



Original Research Article

Impact of corporate branding on consumer preference and brand loyalty: A comparative study of the personal care segment in the Indian FMCG sector

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Abstract

The personal care market has become one of the most dynamic and brand-sensitive segments within India's quickly expanding Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry. Customers now have a greater range of options due to the growing number of businesses joining the industry. Corporate branding has developed beyond simple logos or product packaging in such a cutthroat market to now embody a company's principles, dependability, social responsibility, and emotional appeal. With an emphasis on the personal care sector of the Indian FMCG business, this research study seeks to examine how corporate branding shapes consumer choices and promotes brand loyalty. By assessing customer opinions of well-known corporate brands in the personal care industry, including Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), Dabur, Emami, Patanjali, and others, the study takes a comparative approach. 150 respondents from India's urban and semi-urban areas were given a structured questionnaire to complete in order to get primary data. Frequency distribution, mean scores, and cross-tabulation were among the methods used in the data analysis to interpret the findings. According to the research, customer purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by corporate branding components such brand image, corporate reputation, ethical business practices, and consistent marketing communication. Furthermore, the survey shows that consumers like companies that uphold principles like social responsibility, transparency, and environmental sustainability in addition to producing high-quality goods. These elements are turning into important differentiators that help some corporate brands better than others keep their customers loyal.

Keywords: Corporate branding, Consumer preference, Brand loyalty, FMCG, Personal care, India, Brand image, Consumer behavior

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1. Introduction

One of the biggest industries in the Indian economy, the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector makes a substantial contribution to both GDP and employment. Rising disposable incomes, urbanization, increased knowledge of grooming and cleanliness, and changing lifestyle preferences have all contributed to the personal care sector's notable growth within this enormous industry. As consumers get more discriminating, the corporate identity and reputation of the brand are having a greater impact on their purchasing decisions than just the functionality or price of the product (Alasgarli, 2019).²

In this respect, corporate branding refers to how people view a business overall, not just its particular goods. It includes the public image, communication style, ethical

standards, values, and mission that a business conveys to its stakeholders. Corporate branding serves as a crucial difference in the personal care industry, as trust and emotional connection are important factors in consumer behavior. Customers are more inclined to select companies they believe to be genuine, accountable, and reliable—elements frequently linked to powerful corporate brands (Afreen, 2018).¹

Indian customers have noticed a change in branding tactics within the past ten years. Conventional behemoths like Dabur and Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) have changed their corporate branding to highlight diversity, wellness, and sustainability. By presenting themselves as natural, ethical, and made-in-India companies, more recent competitors like Mamaearth, WOW Skin Science, and Patanjali have simultaneously capitalized on customer sentiment. This

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development is indicative of a larger pattern in which corporate narratives directly influence customer loyalty and preference (Mann & Kaur, 2013).⁴

Consumer trust is frequently based on the parent company's perceived integrity and social responsibility rather than just the usefulness of a particular product in such a crowded and dynamic market. As a result, corporate branding turns into an intangible asset that affects consumers' perceptions of a brand's value proposition as well as their loyalty to it over the long run.

In light of this, the purpose of this study is to investigate, via a particular focus on the personal care market, how corporate branding affects consumer preferences and brand loyalty in the Indian FMCG industry. The goal of the study is to determine which aspects of corporate branding are most appealing to customers, how these aspects vary among top businesses, and how much of an influence they have on recurring business (Kotler, 2020).

This article aims to advance both academic and practical understanding of branding dynamics in India's personal care business by including views from both established and up-and-coming industry companies. In the end, the results will assist businesses in improving their branding tactics to better meet changing consumer demands and cultivate more enduring, devoted client connections (Memoria & Jain, 2011).⁵

2. Literature Review

Over time, the idea of branding has changed dramatically, moving from emphasizing specific items to incorporating the entire company. Corporate branding has become a strategic necessity in today's information-driven and globalized society, especially in consumer-focused sectors like FMCG. With a focus on their applicability to the Indian personal care market, this literature review examines the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of corporate branding, consumer preference, and brand loyalty (Qazzafi, 2020).⁶

2.1. Corporate branding

Corporate branding is the process of promoting a company's name rather than its goods or services. It conveys to stakeholders a company's dedication, values, vision, and culture. A strong corporate brand makes it easier for customers to connect a firm with particular psychological and emotional qualities, which frequently has an unconscious impact on their purchasing decisions (Mann & Kaur, 2013).

Organizational identity is fundamental to corporate branding. Consumer trust and credibility are increased when internal corporate culture and external brand communication are in harmony. Such synchronization becomes even more crucial in the personal care industry, where products are used intimately (Rajan, Sammansu, & Suresh, 2021).⁷

2.2. Consumer preference

Both tangible and intangible product features have an impact on consumer desire. Functionality, cost, and quality are still important factors, but intangibles like social media messaging, company values, emotional resonance, and brand image are also quite important. Customers frequently favor goods from businesses they believe to be moral, socially conscious, and have consistent messaging in competitive markets (Roy, 2022).⁸

Sociocultural and psychological elements have a major impact on consumer preferences. Perceptions are formed by consumers based on prior brand encounters, peer pressure, and cultural standards. Consequently, corporate branding can increase brand appeal when it is in line with customer expectations and society norms (Qazzafi, 2020).

2.3. Brand loyalty

The term "brand loyalty" describes a customer's steady preference for a brand over time, which leads to repeat business and favorable word-of-mouth. Brand loyalty is defined as a behavioral reaction linked to a customer's psychological attachment to a brand. It is a crucial factor in determining the long-term success of an organization (Harish, 2022).³

Brand loyalty in the context of personal care is based on perceived brand authenticity, trust, and emotional connection rather than just satisfaction. Thus, a solid corporate brand can act as a basis for creating long-lasting connections with clients (Afreen, 2018).

2.4. Corporate branding and consumer behavior in FMCG

The importance of business branding is supported by empirical research conducted in India. In his research on branding in the Indian FMCG industry, customers are more likely to stick with businesses that are open, socially and ecologically responsible. According to research, corporate branding has a particularly significant impact on the personal care industry, where safety and health are top priorities (Alasgarli, 2019).

Additionally, a favorable company image raises brand equity and consumer trust considerably. As internet connectivity has grown, so too have branding tactics. Storytelling, influencer marketing, and emotive branding have become essential components of corporate communication, especially in industries like cosmetics and haircare (Rajan, Sammansu, & Suresh, 2021).

2.5. Research gap

Even while the body of research on corporate branding and how it affects consumer behavior is strong, there is still a lack of knowledge about these dynamics in the context of Indian personal care. Instead, concentrating on how the entire corporate brand influences customer trust, preference, and

loyalty, the majority of research have looked at branding from a product-level perspective. Moreover, little research has been done to compare the corporate branding strategies of established companies with up-and-coming startups.

The multifaceted character of corporate branding and its extensive influence on customer preference and loyalty are highlighted in this overview of the literature. It also emphasizes the necessity of a more thorough empirical study into the ways in which corporate-level initiatives affect consumer behavior in India's changing personal care industry. By comparing top FMCG brands, this study fills that knowledge vacuum and advances a more sophisticated understanding of branding in the Indian context.

3. Research Methodology

The research methodology describes the general approach taken to gather and examine information in order to comprehend how corporate branding affects customer preference and brand loyalty in the Indian FMCG industry's personal care sector. To make sure the results are trustworthy, legitimate, and indicative of customer opinions, a methodical and structured methodology has been used (Taherdoost, 2021).⁹

3.1. Research design

The research design used in this study is both descriptive and analytical. The descriptive component is concerned with gathering and compiling information about customer preferences, brand perception, and loyalty trends. The analytical dimension assesses the connections between consumer behavior and business branding components.

3.2. Sampling technique

Respondents were chosen using a convenience sampling technique. Time and resource constraints, as well as the requirement for rapid access to people who frequently use personal care items from well-known FMCG brands, led to the selection of this technique.

3.3. Sample size and respondent profile

1. **Sample size:** 150 respondents
2. **Target group:** Urban and semi-urban consumers aged 18–50
3. **Location:** Respondents were selected from major cities and tier-2 towns across India (including Prayagraj, Varanasi, Lucknow, and Delhi).
4. **Gender split:** 55% female, 43% male, 2% non-binary/prefer not to say
5. **Consumer type:** Users of at least one personal care product (skincare, haircare, hygiene, grooming) from an Indian FMCG company

3.4. Data collection method

1. **Primary Data:** Collected using a structured questionnaire containing both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions.
2. **Mode:** Online (Google Forms).

3.5. Key focus Areas in Questionnaire:

1. Brand awareness
2. Perception of corporate image
3. Factors affecting purchase decisions
4. Brand trust and emotional association
5. Likelihood of repeat purchase (brand loyalty)

3.6. Secondary data

Sourced from academic journals, industry reports, company websites, brand campaigns, and government publications related to the FMCG sector.

3.7. Tools and techniques for data analysis

The collected data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel with the following statistical techniques:

1. *Frequency distribution:* To understand the distribution of responses and popular trends.
2. *Mean and standard deviation:* To evaluate central tendencies and variability in consumer opinions.
3. *Cross-tabulation:* To identify patterns across age, gender, and brand preference groups.
4. *Comparative charts and graphs:* Used for visual representation of brand-wise consumer perceptions and loyalty indicators.

3.8. Scope of the study

1. The FMCG industry's personal care sector is the exclusive focus, and Indian corporate brands—such as HUL, Dabur, Emami, Patanjali, and Mamaearth—are highlighted.
2. Focuses on customer behavior and perception rather than operational effectiveness or financial performance.
3. For wider representation, the geographic coverage is restricted to India but encompasses a variety of urban and semi-urban groups.

4. Limitations of the Study

1. Convenience sampling may result in some selection bias
2. The sample size is limited and might not adequately represent the variety of India's customer base.
3. Self-reported statistics may be impacted by the bias of social desirability.
4. Rural consumer behavior, which is a large market for FMCG companies, is not thoroughly examined in the study.

In order to gather valuable insights into how corporate branding influences customer loyalty and choice in the Indian personal care sector, this study technique has been

thoughtfully created. The study intends to generate findings that are instructive and useful for marketers and brand strategists by fusing organized data collecting with fundamental statistical analysis.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1. Demographic profile of respondents

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents (N = 150)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18–25	54	36.0%
	26–35	63	42.0%
	36–50	33	22.0%
	Total	150	100
Gender	Female	83	55.3%
	Male	64	42.7%
	Other	3	2.0%
	Total	150	100
Location	Urban	95	63.3%
	Semi-Urban	55	36.7%
	Total	150	100

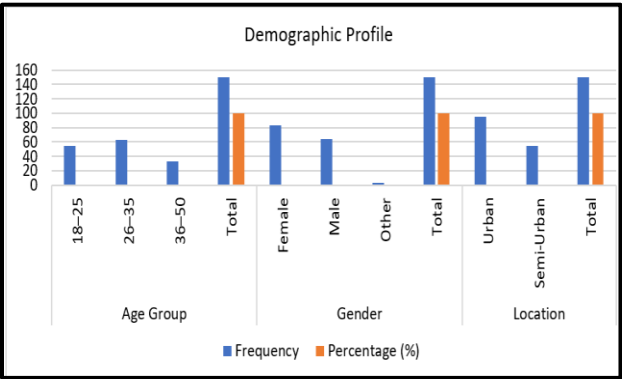


Figure 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Interpretation

- Age Group:** The majority of respondents are in the 26–35 age group (42%), thereafter followed by 18–25 (36%), and then 36–50 (20%).
- Gender:** A higher proportion of respondents are female (55.3%), which could reflect their more active participation in personal care product consumption.
- Location:** Urban residents form the larger portion (63.3%), indicating more exposure to brand communication and wider product choices.

5.2. Descriptive statistics of key corporate branding attributes

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation

Attribute	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Corporate Trust	4.21	0.30
Corporate Image	4.31	0.28
Ethical Perception	4.03	0.33
Sustainability	4.11	0.30

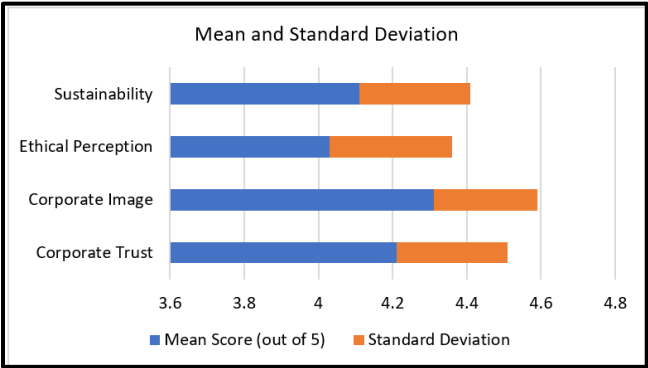


Figure 2: Descriptive statistics of key corporate branding attributes

Interpretation: With the highest score, Corporate Image demonstrated great consumer recognition based on both visual and value-driven factors. Corporate Trust exhibits the least fluctuation, indicating a steady consumer view.

5.3. Cross tabulation analysis

Table 3: Gender-wise repeat purchase (Frequency)

Gender	No	Yes	Total
Female	19	64	83
Male	19	45	64
Non-binary	2	1	3
Total	40	110	150

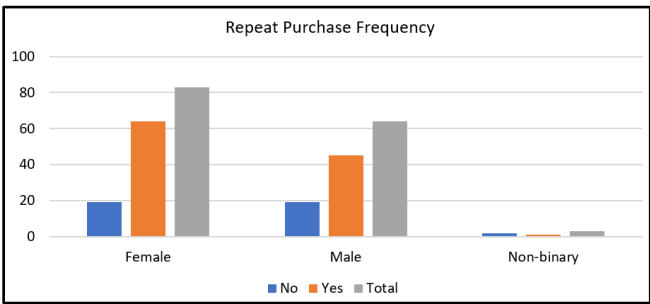


Figure 3: Gender-wise repeat purchase (Frequency)

Table 4: Gender-wise repeat purchase (Percentage within group)

Gender	No (%)	Yes (%)
Female	23.0	77.0
Male	30.0	70.0
Non-binary	67.0	33.0

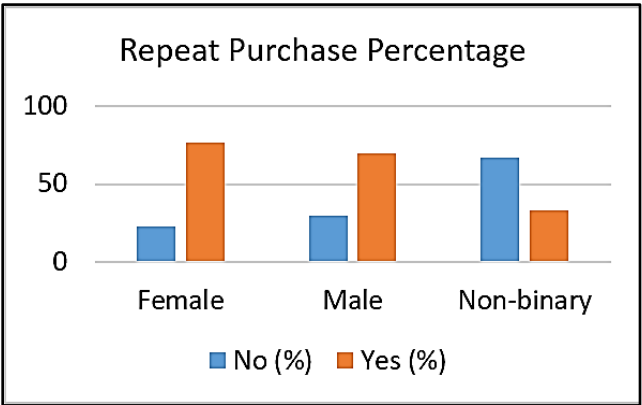


Figure 4: Gender-wise repeat purchase (Percentage within group)

Interpretation: Compared to other genders, female customers are more brand loyal, as seen by their greatest repeat purchase percentage of 77%.

6. Brand Preference Distribution

Table 5: Brand preference frequency and percentage

Brand	Frequency	Percentage (%)
HUL	117	78.0
Dabur	90	60.0
Patanjali	83	55.3
Emami	63	42.0
Mamaearth	51	34.0

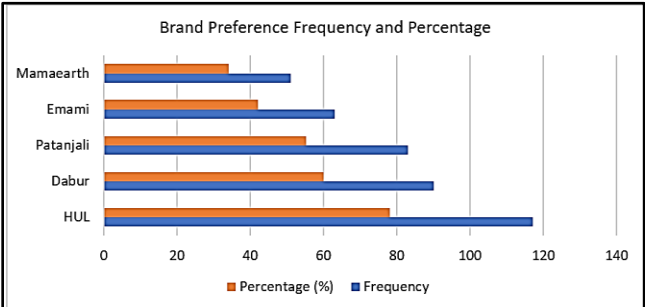


Figure 5: Brand preference frequency and percentage

Interpretation: In the personal care market, HUL is still the top brand, closely followed by Dabur and Patanjali. Mamaearth and other recent arrivals are becoming more popular because of their ethical orientation and contemporary branding.

6.1. Location-wise brand preference

Table 6: Location-wise brand preference

Brand	Urban Frequency	Urban (%)	Semi-Urban Frequency	Semi-Urban (%)
HUL	75	78.9	42	63.6
Dabur	58	61.1	32	48.5

Patanjali	55	57.9	28	42.4
Emami	45	47.4	18	27.3
Mamaearth	35	36.8	16	24.2

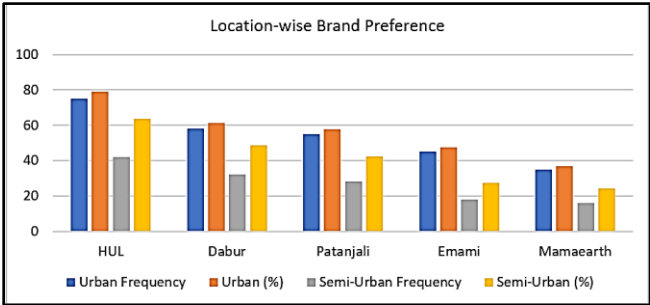


Figure 6: Location-wise brand preference

Interpretation: Semi-urban consumers exhibit a somewhat more balanced preference for more recent entries like Mamaearth, whereas urban consumers choose well-known brands like HUL and Dabur.

6.2. Age Group-wise Brand Loyalty

Table 7: Age Group-wise repeat purchase by brand

Age Group	HUL Yes (%)	Dabur Yes (%)	Patanjali Yes (%)	Emami Yes (%)	Mamaearth Yes (%)
18-25	70.4	61.2	55.6	44.4	35.6
26-35	75.6	65.0	59.7	49.2	42.0
36-50	78.7	72.3	66.7	57.1	45.5

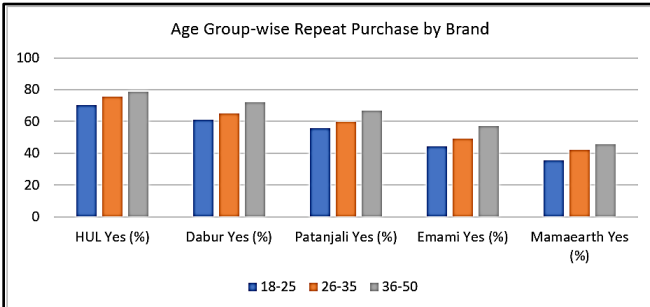


Figure 7: Age group-wise repeat purchase by brand

Interpretation: All age groups have a comparatively high level of brand loyalty, and HUL continues to dominate. Across all brands, younger customers (18–25) are the least loyal, whereas older age groups are most devoted.

7. Discussion

The findings support the notion that corporate branding is essential in the personal care industry. Long-term devotion is fostered by the corporate brand's emotional appeal and credibility, even when product quality and price are crucial. Companies like Dabur and HUL have effectively bonded emotionally with customers through corporate identity.

However, more recent competitors like Mamaearth and WOW Skin Science are using sustainability and digital branding to draw in young people.

8. Findings

- a) In the personal care market, consumer preference and loyalty are greatly influenced by corporate branding.
- b) Customers link a company's reputation to the effectiveness and safety of its products.
- c) The corporate brand is more appealing as a result of CSR and sustainability initiatives.
- d) Recurring purchases are a result of brand trust and emotional attachment.

9. Suggestions

1. FMCG companies ought to make investments in CSR communication and consistent brand storytelling.
2. Value-driven customers can be drawn in by highlighting ethical business practices and sourcing transparency.
3. To strengthen brand identification, businesses should interact with consumers on digital channels on a regular basis.
4. Establishing company loyalty programs helps improve enduring connections with customers.

10. Conclusion

Corporate branding has become a significant factor in influencing customer behavior, especially in the personal care industry. Companies must concentrate on creating dependable and value-driven corporate identities in order to maintain customer loyalty and obtain a competitive edge as Indian customers grow more aware and knowledgeable. According to the study's findings, a powerful corporate brand is more than simply a name; it is a pledge of excellence, moral character, and emotional ties. This study advances our knowledge of how corporate identity may be used as a competitive advantage in the Indian personal care sector by shedding light on consumer expectations and branding tactics. For marketers, brand managers, and legislators looking to improve brand-customer interactions in a competitive market, the findings have real-world applications.

11. Source of Funding

None.

12. Conflict of Interest

None.

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