

## **Consumer Apathy and Awareness Gap in Wall Tile Selection: A Behavioral Analysis of Interior Material Decision Making**

**Dr.V.Josili**

*Assistant Professor,  
Mepco School of Management Studies,  
Mepco Schlenk Engineering College,  
Sivakasi-626005 India.*

**S. F. Jaffy Christina**

*II MBA,  
Mepco School of Management Studies,  
Mepco Schlenk Engineering College,  
Sivakasi-625005 India.*

### **Abstract**

In contemporary interior design markets, consumers are exposed to an unprecedented volume of product information, aesthetic trends, and technological innovations. Despite this exposure, a noticeable gap persists between consumer awareness and informed decision-making. This study explores the phenomenon of consumer apathy and awareness gap in the selection of wall tile coverings for interior spaces. Using a descriptive research design, primary data were collected from 422 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as chi-square analysis, regression analysis, and mean ranking were employed to examine the relationship between demographic factors, aesthetic considerations, functional attributes, and overall preference. The findings reveal that although consumers claim to prioritize durability, water resistance, and hygiene, their actual purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by visible features such as glossiness and light reflection. The study identifies a behavioral contradiction between expressed awareness and statistically significant decision drivers, highlighting the presence of partial knowledge and decision simplification. The research concludes that consumer apathy manifests not as ignorance but as selective evaluation, where visible and trend-driven attributes overshadow technical performance indicators. The findings offer practical implications for manufacturers, designers, and marketers seeking to bridge the awareness gap in interior material selection.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The modern consumer operates in an environment characterized by information abundance, design inspiration platforms, aggressive marketing communication, and rapid technological advancements. In theory, such access should enhance rational decision-making and promote informed consumption. However, empirical evidence across industries suggests that increased exposure does not automatically translate into deeper evaluation. Instead, many consumers exhibit a behavioral pattern known as consumer apathy, where decision-making becomes passive, simplified, or influenced by superficial cues despite access to relevant information.

This study aims to examine consumer apathy and awareness gaps in the selection of wall tile coverings. It investigates whether consumers genuinely demonstrate informed behavior or whether visible attributes and simplified heuristics dominate decision-making. By analyzing demographic variables, aesthetic preferences, functional priorities, and space-specific choices, the research seeks to uncover behavioral inconsistencies that characterize contemporary interior material consumption.

### **Review of Literature**

Mishra and Banerjee (2007) found that ceramic wall tiles are preferred due to their durability, water resistance, and hygienic properties, particularly in moisture-prone areas such as kitchens and bathrooms. Similarly, Chen and Chang (2013) emphasized that consumers seek materials that balance beauty with practical benefits such as easy maintenance and long-term performance. Hoibo and Nyrud (2010) further argued that user preference varies according to the functional context of interior spaces, where subtle finishes are suitable for restorative environments while expressive designs fit active spaces. Hsu and Chen (2012) observed that tile size, color, and minimalistic patterns influence spatial perception, with larger tiles and neutral tones creating a sense of openness and adaptability. Supporting this, Bonda and Sosnowchik (2014) and Abdelrahman and Hassan (2022) highlighted that modern consumers increasingly consider hygiene, sustainability, and durability when selecting interior materials. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that functional attributes such as moisture resistance, stain resistance, ease of cleaning, and durability play a major role in shaping user preference for wall tiles.

Alongside functional considerations, several researchers emphasize the strong impact of aesthetic perception on consumer decisions. Chen and Huang (2009) reported that brightness, color harmony, and subtle patterns significantly enhance user satisfaction, particularly in residential interiors. Garcia and Navarro (2020) found that glossy and marble-look tiles reinforce perceptions of hygiene and luxury, especially in hospitality settings. Kumar and Sharma (2021) observed growing

preference for digitally printed tiles that combine premium appearance with affordability in the Indian market. Lopez and Dominguez (2023) highlighted that innovative installation patterns enhance visual appeal and modern aesthetics, while Zhang and Ma (2024) demonstrated through a fuzzy-logic model that brightness and texture complexity are measurable predictors of aesthetic preference. Zivkovic et al. (2024) further noted that harmonious surface details positively influence user acceptance. Although these studies establish that both aesthetic and functional factors influence wall tile selection, most prior research treats these dimensions separately. The present study integrates both aspects and identifies that while consumers acknowledge the importance of functional performance, aesthetic elements particularly light reflection and design often dominate final decision-making, indicating the need to examine the balance between awareness and actual preference behavior in interior material selection.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a descriptive research design to examine consumer behavior in wall tile selection. Primary data were collected from 422 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to interior material purchasing decisions. The questionnaire covered demographic details, aesthetic preferences, functional attribute priorities, pricing considerations, and space-specific usage patterns. Secondary data were gathered from academic journals, industry reports, and consumer behavior literature. Data were analyzed using chi-square tests to examine associations between age and aesthetic factors, regression analysis to determine the impact of functional attributes on overall preference, and mean ranking to evaluate the relative importance of aesthetic elements.

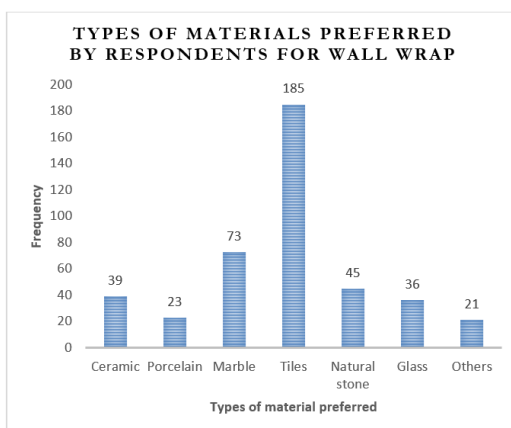
### **Theoretical Background: Consumer Apathy and Awareness Gap**

Consumer apathy is commonly defined as a state of low motivational involvement in decision-making, where individuals minimize cognitive effort. Rather than engaging in detailed product comparison, apathetic consumers rely on familiar cues, recommendations, or visible attributes. This does not necessarily indicate indifference; rather, it reflects bounded rationality the tendency to conserve mental effort in complex decisions. The awareness gap, on the other hand, emerges when there is a disparity between what consumers believe they know and how they actually apply that knowledge. This results in a superficial evaluation process. Interior design decisions often combine emotional and functional components. Aesthetic satisfaction provides immediate psychological gratification, while functional attributes ensure long-term performance. Consumer apathy tends to elevate short-term visual gratification over long-term technical evaluation, especially when technical information appears complex or inaccessible.

## Research Gap

To reduce awareness gaps, manufacturers and retailers must simplify technical communication. Clear labelling of durability ratings, moisture resistance levels, and maintenance requirements can enhance informed decision-making. Interactive showroom demonstrations and comparison charts may encourage deeper evaluation. Design professionals also play a crucial role in guiding consumers toward balanced decisions by explaining both visible and structural attributes.

## Types of materials preferred by respondents for wall wrap



From the above table it is inferred that majority of the respondents prefer tiles for wall wrap where minimum respondents lies in others which includes paint, and other less commonly used finishes. In contrast, materials grouped under “others” appear to be less favored, possibly due to limitations in durability or visual appeal. Overall, the findings highlight a clear dominance of tiles over alternative wall wrap materials among the respondents.

## Relationship between age of the respondents and the aesthetic factors

The study reveals that neutral tones and glossy finishes are the most preferred aesthetic options. Light reflection ranks as the most influential aesthetic factor, followed by style compatibility and tile size. Color coordination and pattern rank lower. The preference for light-reflective tiles suggests spatial reasoning, as brighter surfaces enhance perceived space. However, the uniformity of color preference across age groups indicates standardized aesthetic influence driven by market exposure.

**Table 1**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-square</b>	33.374 <sup>a</sup>	16	<b>.007</b>
<b>Likelihood Ratio</b>	25.303	16	.065
<b>N of valid cases</b>	422		

From the above chi-square table, it is inferred that there is relationship between age of the respondents and Texture and surface which influence user's preference for wall covering. The asymptotic hypothesis for this relationship is below 0.05 and therefore null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 2**

**Functional Attributes: Claimed Importance versus awareness**

Model	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	Sig.	Null Hypothesis
	B	Std Error	Beta			
<b>(Constant)</b>	<b>2.975</b>	<b>.319</b>		<b>9.326</b>		
<b>Highly durable</b>	<b>.103</b>	<b>.045</b>	<b>.319</b>	<b>2.255</b>	<b>.025</b>	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>Strong water resistant</b>	<b>.142</b>	<b>.060</b>	<b>.045</b>	<b>2.350</b>	<b>.019</b>	<b>Rejected</b>
Low maintenance	.003	.056	<b>.060</b>	.058	.954	Accepted
Heat resistance	.033	.044	.056	.747	.456	Accepted
Excellent function and price	-.024	.042	.044	-.572	.567	Accepted

In this analysis, the regression equation is

$$Y = 2.255 + 0.103X_1 + 0.142X_2$$

Were,

X<sub>1</sub> = Highly durable,

X<sub>2</sub> = Strong water resistant,

X<sub>3</sub> = Low maintenance,

X<sub>4</sub> = Heat resistance,

X<sub>5</sub> = Excellent function and price

From the above table it is inferred that there is a relationship between preference for highly durable function and strong water-resistant properties in wall tiles of tiles and overall preference because asymptotic hypothesis is below 0.05 and the null hypothesis is rejected. Also, there is a relationship between strong water-resistant properties in wall tiles and overall preference because null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 3**

**Tile Characteristics Preferred by the Respondents for Kitchen Wall**

<b>Sl.No</b>	<b>Particulars</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>1</b>	Easy to clean tiles	157
<b>2</b>	Heat resistance tiles	112
<b>3</b>	Stain resistance tiles	97
<b>4</b>	Decorative or patterned tiles	56
	<b>Total</b>	422

The data presented in the table indicate that easy-to-clean tiles are the most preferred feature among respondents, with a frequency of 157. Overall, the findings demonstrate that respondents prioritize convenience, hygiene, and performance characteristics over purely decorative aspects when choosing tiles.

**Indicators of Consumer Apathy**

The study identifies several indicators of consumer apathy:

1. Uniform color preference across age groups suggests passive trend acceptance.
2. Moderate price preference indicates reliance on assumed quality rather than technical verification.
3. Limited influence of heat resistance suggests incomplete technical evaluation.
4. Greater emphasis on glossiness indicates focus on immediate visual satisfaction.

These indicators collectively demonstrate that consumer apathy manifests as decision simplification rather than ignorance.

**II. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that consumer behavior in wall tile selection reflects a hybrid pattern of awareness and apathy. While consumers recognize the importance of durability and water resistance, their decisions are strongly influenced by visible features such as gloss and brightness. The awareness gap emerges when expressed importance does not fully translate into measurable decision impact. Bridging this gap requires improved product transparency, educational engagement, and structured guidance.

### **Suggestions**

Wall tile manufacturers may focus more on improving functional features such as water resistance, stain resistance, durability, and ease of cleaning, as these are the most important factors influencing users' preference. Since most users prefer neutral colors and glossy finishes, manufacturers and designers shall offer more designs in these categories to meet customer expectations. Affordable pricing options with good quality can be introduced, as most users prefer moderately priced wall tiles that offer value for money.

### **III. REFERENCES**

1. Chen, Y., & Huang, H. (2009). Aesthetic factors influencing user satisfaction in ceramic wall tiles. *Journal of Design Research*, 8(2), 145–158.
2. Hoibo, O., & Nyrud, A. Q. (2010). Consumer perception of wall covering materials in interior spaces. *Forest Products Journal*, 60(4), 393–403.
3. Hsu, S. H., & Chen, H. Y. (2012). Effects of tile color, pattern, and size on spatial perception. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 32(3), 263–271.
4. Chen, C. F., & Chang, Y. Y. (2013). User evaluation of vinyl and fabric wall coverings in residential interiors. *Journal of Interior Design*, 38(3), 17–32.
5. Nyrud, A. Q., Bringslimark, T., & Bysheim, K. (2014). Psychological benefits of wood surfaces in interior environments. *Forest Products Journal*, 64(3–4), 120–130.
6. Calderon, R., & Ramirez, J. (2014). Influence of surface texture on user perception of ceramic wall finishes. *International Journal of Interior Architecture*, 9(1), 41–53.
7. Burnard, M. D., & Kutnar, A. (2015). Wood and human stress in the built interior: A review. *Wood Science and Technology*, 49(5), 969–986.
8. Cafaro, R., Arno, A., & Rinaldi, M. (2016). Materiality and emotional response in interior wall design. *Design Studies*, 44, 125–141.
9. Muniz, L., & Grasselli, F. (2017). Decorative ceramic tiles as expressions of cultural identity. *Design and Culture*, 9(3), 291–305.
10. Mansour, A., & Hassan, M. (2019). Performance and comfort analysis of ceramic wall tiles in warm climates. *Construction and Building Materials*, 210, 702–711.