



# **THE ROLE OF BRAND ACTIVISM IN INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN THE INDIAN SPOERTS INDUSTRY: STUDY OF MUMBAI METROPOLITAN REGION.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the increasing power of brand activism in shaping Indian sports consumers' behavior, with special reference to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. As the world is turning towards value-driven consumer purchases, consumers are asking brands to be socially, environmentally, and ethically accountable. In the sporting context, where emotional attachment and celebrity endorsements dominate, brand activism can re-engineer consumers' trust, loyalty, and buying intention.

The research uses a quantitative approach based on primary data collected through systematic web-based questionnaires sent to 100 respondents. Analysis of consumer awareness, attitude, and behavior towards activism-spurred campaigns launched by Indian sports brands such as but not limited to Puma India and HRX is investigated. The critical parameters such as trust, authenticity, and long-term loyalty towards the brand are analyzed to measure the impact of brand activism towards consumer loyalty.

Research indicates that celebrity endorsements can create initial interest but fail to create trust or long-term interest. Rather, consumers value more open communication, quantifiable social commitments, and shared values of the brand with their own values. Most of the respondents favored brands that were involved in sustainability programs, health programs, and community service—especially when such activities are highlighted through online media such as Instagram and YouTube.

Evidence from research leads to the conclusion that brand activism, when authentic and meaningfully embedded, has a strong positive effect on consumer opinion, brand value, and loyalty among urban Indian consumers. Brand activists should not be performative in their actions, however, but coherent, transparent, and relevant to motivate the socially conscious audience today. The findings are worthwhile insights for marketers, brand managers, and policymakers interested in establishing purpose-led brands in a competitive sports culture.

**Keywords:** Brand Activism, Consumer Behaviour, Trust, Sports Marketing, Mumbai, Celebrity Endorsement, Brand Loyalty

## **Introduction :**

Brand activism was once one of the more specialized marketing ideas but is now one of the most significant aspects of a brand image, especially where there is strong emotional identification such as in the case of sport. The more socially aware society becomes, the more consumers want to observe firms reacting to issues that are relevant to current society values. For the world of sport, this kind of behavior is particularly appropriate, where celebrity endorsement and emotion-led loyalty have long been the major drivers of customer opinion. Nowadays, consumers do not just consider product quality, but also the ethics and social cause of the brand.

On this type of basis, brand activism is a significant reason why companies are attempting to differentiate and build stronger emotional connections with consumers. Large international brands such as Nike, Adidas, and Puma have used activism to advance causes of inclusivity, sustainability, and mental well-being to huge success. Even in India, the practice is catching up, with Indian sports brands increasingly being inspired by cause-based marketing. Mumbai, sporting and commercial hub and cosmopolitan city, is an intriguing city in which to examine consumer activism overflowing into consumer behavior. The study will try to explore the impact of brand activism on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention within the urban setup of Mumbai.

Mumbai, commercial and sporting center and cosmopolitan city, is a fascinating city in which to explore consumer activism spilling over into consumer behavior. This research will attempt to investigate how brand activism influences consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention in the bustling urban context of Mumbai.



## Literature Review

Brand activism is not merely a public relations strategy; it is a paradigm shift in how brands interact with their stakeholders. Kotler and Sarkar (2018) discuss how brand activism has evolved from being an aspect of corporate social responsibility (CSR) to a more fluid and interconnected component of brand identity. Whereas CSR is often a separate department or entity, brand activism is woven into the very nature of a brand's purpose, voice, and daily habits.

Ohanian's (1990) model of source credibility is central to the understanding of how activist brand messages are dealt with by consumers. According to the model, the impact of any communication will be a function of three variables: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. In India, celebrities like Virat Kohli and Hrithik Roshan are employed to amplify these messages, but endorsement must be felt as authentic and in line with the values of the brand if it is to be effective.

Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) find that customers are more likely to develop brand loyalty towards those brands that demonstrate genuine commitment to social issues. Porter and Kramer (2011) also affirm this position, stating that shared value creation—whereby companies meet social needs as well as business goals—is the way forward in strategic marketing.

Literature also implies the importance of transparency, measurable outcomes, and frequent communication in maintaining the credibility of brand activism campaigns. In India, where commercial intentions are always suspect, brands need to tread cautiously to avoid accusations of opportunism.

## Research Objectives and Hypotheses

### Objectives:

- To examine the extent of consumer awareness and perception of brand activism in the sports industry.
- To analyze the influence of brand activism on consumer trust and brand loyalty.
- To evaluate the impact of different forms of brand activism on purchasing decisions.
- To identify key factors that drive consumer support for activism-driven brands.

### Hypotheses:

- H0: Brand activism positively influences consumer perception of Indian sports brands.
- H1: Consumers in Mumbai are more likely to prefer brands that engage in activism aligned with their personal values.
- H0: Brand activism has a direct impact on consumer trust, loyalty, and purchasing behavior.
- H1: Indian sports brands that actively engage in activism see higher levels of consumer engagement compared to those that do not.
- H0: Sports brands that engage in activism unrelated to their core identity may face backlash from certain consumer segments.
- H1: The authenticity of brand activism significantly impacts consumer acceptance and trust in the brand.
- H0: Digital and social media campaigns significantly amplify the reach and impact of brand activism efforts.

## Research Methodology

**Research Design:** Descriptive and quantitative research design is employed to evaluate consumer attitudes and behavior.

**Data Collection:** Primary data were gathered using Google Forms with 100 valid responses, while secondary data were gathered from journals, market reports, and websites of brands.

**Sample Size:** 100 participants.

**Sampling Technique:** Non-probability convenience sampling, specifically among consumers who live in Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

**Data Analysis Software:** Microsoft Excel and SPSS were used to clean the data, tabulate, and analyze it.

**Target Audience:** Individuals aged 18-55+, including students, professionals, and individuals who are self-employed.

**Survey Design:**

This study used a quantitative survey method in collecting data on consumer attitudes towards brand activism in the Indian sporting sector, focusing on the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Sample Size: 100 respondents

Sampling Technique: Non-probability, convenience sampling

Target Group: People aged 16 years and above, including students, professionals, and sports enthusiasts

Data Collection Tool: Structured questionnaire using Google Forms

Distribution: Online media (WhatsApp, Instagram, Email)

Survey Format: Closed-ended questions (multiple choice, Likert scale, multi-select)

**Key Focus Areas:**

Demographics (age, gender, occupation)

Brand activism awareness and perception

Perceived authenticity of Indian sports brands

Influence on trust, loyalty, and purchasing behavior

Celebrities' influence

Preferred activism causes and media channels

Ethics: Participation was anonymous and voluntary. Personal information was not gathered. The survey was for academic purposes only.

**Data Analysis & Interpretation**

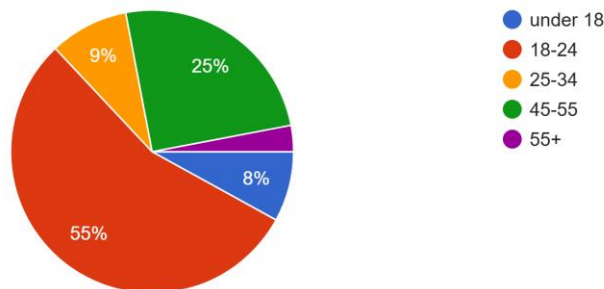
This section presents and interprets the results obtained through a structured survey conducted among 100 respondents from the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. The aim was to assess the extent to which brand activism influences consumer behavior in the Indian sports industry.

**Demographic Profile of Respondents****Age Distribution:**

The majority of participants (55%) were aged 18–24, followed by 25–34 (25%), indicating a youthful audience actively engaged with digital content and brand narratives. Respondents aged 45–55 (9%) and below 18 (8%) contributed modestly, while those above 55 represented only 3%.

What is your age group?

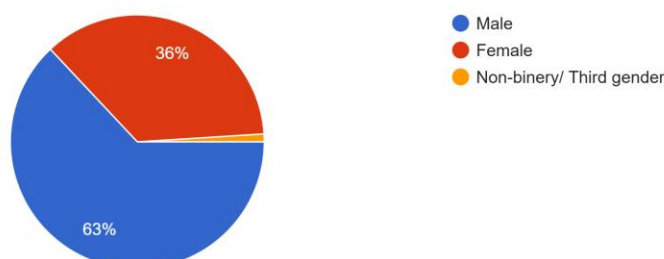
100 responses

**Gender Representation:**

Male respondents formed 63% of the sample, female respondents 36%, and non-binary participants 1%. This shows a relatively balanced representation, albeit with a slight male dominance, which reflects sports audience trends in India.

What is your gender

100 responses

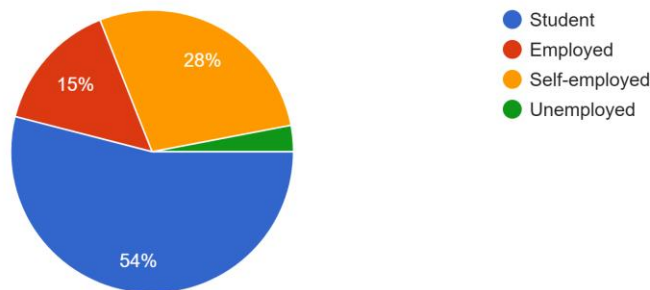


**Occupational Background:**

Students formed the largest occupational group (54%), followed by working professionals (28%) and self-employed individuals (15%). Only 3% were unemployed. This suggests that the sample consists mainly of emerging and early-career consumers with purchasing power.

What is your occupation?

100 responses

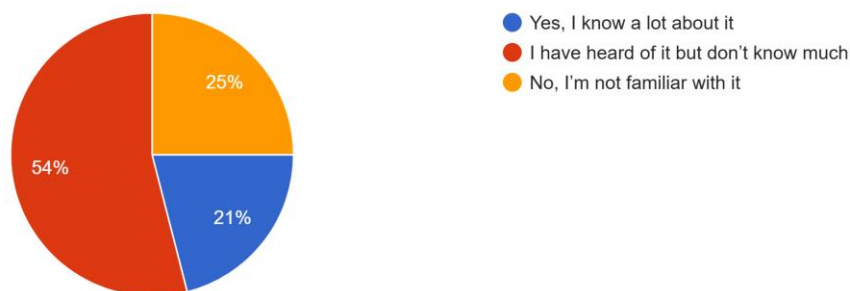
**Awareness of Brand Activism**

Participants were asked if they had heard about brand activism in the sports industry:

- 54% were aware of the term but lacked in-depth understanding.
- 21% were well-informed.
- 25% had no prior awareness.

Have you heard about brand activism in the sports industry before?

100 responses



**Interpretation:** Although the concept of brand activism is gaining popularity, a significant proportion of consumers still require better education and clearer messaging from brands to understand its role and relevance.

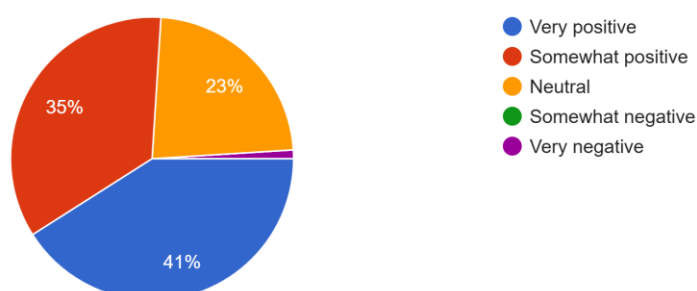
**Consumer Attitudes Toward Activism**

When asked how they felt about Indian sports brands supporting social or environmental causes:

- 41% responded very positively.
- 35% said they were somewhat positive.
- 23% remained neutral.
- Only 1% expressed a negative opinion.

How do you feel about Indian sports brands supporting social or environmental causes?

100 responses



**Interpretation:** There is a strong positive sentiment toward brands engaging in activism, with the majority of consumers viewing such efforts favorably.

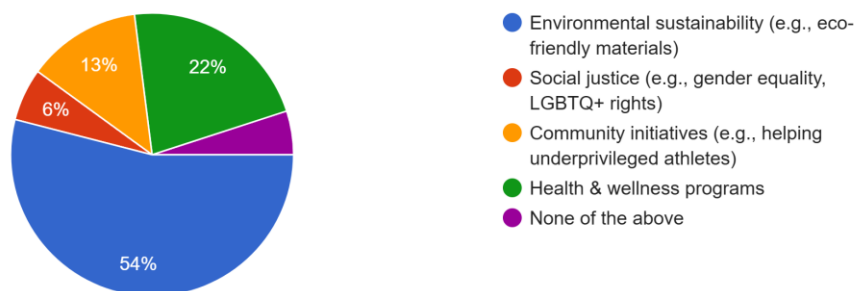
#### Types of Activism That Resonate

Respondents were asked to select the type of activism they most connect with:

- Environmental sustainability: 54%
- Health and wellness: 22%
- Community initiatives: 13%
- Social justice (e.g., gender equality): 6%
- None: 5%

Which type of brand activism do you connect with the most?

100 responses



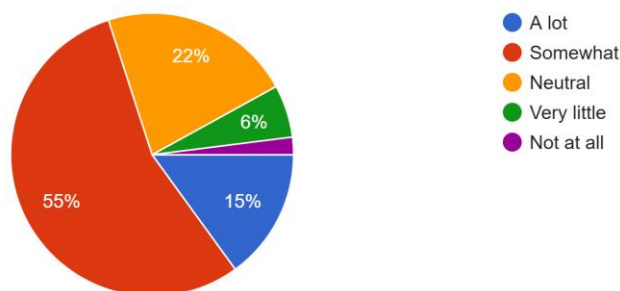
**Interpretation:** Environmental causes clearly dominate consumer preferences, followed by health and community-based activism. This suggests that brands focusing on sustainability will likely gain higher consumer approval.

#### Influence on Brand Perception and Loyalty

- **Influence on Perception:**  
70% of consumers said that a brand's activism somewhat or strongly influences how they view the brand.
- **Influence on Buying Decisions:**  
67% reported that they had chosen a sports brand specifically because of its activism.
- **Influence on Loyalty:**  
30% said they would switch brands if the company discontinued its activism efforts, while 51% said it would depend on the reason.

How much does a brand's activism influence your perception of them?

100 responses



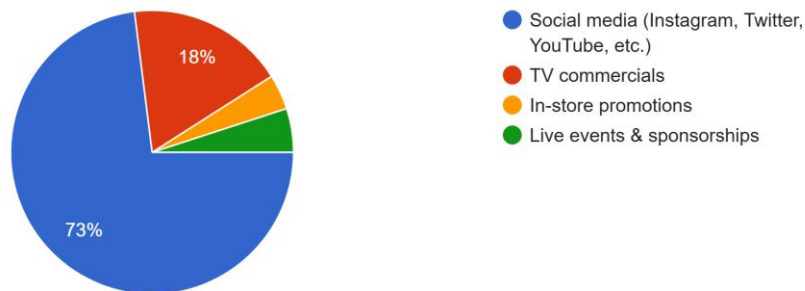
**Interpretation:** Brand activism plays a significant role in shaping consumer preference, image, and long-term loyalty. A brand's activism can directly affect buying decisions and customer retention.

#### Communication Channels for Activism

- 73% encountered activism through social media (Instagram, YouTube, Twitter).
- 18% through television.
- 4% through in-store promotions.
- 5% through live events.

### Where do you most often see brands promoting activism?

100 responses



**Interpretation:** Social media is by far the most effective medium for brands to communicate their activism, especially with younger audiences who dominate online platforms.

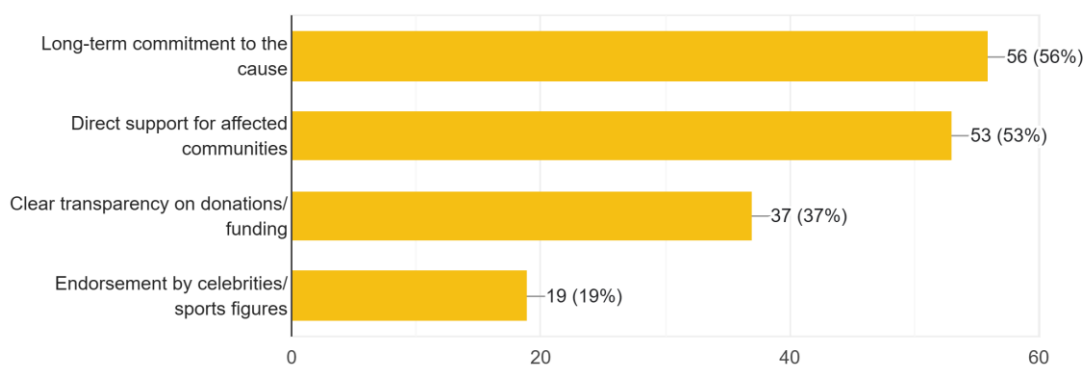
### What Makes a Brand Activism Campaign Impactful?

Responses (Multiple Selections Allowed):

- 56% – Long-term commitment to the cause
- 50% – Direct support to affected communities
- 37% – Transparency in donations/funding
- 19% – Celebrity/sports figure endorsements

### What makes a brand activism campaign impactful for you? (Select all that apply)

100 responses



### Interpretation:

The majority of respondents (56%) believe that sustained commitment is the most impactful trait of a brand activism campaign. This highlights the importance of consistency over short-term publicity efforts. Half of the respondents (50%) value direct community engagement, reinforcing that consumers want brands to make a real-world difference. Transparency in how funds or efforts are utilized (37%) is another key trust factor. In contrast, only 19% cited celebrity endorsements as impactful, further validating that substance outweighs star power in consumer eyes.

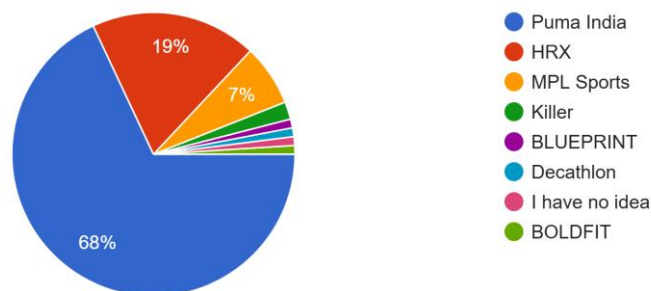
### Top Indian Sports Brand in Activism

Responses (Single Selection):

- 68% – Puma India
- 19% – HRX
- 7% – MPL Sports
- 6% – Other or “Not Sure”

In your opinion, which Indian sports brand is doing the best job in activism?

100 responses



### Interpretation:

Puma India was overwhelmingly chosen (68%) as the brand that best exemplifies activism in the Indian sports industry. Its visible campaigns, environmental focus, and association with figures like Virat Kohli likely contribute to this perception. HRX followed at 19%, benefitting from Hrithik Roshan's fitness-driven influence. MPL Sports (7%) had limited recognition, and the small percentage who chose "Other" or "Not Sure" suggests that most consumers associate activism with only a few prominent brands.

### Findings

Based on the survey of 100 respondents in Mumbai, the following key findings emerged:

Study findings are presented as follows:

High Awareness: Most of the consumers are familiar with brand activism but vary with knowledge levels.

Trust and Loyalty: Transparent and open activism greatly increases consumer trust and brand loyalty.

Social Media Influence: Social media platforms, most notably Instagram and YouTube, are primarily responsible for the visibility and appeal of activism.

Reduced Celebrity Endorsement Impact: While helpful, celebrity endorsements are secondary to the sincerity and genuineness of the brand's activism.

Consumer Expectations: Long-term commitment, direct impact, and openness are most prized in building consumer trust.

### Suggestions

- Align Activism with Brand Identity: Brands should support causes that align with their core values and long-term vision.
- Enhance Transparency: Regularly update consumers on the impact and progress of campaigns.
- Foster Community Engagement: Invest in grassroots efforts that directly benefit local communities.
- Reduce Celebrity Dependence: Focus on real-world actions instead of relying solely on star power.
- Leverage Digital Storytelling: Use engaging content to highlight real stories and outcomes associated with activism.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that brand activism, along with transparency and authenticity, serves as a tool for building trust among consumers and creating brand loyalty. Particularly in the Indian sports market, where there is highly emotional involvement, activism has the potential to bestow competitive edge on brands. Shallow or performative strategies, however, have the risk of backfiring in one's face, emphasizing the need for earnest long-term measures.

Indian consumers, especially from urban markets such as Mumbai, are educated and value-driven. Brands that resonate with purpose through an identification with social good and demonstrate the success of long-term effects will increasingly build more sustainable emotional connections and brand loyalty. The future for branding in India is not about the quality of the product but about purpose, action, and effect.

### Recommendations

Based on this research, the following is suggested to Indian sports brands if they want to engage in effective brand activism:

#### 1. Be Consistent and Genuine

The brand must engage in long-term activities that reflect the core values of a brand. This consistency of action and communication creates trust and demonstrates that activism is not a short-term marketing campaign.

## 2. Focus on Community-Centric Actions

Instead of too much depending on advertising and sponsorship, brands have to directly communicate with the communities they want to benefit. Grassroots communication accomplishes more and does it sincerely.

## 3. Increase Transparency

Brands have to display publicly how their money is utilized for activism. Donations, successes with projects, and collaborations have to be disclosed. Transparency eliminates suspicion by the public.

## 4. Reduce Overdependence on Celebrity Endorsement

Though celebrity endorsement can provide greater visibility, it is not necessarily with trust. Companies should be certain that action speaks louder than words behind it.

## 5. Look for Partnerships for More Impacts

Collaboration with NGOs, government, or other institutions of trust will provide more opportunities through joint efforts and minimizing resources. It may also potentially bring about credibility and reach more.

## 6. Inform Consumers About the Cause

Other than promoting their activities, brands also need to spend time educating individuals regarding the cause that they are donating to. Well-informed consumers will be likely to engage and donate to the brand's cause.

On the whole, Indian sports brands do have an actual potential to make a meaningful contribution by functioning as activist brands. But for actually making an actual difference among consumers' perceptions and creating meaningful brand loyalty, their initiatives need to be honest, open, and well-founded in social responsibility.

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