

Investigating the impact of social influence on the purchasing behavior of sports apparel among athletes in Indore division

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Abstract---The current research sought to examine the effect of social influence on the purchasing decisions of sports apparel among athletes in the Indore Division. A random sampling approach was used to select 102 athletes aged between 17 to 25 years. Data were gathered through a self-constructed and expert validated questionnaire consisting of 18 statements on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". Descriptive statistics were applied to analyse the responses, which were presented in percentage form. The results indicated that most athletes held a positive view regarding the role of social influence in their purchasing behaviour. The majority of respondents concurred that elements such as peer recommendations, family preferences, celebrity endorsements, and the apparel choices of their role models significantly influenced their buying decisions. The study found that social factors play a significant role in the selection of clothing for athletes. Brand awareness and purchase motivation are enhanced by this action. Even so, people are sometimes influenced by brand rather than actual buying decisions. This can be misleading. The findings suggest that teachers, coaches, and marketers can utilize these social effects to enhance awareness campaigns and marketing strategies. Additional research could involve examining other areas or comparing athletes in urban and rural settings to gain more insight into how people purchase sports clothing.

Keywords---social influence, purchasing, sports apparel, athletes, Indore division.

Introduction

In today's world, social factors are becoming more important and greatly affect how people make buying decisions. Most people, whether they realize it or not, make choices based on what others think or do. These social influences can come from personal relationships to bigger social trends. This is especially true in the sports clothing industry, where athletes often choose their outfits to show who they are, where they belong, and what trends they follow, along with how well they perform. This study focuses on Indore, a lively and diverse city in India, to explore how social influence connects to the way people buy sports clothes.

In 2021, the Indian sportswear market was worth around USD 579.47 million, and by 2029, it is expected to reach USD 2238.13 million. The main reasons for this growth are more people getting into sports and sportswear becoming more common in everyday life. To influence what people buy, famous local and global brands like Adidas, Nike, and Shiv-Naresh spend a lot on advertising. It's important to understand what consumers want in a market that has so many choices.

Social influence happens in many ways and refers to any change in a person's thoughts, feelings, or actions because of others. Harvard psychologist Herbert Kelman identified three main types. The first is internalization, which means a belief is truly accepted both when someone is around and when they are alone. The second is

identification, where a person is influenced by someone they look up to, like a celebrity. The third is compliance, where a person agrees with something in public but does not really agree with it privately.

Social influence in sportswear can be broken down into groups and norms. What athletes and people who wear sports clothes choose to wear is affected by many things, such as pressure from friends and their social groups, the strong effect of social media, and the influence of role models like celebrities and professional athletes. In a city like Indore, which mixes traditional values with modern trends, these influences are also shaped by bigger cultural and social factors.

To fully understand how social influence affects consumer buying decisions, it's important to look at the whole process. Once a need is recognized, consumers go through a complex and constantly changing journey. They gather information from many places, like online reviews and what people say to each other. Then, they carefully think about different things, such as the brand's reputation and how much something costs, before finally making a purchase. After buying, they do a final check to see if they're happy with their choice. This final step can influence what they do next and how loyal they are to a brand.

Emotions and social influences play a big role in every part of this process, even though it often looks logical and reasonable. How people see a brand's value and the feelings they have about buying it are just as important as the actual features of the product. So, for marketers to build effective communication plans and properly place their products in the minds of their customers, they need to fully understand how social factors affect people's decisions.

Methodology

The study has made on 102 individuals which consisted of a gender balanced cohort of 51 male and 51 female athletes specifically from the vibrant locale of the Indore Division were selected as subject for this study at random and their age were ranged between 17 to 25 years.

Based on literature review and expert consultation, key variables were selected for their relevance and feasibility. The study will investigate to the ways how peer groups, consumer reviews, social influence, and personal investigation habits modify athletes purchasing decisions. It additionally looks at market related aspects like the accessibility of sportswear, an extensive variety of merchandise options, various shoe brands, and the effect of multiple key market players. Employing a structured questionnaire, key criterion measures were used to evaluate the extent and the frequency of social connections across athletes and assessing the effect of opinion leaders and peers on apparel selections. The researcher had chosen the method of

targeted sampling, which is a random sampling technique, to gather the data. The test was conducted using a questionnaire which the scholar herself developed, adopting descriptive analysis to obtain the data. The investigator generated a link for a Google Form, circulated online, and delivered telephonic instructions. Besides that, she conducted a field tour and provided local institutions with a description of the questionnaire.

Discussion of findings

Once the responses from athletes in the Indore Division were collected and studied, the results showed that most of them had a positive attitude towards how social influence affects their choices when buying clothes. Figure 1 represents the overall distribution of all responses gathered from the 18-statement questionnaire.

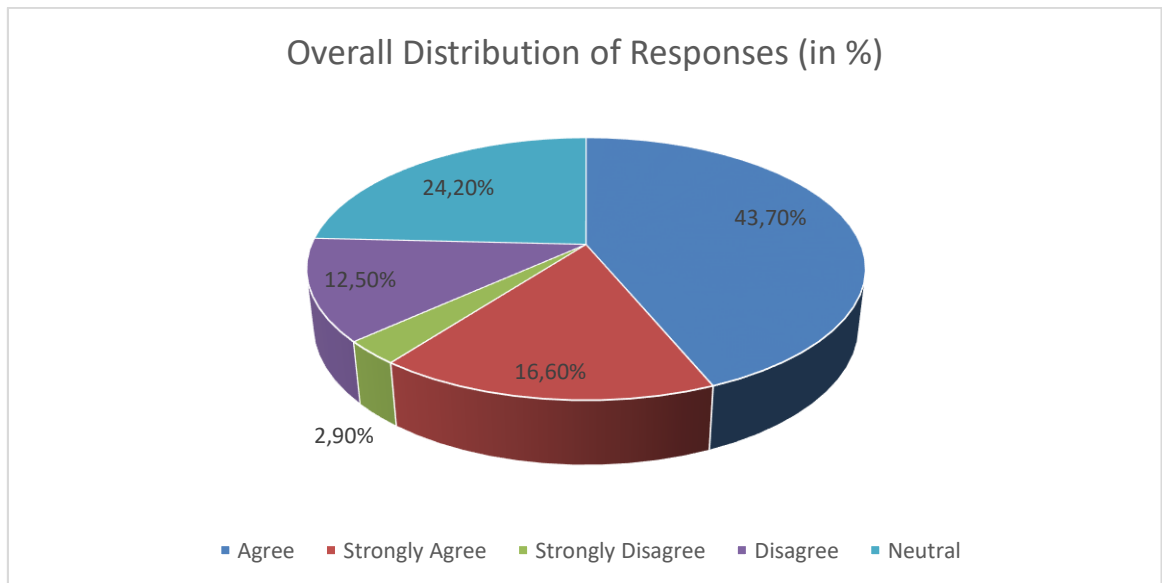


Figure 1: Overall Distribution of Responses (in %)

As the chart clearly illustrates, the overwhelming majority of responses were positive. The categories of "Agree" (43.7%) and "Strongly Agree" (16.6%) comprised for 60.3% of all responses. The fact that the majority of athletes agree that variables like peer recommendations, opinions from professionals, and role models influence their purchasing decisions is quantitatively verified with this.

On the other hand, only a small percentage of responses were negative, with 12.5% selecting "Disagree" and 2.9% selecting "Strongly Disagree," for a total of 15.4%. The vast majority of respondents (24.2%) chose to stay "Neutral," which appears to be consistent with the findings that personal preferences, financial constraints, and other factors can occasionally override social influence.

The study's main finding is supported by this total data. The majority of athletes stated that their clothing choices were greatly influenced by their conversations with friends, the opinions of others, and professional advice. This is strongly supported by the high percentage of agreement shown in Figure 1. The chart also supports the subtleties in the responses; the noteworthy 24.2% "Neutral" slice and the 15.4% who disagreed demonstrate that, although social influence is significant, it is not the only factor. A significant portion of athletes believe that personal decisions and financial matters also have a significant impact.

These results together show that social influence, cost, and how good people think the clothes are where the main reasons athletes in the Indore area bought sports apparel. Even though opinions from friends and experts were clearly important, the athletes also made their own choices based on what they liked, how much money they had, and what their sport needed. This mix of listening to others and making their own decisions shows how complicated buying behaviour is in the sports clothing market.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study shows that social influence was a significant and largely positive factor in the sports apparel purchasing behaviours of athletes in the Indore division. Athletes reported that influence from idols, coaches, peers, and family increased their motivation and led to informed decisions about performance-enhancing brands. However, negative aspects were also noted, such as the promotion of unaffordable brands and peer pressure. Ultimately, social influence was a pivotal driver in athletes' purchasing decisions, presenting both key benefits and some notable drawbacks.

Recommendations

1. Study may be repeated to know the social influence of Indore division athlete, Indore in other aspects.
2. A comparative study can be done between the different level of tribal and urban areas athlete to understand their purchasing behaviors.
3. On the basis of the result of this study, it is very strongly recommended that Physical education teachers, coaches and administrators must apply scientific and systematic physical education programmed.
4. This study can help to all the investors who is newly wanted to be a part of apparel market in sports can refer this study to understand the current market scenario.
5. Study can be repeated to know the purchasing behavior of athletes in pan India.

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