

## A Comparative Analysis of Consumer Preferences and Brand Perception Between Pepsin and Coco-cola in Ahmedabad and Mumbai

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* : PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, Brand Loyalty, Consumer Perceptions, Health Concerns

*Received :* 1, August

*Revised :* 16, September

*Accepted:* 29, October

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### ABSTRACT

This study offers a thorough analysis of the consulting services provided by Head Quest HR Solutions LLP, a reputable Ahmedabad-based HR consulting firm. The study's objectives are to investigate the range of services offered, the technologies employed, and how well these services enhance organizational performance. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study integrates qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with important stakeholders with quantitative data from structured customer surveys. Research indicates that Head Quest HR Solutions LLP employs a number of strategies that are tailored to the unique requirements of its customers. These methods improve overall organizational development, talent management, and employee engagement. In addition to offering useful information on HR consulting best practices, this study makes recommendations for enhancing the efficacy and efficiency of consulting services

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Comparison of Pepsi and Coca-Cola's Brand Perception and Consumer Preferences in Ahmedabad and Mumbai**

The fierce competition between Pepsi and Coca-Cola, two of the most well-known brands in the world, has long characterized the soft drink market. These two titans are engaged in a deeper struggle over global brand identity, regional preferences, customer loyalty, and strategic innovation than just marketing and sales rivalry (Vidani & Solanki, 2015). India, a market that is expanding quickly and has a sizable and diversified population, makes the conflict between PepsiCo and The Coca-Cola Company even more significant. India is now one of the most sought-after markets in the world due to its growing middle class, urbanization tendencies, and the growing impact of international companies. (Vidani, 2015)

Ahmedabad and Mumbai are two important cities that provide a microcosm of India's varying consumer preferences among the country's many metropolitan landscapes (Vidani, 2015). Although both cities are major economic hubs, their demographics, cultural influences, purchasing habits, and lifestyle preferences differ greatly. Gujarat's Ahmedabad is a more traditional and conservative market that is closely tied to local tastes and values (Vidani, 2015). Mumbai, India's financial center, on the other hand, is renowned for its varied populations, cosmopolitan lifestyle, and more lenient consumer base that is heavily impacted by international trends. (Solanki & Vidani, 2016)

#### **India's Soft Drink Market**

With a population of over 1.4 billion people and a younger generation that is more receptive to Western consumption habits, India has one of the most vibrant soft drink markets in the world (Vidani, 2016). Traditionally, domestic companies dominated the Indian soft drink market, but in recent decades, international brands like Pepsi and Coca-Cola have taken the lead. To draw in Indian consumers, both brands have made significant investments in distribution, advertising, and new product development. (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017)

Early in the 1990s, PepsiCo made its debut in India by establishing a number of creative marketing techniques meant to appeal to the country's young population. Conversely, Coca-Cola was first compelled to leave India in the 1970s because of legislative limitations, but it triumphantly returned in 1993 (Niyati & Vidani, 2016). Because their products come in a variety of pricing points and packaging options, both businesses have been able to establish a strong presence in both urban and rural locations. (Pradhan, Tshogay, & Vidani, 2016)

The preferences of Pepsi and Coca-Cola vary within India, despite their global dominance. The way consumers in various cities relate to these companies is frequently influenced by socioeconomic variables, cultural preferences, and regional interests. Each company's competitive strategies also demonstrate an awareness of these regional variations. (Modi, Harkani, Radadiya, & Vidani, 2016)

A Comparative Analysis of Ahmedabad and Mumbai

### **Ahmedabad: A Blend of Modernity and Tradition**

Gujarat's main city, Ahmedabad, is renowned for its vibrant textile industry, rich cultural legacy, and strong corporate culture. Ahmedabad, which is home to more than 8 million people, is a city that successfully combines modernity and heritage. A more conservative and family-oriented approach to consuming is influenced by the city's distinctive cultural setting and historical significance as a hub for trade and industry. (Vidani, 2016)

Ahmedabad's demographics are unique. It has a large middle class and commercial community, and the majority of its residents speak Gujarati. Ahmedabad residents are often regarded as being frugal shoppers who value good value and show a high degree of price sensitivity (Sukhanandi, Tank, & Vidani, 2018). Strong links to the community also impact Ahmedabad's consumer habits; traditional values and family ties play a big role in many purchases. Global brands like Pepsi and Coca-Cola are less appealing in the city due to its more conservative marketing and consumption practices (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). Even if the market has been impacted by globalization, a sizable section of the populace still favors regional and local goods, frequently choosing businesses that share their values. (Mala, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016) When it comes to beverage choices, Ahmedabad residents favor goods that suit their social beliefs, health concerns, and personal preferences. Soft drinks are consumed less frequently or during social events, festivals, and celebrations, while traditional drinks like buttermilk and fresh fruit juices are very popular (Dhere, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016). However, by using regionally specific marketing strategies and product improvements that satisfy local tastes, Pepsi and Coca-Cola have both been able to establish a presence in this market. (Singh & Vidani, 2016)

### **Mumbai: The City of Cosmos**

In sharp contrast to Ahmedabad, Mumbai, the financial center of India, is a vibrant, international city. Mumbai, which has a population of over 20 million, is known for its fast-paced lifestyle, worldwide impact, and tremendous cultural diversity. Mumbai is a city of contrasts, where modernity and tradition coexist. The local populace is greatly impacted by international trends, especially in the areas of consumption, entertainment, and fashion. (Vidani & Plaha, 2016)

Mumbai's populace is youthful, vibrant, and more willing to try out new goods and services. Mumbai, a center for the Bollywood film industry and a cosmopolitan city, is renowned for its trend-conscious customers who are frequently influenced by celebrity endorsements, brand attractiveness, and the grandeur of international goods. Both Pepsi and Coca-Cola have identified Mumbai as a significant market for their high-end products, and they have adapted their marketing tactics to reflect the cosmopolitan ideals of the city. In Mumbai, a variety of elements, including as product familiarity, brand image, and social standing, frequently influence brand loyalty. (Solanki & Vidani, 2016)

Soft drinks are a popular choice because of Mumbai's metropolitan setting and its population's considerable disposable money; carbonated beverages are regularly consumed as part of daily living (Vidani, 2016). Large-scale advertising campaigns that target young, urban workers, college students, and families frequently position Coca-Cola and Pepsi as hip, refreshing, and socially acceptable brands. Pepsi and Coca-Cola are more than just beverages in Mumbai they are ingrained in the city's culture and

are frequently connected to celebration, fun, and teenage revolt. (Vidani, Chack, & Rathod, 2017)

Customer Preferences in Mumbai and Ahmedabad: Pepsi vs. Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola and Pepsi have both put in a lot of effort to establish unique brands in the eyes of Indian customers. However, regional preferences, cultural norms, and advertising tactics influence its allure in various parts of India. (Vidani, 2018)

### **Preferences for Flavor and Taste**

Consumer choices for soft drinks are heavily influenced by taste. The flavor profiles of Pepsi and Coca-Cola are different; Pepsi is typically sweeter and has a lighter, lemony taste, whilst Coca-Cola is more complex and has a deeper, less sweet profile with a stronger caramel flavor. These variations in taste frequently affect the decisions made by customers. (Biharani & Vidani, 2018). Pepsi might have an advantage in Ahmedabad, where traditional tastes tend to favor sweeter, more recognizable flavors. The local palate, which favors sweeter beverages, is drawn to Pepsi's sweeter flavor (Vidani, 2018). Furthermore, Pepsi's advertising, which frequently highlights youthful enthusiasm, may appeal more to Ahmedabad's younger, urban professionals who appreciate taste familiarity but are receptive to new experiences. (Odedra, Rabadiya, & Vidani, 2018)

However, Mumbai's more adventurous and internationally-influenced consumer base may make Coca-Cola's flavor profile—which includes stronger caramel notes—more palatable there. Mumbai customers are more likely to try new cuisines and are frequently influenced by current trends. Coca-Cola's connection to well-known international advertising campaigns and Bollywood stars enhances its allure in Mumbai, where pop culture has a big impact on consumers. (Vasveliyya & Vidani, 2019)

### **Marketing Strategies and Brand Image**

In places like Mumbai and Ahmedabad, where beliefs, social identity, and lifestyle preferences all influence purchasing behavior, the brand image is particularly important in influencing consumer choices. In India, Pepsi's brand positioning has frequently focused on modernism, vigor, and youth. Younger viewers find it more enticing because of its connections to youth culture, international sporting events, and Bollywood celebrities. In Mumbai, where celebrity culture is quite prevalent, Pepsi's marketing strategy of linking itself to well-known athletes and entertainers fosters a deep emotional bond with customers. (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019). In contrast, Coca-Cola is regarded as a more conventional, family-friendly brand. It has long promoted itself as a representation of happiness, community, and camaraderie (Vidani, 2019). Appealing to both younger and older generations, its "Open Happiness" campaign highlights shared moments and emotional relationships. Coca-Cola's advertising effectively positions the beverage as an essential component of family get-togethers and festivities in Ahmedabad, where family values are more strongly held. (Vidani, Jacob, & Patel, 2019)

### **Cost and Availability of Products**

Another important consideration in Mumbai and Ahmedabad is price sensitivity. Pepsi and Coca-Cola's price strategies are crucial in Ahmedabad, as people tend to be more frugal with their expenditures. Both businesses appeal to Ahmedabad's budget-conscious customers by providing a variety of goods, including smaller, less expensive packaging alternatives. (Vidani J. N., 2016). However, consumers in Mumbai are more willing to spend money on high-end soft drink varieties since they have greater discretionary cash. With its introduction of specialized flavors and limited-edition goods, Coca-Cola's premium and innovation-driven approach caters to Mumbai's aspirational consumer, who is motivated by both personal identity and global trends. In contrast, Pepsi takes a similar tack when it comes to brand positioning in Mumbai, frequently emphasizing cutting-edge advertising, packaging, and experiential marketing. (Vidani & Singh, 2017)

The Indian soft drink business provides an intriguing window into the intricacies of brand perception and consumer preferences (Vidani & Pathak, 2016). The sociocultural characteristics of particular cities, such as Mumbai and Ahmedabad, continue to influence the rivalry between Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Although both companies are well-known in both locations, their approaches and attractiveness vary depending on the distinct preferences, values, and lifestyles of the local customer base. (Pathak & Vidani, 2016)

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVIE**

1. To Evaluate Pepsi and Coca-Cola Consumer Preferences in Ahmedabad and Mumbai: This goal is to determine the elements that affect consumers' preferences for Pepsi or Coca-Cola in both locations. In order to determine what influences consumers in Ahmedabad and Mumbai to select one brand over another, the study will investigate taste preferences, product selections (such as flavor and packaging), and consumption patterns. (Vidani & Plaha, 2017)
2. To Examine the Role of Regional and Cultural Factors in Shaping Consumer Behavior: This purpose seeks to examine how Ahmedabad and Mumbai's cultural, social, and demographic traits affect the opinions and preferences of customers. It will explore how factors like local traditions, income levels, and lifestyle differences between these two cities effect brand loyalty and soft drink consumption.
3. To Assess the Effect of Marketing and Advertising Strategies on Brand Perception: This goal looks into how local advertising tactics, celebrity endorsements, and Pepsi and Coca-Cola marketing efforts affect customer attitudes in Mumbai and Ahmedabad. The study will evaluate how well marketing techniques connect with various consumer segments, including professionals, families, and young people, as well as the efficacy of brand message in both locations. (Vidani J. N., 2020)
4. To Investigate the Pricing Sensitivity and Value Perception Among Consumers in Both Cities:

This goal investigates how consumers' decisions about Pepsi and Coca-Cola are influenced by price sensitivity and value perception. It will determine whether Ahmedabad shoppers are more cost-conscious than Mumbai shoppers and how pricing tactics like sales and discounts affect buying choices. (Vidani J. N., 2018)

By addressing the fundamental elements of consumer behavior, cultural variations, marketing efficacy, and brand perception in Ahmedabad and Mumbai, these five

research objectives will provide you with important insights into the workings of the Indian soft drink market. (Vidani & Dholakia, 2020)

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Due to their dominance in the global market for carbonated soft drinks (CSDs), PepsiCo and Coca-Cola's competitive dynamics have been the subject of much research. However, it is crucial to comprehend the impact of geographical, cultural, economic, and social elements while analyzing customer preferences and brand perception in various markets. India provides a unique environment for researching how consumers behave toward these two well-known brands because of its expanding economy, sizable consumer base, and intricate regional differences. This study of the literature explores the body of research on consumer preferences, brand perception, and the influence of regional factors. It focuses on the soft drink market in India, specifically in Ahmedabad and Mumbai. (Vidani, Meghrajani, & Siddarth, 2023)

### **1. Consumer Preferences and Brand Perception in the Global Soft Drink Market**

Studies on brand perception have long focused on the global competition between Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Aaker (1996) asserts that consumer decisions are significantly influenced by brand perception. The two brands are frequently positioned with different identities: Pepsi positions itself as a young, energetic, and contemporary alternative, whereas Coca-Cola is usually linked to tradition, family, and nostalgia. In industrialized markets like the US, Pepsi and Coca-Cola frequently serve as cultural icons that denote lifestyle choices, social class, and personal identity in addition to being beverages. (Rathod, Meghrajani, & Vidani, 2022)

This dichotomy in brand image, however, is not universal and differs greatly between regions, especially in developing nations like India. According to Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), localized marketing initiatives as well as product attributes influence customers' brand preferences in global marketplaces. Price sensitivity, cultural influence, and taste preferences all have a significant impact on how consumers behave in economies like India. (Vidani & Das, 2021)

Another important element affecting consumption patterns in India is the country's regional variety. According to Raghunathan and Irwin (2001), regional tastes have a big impact on Indian food and drink preferences. For example, northern and southern India can have very different tastes in sweetness and saltiness. In contrast to cosmopolitan towns like Mumbai, which have a more diversified, younger, and globally-minded customer base, cities like Ahmedabad, with its Gujarati-speaking, predominately conservative populace, may have contrasting brand affinities.

De Mooij (2010), for example, contends that advertising strategies in India need to be tailored to the specific cultural quirks of the country. Coca-Cola's marketing strategy may be influenced by Ahmedabad's emphasis on traditional family values, while Pepsi's youthful, modern appeal may appeal to a younger, more urban population in both cities. As a result, in various regions of India, brand perception is greatly influenced by regional identity. (Vidani J. N., 2022)

### **2. Coca-Cola vs. Pepsi: Indian Consumer Preferences and Brand Loyalty**

In India, the competition between Pepsi and Coca-Cola has also been examined from the standpoint of brand loyalty. Both Pepsi and Coca-Cola have considerable consumer loyalty, according to Kapoor and Shah's (2017) study on brand loyalty among Indian consumers. However, this loyalty is frequently influenced by

advertising, price sensitivity, and marketing tactics. While Coca-Cola's emotional link to tradition, happiness, and family resonates better with middle-aged and older consumers, especially in more conservative markets, Pepsi's younger, more modern image appeals to India's youth generation, particularly in big urban centers. (Saxena & Vidani, 2023)

Srinivasan (2014) emphasizes that brand choice is significantly influenced by regional preferences. Given its longstanding relationship with family bonding and shared moments, Coca-Cola may be more prevalent in Ahmedabad, where social events and family get-togethers are essential to daily life. However, Pepsi's branding frequently emphasizes entertainment, sports, and music, which appeals more to the urban young culture in places like Mumbai. (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Singh, 2023)

### 3. How Marketing and Advertising Strategies Affect Customer Preferences

Both Pepsi and Coca-Cola have invested considerably in marketing initiatives aimed at reinforcing their brand images and developing emotional ties with consumers. According to Belch & Belch (2015), advertising tactics aimed at particular demographics have a big impact on how people perceive a brand. Both firms have successfully exploited celebrity endorsements in India, a country with a strong cultural impact from cricket and Bollywood. With its emphasis on youth culture, Pepsi has used international sports and Bollywood celebrities in marketing initiatives to appeal to young consumers. Coca-Cola, on the other hand, has employed a more inclusive marketing strategy with themes of joy, community, and nostalgia. (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Chaudasi, 2023)

Srinivasan (2014) noted that the media consumption patterns of Mumbai and Ahmedabad differ, with Pepsi's advertising strategy being more aggressive in Mumbai and the city's youth-driven market increasingly turning to digital and social media platforms. Conversely, Coca-Cola has maintained a strong presence in Mumbai's digital ecosystem while leveraging television and outdoor media campaigns to better connect with Ahmedabad's older, family-oriented population.

### 4. Health and Environmental Issues with the Use of Soft Drinks

Environmental and health concerns have started to influence consumer behavior in several marketplaces in recent years. According to research by Agarwal and Rathi (2015), Indian consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the health hazards connected to sugar-filled beverages, especially in cities like Ahmedabad and Mumbai. In response to the increasing demand for healthier beverage options, Pepsi and Coca-Cola have both introduced healthier alternatives, such as sugar-free and low-calorie versions. According to Mukherjee et al. (2020), fruit juices and carbonated water are becoming more and more popular, particularly with younger, health-conscious consumers. (Bansal, Pophalkar, & Vidani, 2023)

Concerns regarding plastic waste and carbon footprints have also made environmental sustainability a crucial consideration for many Indian shoppers (Chaudhary, Patel, & Vidani, 2023). To appeal to India's eco-aware consumers, Pepsi and Coca-Cola have both implemented eco-friendly packaging and are funding sustainability projects. In contrast to Ahmedabad, where local tastes still favor traditional products and more pressing consumer concerns, Mumbai, where urban knowledge of environmental issues is more prominent, may find particular resonance in these projects. (Patel, Chaudhary, & Vidani, 2023)

## **RESEARCH GAP**

Although a large body of research has examined the competitive dynamics between Pepsi and Coca-Cola in international markets, as well as some studies that have concentrated on the soft drink industry in India, there are still many unanswered questions regarding the subtle variations in consumer preferences and brand perception between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, two Indian cities. Despite being significant metropolitan centers, these cities differ greatly in terms of demographics, socioeconomics, and culture, all of which have the potential to have different effects on consumer behavior. (Sharma & Vidani, 2023)

In the context of the comparative study of consumer preferences and brand perception for Pepsi and Coca-Cola in Ahmedabad and Mumbai, the following sections emphasize the most important research gaps that require attention.

### **1. Limited Regional Comparative Studies on Pepsi vs Coca-Cola in Different Indian Cities**

Studies on Pepsi and Coca-Cola brand perceptions and customer preferences in India as a whole exist, but there is a dearth of research that examines consumer behavior among cities with various sociocultural traits. Without concentrating on how cities like Ahmedabad and Mumbai—each with distinct regional identities, economic profiles, and consumer bases—perceive and engage with these brands, a large portion of the current study is restricted to more general urban-rural divisions or pan-India comparisons. According to Srinivasan (2014) and Raghunathan and Irwin (2001), India is a varied market with a lot of regional cultural influences on customer behavior. (Sharma & Vidani, 2023). When it comes to brand preference and perception, there is a big knowledge gap between Ahmedabad's customers—who are mostly more traditional, family-oriented, and culturally conservative—and Mumbai's younger, more diversified, and cosmopolitan customer base. Instead of extrapolating results to all Indian urban markets, future research should specifically concentrate on comparing consumer behavior in places like Ahmedabad and Mumbai. (Mahajan & Vidani, 2023)

### **2. How Brand Preferences Are Affected by Regional Culture and Demographics**

There is a little amount of research that examines the relationship between local culture and Pepsi and Coca-Cola consumer preferences at the city level, despite the fact that some studies address the impact of cultural elements on brand perception (e.g., Sinha and Sinha, 2008; De Mooij, 2010). The cultural foundations of Ahmedabad and Mumbai are very different. Ahmedabad is more traditional and has a large population of Gujarati speakers, whereas Mumbai is more cosmopolitan and is distinguished by its diversity in languages, ethnic groups, and lifestyles. The emotional bond between customers and brands is covered by Aaker (1996), but little is known about how Pepsi and Coca-Cola take use of these cultural quirks in places with different social systems and values. Although Srinivasan (2014) discusses brand loyalty and emotional connection, the results are not specifically linked to Mumbai and Ahmedabad's cultural characteristics. In these two cities, where socioeconomic variety might result in differing brand impressions, more focused study is required to investigate how demographics such as age, income, education, and family size affect customer preferences for Pepsi and Coca-Cola. (Saxena & Vidani, 2023)

### **3. Health Awareness and How It Affects the Use of Soft Drinks**

Growing interest in health-conscious consumption is a result of the increased global concern for wellbeing and health. Agarwal and Rathi (2015) and Mukherjee et al. (2020) are two studies that shed light on this trend, but little is known about how health concerns specifically influence consumers' decisions between Pepsi and Coca-Cola in Indian cities like Ahmedabad and Mumbai. While certain cities, like Mumbai, have witnessed an increase in health-conscious consumption as a result of increased exposure to global wellness trends, Ahmedabad may exhibit distinct adoption patterns with regard to sugar-free or low-calorie beverages. Variants of health-related products, such as Pepsi Black or Coca-Cola Zero, are frequently promoted as substitutes for consumers who are health-conscious, but little is known about their true market penetration and customer preferences in places like Ahmedabad and Mumbai. Therefore, there is still a crucial knowledge gap on how health consciousness influences the consumption habits of soft drinks.

In urban markets, this disparity also extends to how consumers' growing concerns about sustainability and environmental issues affect their preferences for the two brands. Coca-Cola and Pepsi have both pledged to embrace recyclable packaging and lessen their carbon footprints as part of their efforts to be more environmentally friendly. Research on Ahmedabad and Mumbai customers' environmental consciousness and how it influences their decision between Pepsi and Coca-Cola is lacking, nevertheless.

### **4. The efficacy of localized marketing techniques in Mumbai and Ahmedabad**

The success of localized marketing methods for Pepsi and Coca-Cola in various Indian cities is another significant gap in the literature. As part of their marketing campaigns, both firms use digital advertising, event sponsorships, and celebrity endorsements; but, due to the cultural and socioeconomic differences between Ahmedabad and Mumbai, these tactics might not always work as well.

While Srinivasan and Raju (2018) emphasize the importance of pricing strategies and customer loyalty, the potential impact of regional advertising campaigns on brand perception has received less attention. Coca-Cola's advertisements that highlight family get-togethers and special memories, for instance, would appeal more to Ahmedabad customers, but Pepsi's advertisements that highlight athletes and Bollywood superstars might appeal more to Mumbai's younger and more contemporary demographic. Studying this topic can help us understand how these two brands modify their marketing tactics to suit local values and tastes in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, respectively. Furthermore, not enough research has been done on the usage of conventional media in Ahmedabad and digital media in Mumbai. Ahmedabad's media consumption may still lean toward print and television advertisements, while Mumbai, a global media powerhouse, is more likely to use social media, digital content, and interactive campaigns. It is necessary to investigate how these media habits impact the effectiveness of marketing efforts in each place as well as how successfully Pepsi and Coca-Cola's marketing strategies adjust to these various media landscapes.

## HYPOTHESIS

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant preference for PepsiCo beverages over Coca-Cola beverages in terms of taste.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** There is a significant belief that Coca-Cola has a stronger brand image than PepsiCo.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** There is a significant level of brand loyalty when it comes to choosing between PepsiCo and Coca-Cola.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** There is a significant perception that Coca-Cola products are more widely available than PepsiCo products.

**H<sub>5</sub> :** There is a significant perception that Coca-Cola packaging is more appealing than PepsiCo packaging.

**H<sub>6</sub> :** There is a significant perception that PepsiCo beverages are more affordable than Coca-Cola beverages.

**H<sub>7</sub> :** There is a significant level of satisfaction with the overall quality of Coca-Cola products compared to PepsiCo beverages.

**H<sub>8</sub> :** There is a significant perception that PepsiCo is more innovative than Coca-Cola in launching new products.

**H<sub>9</sub> :** There is a significant influence of promotional offers and discounts on the decision to buy PepsiCo products compared to Coca-Cola products.

**H<sub>10</sub> :** There is a significant perception that Coca-Cola beverages have more concerning health implications than PepsiCo beverages.

**Table 1: Validation of Questionnaire**

Statements	Citation from JV citation file (You can add more than 1 citation)
I prefer the taste of PepsiCo beverages over coco-cola.	(Saxena & Vidani, 2023)
I believe coco-cola has a stronger brand image than PepsiCo.	(Mahajan & Vidani, 2023)
The advertising campaigns of PepsiCo influence my purchase decisions.	(Sharma & Vidani, 2023)
I find coco-cola products to be more widely available than PepsiCo products	(Patel, Chaudhary, & Vidani, 2023)
I am loyal to a particular brand when it	(Chaudhary, Patel, & Vidani, 2023)

comes to choosing between PepsiCo and coco-cola.	
I perceive PepsiCo beverages to be more affordable compared to coco-cola beverages.	(Bansal, Pophalkar, & Vidani, 2023)
The packaging of coco-cola products is more appealing to me than that of PepsiCo products.	(Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Chaudasi, 2023)
I consider PepsiCo to be more innovative in launching new products than coco-cola.	(Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Singh, 2023)
I feel more satisfied with the overall quality of coco-cola products than with PepsiCo beverages.	(Saxena & Vidani, 2023)
I believe the health implications of consuming coco-cola beverages are more concerning than those of PepsiCo beverages.	(Vidani J. N., 2022)
Promotional offers and discounts influence my decision to buy PepsiCo products more than coco-cola products.	(Vidani & Das, 2021)

Source: Author's compilation

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Table 2: Research Methodology**

<b>Research Design</b>	Descriptive
<b>Sample Method</b>	Non-Probability - Convenient Sampling method
<b>Data Collection Method</b>	Primary method
<b>Data Collection Method</b>	Structured Questionnaire
<b>Type of Questions</b>	Close ended
<b>Data Collection mode</b>	Online through Google Form
<b>Data Analysis methods</b>	Tables
<b>Data Analysis Tools</b>	SPSS and Excel
<b>Sampling Size</b>	<b>No. of responses in Google form</b>
<b>Survey Area</b>	<b>AHMEDABAD AND MUMBAI</b>

<b>Sampling Unit</b>	Students, Private and government Job employees, Businessmen, Home maker, Professionals like CA, Doctor etc.
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Source: Author's compilation

### DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

The survey shows that most respondents are young (80% aged 18-25) and predominantly male (66.8%). While 70.6% are students, a significant portion earn below 20,000 or above 1,00,000 per month. In terms of brand preference, 37.4% are neutral about taste, with Coca-Cola being favored by 27.4% and PepsiCo by 22.4%. Coca-Cola is seen as having a stronger brand image (43.5%) and is more widely available (41.2%). PepsiCo influences 30.6% of respondents through ads, while 37.6% are loyal to one brand. Coca-Cola is preferred for packaging (42.1%), but PepsiCo is perceived as more innovative (36.5%) and more affordable by 27.1%. Health concerns are stronger around Coca-Cola (30.6%), with PepsiCo's discounts swaying 32.9% of participants.

### CRONBACH ALPHA

**Table 3: Cronbach Alpha**

Cronbach Alpha Value	No. of items
.717	15

Source: SPSS Software

The Cronbach Alpha value of 0.891 indicates a high level of internal consistency among the items in your scale, suggesting that the 15 items effectively measure the same underlying construct. Typically, a Cronbach Alpha value above 0.7 is considered acceptable, while values above 0.9 are seen as excellent. Therefore, your value of 0.891 suggests that the items are closely related and reliable for use in your research.

**Table 4: Results of Hypothesis Testing**

Add rows as per number of hypothesis you have created

Sr. No	Alternate Hypothesis	Result p =	>/< 0.05	Accept/Reject Null hypothesis	R value	Relations hip
1	<b>H<sub>1</sub></b> : There is a significant preference for PepsiCo beverages over Coca-Cola beverages in terms of taste.	0.001	>	H01 Rejected (Null hypothesis rejected)	0.336	weak
2	<b>H<sub>2</sub></b> : There is a significant belief that Coca-Cola has a stronger brand image than PepsiCo.	0.001	>	H02 Rejected (Null Hypothesis is rejected)	0.603	weak

				Rejected)		
3	<b>H<sub>3</sub></b> : There is a significant level of brand loyalty when it comes to choosing between PepsiCo and Coca-Cola.	0.001	>	H03 Rejected (Null Hypothesis is Rejected)	0.056	Weak
4	<b>H<sub>4</sub></b> : There is a significant perception that Coca-Cola products are more widely available than PepsiCo products.	0.001	>	H04 Rejected (Null Hypothesis is Rejected)	0.663	Weak
5	<b>H<sub>5</sub></b> : There is a significant perception that Coca-Cola packaging is more appealing than PepsiCo packaging.	0.001	>	H05 Rejected (Null Hypothesis is Rejected)	0.016	weak
6	<b>H<sub>6</sub></b> : There is a significant perception that PepsiCo beverages are more affordable than Coca-Cola beverages.	0.001	>	H06 Rejected (Null Hypothesis is Rejected)	0.003	Weak
7	<b>H<sub>7</sub></b> : There is a significant level of satisfaction with the overall quality of Coca-Cola products compared to PepsiCo beverages.	0.001	>	H07 Rejected (Null Hypothesis is Rejected)	0.749	weak
8	<b>H<sub>8</sub></b> : There is a significant perception that PepsiCo is more innovative than Coca-Cola in launching new products.	0.001	>	H08 Rejected (Null Hypothesis is Rejected)	0.783	weak
9	<b>H<sub>9</sub></b> : There is a significant influence of promotional offers and discounts on the decision to buy PepsiCo products compared to Coca-Cola products.	0.001	>	H09 Rejected (Null Hypothesis is Rejected)	0.004	Weak

10	<b>H<sub>10</sub></b> : There is a significant perception that Coca-Cola beverages have more concerning health implications than PepsiCo beverages.	0.001	>	H10 Rejected (Null Hypothesis is Rejected)	0.001	weak
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Source: Author's compilation

## DISCUSSION

Investigating consumer perceptions and preferences for PepsiCo over Coca-Cola was the aim of this study, with a focus on flavor, brand image, loyalty, availability, packaging, affordability, and health concerns. The findings provide important insights into how consumers perceive these two well-known companies and how these perceptions influence their preferences and purchasing patterns.

### Key Findings

Significant variations in customer preferences were found by the investigation. Taste is still an important consideration for consumers when making decisions, as evidenced by the significant percentage of respondents who said they preferred PepsiCo drinks over Coca-Cola. This result is consistent with earlier studies that demonstrated that drink preference is frequently primarily influenced by flavor. Coca-Cola, however, continuously fared better than PepsiCo when it came to brand image evaluation, with respondents linking Coca-Cola to a more powerful and well-known brand identity. This is a reflection of Coca-Cola's effective long-term brand-building tactics and strong customer bonds. Brand loyalty was yet another significant discovery. Coca-Cola shown greater levels of brand loyalty, probably as a result of its established market position and potent emotional appeal, while PepsiCo drew in a more varied customer base that would not have demonstrated the same degree of brand loyalty. This implies that Coca-Cola's devoted client base continues to be a competitive advantage, even though PepsiCo can draw in a large audience.

The majority of respondents thought that Coca-Cola goods were easier to find, which is probably due to the company's broad distribution networks and global market presence. However, PepsiCo was thought to be the most cost-effective choice, particularly in areas where consumers are highly sensitive to price. Purchase decisions may be influenced by this pricing advantage, particularly among consumer segments that are price concerned.

The fact that respondents thought Coca-Cola's packaging was more attractive than PepsiCo's was a noteworthy discovery. Coca-Cola's recognizable red and white color scheme and consistent branding appear to have a greater visual appeal, which influences consumer choices. In the meantime, consumer perception was significantly influenced by health concerns. Many respondents were more worried about the potential health effects of drinking Coca-Cola drinks, especially in light of their high sugar content. This research emphasizes the growing health consciousness and concern, which is playing a big role in beverage consumption trends. These findings provide both businesses with insightful information. Coca-Cola should keep using its sentimental and emotional ties to customers, as seen by its enduring brand loyalty and dominance. PepsiCo may use the perception of improved affordability and innovation as a key component of its marketing campaigns, especially when aiming to attract

trend-driven and budget-conscious customers. Furthermore, as consumer preferences change, there may be a chance for both businesses to diversify into healthier beverage offerings, including low-sugar or functional beverages, given the increased concern over health consequences.

### **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This study has a number of significant theoretical ramifications for branding, marketing theory, and consumer behavior, especially when considering two significant beverage industry brands: PepsiCo and Coca-Cola.

#### **Brand Image and Consumer Loyalty**

Stronger brand loyalty and a preference for the Coca-Cola image provide credence to ideas of emotional branding and brand attachment. Aaker's (1997) Brand Equity Model states that a strong brand image is crucial in determining customer loyalty. While PepsiCo's more varied but less devoted customer base highlights the significance of market segmentation and variety-seeking behavior, Coca-Cola's capacity to develop an emotional bond over time demonstrates that brand equity can drive consumer loyalty and preference (McAlister, 1982). Given that Coca-Cola benefits from strong brand attachment, our findings highlight the importance of emotional engagement in fostering brand loyalty.

#### **Perception of Product Attributes**

The results pertaining to product availability and packaging help to clarify how non-functional characteristics affect customer choices. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), customers frequently base their selections on ancillary cues like availability and packaging. Coca-Cola's more appealing packaging and wider availability indicate that, even when not consciously considered, visual and distribution cues can have a big impact on customer choice.

#### **Health Concerns and Consumer Behavior**

The study's conclusions regarding health issues are consistent with theories of health-based consumer behavior (Schwartz et al., 2012), showing that customers nowadays are more driven by worries about the chemicals in products, especially those that contain sugar. Coca-Cola's link to health hazards emphasizes how crucial it is to take care of customers' health and implies that health consciousness is now a major determinant of consumer behavior. In order to address these growing health concerns, beverage brands need to provide healthier options and increase product component disclosure.

#### **Consumer Decision-Making Models**

These findings also have implications for consumer decision-making models like Howard and Sheth's (1969) model, which describes stages from problem recognition to post-purchase evaluation. Our results suggest that taste and price are key influences in the pre-purchase stage, while brand image and loyalty become more significant during the post-purchase evaluation. This highlights the need for decision-making models to account for both rational and emotional factors in consumer choices.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The study's conclusions give PepsiCo and Coca-Cola marketers and brand managers important information for forming their marketing plans and adapting to shifting customer preferences. The study's conclusions give PepsiCo and Coca-Cola marketers and brand managers important information for forming their marketing plans and adapting to shifting customer preferences.

### **1. Emotional Branding and Consumer Loyalty**

Given Coca-Cola's strong brand image and increased brand loyalty, marketers should keep emphasizing emotional branding in order to establish stronger bonds with customers. Loyalty has been successfully fostered by Coca-Cola's long-standing brand narrative, which is focused on tradition, nostalgia, and emotional appeal. Coca-Cola should thus continue to evoke strong feelings in its audience through customer experiences, narrative, and community-focused advertising that appeals to its devoted following. PepsiCo, on the other hand, might profit by segmenting its marketing to better target younger, trend-driven consumers who value affordability and innovation because of its more diversified client base.

### **2. Packaging and Availability**

Visual appeal and distribution tactics are crucial, as evidenced by the findings that Coca-Cola's packaging is seen as more appealing and more widely accessible. Coca-Cola should keep using its recognizable, eye-catching packaging to strengthen its brand identity. Furthermore, maintaining broad availability in domestic and international markets ought to continue to be a top concern. However, in order to improve its exposure and consumer access in important regions, PepsiCo may look into ways to differentiate its packaging and make it more aesthetically pleasing and striking. It may also improve its distribution network.

### **3. Health Concerns and Product Innovation**

Both brands must respond to consumers' growing health concerns about sugar-filled beverages. Coca-Cola in particular ought to think about boosting ingredient transparency and launching more health-conscious substitutes (such low-sugar or functional beverages). In order to draw in price-conscious, health-conscious customers, PepsiCo might take advantage of the idea that its products are more reasonably priced by providing healthier options at competitive pricing points. CSR programs that prioritize sustainability, health, and product transparency can be advantageous for both brands.

### **4. Pricing Strategies**

Pricing tactics should take advantage of PepsiCo's perceived affordability advantage. By stressing product variety and price sensitivity, the brand can establish itself as the best value. Coca-Cola might emphasize the quality and brand heritage as part of its premium value offer while keeping its premium pricing strategy.

## CONCLUSION

With an emphasis on important factors such as flavor, brand image, loyalty, availability, packaging, price, and health concerns, this study investigated customer preferences and views of PepsiCo and Coca-Cola. The results show clear disparities between customers' perceptions of these two brands and point to a number of factors that affect their choices.

In line with its long-standing emotional bond with customers, Coca-Cola was found to have a stronger brand image and higher brand loyalty. PepsiCo, on the other hand, was thought to be more inventive and reasonably priced, appealing to a wider range of consumers who were more cost-conscious. Additionally, consumers thought PepsiCo was a more cost-effective choice, while Coca-Cola's packaging was more enticing and its products were more widely accessible.

Sugar-filled drinks raised serious health concerns, with Coca-Cola coming under increased scrutiny for its effects on the body. Both brands now have the chance to take advantage of this increased knowledge by developing healthier substitutes and increasing product ingredient transparency.

The study's result emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend customer behavior in marketplaces with intense competition. Maintaining long-term market leadership and meeting changing customer expectations will require PepsiCo and Coca-Cola to strike a balance between functional qualities, emotional appeal, and health-conscious innovation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH/ FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Even while this study provides insightful information about PepsiCo and Coca-Cola consumer preferences and perceptions, there are a number of areas where more research could improve our comprehension of brand dynamics in the beverage sector. The following suggestions are made to direct further research in this area:

### **1. Longitudinal Studies on Brand Loyalty**

Longitudinal studies could be investigated in future study to look at how consumer preferences and brand loyalty change over time. This would make it possible for academics to monitor how customer perceptions of PepsiCo and Coca-Cola alter in reaction to shifting market dynamics, advertising campaigns, and cultural trends like growing health consciousness. A more thorough knowledge of how brand attachment evolves and whether more recent tactics—like healthier product lines—have an impact on loyalty would be possible with long-term data.

### **2. Exploring Regional Differences in Consumer Behavior**

Although the main focus of this study is consumer perceptions, more research might be done on regional variations in brand perception and buying patterns. Future studies could look into how PepsiCo and Coca-Cola consumer choices are influenced by demographic, cultural, and economic aspects in various geographic areas. Both businesses could more successfully adapt their marketing and product strategies to local likes and preferences if they have a better understanding of these regional quirks.

### **3. Impact of Digital and Social Media Marketing**

Future research might look at how online campaigns, influencers, and social media involvement impact consumers' impressions of PepsiCo and Coca-Cola given the growing prominence of digital marketing and social media in forming brand

perceptions. Research might concentrate on how these platforms affect product selections, customer loyalty, and company image, particularly among younger, tech-native consumers.

#### **4. Health and Wellness Trends in Soft Drinks**

Given the increased focus on health, a more thorough investigation of how wellness and health trends affect brand impressions would be beneficial. Future studies should look at how consumer choices are influenced by perceptions of sugar content, artificial sweeteners, and functional beverages (such as energy drinks, sodas with no calories, or natural beverages). Both firms would get a better understanding of how to innovate to satisfy the desires of health-conscious consumers as a result.

#### **5. Comparative Studies with Other Competing Brands**

A more thorough understanding of the market dynamics in the soft drink sector might be obtained by a more extensive comparative analysis that includes more beverage brands than just PepsiCo and Coca-Cola. A more comprehensive picture of customer behavior and the competitive landscape would result from comparing brand perceptions, loyalty, and preferences across multiple competitors, including local or niche businesses.

#### **6. Experimental Research on Packaging and Design**

Experiments could be used in future study to examine the precise effects of visual components and packaging design on consumer perceptions and decision-making. Through controlled testing of various packaging designs, colors, and styles, researchers can gain a better understanding of how aesthetic variables affect purchase intention and brand preference.

#### **7. Incorporating Behavioral Data**

Finally, a more thorough knowledge of customer choices would be obtained by combining self-reported impressions with behavioral data (such as actual purchase behavior or sales data). This method would provide more accurate insights into how customer attitudes directly influence purchasing decisions and lessen the need on subjective measurements.

In conclusion, there are many directions for further research to expand our comprehension of these intricate consumer dynamics, even though our study offers insightful information about PepsiCo and Coca-Cola brand perceptions and consumer preferences. Future research can offer practical insights for businesses trying to adjust to a changing market by examining longitudinal trends, regional variances, health issues, digital marketing, and packaging.

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