

Consumer Buying Behaviour Towards Fitness Apparel Among Youth in Surat: A Comparative Study of National and International Brands

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Abstract

This study examined the buying behaviour of youth towards fitness apparel in Surat city, with a comparison between national and international brands. The main objective was to understand how factors such as brand image, price, and quality influence purchase decisions. Data was collected from 300 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The study used simple statistical tools like percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, correlation, t-test, ANOVA, and Chi-square test to analyse the data.

The findings showed that most respondents belonged to the age group of 21–25 years and were actively involved in fitness activities. Online shopping was found to be the most preferred mode of purchase. Quality (29.3%) and price (26.7%) were the most important factors influencing buying decisions. Descriptive statistics indicated that the average response was above 3.5, showing a positive attitude towards fitness apparel. The reliability test showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.842, confirming that the data was consistent. The normality test ($p > 0.05$) confirmed that the data was normally distributed.

Hypothesis testing revealed that brand image, price, and quality had a significant impact on buying behaviour. International brands were slightly more preferred than national brands, although local brands remained competitive due to affordability. The study concluded that fitness awareness and lifestyle changes have strongly influenced consumer behaviour in Surat.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Fitness Apparel, Youth, Brand Preference, Surat

INTRODUCTION:

CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR:

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the way individuals or households select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services to satisfy their needs. In the Indian context, this behaviour is shaped by a mix of cultural values, social influences, economic conditions, and rapid technological changes. Over the past decade, India has witnessed a significant shift in consumption patterns due to rising income levels, urbanisation, and increased access to digital platforms. Consumers today are more informed, price-conscious, and quality-oriented, which has made the market highly competitive.

Traditionally, Indian consumers relied heavily on word-of-mouth and family opinions before making purchase decisions. However, with the growth of online shopping, social media, and digital payments, decision-making has become faster and more independent. Factors such as brand image, product quality, price, promotional offers, and peer influence play an important role in shaping consumer preferences. At the same time, emotional and psychological aspects like trust, satisfaction, and perceived value also affect buying behaviour.

Understanding consumer buying behaviour is important for businesses to design effective marketing strategies and meet customer expectations. It helps companies identify what customers want, how they make decisions, and what influences their choices. In a diverse country like India, where preferences vary across regions and income groups, studying consumer behaviour becomes even more essential for achieving business success.

FITNESS APPAREL:

Fitness apparel refers to clothing specially designed for physical activities like gym workouts, yoga, running, and sports. In India, the demand for fitness wear has increased steadily due to growing awareness about health, wellness, and active lifestyles. Earlier, people used regular clothes for exercise, but now there is a clear shift towards comfortable, stretchable, and sweat-absorbing garments that improve performance and ease of movement.

Modern fitness apparel is not only about functionality but also about style and self-expression. Many consumers, especially young people, prefer outfits that look trendy while offering comfort during workouts. Factors such as fabric quality, durability, brand reputation, and price play an important role in purchase decisions. In addition, the influence of social media, fitness influencers, and celebrity endorsements has significantly shaped consumer preferences in this segment.

The Indian market for fitness apparel is also expanding due to the rise of gyms, yoga centres, and home workout trends after the pandemic. Both men and women are becoming more conscious about their appearance and health, which is boosting demand. Understanding consumer behaviour in this category helps businesses create better products and marketing strategies that match the needs of Indian consumers.

NEED OF THE STUDY

In recent years, the fitness culture in India has grown rapidly, especially among young people. Activities like gym workouts, yoga, and sports have become part of daily life, leading to increased demand for fitness apparel. Youth in cities like Surat are becoming more health-conscious and style-aware, which has changed their clothing preferences. Fitness apparel is no longer limited to sports use; it is also worn as casual and lifestyle clothing. This shift makes it important to study how young consumers make buying decisions in this category.

The Indian apparel market today offers a wide range of national and international brands, giving consumers many choices. Studies show that young consumers are influenced by factors such as brand image, quality, comfort, price, and peer influence while purchasing apparel. At the same time, there is a growing attraction towards international brands due to perceived status

and global trends, while national brands are preferred for affordability and local relevance . This creates a need to compare how youth in Surat perceive and choose between these two categories.

Moreover, changing lifestyles, increasing disposable income, and digital exposure have made young consumers more aware and selective in their purchases. Online platforms and social media also play a major role in influencing buying decisions, making the market more dynamic and competitive. Research indicates that consumer behaviour varies based on demographic factors such as age, income, and lifestyle, highlighting the importance of targeted marketing strategies .

Despite the rapid growth of the fitness apparel market, limited studies focus specifically on youth behaviour in Surat, especially comparing national and international brands. Understanding these differences will help businesses design better products, pricing strategies, and promotional activities suited to local preferences. It will also help marketers identify what drives brand choice, loyalty, and satisfaction among young consumers.

Therefore, this study is necessary to analyse the buying behaviour of youth towards fitness apparel, identify key influencing factors, and compare preferences between national and international brands. The findings will be useful for retailers, marketers, and researchers in understanding the evolving trends in the Indian fitness apparel market.

EXAMPLES OF BRANDS

Basis	National Brands (India)	International Brands
Popular Brands	Nike India (licensed), HRX, Campus, Wildcraft, Decathlon India	Nike, Adidas, Puma, Reebok, Under Armour
Price Range	Affordable to Mid-range	Mid-range to Premium
Consumer Perception	Value for money, locally suitable	High quality, status symbol
Availability	Easily available in local & online markets	Mostly in malls, branded stores & online
Target Audience	Price-sensitive youth	Brand-conscious & premium buyers

LITERATURE REVIEW:

1. Bansal and Arora (2023) analysed the effect of promotional strategies on consumer buying behaviour. The study used a descriptive design with 210 respondents. Findings revealed that discounts, offers, and advertisements strongly influence purchase decisions. Youth are attracted to brands that provide value deals. The study concluded that promotions play a key role in increasing sales. The authors suggested using attractive offers to engage young consumers.

2. Chauhan and Jain (2019) studied rural and urban differences in apparel buying behaviour. Data was collected from 200 respondents across different regions. The study found that urban consumers prefer branded and trendy fitness wear, while rural consumers focus more on price and utility. Awareness levels were also higher in urban areas. The study concluded that market strategies should vary based on location. The authors recommended region-specific marketing approaches.
3. Gupta and Shah (2021) studied the influence of digital platforms on buying behaviour. The objective was to understand how online content affects consumer decisions. Data was collected from 180 respondents using structured questionnaires. The study found that social media advertisements and influencer marketing strongly impact brand choice. Consumers often rely on online reviews before purchasing. The authors concluded that digital presence is essential for brands today. They recommended using social media effectively to attract youth.
4. Iyer and Mishra (2021) examined the role of product quality in purchase decisions. The research used a survey method with 170 respondents. The findings indicated that fabric quality, flexibility, and sweat absorption are key considerations. Consumers are willing to pay more for better quality. The study concluded that quality directly affects customer satisfaction and repeat purchase. The authors suggested focusing on product innovation.
5. Kumar and Verma (2022) examined the impact of brand perception on fitness apparel purchase. The objective was to compare national and international brands. The researchers used a descriptive research design and surveyed 250 young consumers. Results showed that international brands are associated with higher status and quality, while national brands are preferred for affordability. The study highlighted that brand loyalty is stronger for global brands. It concluded that perception plays a major role in decision-making. Companies should build strong brand identity to influence youth.
6. Mehta and Joshi (2020) analysed consumer preference towards branded and non-branded sportswear. The research used a comparative approach with 200 respondents. Findings showed that branded products are preferred for quality and durability, while non-branded items are chosen for low cost. The study also revealed that income level influences buying decisions. It concluded that both segments have their own market demand. The authors suggested that brands should offer value for money to remain competitive.
7. Patel and Desai (2020) analysed consumer behaviour towards sportswear among college students. The study aimed to identify key factors influencing brand preference. Data was collected using a questionnaire from 150 respondents in Gujarat. The findings revealed that durability, affordability, and peer influence significantly impact buying decisions. It was also observed that students are highly price-sensitive. The study concluded that local brands have an advantage due to competitive pricing. The authors recommended that marketers should balance quality and cost to capture this segment.
8. Reddy and Nair (2019) focused on the role of lifestyle in apparel consumption. The study used a quantitative approach and gathered data from urban youth through online surveys. The findings indicated that health awareness and active lifestyles have increased demand for fitness clothing. It also showed that convenience and comfort are major decision factors.

The study concluded that changing lifestyles are driving the growth of fitness apparel. The authors suggested that brands should align products with modern lifestyle needs.

9. Sharma and Singh (2021) studied how young consumers in India choose fitness apparel. The main aim was to understand the factors influencing their buying decisions. The researchers used a survey method and collected data from 200 urban youth through structured questionnaires. The study found that comfort, brand image, and price are the most important factors affecting purchase decisions. It also showed that social media plays a strong role in shaping preferences. The authors concluded that youth today prefer stylish yet functional fitness wear. They suggested that brands should focus on quality and digital promotion to attract young buyers.
10. Singh and Kaur (2022) explored gender differences in fitness apparel buying behaviour. The study collected data from 220 male and female respondents. Results showed that females focus more on style and design, while males prefer comfort and performance. Both groups consider brand and price as important factors. The study concluded that marketing strategies should be gender-specific. The authors highlighted the need for customised product offerings.

Research Gap

Existing studies on consumer buying behaviour towards fitness apparel mainly focus on general apparel trends or broader urban markets, but very few have specifically examined youth in Surat city. Most literature discusses factors like price, quality, and brand image separately, without giving a clear comparative view between national and international brands. There is also limited research that connects purchase intention directly with changing fitness lifestyles among young consumers. Earlier studies have largely focused on metro cities, leaving tier-2 cities like Surat underexplored. In addition, the role of digital influence and peer impact in shaping brand preference is not deeply analysed in available studies. The comparative understanding of how youth perceive value, status, and affordability across different brand categories is still unclear. Therefore, this study attempts to fill these gaps by providing a focused, comparative, and location-specific analysis of youth buying behaviour towards fitness apparel.

Research Methodology

Particulars	Description
Problem Statement	The study identified that the demand for fitness apparel among youth had increased significantly, but there was a lack of clear understanding of buying behaviour in Surat city. Earlier studies had not provided a proper comparison between national and international brands. The impact of brand image, price, and quality on purchase decisions remained unclear in the local context. Additionally, changing lifestyle and digital influence among youth were not deeply analysed. Therefore, the study aimed to

	examine and compare consumer buying behaviour towards fitness apparel among youth in Surat.
Research Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To analyse the factors influencing purchase intention towards fitness apparel among youth in Surat city. • To compare consumer preferences between national and international fitness apparel brands. • To examine the impact of brand image, price, and quality on buying decisions.
Research Design	The study adopted a Descriptive Research Design to describe consumer behaviour and preferences systematically.
Data Collection	Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires from respondents. Secondary data was collected from journals, research papers, websites, and articles.
Sample Area	Surat City
Sample Size	300 Respondents
Sampling Technique	Non-Probability – Convenient Sampling
Target Respondents	Youth consumers using or purchasing fitness apparel
Variables of the Study	Independent Variables: Brand Image, Price, Quality; Dependent Variable: Buying Decision; Mediating Variable: Purchase Intention
Measurement Scale	5-Point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)
Questionnaire Design	Structured and close-ended questionnaire including demographic and behavioural questions
Data Analysis Software	SPSS / Excel was used for data analysis
Statistical Tools	Frequency Analysis, Descriptive Statistics, Normality Testing, Reliability Test (Cronbach’s Alpha), Hypothesis Testing
Hypothesis 1	H ₀ : There was no significant relationship between influencing factors and purchase intention. H ₁ : There was a significant relationship between influencing factors and purchase intention.
Hypothesis 2	H ₀ : There was no significant difference between national and international brand preferences. H ₁ : There was a significant difference between national and international brand preferences.

Hypothesis 3	H ₀ : Brand image, price, and quality had no significant impact on buying decisions. H ₁ : Brand image, price, and quality had a significant impact on buying decisions.
Limitations of the Study	The study was limited to Surat city only. Convenient sampling may reduce generalisation. Responses may be biased as they were based on personal opinions.
Future Scope of the Study	Future research can include multiple cities for better comparison. Probability sampling can be used for accuracy. More factors like lifestyle, digital influence, and brand loyalty can be studied in detail.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Section A: Demographic Profile Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Details of Respondents (n = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	15–20	90	30%
	21–25	150	50%
	26–29	60	20%
Gender	Male	180	60%
	Female	120	40%
Occupation	Student	140	46.7%
	Service	90	30%
	Business	50	16.7%
	Other	20	6.6%
Income	Below ₹10,000	80	26.7%
	₹10k–₹25k	110	36.7%
	₹25k–₹50k	70	23.3%
	Above ₹50k	40	13.3%
Workout Frequency	Daily	100	33.3%
	3–4 times/week	120	40%
	Occasionally	60	20%

	Rarely	20	6.7%
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Interpretation: The data showed that most respondents belonged to the 21–25 age group, indicating strong youth participation. Male respondents were slightly higher than females. A large portion were students with moderate income levels. Most respondents exercised regularly, showing good fitness awareness among youth in Surat.

Section B: Multiple Choice Questions Analysis

Table 2: Purchase Location Preference (Q1, Total Responses = 700)

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Online	280	40%
Brand Stores	175	25%
Local Shops	140	20%
Shopping Malls	105	15%

Interpretation: Most respondents preferred online platforms for purchasing fitness apparel due to convenience and variety. Brand stores were also popular, showing trust in branded products.

Table 3: Preferred Type of Apparel (Q2, Total Responses = 550)

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Gym Wear	200	36.4%
Yoga Wear	120	21.8%
Sportswear	150	27.3%
Casual Activewear	80	14.5%

Interpretation: Gym wear was the most preferred category, reflecting rising gym culture. Sportswear also had strong demand among youth.

Table 4: Purchase Frequency (Q3, Total Responses = 650)

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly	150	23.1%
Quarterly	250	38.5%
Half-Yearly	180	27.7%

Rarely	70	10.7%
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Interpretation: Most respondents purchased fitness apparel quarterly, indicating moderate buying behaviour. Regular purchases show growing interest in fitness clothing.

Table 5: Purchase Influencing Factor (Q4, Total Responses = 750)

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Price	200	26.7%
Brand	150	20%
Quality	220	29.3%
Style	100	13.3%
Offers	80	10.7%

Interpretation: Quality and price were the most important factors influencing purchase decisions. Brand and style also played a role but were comparatively less important.

Section C: Descriptive Statistics

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics (n = 300)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Purchase Intention Factors	3.95	0.72
Brand Preference	3.70	0.81
Brand Image, Price & Quality	4.10	0.65

Interpretation: The mean values were above average, indicating positive responses from respondents. Low standard deviation showed consistency in responses. Overall, factors like quality and brand image strongly influenced buying behaviour.

Section D: Hypothesis Testing

1. Normality Test

Table 7: Normality Test

Test	Statistic	Sig. Value
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.062	0.200
Shapiro-Wilk	0.971	0.085

Interpretation: Since significance values were greater than 0.05, the data was normally distributed. Therefore, parametric tests were applied.

2. Reliability Test

Table 8: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
0.842	15

Interpretation: The reliability value was above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency of the questionnaire.

3. Hypothesis Testing

Table 9: Regression Analysis (Objective 1)

Variable	Beta	Sig.
Purchase Factors	0.68	0.000

Interpretation: The significance value was less than 0.05, so H_0 was rejected. Factors like price, quality, and social influence significantly affected purchase intention.

Table 10: Independent t-test (Objective 2)

Group	Mean	Sig.
National Brands	3.65	0.021
International Brands	3.92	

Interpretation: There was a significant difference between preferences. International brands were slightly more preferred than national brands.

Table 11: Correlation Analysis (Objective 3)

Variables	Correlation (r)	Sig.
Brand Image & Buying Decision	0.71	0.000
Price & Buying Decision	0.65	0.000
Quality & Buying Decision	0.78	0.000

Interpretation: All variables showed strong positive relationships with buying decisions. Quality had the highest impact among all factors.

Table 12: ANOVA Test

Source	F Value	Sig.
Between Groups	4.56	0.012

Interpretation: Significant differences existed among groups, indicating variation in consumer preferences.

Table 13: Chi-Square Test

Value	Sig.
18.45	0.005

Interpretation: There was a strong association between demographic factors and buying behaviour.

Table 14: Factor Analysis

Factor	Loading
Quality	0.82
Brand Image	0.78
Price	0.74

Interpretation: Three main factors were identified influencing buying behaviour, with quality being the most dominant.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Majority of respondents (50%) belonged to the 21–25 age group, indicating strong youth participation.
- Male respondents (60%) were higher compared to female respondents (40%).
- Around 40% of respondents preferred online platforms for purchasing fitness apparel.
- Quality (29.3%) and price (26.7%) were identified as the most important purchase factors.
- Descriptive statistics showed mean values above 3.5, indicating a positive consumer attitude.
- Standard deviation values were below 1, showing consistency in responses.
- Normality test results (Kolmogorov–Smirnov = 0.200, Shapiro–Wilk = 0.085) confirmed normal distribution.
- Reliability test showed Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.842, indicating high internal consistency.

- T-test results ($p = 0.021$) showed a significant difference between national and international brand preferences.
- Pearson correlation ($r = 0.78$) indicated a strong relationship between quality and buying decision.
- Chi-square test ($p = 0.005$) showed a significant association between demographic factors and buying behaviour.
- ANOVA test ($p = 0.012$) confirmed differences in consumer preferences among groups.

CONCLUSION

The study clearly showed that consumer buying behaviour towards fitness apparel among youth in Surat is influenced by multiple factors such as quality, price, and brand image. The findings indicated that young consumers are becoming more health-conscious and style-aware, which has increased the demand for fitness apparel. Most respondents preferred online shopping due to convenience and wider availability of options.

The analysis revealed that quality was the most important factor influencing purchase decisions, followed by price. Although international brands were slightly more preferred due to better design and brand image, national brands remained popular because of affordability and value for money. This shows that both categories have strong demand in the market.

The statistical results supported these findings, as the data was reliable and normally distributed. Hypothesis testing confirmed that there is a significant relationship between influencing factors and purchase intention. It also showed that consumer preferences differ between national and international brands.

Overall, the study concluded that youth in Surat are making more informed and balanced decisions while purchasing fitness apparel. They are not only looking for stylish products but also focusing on quality and price. The growing fitness trend and digital influence have further shaped their buying behaviour. Businesses need to understand these changing preferences to remain competitive in the market.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Companies should focus on improving product quality while keeping prices affordable to attract young consumers.
2. National brands should enhance their design and branding to compete effectively with international brands.
3. Marketers should use social media and influencer marketing to influence youth buying decisions.
4. Businesses should offer discounts and promotional schemes to increase customer engagement and sales.

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