is to provide insights into the specific components of customer service that are most effective for strengthening Samsung Electronics' brand image in the highly competitive Chinese market.

Research Objectives

To study the influence of product after-sales service on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center.

Research Hypothesis

The after-sales service of products affects the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center.

Research Framework

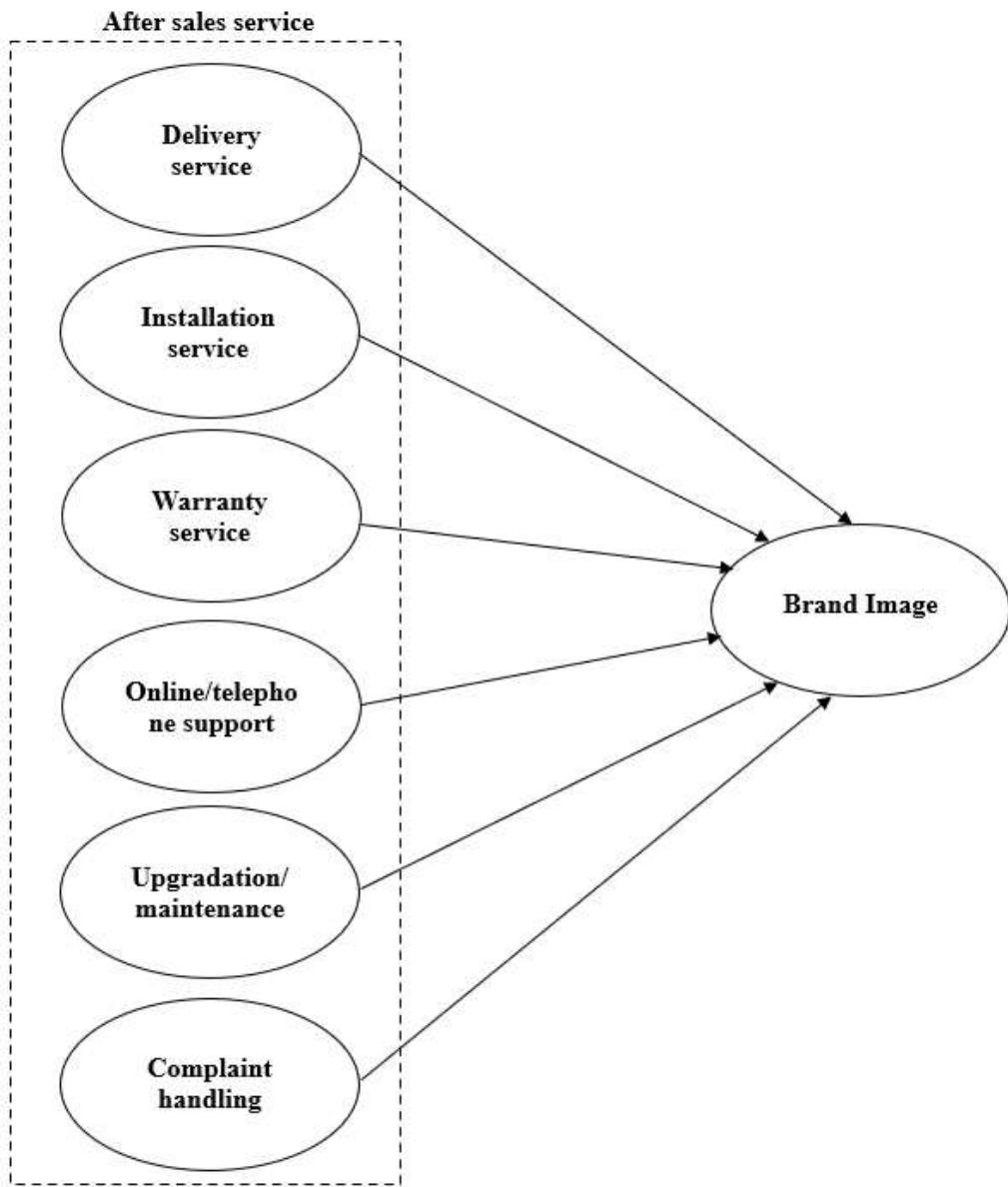


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Literature Review

Concepts and theories about after sales service

Inyang (2015) defines after-sales service as actions taken after the seller has initiated the sale, regardless of whether the sale is closed. The sales process is not yet complete. The seller still has the opportunity to build a good relationship that can have a positive impact in the future. Companies should understand the importance of after-sales service themselves and strive to strengthen the after-sales activities of delivered products to achieve such strength (Szwejczewski et al., 2015). Haryadi et al. (2022) emphasized that after-sales service plays a critical role in industrial marketing as a component of both product and promotion strategies, helping to strengthen relationships between customers and organizations. The study identifies

six key components of after-sales service: delivery service, which ensures timely product delivery based on agreed conditions; installation service, which includes professional setup and user guidance; warranty service, which covers defect repairs within a set period; online/telephone support for remote issue resolution; upgradation/maintenance to enhance and sustain product performance; and complaint handling to address and resolve customer issues through various channels. These components collectively enhance customer satisfaction and reinforce long-term business relationships.

Concepts and theories about brand image

Lee, James, and Kim (2014) define brand image as what customers think of and the thoughts they have about a brand, which stems from beliefs and perspectives about the brand. This is the result of creating the brand's identity, values, and personality. Frandsen (2017) explained that brand image is something that an organization creates as a representation to make people remember the brand and the organization. It is crucial for leading the organization to success. Additionally, brand image differentiates each organization. Therefore, creating a good brand image takes time and is not easy to achieve in a short period. Zia et al. (2021) explained that brand image is the overall perception formed in consumers' minds through positive efforts by marketers to make the brand memorable and associated with favorable experiences. A strong brand image encourages consumers to choose that brand over others due to the positive impressions and associations it creates. The components of brand image include attributes that define product characteristics, benefits that highlight both functional and emotional value, brand value that signifies the worth of the product or producer, cultural representation of the brand, personality that reflects the brand's character, and user imagery that aligns the product with specific customer groups. These elements collectively shape consumer preferences and influence purchasing decisions.

Research Methodology

1. Population and Sample: The sample group used in this research is those who have used the after-sales service of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center. The sample size determination for this study uses the sample size calculation criteria of Hair et al. (2010), which discusses the sample size determination for data analysis using structural equation modeling. It should have a sample size of 20 people per observable variable. In this research, there are 36 observable variables. Therefore, the sample size should be 720 people in total. However, upon actual data collection, it was found that only 600 fully completed questionnaires were returned. The sampling method in this research uses Purposive Sampling, which is a method of selecting a sample group that meets predetermined criteria.

2. Research Instruments: The research instrument is a questionnaire developed from studying concepts and theories related to the research objectives. The questionnaire is designed to collect data about after-sales service and brand image of Samsung Electronics

(China) Service Center, divided into 3 parts as follows: (1) Questionnaire about general information of respondents (2) Questionnaire about After Sales Service and (3) Questionnaire about Brand Image. The researcher added a content validity check by finding the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) from 3 experts. The IOC index should be 0.67 or higher to consider the questionnaire consistent with the research objectives. Afterwards, the researcher piloted the questionnaire with a trial group of 30 people, equal to the sample size, to test reliability using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient method. The coefficient should be greater than 0.70 or 70% to consider the questionnaire reasonably reliable.

3. Data Analysis: In this research, data analysis and hypothesis testing were conducted using computer programs. The analysis process is divided into descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involves preliminary examination of the data collected from the sample to understand the characteristics of the data and the distribution patterns of various variables. Inferential statistics used to test research hypotheses, with a statistical significance level set at .05. The analysis uses Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is a statistical analysis technique that allows for examining complex relationships.

Results

1. Results of general information analysis of respondents

the majority of respondents were female, accounting for 312 individuals (52.00%). The largest age group was between 31 and 40 years, comprising 176 individuals (29.33%). A significant portion of respondents held a bachelor's degree, with 355 individuals (59.17%). The majority reported an average monthly income between 4,001 and 6,000 CNY, totaling 153 individuals (25.50%). Additionally, 188 respondents (31.33%) were private sector employees.

2. Results of opinion from respondents on after sales service of products and brand image

Table 1 The mean and standard deviation of after sales service of products and brand image

Factors	\bar{X}	SD	Level of opinion
After sales service of products	3.70	0.66	High
- Delivery service	3.79	0.99	High
- Installation service	3.83	0.92	High
- Warranty service	3.57	1.07	High
- Online/telephone support	3.79	1.00	High
- Upgradation/maintenance	3.56	1.10	High
- Complaint handling	3.67	1.08	High
Brand Image	3.77	0.94	High

3. Hypothesis testing results

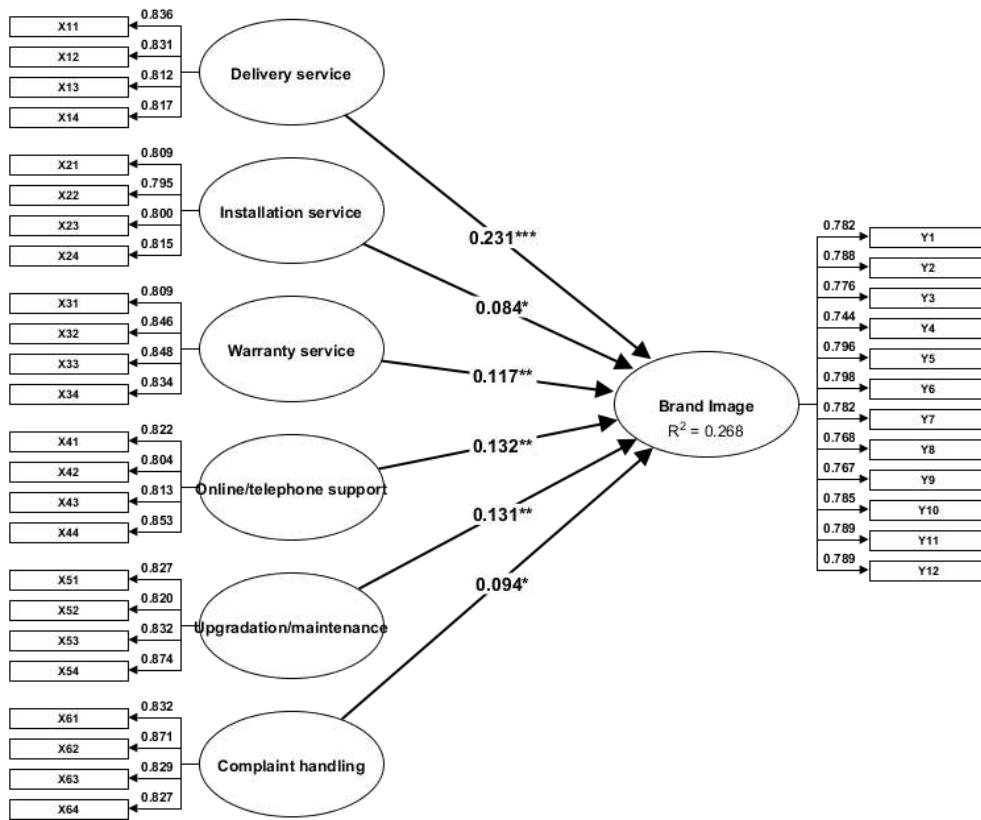


Figure 2 shows the results of the hypothesis testing

Table 2 The effects of after sales service for products on brand image

After sales service for products	Brand Image			
	Beta	t-test	p-value	Cohen's F2
- Delivery service	.231	4.685	.000***	0.055
- Installation service	.085	2.055	.020*	0.008
- Warranty service	.117	2.632	.004**	0.013
- Online/telephone support	.132	3.119	.001***	0.020
- Upgradation/maintenance	.131	3.048	.001***	0.019
- Complaint handling	.094	2.361	.009**	0.010

*** Statistical significance at .001 level

** Statistical significance at .01 level

* Statistical significance at .05 level

From Table 2, it was observed that all aspects of after sales service of products had a statistically significant influence on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center, with a predictive power of 26.8% ($R^2 = 0.268$). The ranking of influence is as follows:

1. Delivery service has a statistically significant influence on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center, with a statistical significance at the .000 level. The level of influence of .231 ($\beta = .231$) and a Cohen's F2 value of 0.055.

2. Online/telephone support has a statistically significant influence on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center, with a statistical significance at the .001 level. The level of influence of .132 ($\beta = .132$) and a Cohen's F2 value of 0.020.

3. Upgradation/maintenance has a statistically significant influence on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center, with a statistical significance at the .001 level. The level of influence of .131 ($\beta = .131$) and a Cohen's F2 value of 0.019.

4. Warranty service has a statistically significant influence on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center, with a statistical significance at the .004 level. The level of influence of .117 ($\beta = .117$) and a Cohen's F2 value of 0.013.

5. Complaint handling has a statistically significant influence on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center, with a statistical significance at the .009 level. The level of influence of .094 ($\beta = .094$) and a Cohen's F2 value of 0.010.

6. Installation service has a statistically significant influence on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center, with a statistical significance at the .020 level. The level of influence of .085 ($\beta = .085$) and a Cohen's F2 value of 0.008.

Conclusions and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that after-sales service components—including delivery service, online/telephone support, upgradation and maintenance, warranty service, complaint handling, and installation service—exert a statistically significant influence on the brand image of the Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center, collectively accounting for a predictive power of 26.8%. This result is consistent with the proposed research hypothesis and underscores the crucial role of post-purchase services in shaping brand perception. Among the various service dimensions examined, delivery service emerged as the most influential factor affecting brand image. This outcome can be attributed to the fact that delivery constitutes the final and highly visible step in the customer's purchasing journey. A prompt, efficient, and damage-free delivery process significantly enhances customer satisfaction and reinforces trust in the brand's operational excellence. Supporting this, Sala et al. (2019) emphasized that effective delivery encompasses proper storage, packaging, and transportation, and that timely delivery of products in good condition plays a vital role in fostering customer loyalty and trust. Following delivery service, online/telephone support was identified as the second most impactful factor on brand image. Access to timely and efficient support via digital or telephonic channels provides reassurance to customers, conveying professionalism and responsiveness, which in turn enhances the perceived

reliability of the brand. Dwivedi et al. (2021) corroborate this by highlighting that such support mechanisms not only increase convenience but also offer opportunities for companies to strengthen customer relationships and generate additional revenue through service upselling. The third significant contributor is upgradation and maintenance services, which, while less influential than delivery and support services, still play an important role in reinforcing the company's commitment to long-term product performance and customer satisfaction. Regular upgrades and maintenance help extend the product's lifecycle, aligning with Rane et al. (2023), who noted that such services are essential in maintaining product relevance, performance, and customer confidence. Warranty services also contribute meaningfully to brand image by instilling a sense of assurance and reliability in the minds of consumers. Nugraha et al. (2024) found that awareness of warranty provisions significantly influences purchasing intentions, particularly among risk-averse consumers. Similarly, Hutahean et al. (2024) argued that warranties are a crucial trust-building mechanism, particularly when customers perceive that the company is prepared to stand behind its products. In addition, complaint handling was found to be important in maintaining customer satisfaction and managing potential reputational risks. While not as dominant as delivery or support services, efficient and transparent handling of customer complaints strengthens long-term trust and mitigates dissatisfaction. Lastly, installation service, though perceived as a standard expectation in the purchase process, still has a modest impact on brand image. A seamless, professional installation experience can boost customer confidence in both the product and the service provider. Yapraklı and Mutlu (2024) noted that high-quality installation services contribute to overall satisfaction and enhance customers' willingness to recommend or repurchase the brand in the future.

Recommendations

Implications of the study

The findings suggest that delivery service has the strongest influence on the brand image of Samsung Electronics (China) Service Center. Therefore, the company should prioritize enhancing its delivery system by ensuring product quality before dispatch, speeding up the delivery process, and improving the usability of order tracking systems to foster trust and improve brand perception. Similarly, online and telephone support services significantly shape customer impressions. To strengthen brand image, the company should focus on employee training to enhance service capabilities, improve responsiveness, and resolve customer issues efficiently. While not as influential, upgradation and maintenance services still play a vital role in sustaining long-term customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Timely management of spare parts and software updates reflects a genuine commitment to customer care beyond the point of sale.

Moreover, warranty services, though less impactful than delivery or support services, are essential for reinforcing customer confidence in the brand's reliability. Accelerating repair or replacement services and offering clear warranty information will further bolster trust. Additionally, efficient complaint handling, although not the primary driver of brand image, is crucial for maintaining customer satisfaction and mitigating dissatisfaction. The company should therefore establish effective systems for managing customer complaints. Lastly, although installation services are often seen as basic expectations, ensuring professional, knowledgeable installers and providing clear product usage instructions can enhance customer satisfaction and subtly contribute to a more favorable brand image.

Future research

Future research should consider expanding the scope of customer service dimensions examined in relation to brand image. Specifically, future studies could investigate additional after-sales services such as product return and refund policies, loyalty programs, and personalized follow-up services. These elements, though not included in the present study, may significantly influence customer perceptions and offer a more holistic view of how comprehensive service strategies contribute to brand image. Exploring such dimensions would allow researchers to better understand the broader impact of after-sales engagement on customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

In addition, future research could benefit from comparative and longitudinal approaches. A cross-cultural comparison of customer service practices and their impact on brand image would reveal whether specific service components hold universal significance or are shaped by cultural expectations. This would be especially valuable in multinational contexts where service standards and consumer behavior vary. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could provide insights into how the effects of customer service evolve over time, offering a deeper understanding of the long-term relationship between consistent service quality and brand equity. Lastly, as technological innovations continue to transform customer service delivery, future research should examine the implications of emerging technologies such as AI-powered service platforms and automated delivery systems. Understanding the role of these advancements in shaping consumer perceptions would provide critical insights for businesses aiming to remain competitive and responsive to shifting customer expectations.

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