

# Branding and Buying Behaviour: A Survey of College Students in Mumbai

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**Abstract:** *Branding has evolved into a crucial factor influencing consumer decision-making, particularly among young and educated individuals. This study investigates how branding affects the buying behaviour of college students pursuing professional courses such as LLB, MBA, B.Tech, and Pharmacy in Mumbai. The research examines the role of brand awareness, perceived quality, pricing, advertising, and peer influence in shaping purchase decisions. A structured questionnaire was administered to 120 students across different academic streams. The collected data were analysed using percentage and tabular methods. The findings indicate that branding significantly impacts students' purchasing behaviour, with a strong inclination toward branded products due to perceived reliability, social identity, and quality assurance. The study concludes that branding strategies, especially through digital platforms, play a vital role in influencing youth consumers.*

**Keywords:** Branding, consumer, decision -making, strategies, advertising and purchasing- behaviour.

## 1. Introduction

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the systematic process through which individuals identify their needs, search for information, evaluate alternatives, make purchase decisions, and assess post-purchase satisfaction. This process is influenced by a combination of psychological, social, cultural, and economic factors. In modern markets, one of the most powerful influences on this process is branding.

Branding goes beyond merely assigning a name or logo to a product. It is a strategic process through which firms create a distinct identity and personality for their products or services in the minds of consumers. A brand represents a set of associations, perceptions, expectations, and emotional connections that differentiate one product from another. It serves as a signal of consistency, quality, and reliability, reducing the perceived risk involved in purchasing decisions.

Branding operates at both functional and symbolic levels. Functionally, it assures consumers about the quality and performance of a product. Symbolically, it conveys social meanings such as status, lifestyle, and personal identity. For college students particularly those pursuing professional courses like LLB, MBA, B.Tech, and Pharmacy brands often act as tools for self-expression and social positioning. The choice of branded clothing, gadgets, or accessories is not always driven by necessity but by the desire to align with certain social groups or aspirational lifestyles. In today's highly competitive and globalized marketplace, branding has evolved into a sophisticated mechanism supported by integrated marketing communication, digital media, and influencer culture. Social media platforms play a crucial role in shaping brand perception by continuously exposing students to advertisements, celebrity endorsements, peer reviews, and trending products. This constant exposure creates a psychological reinforcement loop, where familiarity with a brand increases trust and preference, often leading to habitual buying behaviour.

## 2. Review of Literature

**Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller (2016)** explained that branding influences consumer buying behaviour by creating differentiation and emotional connection. Their work highlights that effective branding strategies, including advertising and digital marketing, significantly impact consumer perception and loyalty. They also emphasized the growing role of social media in shaping brand awareness among young consumers.

**T. Ndhlovu and T. Maree (2023)** analysed the concept of **consumer-brand engagement (CBE)** in both product and service contexts. Their findings suggest that brand trust, interactivity, and self-expression significantly influence consumer engagement, which directly affects buying behaviour. The study highlights that modern consumers actively interact with brands, especially through digital platforms.

**Anwar Sadat Shimul (2022)** conducted a comprehensive review on **brand attachment** and its influence on consumer behaviour. The study concluded that emotional bonding between consumers and brands significantly affects purchase intention, loyalty, and repeat buying behaviour. It emphasizes that branding is not only functional but also emotional and psychological in nature.

**Pradeep Rathore, Esha Saha, Krantiraditya Dhalmahapatra, and Murali Sambasivan (2024)** studied the **impact of branding on purchase decisions in the apparel industry** using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. The results indicate that branding stimuli such as brand image, store environment, and promotions significantly influence consumers' internal responses, leading to purchase decisions.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

- To study the awareness of branded products among college students.
- To analyse the impact of branding on buying behaviour.

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- To identify factors influencing purchase decisions (price, quality, advertisement, peer influence).
- To examine preference for branded vs non-branded products.
- To evaluate the role of social media in branding influence.

#### 4. Research Methodology

The present study is based on **descriptive research design**, which aims to systematically describe the characteristics, preferences, and behaviour of college students regarding the subject under study. Descriptive research is appropriate as it helps in understanding the current trends and patterns without manipulating any variables.

The **area of the study** is confined to Mumbai City, which is one of the major metropolitan cities in India with a diverse population of college students from different educational backgrounds. This makes it a suitable location for conducting the research and obtaining varied responses.

The **sample size** for the study consists of 120 college students. This sample size is considered adequate to draw meaningful conclusions and represent the target population within the limitations of time and resources.

The study uses a **convenience sampling method**, where respondents are selected based on their easy accessibility and willingness to participate. This method is practical and time-saving, especially when the population is large and widely dispersed.

Both **primary and secondary data** have been used for the purpose of the study. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to college students, which helped in gathering first-hand information relevant to the research objectives. Secondary data was obtained from various sources such as journals, research articles, books, and credible online sources to support and strengthen the findings.

#### 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This analysis presents findings based on primary data collected from students representing multiple colleges in Mumbai. The data offers a localized perspective on the subject matter, with the resulting trends and figures detailed in the subsequent analysis

**Table 1: Preference for Branded Products**

Preference	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Branded Products	90	75%
Non-Branded Products	30	25%
<b>Total</b>	120	100%

**Interpretation:** Out of a total sample size of 120 respondents, a significant majority - 90 students, representing 75% of the group- indicated a preference for branded products. In contrast, only 30 respondents, or 25%, opted for non-branded products. So, majority (75%) prefer branded products.

**Table 2: Factors Influencing Buying Behaviour**

Factor	Respondents	Percentage
Quality	40	33%
Brand Image	30	25%
Price	20	17%
Advertisement	15	13%
Peer Influence	15	12%

**Interpretation:** Closely following quality is Brand Image, which influences 30 respondents (25%). This indicates that a quarter of the surveyed students are driven by the reputation and status associated with specific labels. Interestingly, Price ranks third, cited by only 20 respondents (17%). This reinforces the idea that for Mumbai's collegiate youth, the perceived value and prestige of a product often outweigh its immediate cost. The remaining factors, Advertisement and Peer Influence, play a smaller but equal role in the decision-making process. 15 respondents (13%) are primarily swayed by marketing campaigns, while another 15 (12%) - accounting for the slight rounding difference in the percentage- rely on the recommendations of their social circles. Overall, the interpretation of this data suggests a sophisticated consumer base that values substance and brand identity over mere affordability or external social pressure. Quality and brand image are the most important factors.

**Table 3: Influence of Social Media**

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	85	71%
No	35	29%

**Interpretation:** The table provided illustrates the significant impact of social media on the purchasing behaviour of college students in Mumbai. Out of the 120 students surveyed, a dominant 85 respondents, or 71%, admitted that their buying decisions are influenced by social media platforms. This high percentage underscores the powerful role that digital marketing, influencers, and online trends play in shaping the consumption patterns of the youth today. Conversely, a smaller portion of the sample, consisting of 35 respondents or 29%, stated that social media does not influence their purchasing choices. This suggests that while nearly one-third of the students remain independent of digital persuasion perhaps relying on traditional shopping methods or personal necessity—the vast majority are digitally engaged consumers. Ultimately, the data confirms that social media is a primary driver of consumerism within the Mumbai collegiate demographic, serving as a vital touchpoint for brands looking to reach this audience. Social media significantly influences buying behaviour.

#### Impact of Branding on Buying Behaviour

- 1) The first step is for marketers to develop the brand's image in order to influence consumers' purchasing decisions. It all comes down to a product's physical appeal, catchy slogans, reputation, and other factors.
- 2) The brand reputation plays a significant role in establishing customer and marketer trust. The brand will come to dominate the decision-making process due to its allure and intrigue.
- 3) The brand influences the customer's decision to buy the product by generating interest in the product in the customer's mind.

- 4) The brand will give the customer a positive vibe that will influence his purchase decision.
  - 5) The consumer will favour products with strong brand perception in the market, so the marketer must build and sustain strong brand perception for the product.
  - 6) Every part of the brand is crucial since its perfection will enable the marketer to make the product stick in the thoughts of consumer
- 1) It is suggested that companies should focus on building strong and meaningful brand identities that go beyond just logos and advertisements. Since college students are highly aware of brands, marketers should emphasize quality, consistency, and value to maintain long-term trust and loyalty among young consumers.
  - 2) Businesses should also adopt responsible branding strategies. As students are influenced by brand image and social pressure, companies must avoid misleading advertisements and exaggerated claims. Ethical marketing practices will help in building credibility and sustaining a positive brand reputation in the long run.

## 6. Findings

- 1) The first objective of the study was to examine the awareness of branded products among college students. The findings reveal that a large majority of students are well aware of various branded products available in the market. This high level of awareness can be attributed to continuous exposure through advertisements, social media platforms, and peer interactions. Students from LLB, MBA, B.Tech, and Pharmacy streams demonstrate a strong familiarity with popular brands, indicating that branding has successfully penetrated the youth segment.
  - 2) The second objective aimed to analyse the impact of branding on buying behaviour. The study clearly shows that branding plays a significant role in influencing students' purchase decisions. Branded products are often perceived as more reliable, stylish, and of superior quality. As a result, students tend to prefer brands that align with their personality and lifestyle, highlighting the strong psychological and emotional influence of branding.
  - 3) The third objective was to identify the key factors influencing purchase decisions, such as price, quality, advertisement, and peer influence. The analysis indicates that while all these factors are important, brand name and perceived quality have a stronger impact compared to price. Advertisements and peer influence also contribute significantly by shaping opinions and creating a desire to purchase certain products. This suggests that buying behaviour is a combination of both rational and social factors.
  - 4) The fourth objective focused on examining the preference for branded versus non-branded products. The results show that most students prefer branded products over non-branded ones. This preference is mainly driven by trust, quality assurance, and the status associated with well-known brands. Non-branded products are generally considered less reliable, which further strengthens the inclination toward branded alternatives.
  - 5) The final objective was to evaluate the role of social media in influencing branding. The study finds that social media plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions and attitudes toward brands. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and online advertisements expose students to trends, reviews, and influencer endorsements, which significantly impact their buying decisions. Social media not only increases brand awareness but also creates a strong desire to follow trends and maintain social identity.
- 3) It is recommended that marketers make effective use of social media platforms, as they play a significant role in shaping students' buying behaviour. However, the content should be informative and authentic rather than purely promotional. Collaborations with genuine influencers and the use of relatable content can enhance brand engagement among college students.
  - 4) Students, on the other hand, should be encouraged to make rational and informed purchase decisions. Educational institutions can play a role by creating awareness about consumer rights and promoting financial literacy. This will help students evaluate products based on quality and necessity rather than just brand image or peer influence.
  - 5) Furthermore, companies should consider pricing strategies carefully. Since students are often price-sensitive, offering student discounts, affordable product ranges, and value-for-money options can increase brand preference without compromising accessibility.
  - 6) Finally, future research can be conducted with a larger sample size and in different geographical areas to gain a broader understanding of consumer behaviour. Comparative studies across different age groups or educational backgrounds may also provide deeper insights into the role of branding.

## 8. Conclusion

The study concludes that branding has a significant and direct impact on the buying behaviour of college students in Mumbai. It influences not only their product preferences but also their perceptions of quality, trust, and social status. Students from professional courses such as LLB, MBA, B.Tech, and Pharmacy are particularly influenced by branding due to their exposure to modern lifestyles and digital media. While branding provides several advantages, such as reducing risk and enhancing confidence in purchase decisions, it also has certain drawbacks. Excessive reliance on branding may lead to impulsive buying and increased social pressure among students.

Therefore, it is important for both marketers and consumers to maintain a balance. Companies should focus on ethical branding and value creation, while students should develop awareness and make rational purchasing decisions. Overall, branding remains a powerful force in shaping modern consumer behaviour, especially among the youth.

## 7. Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study suggestion and recommendations are as follows:

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