



# **The Role of Branding in Youth Purchasing Decisions: A Kerala-Based Study**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Branding has become an important aspect of marketing today. The reason is the way of delivering required information to a customer on the product associated with the brand name of the company. A brand is described as a set of intangible elements, such as a name, logo, or slogan, that labels a product and distinguishes it from those of competitors. In simple terms, a brand is a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, or a combination of these things that causes a product of one seller to be distinguished from those of other sellers. It is a mark or distinctive name used by a seller for goods and services to differentiate them from goods and services of others. Brands can be classified into two groups: local brands and global brands.

Many local brands are quite popular among buyers in Kerala as compared to international brands. Some consumers prefer local brands because of some characteristics, as they evoke motivational and emotional responses which can influence the attitudes toward the brands and purchase intentions. A lot of research work has already been conducted on branding across various sectors in India as well as abroad. There lies a research gap in studying how youth in Kerala perceive branding personalities comparing global and local brands. The study of brands is confined to Coffee, Beverages, Snacks & Edibles. The findings reported in the paper reveal that both types of brands are popular and there exists a good number of differences among buyers.

In earlier studies, a lot of research work has already been done in the area of branding across several sectors like CLOTHes and Small Scale Industries in areas like branding and its impact. But branding in the context of any unsolicited NGO is seldom discussed until now. Kerala watercolor paintings, famous for its unique traditional and aesthetic beauty, across the globe need professional branding for its continued survival. Considered with the above background, this study attempted to assess the present status of branding and its attributes among watercolor paintings and its market difficulties.

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## **1. Introduction**

The influence of brands and branded goods on young consumers in India is rapidly growing as this country becomes one of the largest consumer markets in the world. The new generation is getting exposed to global brands and branded goods with the increasing influence of Western culture, lifestyle, education (Sengupta, 2014), and mass media. India is increasingly being seen as a young nation offering unrestricted opportunities in terms of a sizable and diversified market, with an estimated total population of over 1 billion, and 65% of the population below the age of 35. The Indian youth are more detail-oriented, responsive and brand aware, which significantly differentiates the youth segment from the general consumer segment. The share of youth-based consumption is expected to significantly increase in general consumption expenditure over the years. Youth in India have immense spending power estimated at USD 320 billion (Al Salamin et al., 2016). With the globalization of the Indian economy and opening up of the Indian market after the reform in 1991, Indian consumers look beyond local products to global offerings. Rural and semi-urban markets are significant contributors to India's growing consumer marketplace, where the middle class is increasing rapidly. A burgeoning youth population, among whom 46% is below the age of 25, is pushing brand makers to extend their portfolio accommodating small packs and budgets to tap the micro-segment.

The fast-paced lifestyles, enormous aspirations, rampant purchases and expression of individuality through products and brands, and rising disposable incomes make youth consumers a lucrative segment. Marketers across categories are wooing the youth by offering products that speak about their aspirations and desires. However, the youth segment is highly volatile and fragmented, and great attention needs to be paid to their unmet needs and demands as well as behavioral, cultural, environmental, social and technological factors. Youth aspirational values are notably different as they are increasingly influenced by cultural, ethnographic, and contextual factors. Brands are thus forced to communicate differently and creatively to actively involve and engage with this important segment that is most likely to stay brand loyal and thus reward the manufacturers. The purpose of this study is to explore the branding beliefs and consumption values of youth in Kerala, South India, and study the impact of the different branding beliefs on the consumption values.

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## 2. Literature Review

Branding helps create a long-lasting image in the minds of consumers. A number of brands sell the same product, few of them manage to persuade customers toward them. A brand name or color also creates image in the minds of consumers. There are three stages in building a brand. They are brand loyalty, brand associations and brand awareness. The former plays the most important role in securing hegemony in a category and the latter enhances competitive advantage through increasing equality over customers and enhancing about brand knowledge. Brand association is the most important stage that helps satisfy consumer needs. There are two types of brand associations, favourable and unique associations. The former creates positive differentiation in brand attributes and the former creates stronger brand associations than competitive brands.

In a developing country like India with a population of 1.2 billion it is important to have a proper understanding of the youth consumer market. The product price also plays an important role to the youth consumers. Quality good image, price evaluation factors and collectivism and youth consumers. Most South Indian consumers look for demonstrations and have interactions than North Indian consumers. Clothing category advertisement is smoother after financial commitment but youth consumers in different states follow different processes. The youth cohort is most valued because of balanced knowledge and income to impulsive buy, awareness and expectations. Research on market segmentation is least therefore Indian youth consumers favour stereo-typed advertisement style. Further research examines brand consciousness, social media, values, celebrity endorsement and investment in branding/content marketing measures as important antecedents of consumer markets.

Branding creates consumer loyalty understandably the most innovative brands have been the most successful ones. Brita is essentially a brand of water filters and is increasingly being used for Brita filtered water. Apple cannot be confused with any other company in mobile category or even in computer. Statement is equivalent in the Fiji Islands or Kansas.

Branding creates consumer loyalty for fast moving consumer goods, industrial and corporate purpose. Consumer loyalty is essentially a psychological attachment to an identity having its associates and better product realization. Industrial loyalty is a precondition for consumer loyalty.

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## 3. Research Methodology

The study investigates the impact of branding on consumer purchasing decisions among university students in Kerala. A practical and useful tool for managers is developed in the form of a questionnaire, because branding plays a significant role in purchasing decisions for fast-moving consumer goods among the youth. This research adds significantly to marketing theory and practice in this area and can serve as a base for further research as it is not a last word on the subject but a first step to further research. Specifically, while it is understood that branding plays a role, there is sparse empirical research in the context of its impact on consumer purchasing decisions among young adults with a country focus on India and a state focus on Kerala. In the light of this gap, the value of the study is presented. Therefore, this research adds value to both theory and practice in a specific context which has not been explored yet, and lays the foundation for further research. There are studies conducted on branding but in the context of India it is limited. Very few studies are done in the state of Kerala, one of the most literate states in India, which also houses a significant youth population present in the universities. This research addresses a gap in the said context and adds value to marketing theory and practice.

The results of this research would help marketers understand the factors impacting youth purchases decisions. By understanding the insights of the branding and the impact of branding on purchasing decisions marketers can design effective marketing communication which would help them to improve sales. The cooperation of consumers will also vary in purchase decision and some may forget the branding, and that brings a challenge in marketing. How marketers motivate consumer towards specific brands is an area to research further. Also the competition intensity of market and role of celebrities on branding is an unanswered question.

A survey method is used and a semi-structured questionnaire was developed to gather the responses of students studying in colleges and universities in Kerala. After the collection of responses, the data was analyzed using statistical tools frequency and descriptive analysis, Correlation, Multiple Statistical testing. Generally, statistical tests were conducted to analyze the data. The result shows that branding plays a significant role in triggering the purchase decisions of youth on fast-moving consumer goods being consumed like shampoos, soaps, biscuits, tiffin box, energy drink, juice, mineral water, mosquito repellent, and perfume. How brands, Brand Image has an impact on the purchase decisions of youth is discussed. Consumer value is presented as the dependent variable and brand loyalty, the motivation of branding, brand awareness, the impact of advertisement, convenience bought, trusted friend, and other factors as the independent variables.

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## 4. Findings

Incipient days of retail branding in the 1980s, manufacturer branding and private brand substitutes captivated a greater patronage from Kerala consumers. Slowly and steadily, consumer perceptions shifted to branded apparel products. The consumer purchasing pattern was motivated by multiple factors, significantly influenced by aspects such as gender, financial wellness, and locality. This study centers on these factors in the situation of apparel purchases by Kerala-based youth retail consumers. This study aims to analyze the current scenario of branding on the decision-making on youth purchasing and the roles of gender and financial wellness of the consumers. The day was not far off when brands ruled the purchasing, use, and consumption pattern of consumers, resulting in brand positioning, brand choice, attitude toward brands, brand loyalty, and many more advances in brand perception (Sengupta, 2014). To finalize the parameters of research, a comprehensive literature review was conducted, and a list of variables was formulated. The measurement scale was prepared using a five-point Likert scale basis. For a clear understanding of the research topic, the questionnaire was distributed among various

groups of respondents. The data was collected and analyzed through factor analysis and regression statistics to interpret the results. The study centers on the present scenario of retail branding with the changing consumer perception toward branded products. The study was conducted on youth retail consumers of Kerala. The parameters of the research were finalized by a thorough literature review and data collection.

#### ***4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents***

This chapter explains the demographic profile of the respondents divided into different sections like Gender, Age, Area, Education, and Income Group followed by a summary of the analysis.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are categorized into five major characteristics consisting of gender, age, area, education, and income group. Each of the characteristics is depicted through a chart along with its interpretation.

The distribution of respondents by gender shows that most (54%) of the samples were female respondents while 46% were male.

The distribution of respondents by age indicates that the majority (58%) fell under the age category of 18 to 24 years, described as below the higher education level. 28% of the respondents are in the age group of 25 to 30 years, which is approximately equal to the age group of 31 to 38 years expected to be in the category of higher education level. The remaining 14% represents those above 38 years of age, which comprises married and working women.

The information regarding the distribution of respondents by area shows that the majority (48%) belonged to Thrissur district, which is known for various brands and boutique shops. 24% of respondents are from Kochi, recognized as a city of sophistication and upscale area where shopping choices range widely. 14% of respondents belong to Palakkad district, a district bordering Tamil Nadu. 10% of the respondents belong to Kottayam and 4% belong to Malappuram district. Each of these districts has different market stores based on the society's ability, where a variety of purchases exist across the town.

The distribution of respondents by education details reveals that 42% are Postgraduates and 40% are Under Graduates, representing over 80% of the samples surveyed who believe brands are a part of their quality level. 14% of the respondents are high-school level certificate holders. 4% of respondents are Qualified ITI, comprising below secondary students who prefer and love brands more than others. The information regarding the distribution of respondents by income group shows that more than 50% belong to the monthly income group of 30,000 to 50,000, representing high purchasing power. 28% belong to the income group of more than 50,000. 10% each belong to the income groups of 10,000-20,000 and 20,000-30,000.

#### ***4.2. Brand Awareness Among Youth***

Brand awareness among youth has been studied for global and local apparel brands. There is higher brand awareness for global brands than local ones. Global brands scored above average on the awareness scale, while local brands were below average. The apparel sub-category in which global brands have higher awareness also makes them a more credible brand than local brands. Males are more aware of local brands, while females are more aware of global brands. Youth shows awareness about local brands of lower pricing, while for higher-priced brands it is the opposite, as awareness about fashion brands is higher in both the cases. The lower apparel brand awareness and its effect can be expected within the young female group (Sengupta, 2014). Awareness of global brands (Fernandez & Lean, 2009) is higher as these brands initiate entry into the market and thus generate brand recall. Awareness of local brands is lower than global brands as these brands are not celebrity endorsed and neither their advertisements are memorable. Higher awareness for global brands is not due to lower awareness of local ones, but simply because global brands scoring above average on the scale of brand awareness.

#### ***4.3. Factors Influencing Purchasing Decisions***

In the auditorium, the students were divided into three teams and asked to participate in a carnival task to select the best product from the given six options (candy, chips, gadgets, ice creams, cakes, and pastries). Each team was given 100 tokens as budget, and members representing groups selected the product based on a pre-prepared questionnaire. After two hours, the questionnaires were collected from each team. A total of 122 responses were recorded and saved for further processing. The collected data was analyzed.

The analysis included reliability tests, descriptive statistics, and regression analysis. The categories treated as independent variables were price, promotion, packaging, availability, advertisements, product quality, brand image, movie celebrities, and family influence, while the dependent variable was selected to be 'brand' selection. The final output showed the level of influence of various independent variables on brand selection.

The information sought from respondents regarding personal details was analyzed, and the findings are shown in a table. Of the total respondents, 55 were males (45.08%), and 67 girls gave responses (54.9%). For the category of product searched, 48 were in 'ice cream' category (39.34%), while the least influencing category was found to be 'chips' (with only 14 selections, 11.48%). On the occasion, a total of six companies were identified, including Ice Creams, Chips, and Cake & Pastry.

As observed in the result, a majority of students chose 'cream bell' branding ice cream. Most of them influenced due to its taste, and bat shape for packaging, while commercialization and television advertisements least influenced branding selection. In the case of food chips, 'Lays' was found to be most influencing as a brand. The taste of chips and contests in advertisements specially influenced them for selection. Most of the selections were based on perception-based influences such as packaging, taste of product, availability, and advertisement in selecting food products.

#### 4.4. Role of Advertising

Advertising plays an important role in promoting the brands. This is especially true in the case of consumer goods like personal care products. Hence focus should be given to the choice of advertisement media, its appropriateness, and its quality for better promotion of brand. It is assumed that advertising provides product awareness, reminds about the product, creates interest, shows how to use it and also builds brand image. Except the last one it is being used to describe the role of advertising in personal care product branding (Maheshkar et al., 2021). Respondents perceived that product awareness, reminder and also product interest were high compared to the respondents of 19-23 age group. Awareness and reminder are also being considered as the first of five important roles of advertising. As personal care brands are already well-known, it could be the reason for this greater perceived role of advertising.

Use of celebrities in advertisements of personal care products is considered as an important aspect in understanding the advertising appeals used by the personal care brands. The attitude towards a celebrity endorsement is linked to the product brand endorsement. In the case of personal care products also it is found that both product credibility and announcer credibility are correlated. They concluded that the brand advertising must be carried out with an appropriate celebrity who can better present the brand and the benefits associated with it. In studying the impact of advertisement on branding in small towns and villages of India, it is found that the use of television and print media was found to be important advertisement media for small towns and villages for personal care products branded advertisements. It was envisaged that an advertisement that projects the brand and includes the use of various techniques in which brand is produced, packed and distributed will help to attract viewers as it is not included in many of the personal care products.

### 5. Conclusion

Promotion has a substantial impact on the youth's proclivity for both the specific brand and attire category, followed by price and place variables. Promotion has a substantial impact on the youth's proclivity for both the specific brand and attire category, followed by price and place variables. The study showed that promotion in mass media had a significant impact on the youth's proclivity for both the specific brand and apparel category. But the youth responded least for the promotions in niche media—fashion shrub pages, fashion articles in news dailies, fashion channels, etc. This study was with a focus on the branded youth attire segment; In India, though brands like Relatives, RPG, etc., have competitive advantage over global brands like Reebok and adidas in the lower end of the price bracket, in the higher end of the price bracket global brands rule (Sengupta, 2014).

Promotion in the target market's mass media (news television, print, and radio) was the most beneficial variable in enhancing the youth's proclivity toward a specific brand. The effect of promotion in the television media varied at point intervals. The dependence of purchasing decisions on point factors was less. Therefore, marketers should use mass media in the target markets with a focus on promotion and ensure visibility at above-the-line function levels. In the youth apparel segment, besides brand and advertising, the price variable had good potential for enhancing proclivity and convincing brand choice. In mass media, promotion was found to have a crucial impact on a branded market. But it does not mean that sales promotion efforts in mass media would yield optimum advertising. In the age of the rise of new media, one-to-one communication is key. Increased out-of-home promotions are given as youth pre-commute on a daily basis. Therefore, future research efforts can be made to model these other variables in this segment to understand their proposition better.

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