

## **DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES OF SELECT BRANDS OF SPORTS PRODUCTS**

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### **Abstract**

In order for companies to exercise growth, consumer research is conducted to better understand their target market. The company's primary objective is to categorize the value of their investment. The purpose of this research was to identify the influential factors in the purchasing decision of sporting equipment among college students attending a small, private, and Division III institution. 120 undergraduate students from St. John Fisher College were surveyed and varied in gender and athletic status. The participants in this study reported that while a small majority preferred shopping in-store, there was no significant difference in the shopping pattern within participant demographic groupings. Footwear was the largest category of want and need for participants in this study. Some differences in needed and wanted items for purchase were uncovered through statistical analysis. Headwear and gloves were significant differences observed by gender. Stakeholders will find value in this research as it can develop a segmented market targeting colleges within a particular geographic region.

**Keywords:** sporting equipment, college students, consumers

### **Introduction**

Brand loyalty has been an alarming concern in the recent past for various business firms to consider for effective customer retention and the sportswear industry is no exception to it. Retaining a brand loyal customer is much more cost effective than attracting a new customer. A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors. In layman terms, brand is an idea or image of a specific product or service with which the customer connects with by identifying its name, logo, caption, design, way of presenting, or by the design of the company who owns the idea or image of a specific product or service. Branded sportswear plays a vital role in the global market especially in the Indian markets. The country's economic growth is rapidly changing and moreover peoples' life style, purchase behaviour and purchase power is consistently increasing since globalization. Nowadays, sportswear has become a common and popular factor as it gives young people a relaxed lifestyle, greater adaptability and

comfort. Many people use the sports goods for different motive. They use the sportswear like fashion wear. There is a large variety of sportswear present in the market of different brands but individuals prefer only the brand which gives them satisfaction. Customers are ready to pay more for the branded sportswear because it provides them good quality product, features, durability, style, etc. If the existing brand is unable to satisfy the customer, then they switch to some other brand. With the help of marketing strategies, company try to retain the customer and convert them as a loyal customer. There are different degrees of loyalty: Hard core loyal (Brand loyalty), split loyal, shifting loyal and brand switchers. Brand loyalty is the situation in which a consumer purchases the same manufacturers product or service again and again rather than purchasing from different suppliers within the category. A loyal customer is that who doesn't change their

brand even after the regular advertisements, promotions, offers and discounts etc. from the competitors. Brand loyal customer results in the increase in the profitability of the firm as the loyal customer will promote the brand through word of mouth. As a result of that, the company also try

to provide benefits to their loyal customers and also try to retain them for future. Brand Switchers are those customers who do not remain loyal with one brand and they always use different products or services of different brand. Sportswear industry is a large industry with a variety of sportswear

for men, women, kids and many foreign companies enter into the Indian market which increases the competition rapidly. In order to face the competition, branding was introduced by marketers in this industry to have a clear understanding of Indian companies as a marketing strategy to differentiate the branded sportswear. The present study primarily focuses on how customers evaluate role of brand in purchasing decision of sportswear, based on factors like price, quality, durability comfort, etc. This study explains the importance of the brand while purchasing sportswear products. This study aims at analysing the factors that determines the role of brand in purchase decision of sportswear and

### **Research Objectives**

- To discover the factors determining the role of the brand in purchase decision of sportswear.
- To identify the most important and least important factor in purchasing branded sportswear.

### **Objectives of the Research**

- To identify the key factors that contribute to brand loyalty in the sportswear industry by exploring some pertinent elements such as customer experience, brand image, and product quality.
- To analyse the intricate relationship between brand loyalty and business growth in the sportswear industry by examining customer acquisition and retention, market share, and related other factors.
- Identifying and evaluating strategies as well as best practices to develop brand loyalty in the sportswear industry.

### Research Gap

In the literature review here, different journals, books, case studies, and scholarly articles have been analysed to understand the impact of brand loyalty on the business growth of the sportswear industry. Brand loyalty factors, their relationship with business growth, and strategies to improve brand loyalty have been discussed here thoroughly. However, some other areas could have been delineated to understand the topic well. To illustrate, the use of a limited number of resources here could not provide a holistic overview of the global sportswear industry given that it is a vast industry to research. The challenge regarding access to a large number of research materials created this research gap. Again, the cultural perspectives of customers have not been highlighted here when discussing brand loyalty in the sportswear industries of different countries. Therefore, the strategy of developing a loyal customer base does not become very effective. Moreover, technology plays a vital role in developing brand loyalty across all industries (Phillips, 2010). However, the use of technologies such as social media, Artificial Intelligence, Search Engine Optimisation, and so on have not been highlighted here, making the research somewhat incomplete. Therefore, there are scopes to research the sections where research gaps are identified.

### Percentage Analysis

TABLE – 4.1.9

Table Showing Which brand you prefer?

S.no	Particulars	No.of Respondents	Percentage
•	Nike	10	10%
•	Puma	20	18%
•	Adidas	14	11%
•	Gavy nicols	28	27%
•	Asics	24	22%
•	Fila	13	12%
	Total	109	100%

### Interpretation

Gavy nicols(27%) and Asics(22%), Puma(18%), Fila(12%), Adidas(11%), Nike(10%).

TABLE – 4.1.10

Table Showing How do you perceive the overall value for money offer by sports brands compared to competitors

S.no	Particulars	No.of Respondents	Percentage
•	Excellent	15	13%
•	Good	45	42%
•	Fair	32	33%
•	Poor	13	12%
	Total	105	100%

### Interpretation

Good(42%), Fair(33%), Excellent(13%), Poor(12%).

### Findings

1. The respondent sample demonstrates a balanced gender distribution, which ensures a representative perspective across genders in the survey data.

2. The majority of respondents (69%) fall within the 18-24 age group, followed by 29% in the 25-40 age range, and only 2% aged 40 and above.

3. The respondent sample predominantly consists of younger individuals, indicating a skew towards younger demographics. This age distribution suggests that the survey data may reflect the perspectives and preferences more common among younger age groups.

4. The respondent sample is predominantly composed of students, suggesting a youthful demographic bias in the data. This distribution underscores the importance of considering the specific needs and preferences of student respondents in any analysis or decision-making process.

5. Videos are the preferred format for receiving information about Sports products, suggesting the effectiveness of visual content in engaging audiences. Sports products providers should prioritize creating video content to effectively communicate information about their services to their target audience.

6. Word of mouth and online search are the most influential channels for people to hear about Sports products centers in Coimbatore, highlighting the importance of reputation and online visibility. Sports products providers should focus on providing excellent service to encourage positive word of mouth and invest in online marketing strategies to enhance their visibility in search results and social media platforms.

7. There is a prevalent pattern of regular online searches for Sports products services among respondents, with a considerable portion engaging weekly or monthly. This underscores the importance of online platforms in providing accessible health information and services.

8. Instagram is a prominent platform for accessing Sports products, highlighting the significance of visual and social media-based approaches in health-related searches. Facebook and Google remain popular choices, while Health Directories play a supporting role in facilitating access to Sports products information and services.

9. Endorsements from patients and physicians, backed by research and accreditation, are crucial for building trust in healthcare marketing. Transparency in pricing, while less prominent, remains a factor in establishing credibility.

10. A significant portion of respondents consider community involvement important when selecting a healthcare center, highlighting the role of community engagement in healthcare decision-making. However, a notable proportion remains neutral or does not prioritize community involvement in their choice.

11. Online reviews play a substantial role in the decision-making process for selecting healthcare centers, with a majority of respondents relying on them to inform their choices. This underscores the importance of online reputation management for healthcare providers.

12. The availability of specialized services is a crucial factor for a majority of patients when choosing a healthcare center. Healthcare providers may benefit from emphasizing and promoting their specialized services to attract patients

13. While traditional methods still dominate, there's a notable trend towards digital channels for appointment booking. Healthcare centers should consider offering online booking options and mobile apps to cater to changing patient preferences and enhance accessibility.

14. There's a diverse preference for language in receiving marketing materials, with a substantial portion preferring bilingual content. Healthcare marketers should consider offering materials in multiple languages to effectively reach and engage with diverse audiences.

15. While a significant portion of respondents value the location and accessibility of healthcare centers, a notable percentage remains neutral or does not prioritize these factors. Healthcare providers should consider the varying preferences of patients when determining facility locations and accessibility options.

16. Promotional discounts significantly influence patient decisions regarding healthcare center visits, suggesting the effectiveness of such marketing strategies in attracting patients.

17. While monthly engagement is the most common, respondents engage with healthcare centers on social media across different frequencies, highlighting the importance of maintaining a consistent and active presence on social platforms to reach and connect with patients.

18. While phone calls remain the most preferred communication

19. channel, there's a notable preference for digital channels such as social media messaging and SMS/text messages. Healthcare centers should adopt a multi-channel communication approach to accommodate diverse patient preferences.

20. There is significant support among respondents for the implementation of feedback mechanisms in healthcare centers, suggesting a recognition of the importance of patient feedback in improving services and patient satisfaction.

21. A significant portion of respondents value continuity of care, emphasizing the importance of consistent healthcare provider relationships in their healthcare experience. Healthcare centers should consider continuity of care as a factor in improving patient satisfaction and outcomes.

22. Health education programs offered by healthcare centers are perceived as helpful by a majority of respondents, indicating the value of such initiatives in promoting health awareness and empowerment. However, a significant portion of respondents still do not find these programs helpful, suggesting a need for improvement in program content or delivery methods to better meet the needs and preferences of patients.

### **Suggestions**

In case you missed it, I talked in part 1 about the need for branding your sports teams. In part 2, I discussed the role of sports marketing in your athletic department. Now, it's time to brainstorm some practical ways to brand and market your sports program.

First, I want to briefly make clear what marketing is not. It is not fundraising like you're probably thinking of "fundraising." There will be no mentions of doughnuts, coupon books, or car washes. In addition, sports marketing (as referred to in this post) is not distributing stuff (shirts, mugs, bumper stickers, etc.) to your players or booster club members for them to sell.

Now it's time for some suggestions on how you, the school's newly assigned sports marketer, can market your athletic program.

### 1. Team Stores

When something like this is mentioned, most people either think, “I don’t have time for that” or “The return on the time spent isn’t worth it.” Did you know you can have your own team store set up for free? Parents, alumni, and fans can order team apparel directly through your custom web-store. On top of that, your athletic program gets a percentage of the sales! Sound too good to be true? Contact [sales@323sports.com](mailto:sales@323sports.com).

Schools are using these team stores for spirit wear, team apparel, footwear, etc. People buy your gear, then act as billboards as they walk around in apparel marked with your school’s logo. Who doesn’t love free advertising???

### 2. Social Media

By now, I hope you understand that websites are a given. In today’s world, social media is becoming a given for organizations, too. Think of these benefits:

Facebook: Allows you to connect with parents and alumni (72% of American adults use Facebook) Instagram and Snapchat: Allows you to connect with students (53% of 18-29 year olds use Instagram; Snapchat’s largest demographic: 13-24 year olds) There’s no better way to tell your sports program’s story than through social media. These platforms give you an avenue for telling your story through multimedia. Give your fans a behind-the-scenes look with photos and video.

### 3. Game Experience

There’s no better way to connect with sports fans than by giving them a memorable game experience. Why not pick one of the following for this coming season?

Platform event: designed to promote a social cause (e.g., Breast Cancer Awareness, Armed Forces Appreciation) Theme night (e.g., Superhero Night, Ugly Sweater Night)

Fan pre-game/post-game event (e.g., tailgating, walk to the stadium) Special group spaces (e.g., student section, booster club or alumni spaces or seating) Contests (e.g., pay and shoot for prizes, relays for parents, mini-dunk contest for kids) The goal of sports marketing is to create, communicate, and deliver experiences that have value for your school’s students, families and community. Are you doing things to add value? Could you be doing more?

### Conclusion

Companies evaluating this sample to make informed decisions would see value in having a balance to cater hedonic and utilitarian shoppers while also capitalizing on both brick-and-mortar and e-commerce. This sample showed that college students go in both directions and there are reasons specific to those fluctuations. For companies to have the greater impact on a college student market, they would need to evaluate the sporting equipment needs/wants and increase inventory in those areas specific to the sports played in the area. College students will find this incorporation to be of value as they will be able to more consumed in the products given the push to be targeted towards. This does not just stop with individual companies, but also expands to college campus bookstores and athletic departments to evaluate what are the necessities and how are their students purchasing sporting equipment. The feedback from this study will provide the institution the key information to expand or narrow in on offerings that resonates with their target market, the student body.

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