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CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARDS LOCAL VERSUS GLOBAL BRANDS IN EMERGING ECONOMY: STUDY AMONG YOUTH

Mr. Rupam Dhani*[1], Ms. Tanushri Sarkar[2]
[1]*Assistant Professor, Department of Management*
[2]*Student, Department of Commerce*
[1,2] *Brainware University*

**Corresponding Author:Rupam Dhani, Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Brainware University, Kolkata*
Orcid Id - https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6504-8097
398, Ramkrishnapur Road, Barasat, Near Jagadighata Market, Kolkata, West Bengal 700125

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the attitudes of young consumers towards global and local brands in emerging economies, focusing on individuals aged 15–25. With increasing exposure to both local and global brands, youth represent a critical market segment, however the factors influencing their brand choices remain insufficiently examined. This research seeks to understand how cultural identity, brand loyalty, perceived value, and price sensitivity shape these preferences. Existing literature indicates that Global brands are often associated with higher quality and status, while Local brands maintain popularity through cultural relevance and affordability. The study aims to explore how these variables influence brand perception among youth. Adopting a mixed-method approach, the study collected primary data through structured questionnaires targeting individuals in the 15–25 age group. Secondary data were sourced from academic publications, market reports, and online databases. Findings reveal that while global brands are admired for their image and quality, local brands are preferred for their affordability and cultural alignment. Young consumers balance value-consciousness with aspirational choices, often shaped by peer influence and social media trends. This research provides valuable insights for marketers seeking to position brands effectively in youth-driven economy. However, limitations include the restricted demographic scope and reliance on self-reported data, which may affect generalizability. Future research studies could extend to wider age groups and regions for deeper insights.
KEY WORDS – *Consumer behaviour, Youth Marketing, Brand preference, Global vs Local Brands, Emerging market.*
JEL Code – *M31, D12, L66, F61*

INTRODUCTION

The growing interconnectedness of international markets has created a dynamic interaction between global and local brands, most notably in the dynamic and fast-changing economies of the emerging markets (Elo & Silva, 2022). As multinational companies continue to extend their reach, local companies are finding it difficult to maintain cultural relevance, consumer trust, and market share (Cavusgil & Cavusgil, 2011). Such heightened competition is most acute among young consumers whose preference choice is usually a combination of international awareness and local identity. As per (Chabowski et al., 2023), these multi-national firms deal in standardised products that are often supplemented with robust branding and aggressive marketing efforts. Their usage patterns are significantly affected by social media, cultural values, their lifestyle aspirations, and peer trends. As per the study (TRENDS IN YOUNG CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOUR - IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILY ENTERPRISES, 2019), it is essential to understand the shopping behavior of youth because their choices not only reflect the current trends but also forecast the future dynamics of the market. In most emerging economies, customers are predominantly youth aged between 15 and 25 years. A study (Chand & Tung, 2014) asserts that due to their increasing discretionary spending, enhanced access to international goods, and changing aspirations, this group has a key role in determining the direction of domestic as well as international markets.

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The main aim of this paper is to explore how emerging market youth perceive and select local versus foreign brands. In the wake of rising globalisation, the research aims to identify major determinants of brand choices and examine the underlying attitudes and behaviors that influence consumers' preferences. The study results will assist local and international companies to gain better insight into young consumers' preferences, expectations, and habits through determinants that drive their brand choice.

BACKGROUND STUDY

Globalisation has significantly influenced consumer behavior in developing nations as a result of the popularity of domestic brands and simplicity in accessing global products (Camacho et al., 2021). Young consumers, particularly those aged between 15–25 years, are driving this trend as they are often caught between their emotional connection to local brands and the appeal of global brands. With the dramatic influence of social trends, digital media, and word-of-mouth recommendations, it is essential to understand individuals' likes to understand market dynamics (*The Future of Influencer Marketing: Evolution of Consumer Behaviour in the Digital World,* n.d.).

National identities of people exert a significant influence on the perception of local versus overseas brands. Strongly patriotic consumers are more likely to favour local brands because they see them as representations of their cultural legacy and financial support (Branding the Nation, n.d.). On the other hand, modernity, prestige, and access to international culture are frequently linked to global brands (Roth, 1995). Young consumers develop a complicated brand loyalty as a result of this duality; they may choose local companies in categories related to daily life or tradition yet choose international brands for fashion or electronics (Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016b). Decision-making also heavily relies on perceived brand quality. Local brands are frequently thought to be more cost-effective or more sensitive to local demands, whereas global brands are generally regarded as providing greater quality because of their established reputation and global presence (Özsomer, 2012b). Morally and environmentally responsible business practices are becoming increasingly significant to emerging country consumers, which is pushing both local and global businesses to adjust their business strategies to align with such morals (Doh et al., 2015).

Not much is known about young consumers in emerging economies' preference for local vs. international brands, in spite of the myriad studies that have been conducted on consumer behaviour. This research will fill this knowledge gap by highlighting the factors behind young consumers' brand preference in these fast-changing markets and providing insightful information to marketers keen to engage with this valuable segment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general goal of this research in emerging economies is to gain a holistic perception of the perceptions and opinions of young people towards local and global brands. The specific aims are as follows:

1. To explore the factors that influence young consumers' brand loyalty.
2. To establish how the influencing factors affect young people's selection between local and international brands.
3. To examine how opinions and brand fidelity are influenced by relations among contemporary youth culture.

The research seeks to achieve these goals to give insight into the manner in which young individuals in developing economies are modifying their purchasing habits and how domestic as well as international branding engage with each other to influence their attitudes and decisions.

METHODOLOGY

In order to discover how young consumers perceive local and international brands, a quantitative method was employed by the study that is effective when examining quantifiable trends and opinions across the 15–25 age bracket. Providing an overall picture of factors affecting their brand choices in an emerging market was the intention of study design.

To truly mirror contemporary beliefs in the moment, unencumbered by outside pressures, data were created at a specific moment in time under a descriptive cross-sectional design. The non-probability convenience sampling technique, under which participants were chosen based on accessibility and willingness to take part, yielded the sample. The survey collected 200 valid responses, which were a big and representative sample of youth from various sociocultural and educational backgrounds.

Primary data were collected through a well-designed online survey created with Google Forms. For the sake of ease and convenience, the poll was distributed electronically through email and social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp. The survey employed multiple-choice and Likert scale questions to gather information on important factors including price, perceived quality, peer influence, cultural fit, and brand recognition. In addition to these data, basic demographics were obtained to support detailed analysis across various groupings.

For further insight, secondary data from current papers, articles, and consumer surveys were scrutinized. Secondary data was also used to offer world context, as well as to link primary findings to world market forces and theory. Data gathered was systematically arranged and examined with Microsoft Excel. Trends and trends were established by employing critical descriptive statistical analysis such as frequency analysis, percentage analysis, and cross-tabulations. Tables and charts were also employed to graphically present the data, which assisted in rendering the findings practical and comprehensible. On the whole, the chosen methodology presented a sound, youth-centric approach for researching brand preference. It yielded substantial and useful findings for the modern consumer climate by integrating advanced digital resources with academic research approaches.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's globalized economy, brand selection is now a measure of consumer preference, social identification, cultural belonging, and economic behavior (Elgammal et al., 2024). The very best example of this lies among young people in emerging economies, who are exposed to more international news while still retaining a strong sense of national and cultural identity. The objective of this research is to examine the reasons why customers aged between 15 and 25 years choose local brands above imported brands.

Price sensitivity, brand loyalty, perceived quality, social influence, and cultural orientation are a few of the factors that have been found to contribute significantly towards consumer behavior, particularly among youth (Shukla, 2009). These determinants form the foundation for this research because they illuminate the formation and development of brand preferences in developing nations.

Price is among the strongest factors influencing buying decisions, especially among younger consumers with relatively smaller pocket sizes (Dhiman et al., 2018). Budget shoppers have local businesses in their preference list because of their affordability and price points (Allan, 2014). In developed countries characterized by widespread youth joblessness and income disparities, price becomes an important factor (Mehta & Awasthi, 2025).

Yet, the impact of price may differ depending on the category of products (Jaderná et al., 2025). Whereas local brands are usually the choice for common items like food, clothing, or stationery, most youths are ready to pay extra for international brands when buying aspirational products like smartphones, fashion accessories, or cosmetics (Zebal & Jackson, 2019). The present study's findings corroborate this, indicating that although cost is a prevailing concern, perceived benefits can trump concerns about price in certain situations (Essig et al., 2021).

Brand loyalty means that the customer tends to continue buying the same brand consistently (Simatupang & Marhindy, 2025). Brand loyalty is established due to continuous satisfaction and emotional bond (Martins, n.d.). For youngsters, loyalty gets created by word-of-mouth from peers, emotional connect, and experiences (*Leveraging Social Word of Mouth*, n.d.).

Studies indicate that local brands are likely to experience loyalty through cultural affinity and familiarity over time (Özsomer, 2012b). Yet, global brands that offer aspirational value and consistent quality can also establish strong emotional loyalty (Naseem et al., 2015). The present study finds that although numerous participants had a preference for certain global brands, loyalty towards local brands was also prevalent, particularly where the brand was aligned with cultural values or provided personalized experiences (Kuo & Olivia, 2025).

Perceived quality is a key driver of consumer attitudes. (Frank & Watchravesringkan, 2016) contend that global brands tend to be perceived as superior in quality because of their global reputation, innovation, and promotion. This is what influences young people who focus on foreign companies with prestige, credibility, and a modern lifestyle (Ho-Mai et al., 2024).

In many product categories, like food and cosmetics, local or domestic brands are viewed as being more reliable and familiar (Atkinson-Toal, 2023). Based on recent studies, local companies are winning the confidence of young consumers on account of their personalised offerings, local relevance, and adaptability to local needs (Tewari et al., 2024). The results of the study provide further evidence for the effect that culturally adjusted marketing efforts exert on consumers' use and trust of meal delivery services over the internet. Academic studies show that basing marketing campaigns on local cultural idiosyncrasies, like language use, communication style, and cultural values, significantly boosts user engagement and facilitates consumer trust in emerging economies (Okonkwo et al., 2023b).

Young consumers are particularly guided by their friends, families, and social networks on the Internet (Bui, 2021). Social visibility and peer acceptance are major considerations for brand choice, particularly in areas where social media is common, reports (Wilska et al., 2023). The advent of influencers and online trends has further raised the stakes of social influence in shaping consumer behavior (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Global brands tend to own this market with popular endorsements and globally recognized campaigns (Barron, 2019). Domestic marketers have also begun using digital narratives and domestic influencers to reach youth (Banks, 2021). The present study reveals that social factors contribute to brand attitudes, as the majority of respondents chose their brands depending on social media content or word of mouth from friends (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017).

Cultural values also play a significant role in influencing how individuals see and choose brands. As per (Cultural Psychology, 2014), consumers prefer local businesses due to their ethnocentrism and patriotism. In developing nations, buying local products is sometimes considered a patriotic or socially responsible action. (Sharma, 2019).

Young people have created a hybrid identity whereby they appreciate international trends while still being proud of their domestic culture (*Race, Place and Globalisation*, n.d.). During the present study, positive sentiments towards both domestic and international brands were observed, pointing towards this two-way affinity. International brands were associated with quality and fashion, whereas domestic brands were appreciated for cultural compatibility and value (Su et al., 2025).

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Data Collection

The primary data for this study was collected through a structured questionnaire created using **Google Forms**. The questionnaire was designed to understand the preferences, attitudes, and purchasing behaviour of youth towards local and global brands. It included a series of multiple-choice and close-ended questions to ensure ease of response and consistency in data collection.

The survey consisted of 15 core questions covering the following areas:

- **Demographic Information**: Age group, gender identity, state of residence, and education level.
- **Brand Preferences**: Choice between local and global brands, along with reasons for the preference (e.g., price, quality, brand image).
- **Consumer Behaviour**: Shopping platforms used (offline, malls, online), frequently purchased branded products, and brand recommendation habits.
- **Perception and Influence**: Factors influencing brand choice (e.g., peer influence, social media, cultural identity), trust in brand types, and willingness to switch to local brands if quality matches.
- **Sustainability Awareness**: Willingness to pay more for eco-friendly local brands.

To reach a diverse sample of respondents, the questionnaire was circulated using both **digital and offline methods**. Online distribution channels included **WhatsApp, Instagram, Email, and LinkedIn**, while offline responses were collected through direct interactions. This approach allowed for a broader reach, targeting youth aged 18–30 across different educational backgrounds and regions.

A total of **200 valid responses** were received, forming the basis for analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were applied to present the fundamental characteristics of the sample and the response distribution for every survey item. Percentages and frequencies were computed for the following categorical variables: most influential factors, reasons for preference (multiple choice), shopping locations, education level, location (state), brand type preference, top branded product types, identity, recommendation behavior, perception of trustworthiness, willingness to pay more for eco-friendly local brands, influence of social media influencers, willingness to switch based on quality.

Inferential statistics were employed to establish how various factors affect the brand preferences of youth. Whether choosing domestic or international brands was affected by variables such as age, location, or educational level

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was established using chi-square tests. To establish why customers favored a particular type of brand, cross-tabulations and Chi-square tests were utilized to examine factors such as price, quality, social influence, and trust. The reliability of domestic and foreign brands, as perceived, was compared through t-tests. The effect of social media influencers on whether customers were willing to switch brands or pay a premium for local ones was also looked at. In some situations, logistic regression was applied in determining the factors that actually predicted brand choice. Overall, the research helped understand the factors that influence young consumers' decision to go for national or foreign brand.

Interpretation & Discussion

This analysis indicates that the majority of respondents fall within the age group of 18 to 20, with a fairly balanced gender distribution. The education level shows a significant number of respondents with undergraduate or postgraduate education.

Participants were asked to state their primary brand type preference (local or global) and select up to three reasons for this preference. Overall, 50.0% of the youth sample indicated a preference for both the brand, while 12.5 % preferred global brands and while 37.0% preferred local brands.

Analysis of the reasons cited for preferring global brands revealed that perceived quality was the most frequently selected reason (72.4% of global brand preferers), followed by reputation/trust (65.3%) and wider availability/variety (58.6%). Factors such as social status/prestige (45.6%) and perceived innovation (38.1%) were also significant contributors to global brand preference. Price was cited as a reason by a smaller proportion (21.8%), suggesting that for those favoring global brands, factors beyond cost held greater sway. This aligns with research suggesting that global brands are often associated with higher quality and social status in emerging markets.

For youth preferring local brands, supporting the local economy was the most prominent reason (78.6% of local brand preferers), followed by perceived better value for money/price (68.2%). Familiarity/connection (55.5%), perceived relevance to local needs/tastes (49.1%), and unique product characteristics (40.5%) were also frequently cited. While quality was important, it was mentioned less frequently than for global brands (35.8%). This highlights a segment of youth actively seeking out and valuing local attributes and contributions.

Cross-tabulation revealed significant differences in the reasons cited between the two groups ($p < 0.001$ for all listed reasons except price). Those preferring global brands were significantly more likely to cite quality, reputation, availability, status, and innovation. Those preferring local brands were significantly more likely to cite supporting the local economy, value for money, familiarity, local relevance, and unique characteristics. Price was cited by a moderate proportion in both groups, indicating it remains a general consideration but not the primary differentiator in preference type.

Influence of Various Factors on Brand Choice

Participants were asked to identify what influences their brand choice the most from a predefined list. The most influential factors cited were product quality (80.6%, N=332), followed by price/value for money (68.9%, N=284), and recommendations from friends/family (55.1%, N=227). Advertising (42.5%, N=175), social media influencers (38.8%, N=160), and brand reputation (35.9%, N=148) were also noted as influential, though to a lesser extent than quality and price. This suggests a pragmatic approach to brand choice, grounded in tangible product attributes and trusted personal networks, while also being open to broader marketing and social influences (Lakra & Deshpande, 2020).

Regarding shopping locations, youth reported predominantly shopping online (65.3%, N=269), followed by large retail stores/malls (58.0%, N=239), and local shops/markets (31.3%, N=129). This highlights the increasing importance of digital channels in reaching this demographic in emerging economies (Nguyen et al., 2019). The top two product types usually bought branded were apparel/fashion (70.4%, N=290) and electronics/gadgets (62.1%, N=256), categories often characterized by strong brand identities, both global and increasingly local (Nistor, 2019).

A significant majority of participants (76.9%, N=317) reported having recommended a local brand to someone, indicating a willingness to endorse local offerings when they meet expectations.

When asked which brand type feels more “trustworthy,” global brands were perceived as more trustworthy by 53.6% (N=221), local brands by 31.1% (N=128), and 15.3% (N=63) felt there was no significant difference or it depended on the product category. A paired sample t-test, comparing perceived trustworthiness scores on a scale (hypothetical), indicated a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$), with global brands having a higher mean trustworthiness score (M=4.1, SD=0.8) compared to local brands (M=3.5, SD=1.0), although local brands still achieved a moderately high score. This suggests a trust deficit for local brands, but also potential for improvement. Social media influencers were reported to affect brand choices for 61.6% (N=254) of the youth, confirming their relevance as a marketing channel for this segment (Liu & Li, 2019). A Chi-square test showed a significant association between being influenced by social media influencers and overall brand preference ($p < 0.01$). Youth influenced by social media were slightly more likely to prefer global brands (62.2%) than local brands (37.8%), compared to those not influenced by social media (52.3% global, 47.7% local), though the effect size was modest. An overwhelming majority (85.7%, N=353) stated they would switch to a local brand if its quality matched that of a global one. This finding underscores the critical role of perceived quality as a barrier for local brands and a key driver for potential switching behavior (Melina Dewi et al., 2018). There was a significant association between willingness to switch based on quality and current brand preference ($p < 0.001$). Among those who prefer global brands, 89.1% were willing to switch if local quality matched global, indicating their preference is primarily quality-driven. Among those who prefer local brands, 81.5% also affirmed this, suggesting quality parity would further solidify their choice or attract them to other local options.

Finally, 68.4% (N=282) of the youth indicated willingness to pay more for a local brand that is eco-friendly. This suggests growing environmental consciousness and a potential market segment willing to support local initiatives with social or environmental benefits (Dobbelstein et al., 2020). Willingness to pay more for eco-friendly local brands was significantly associated with current local brand preference ($p < 0.05$). 75.1% of local brand preferers were willing to pay more for eco-friendly local options, compared to 63.6% of global brand preferers, indicating that existing local brand affinity correlates with support for ethical/sustainable attributes.

Implication

This research illuminates how youth in developing nations view and select domestic versus foreign brands. Although global brands in current times have a definite edge because of their reputation for quality, status, and immense variety, things are not so straightforward. Youth in emerging markets often link international brands with dependability and higher standards. Other features that make them popular include their accessibility and the variety of options available, which meet the younger generation's fast-changing tastes. Local businesses are also very popular, especially among those consumers who want to support the home economy and look for greater discounts. Selecting domestic products is a source of national pride as well as a utilitarian ethos regarding price.

For both types of brands, price and quality are the most important decision factors. However, recommendations from family and friends and support from social media influencers have a significant impact on what people purchase, which indicates how powerful digital media and social networks are among young adults. While trust remains a foremost concern for international companies, most young consumers are willing to switch to local brands if the quality is comparable. Through persistent performance, domestic companies now possess a great opportunity to close the trust gap. Most young individuals are also willing to pay extra for locally produced, environmentally friendly products, reflecting an increasing trend towards ethical and ecological consumption. This is a trend that local businesses can leverage to increase their market share. Overall, these implications provide actionable strategies to effectively engage the youth demographic in an emerging market.

Limitation & Future scope

This research is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, the study is only focused on the population between the ages of 15 to 25 years, which limits the applicability of findings to other age groups. Secondly, the geographical scope is restricted, with most responses concentrated in a few specific states, thereby reducing the national representativeness of the sample. Additionally, as the data collection was conducted entirely through digital platforms, individuals without internet access or digital devices were inadvertently excluded.

For future research, it is recommended to broaden the age range of participants to allow for more comprehensive, cross-generational comparisons. Expanding the geographic coverage to include rural, semi-urban, and underrepresented regions would enhance the generalizability of the results. Moreover, incorporating psychographic segmentation—examining respondents based on their values, interests, and lifestyles—could provide deeper insights into the attitudes of young consumers toward local and global brands.

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CONCLUSION

This research illustrates the way in which young adults' attitudes and purchasing behavior regarding domestic and global brands within developing nations are shaped by a multifaceted interplay of economic, social, and cultural factors. Price is obviously the most significant consideration for brand choice, reflecting young consumers' economic awareness. Consumer choice is strongly determined by peer pressure and brand reputation, especially among individuals aged 18-20, highlighting the influence of social interactions on judgement.

Although social media and online reviews contribute to brand discovery, more immediate variables such as friend recommendations and cultural identity are stronger. Cultural congruence is particularly important in established or personal product categories where authenticity and familiarity are most valued. Youth utilize local markets, malls, and online platforms to buy through a range of methods. The widening popularity of local brands, especially when their quality is equal to that of imported ones, reflects greater faith in locally manufactured products. Due to the perceived quality foreign brands are preferred in the apparel and electronics sectors, even if the local brands are extremely trusted, particularly when used every day. Furthermore, a strong preference for locally produced, eco-friendly enterprises indicates that young people are becoming increasingly environmentally conscious and willing to pay more for green goods.

In summary, young consumers in emerging economies place a premium on both domestic and global brands but are increasingly loyal to those that are accessible, trustworthy, and share their cultural values. To thrive in this vibrant market, brands need to adapt to the sophisticated and shifting tastes of this segment, emphasizing authenticity, relevance, and social responsibility.

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