

# A Study on Consumer Perception and Buying Behaviour towards Korean Consumer Products in Mumbai

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## Abstract

*This study examines how people perceive and purchase Korean goods in the Mumbai Metropolitan region, particularly in the beauty and food sectors. The impact of Korean popular culture (Hallyu or Korean Wave) on the awareness and acceptance of Korean brands within India is expanding. However, little empirical evidence has been collected about what influences consumer purchasing patterns in metropolitan areas like Mumbai. The study uses a descriptive research design, collecting primary data through a structured survey of 246 respondents from different geographical locations throughout Mumbai. The outcomes show consumer awareness and frequency of purchase behaviour by assessing four factors: awareness level, frequency of purchase, factors that influence purchase and satisfaction with purchases. In addition, other data sources included academic journals/reports, online and industry reports. Overall findings demonstrate that while the media creates initial awareness of a product, recurring purchasing behaviours occur due to perceptions regarding the product's quality, transparency of ingredients or sourcing information, and value for money. Furthermore, this study suggests that consumers perceive Korean consumer products as offering a reasonable price point for premium goods; therefore, it provides valuable insights into this opportunity for marketers and researchers.*

**Keywords:** Consumer Perception, Buying Behaviour, Korean Consumer Products, Hallyu Korean Wave

## Introduction

As global markets continue to become increasingly globalised and digital media rapidly advances, the way global consumers purchase products has undergone drastic changes. Many of the most rapidly growing sectors for Korean consumer goods (beauty and food) are on the rise, largely due to the current rise in Korean culture (popularly referred to as the 'Korean Wave' or 'Hallyu') in countries such as India. The major metropolitan hubs within India (e.g., Mumbai) provide a unique opportunity for Korean brands to promote their products because of the large volume of media exposure and the high variety of consumer bases within these areas.

However, although Korean products are now more visible and consumed in larger quantities than before, the question of what exactly drives the purchase behaviour for Korean products remains unanswered. Clearly, exposure to Korean culture via K-dramas, K-pop, and digital media will lead to increased consumer awareness and ultimately result in an increased likelihood of trying the products; however, it is uncertain whether

consumers' purchases are based on cultural affinity or functional attributes/dimension (i.e., product quality, ingredient transparency, price). Marketers need to establish a clearer understanding of this relationship to facilitate long-term sustainability and growth of the market for Korean products.

### **Problem Statement**

While consumers in the Mumbai market are increasingly accepting of Korean consumer products, there is little empirical evidence available to clarify if consumer purchase behaviours are influenced by either the Korean Wave or a rational evaluation of product-related attributes. This lack of clarity can make it difficult for marketers to develop effective long-term strategies in a highly competitive metropolitan market.

### **Research Gaps**

While significant studies have been conducted on the general trend in Indian Online Shopping of Korean Products as well as how they are doing (or not doing) well in specific areas such as the North East region of India, there is very little research looking into what motivates Indian consumers in metropolitan India to purchase Korean Products, e.g. Mumbai. Cultural Exposure and Utility/Functional Product Performance are the two factors that shape Indian Metropolitan Consumer Purchasing Behaviour for Korean Products. There have been few studies that integrate both Cultural Influences and Product Performance Dimensions into a single framework; therefore, this Study will fill that gap and provide Research on the Consumer Perception and Consumer Behaviour toward Korean Products in Mumbai.

### **Review of Literature**

The conceptualization of how consumers will know of, perceive and evaluate brands based upon where they originate (Country of Origin) has been observable in consumer behaviour research for many decades (Kotler and Keller, 2019). By way of example, the evaluations of products as being of superior quality (and hence the trust/credibility afforded to the brand) due to association with technologically advanced/culturally influential countries (e.g., the USA, Germany, Japan) is indicative of the impact of Country of Origin.

The existence of the Korean Wave (Hallyu) has now been shown through numerous empirical studies, that products from Korea that have association to the Korean Wave, have a positive influence on the brand image, consumer trust and the intent to purchase the product in the international marketplace (Kim et al., 2020; Lee and Lee, 2018). Based upon studies conducted by Moon and Jain (2002) into Korean popular culture, it was identified that the influence of this culture increased the emotional attachment consumers have to Korean brands and resulted in greater trial purchase behaviour.

However, there is also empirical research which indicates that for consumers to continue to be loyal to a product/brand, they will require more than just the appeal of Korean culture (Solomon, 2018). Evidence suggests that consumers also need trust in the functional performance attributes of products, such as quality, safety, and value for money.

Currently, the research on this topic in India is theoretical in nature and primarily focused at a regional level. There is a lack of empirical research that encompasses both cultural influences and product functional performance in the same framework. The current research will explore how consumers in metropolitan areas of Mumbai weigh the cultural exposure to Korean consumer products against their informed analysis of the product when making purchase intentions.

### **Research Objectives**

- Research what people in Mumbai know about the Korean products they use.
- Investigate how buyers evaluate price, quality and brand image of Korean products when choosing to purchase these products.
- Determine the factors that influence buyers in their decisions to purchase Korean products.

- Determine if there is a correlation between how buyers perceive a Korean product and how they purchase these products.

### **Hypothesis**

- **H0:** The perception of consumers does not significantly relate to repurchase intention for Korean-manufactured goods.
- **H1:** The perception of consumers significantly relates to repurchase intention for Korean-manufactured goods.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The research employs an analytical and descriptive research design whereby consumer perception and consumer purchase behaviour are being analysed in relation to Korean-manufactured products within a city metropolitan area. This methodology will allow the researcher to describe the behavioural attitudes of consumers without altering the dependent variables.

#### **Sources of Data**

The present study includes both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from consumers living in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, while secondary sources of data included articles from peer-reviewed journals, books published by academics, reports published by trade organisations and reliable internet databases that support the theoretical framework of the present study.

#### **Sampling Size and Sampling Method**

A total of 246 respondents were selected using convenience sampling methodology, and the respondents included consumers from different age groups, income levels, and education levels, thus reflecting the diversity of metropolitan consumers.

#### **Questionnaire Developed for Research**

Data collection included the use of an instrument that utilized a structured instrument to collect primary data from research participants. This structured instrument contained both closed-ended questions in addition to the measurement of five response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire collected demographic variables, cultural exposure, awareness, perceptions (dimensions associated with) purchase intentions, and repurchase behaviours of participants.

#### **Analytical Methods**

The data were analysed using Percentage, Mean, Reliability, Chi-Square Tests of Association and Multiple Regression Analysis. The Software Package SPSS was utilised to analyse and present the results of the analyses.

### **Results and Discussion**

To clearly illustrate the analysis of the results obtained from the research, the Results will be presented in accordance with the journal guidelines, that is, through the use of tables, figures, and all of the descriptive statistical data and inferential statistical data to display quantitative information.

## Descriptive Analysis

**Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 246)**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–25 years	92	37.4
	26–35 years	88	35.8
	36–45 years	42	17.1
	Above 45 years	24	9.7
Gender	Male	118	48.0
	Female	128	52.0

### Analysis

Majority of respondents are aged 18–35, demonstrating a dominant presence of young urban consumers (18–35). There is approximately equal representation between males and females, which increases the overall balance within the sample.

**Table 2 Awareness Sources of Korean Consumer Products**

Source of Awareness	Percentage of Respondents
Social media	42.3
Korean Dramas / K-pop	31.7
Friends & Peers	18.5
Advertisements	7.5

**Analysis of the Results:** Social Media and Korean Popular Culture Served as Important Channels of Awareness and the Impact of Digital and Cultural Exposure on Mumbai’s Market.

### Consumer Perception Analysis

A Mean Score Analysis was performed to evaluate Consumer Perceptions across the various dimensions that were described.

**Table 3 Mean Scores of Consumer Perception Variables**

Perception Dimension	Mean Score	Interpretation
Product Quality	4.31	Very High
Ingredient Transparency	4.24	Very High
Price–Value Perception	3.98	High
Brand Trust	3.91	High
Cultural Influence	3.62	Moderate

The Analysis showed that the highest-rated Functional Attributes (such as Product Quality and Transparency of Ingredients) is rated the highest, while the lowest-rated Attribute in this category is Culture. Thus, Culture primarily functions to promote Awareness and Attitude Trial.

**Reliability and Association Analysis****Table 4 Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)**

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Consumer Perception	10	0.84
Buying Behaviors	6	0.81
Overall Scale	16	0.86

The values for Chronbach's Alpha were above 0.70, meaning there are strong Internal Consistency Values for the Measures of each of the Constructs.

**Table 5 Chi-Square Test between Consumer Perception and Repurchase Intention**

Test Statistic	Value
Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ )	18.47
Degrees of Freedom	4
Significance (p-value)	0.001

The Chi-square test result indicates a statistically significant association between consumer perception and repurchase intention ( $p < 0.05$ ), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis.

**Regression Analysis**

Multiple Regression Analysis was used to examine the effects of perception variables on the intent to purchase. The results of the Multiple Regression Analysis indicate that of all the variables analysed, Functional Attributes have the highest positive correlation to purchase intent, while Cultural Influence has a statistically significant but comparatively lower positive correlation to intent to purchase.

**Table 6 Multiple Regression Results – Determinants of Purchase Intention**

Independent Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value
Product Quality	0.42	6.31	0.000
Ingredient Transparency	0.36	5.48	0.000
Price-Value Perception	0.24	3.92	0.001
Cultural Influence	0.17	2.68	0.008

**Model Summary:**  $R^2 = 0.62$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.60$ ,  $F = 39.84$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). The multi-variable regression analysis shows that Functional Attributes have the largest positive effect on intent to purchase and have the highest statistical significance, while Cultural Influence has a statistically significant level of influence on purchase intent but is a lower percentage than Functional Attributes.

**Conclusions**

The results from this study provide empirical evidence that awareness of cultural influences from Korea via the Korean Wave and how well the product demonstrates functional capability impact Mumbai consumers' purchasing behaviour of Korean products. These results provide unique contributions to the existing theory of consumer behaviour by providing an integrated framework of functional and cultural influences on how consumers in an emerging city develop purchasing intent for products that are new to them. The results support the need for marketers entering the Mumbai market to design strategic marketing communications that leverage the cultural attraction of Korean products and highlight their advantages in terms of performance, safety, and ingredient transparency to develop a sustainable business.

## Limitations

The findings of the present investigation are limited by conducting convenience sampling and focusing on one metropolitan city. As a result, the data may not be generalizable to a wider population. Future studies should implement probability sampling methods, select multiple metropolitan cities in a regional area, and utilise longitudinal methodologies to track changes in consumer behaviours over periods of time.

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