

## A Study on Brand Preference of Soft Drinks among College Students in Nadia District

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### Abstract

The present study examines the brand preference of soft drinks among college students in Nadia District, West Bengal. Soft drinks have become a popular beverage choice among young consumers due to their taste, availability, brand appeal, and promotional visibility. The main objectives of this study are to identify the most preferred soft drink brands among college students and to analyze the major factors influencing their preferences, such as taste, price, brand image, advertisement, packaging, and availability. The study is descriptive in nature and is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 50 respondents through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. The collected data were analyzed using simple percentage analysis and presented through tables and graphical representations. The findings reveal that Coca-Cola is the most preferred soft drink brand among the respondents. The study also shows that most students consume soft drinks occasionally. Among the factors influencing brand preference, taste emerged as the most important factor, followed by price, brand image, and packaging. The findings further indicate that students are becoming more health-conscious and expect soft drink brands to introduce healthier ingredients, better taste, and improved packaging. The study provides useful insights into youth consumer behavior and may help marketers develop better strategies for attracting and retaining college student consumers.

**Keywords:** *Brand preference, soft drinks, college students, consumer behavior, purchase decision, brand image, taste, advertising, Nadia District*

### 1. Introduction

In today's modern consumer market, soft drinks have become one of the most popular beverages among young consumers, especially college students. The increasing demand for soft drinks has created strong competition among different brands in the beverage industry. Companies continuously try to attract consumers through attractive packaging, promotional offers, celebrity endorsements, advertisements, social media campaigns, and the introduction of new flavors.

Brand preference plays an important role in influencing the buying behavior of consumers. Consumers generally choose a brand based on satisfaction, trust, taste, quality, price, personal experience, and brand image. Among all consumer groups, college students are considered one of the most active and influential market segments. Their choices are often affected by trends, peer groups, social media, advertisements, lifestyle habits, and product availability.

The soft drink market in Nadia District of West Bengal includes a large youth consumer base. As a result, beverage companies compete strongly to capture student attention and build brand loyalty. Students may prefer a particular soft drink brand for different reasons. Some may prefer taste and refreshment, while others may be influenced by brand popularity, packaging, price, advertisements, or social trends.

Brand preference refers to the tendency of consumers to select one brand over another because of perceived value, satisfaction, trust, and experience. Understanding consumer preference helps companies identify market demand and improve their marketing strategies. In the case of college students, buying behavior changes rapidly because of changing trends, promotional activities, peer influence, and lifestyle patterns.

Therefore, the present study focuses on examining the brand preference of soft drinks among college students in Nadia District. The findings of the study may help beverage companies, marketers, and researchers understand consumer behavior patterns among youth and develop more effective marketing strategies.

## **2. Literature Review**

Several studies have examined consumer preferences, buying behavior, and brand selection in the soft drink industry. These studies highlight that factors such as taste, price, advertisement, brand image, packaging, availability, demographic profile, and health awareness influence consumer decisions.

A study by Anojan and Subaskaran (2015) found a significant relationship between consumer preference and buying behavior for soft drinks in Northern Sri Lanka. Their research indicated that brand choice is closely connected with the overall buying pattern of consumers.

Nashath Raffia Azeez, Vignesh, and Tharic Ajis (2015) observed that demographic factors, brand appeal, taste, price, and advertising significantly influence consumer preference toward soft drinks. Their study emphasized that soft drink consumption is shaped by both personal and promotional factors.

Satnam Ubeja and Rajana Patel (2014) studied consumer preference toward soft drinks in Indore city and found that consumers mostly choose soft drinks for refreshment and taste. Their study also suggested that gender-based differences were not very strong in determining soft drink preferences.

Vinayaga Moorthy and Madevan (2014) highlighted the influence of advertisements on consumer brand preference. Their study showed that advertisements and age-specific media exposure strongly affect brand preference and changing consumer attitudes over time.

Beverly Tepper (1998) examined the relative contribution of taste and health considerations in consumer liking and purchase intention of cola drinks. The study found that although health concerns are increasing, taste remains the primary factor influencing the selection of cola drinks.

George (1999) studied brand inclination in the soda industry in the context of globalization. The research identified brand persona as an important factor influencing consumer choice. Consumers often judge a brand based on its external identity, image, and personality.

Narasimman (1999) observed that soda commercials often influence young consumers through sports sponsorships, gaming models, and celebrity-based promotions. Such promotional strategies may encourage the consumption of high-sugar beverages among youth.

Venugopal Rao (1999) noted that consumer preference in rural India has gradually shifted from unbranded drinks to branded soft drinks. Branded beverages are often perceived as offering practical, emotional, and symbolic value to consumers.

Jacobson (2000) discussed the health concerns related to soft drink consumption and suggested that small taxes on soft drinks and snacks could encourage healthier consumption patterns if the revenue is used to support health programs.

Daniells (2008) found that color and flavor play an important role in soft drink preference. The study suggested that visual appearance and taste-related factors strongly affect consumer liking.

Sampathkumar (2003) emphasized that consumer behavior includes the process of purchasing, using, and evaluating products and services. The study noted that both urban and rural consumers prefer high-quality products at reasonable prices and often rely on retailer suggestions.

Singh (1989) observed that consumer attitudes change over time. Therefore, companies must regularly study consumer needs and adjust their marketing strategies to keep customers satisfied.

Srivastava and Shocker (1991) discussed the role of brand equity and product value. Their work suggested that cost, size, perceived value, and brand strength together influence consumer choice and competitive advantage.

Mita Sujana (2010) investigated brand awareness based on education and location. The study found that educated and urban consumers generally have higher brand awareness, while rural and less educated groups may have lower brand awareness.

Shinde and Ganjre (2015) explored the soft drink market within the broader beverage industry and discussed the importance of the marketing mix, including product, price, place, and promotion.

Hyman (2014) studied promotional cooperation among soft drink brands and suggested that promotions are used not only to attract new customers but also to strengthen competition and brand positioning.

Nelson and Moran (2016) examined the relationship between advertising and beverage consumption in the United States. Their study found that beverage consumption is influenced by advertising as well as income, age, gender, taste preference, family habits, and product availability.

Donnelly (2005) observed that color intensity and flavor are important factors driving consumer acceptance of soft drinks. The study also suggested that companies should use sensory marketing and continuous innovation to attract consumers in a competitive market.

Overall, the literature indicates that soft drink brand preference is influenced by multiple factors. Taste, brand image, price, advertisement, availability, health awareness, and peer influence are among the most important determinants of consumer choice. The present study builds on these ideas by examining brand preference among college students in Nadia District.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the most preferred soft drink brands among college students in Nadia District.

2. To analyze the factors influencing students' preference for soft drink brands, such as taste, price, advertisement, packaging, and availability.
3. To examine the frequency and consumption pattern of soft drinks among college students in Nadia District.

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Research Design**

The present study is descriptive in nature. Descriptive research is useful for studying the opinions, attitudes, preferences, and behavior of respondents. This research attempts to describe the brand preference of soft drinks among college students in Nadia District.

### **4.2 Source of Data**

The study is based on both primary and secondary data.

Primary data were collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from journals, articles, websites, and other published sources related to consumer behavior and soft drink brand preference.

### **4.3 Data Collection Tool**

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire included questions related to demographic profile, preferred soft drink brand, frequency of consumption, factors influencing brand preference, and expected improvements in soft drink brands.

### **4.4 Sampling Method**

The study used convenience sampling. Under this method, respondents were selected based on their availability, accessibility, and willingness to participate in the survey.

### **4.5 Sample Size**

The sample size of the study was 50 respondents. The respondents were college students from Nadia District.

### **4.6 Area of Study**

The geographical area of the study was Nadia District, West Bengal. The study focused on college students living or studying in this region.

### **4.7 Tools for Data Analysis**

Simple percentage analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The results were presented through tables and graphical representations to make the findings easy to understand and interpret.

## 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

### 5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

**Table 1:** Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Female	31	62%
	Male	19	38%
	Total	50	100%
Age	19-20 years	40	80%
	17-18 years	5	10%
	21 years and above	5	10%
	Total	50	100%



**Figure 1:** Gender and Age Group of Respondents

Table 1 and Figure 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Out of 50 respondents, 31 respondents, representing 62%, were female, while 19 respondents, representing 38%, were male.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents belonged to the 19-20 years age group, accounting for 80% of the total sample. The age groups 17-18 years and 21 years and above each accounted for 10% of the respondents.

This indicates that the study mainly represents young college students, particularly those in the 19-20 years age group. The gender distribution also shows higher participation from female respondents.

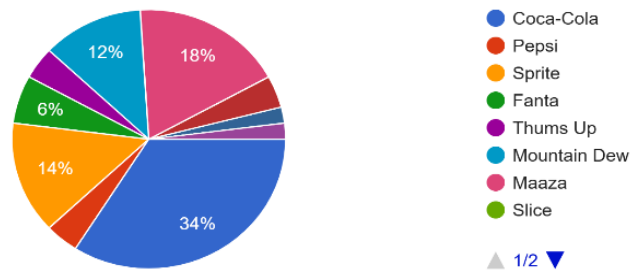
### 5.2 Most Preferred Soft Drink Brand

**Table 2:** Most Preferred Soft Drink Brand

Brand	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Coca-Cola	17	34%
Maaza	9	18%
Sprite	7	14%

Mountain Dew	6	12%
Others	4	8%
Fanta	3	6%
Pepsi	2	4%
Thums Up	2	4%
Slice	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Which soft drink brand do you prefer the most?  
 50 responses



**Figure 2:** Which Soft Drink Brand Do You Prefer the Most?

The Table 2 and Figure 2 shows the preferred soft drink brands among the respondents. Out of 50 respondents, 34% preferred Coca-Cola, making it the most preferred soft drink brand. Maaza was preferred by 18% of respondents, followed by Sprite with 14% and Mountain Dew with 12%.

Other brands accounted for 8% of responses, while Fanta was preferred by 6%. Pepsi and Thums Up were each preferred by 4% of respondents. None of the respondents selected Slice as their preferred soft drink brand.

The findings indicate that Coca-Cola enjoys the highest brand preference among college students in Nadia District. This may be due to its strong brand image, wide availability, taste, advertisements, and market presence.

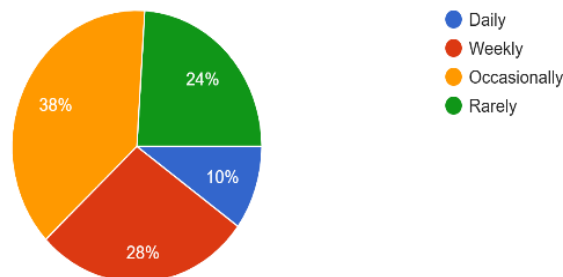
### 5.3 Frequency of Soft Drink Consumption

**Table 3: Frequency of Soft Drink Consumption**

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Occasionally	19	38%
Weekly	14	28%
Rarely	12	24%

Daily	5	10%
Total	50	100%

How often do you consume soft drinks?  
 50 responses



**Figure 3:** How Often Do You Consume Soft Drinks?

The Table 3 and Figure 3 shows the frequency of soft drink consumption among the respondents. Out of 50 respondents, 38% consumed soft drinks occasionally, while 28% consumed them weekly. Around 24% of respondents consumed soft drinks rarely, and only 10% consumed soft drinks daily.

The findings indicate that most college students do not consume soft drinks every day. Instead, soft drink consumption is mainly occasional. This suggests that students may consume soft drinks during outings, celebrations, social gatherings, college breaks, or leisure activities.

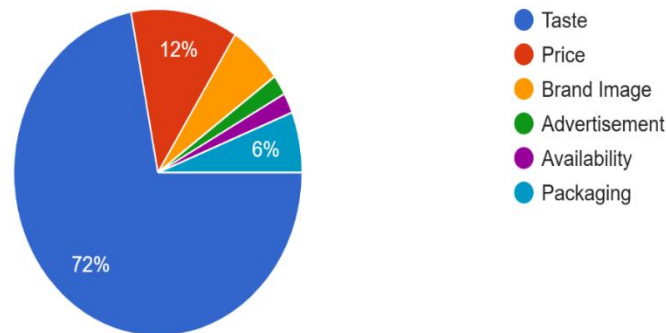
#### 5.4 Factors Influencing Soft Drink Brand Preference

**Table 4: Factors Influencing Soft Drink Brand Preference**

Factor	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Taste	36	72%
Price	6	12%
Brand Image	3	6%
Packaging	3	6%
Availability	1	2%
Advertisement	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Which factor mainly influences your choice of soft ?

50 responses



**Figure 4:** Which Factor Mainly Influences Your Choice of Soft Drink?

The Table 4 and Figure 4 shows the main factors influencing soft drink brand preference among the respondents. Taste emerged as the most important factor, with 72% of respondents selecting it as the primary reason for choosing a soft drink brand.

Price was the second most important factor, selected by 12% of respondents. Brand image and packaging each accounted for 6% of responses. Availability and advertisement each accounted for 2% of responses.

The findings clearly show that taste is the dominant factor influencing soft drink preference among college students. Although price, brand image, and packaging also matter, students primarily choose soft drinks because of their taste and flavor experience.

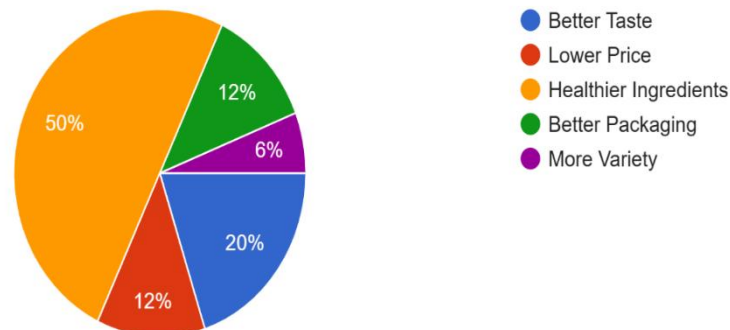
### 5.5 Desired Improvements in Soft Drink Brands

**Table 5: Desired Improvements in Soft Drink Brands**

Improvement Expected	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Healthier Ingredients	25	50%
Better Taste	10	20%
Better Packaging	6	12%
Lower Price	6	12%
More Variety	3	6%
Total	50	100%

What improvement would you like to see in soft drink brands?

50 responses



**Figure 5:** What Improvement Would You Like to See in Soft Drink Brands?

The table 5 and figure 5 shows the improvements that respondents would like to see in soft drink brands. The majority of respondents, 50%, preferred healthier ingredients. This indicates that health consciousness is becoming an important factor among college students.

Better taste was selected by 20% of respondents, making it the second most preferred improvement. Better packaging and lower price were each selected by 12% of respondents. More variety was selected by only 6% of respondents.

The findings suggest that students are not only concerned about taste and price but also about health-related aspects of soft drinks. Soft drink companies may therefore benefit from introducing healthier options, reducing sugar content, improving ingredients, and offering better taste without compromising product appeal.

## 6. Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study are as follows:

- I. The majority of respondents were female, representing 62% of the sample.
- II. Most respondents belonged to the 19-20 years age group.
- III. Coca-Cola was the most preferred soft drink brand among the respondents.
- IV. Maaza, Sprite, and Mountain Dew also had notable preference among students.
- V. Most respondents consumed soft drinks occasionally rather than daily.
- VI. Taste was the most important factor influencing soft drink brand preference.
- VII. Price was the second most important factor influencing preference.
- VIII. Brand image and packaging also influenced the purchase decision of some respondents.
- IX. Advertisement and availability had comparatively less influence on brand preference.
- X. Healthier ingredients were the most desired improvement in soft drink brands.

- XI. Better taste, better packaging, lower price, and more variety were also expected by respondents.
- XII. The findings suggest that students are becoming more health-conscious while still valuing taste and brand appeal.

## **7. Discussion**

The findings of the study reveal that soft drink preference among college students is mainly driven by taste. This supports the idea that sensory satisfaction plays a central role in beverage choice. Although advertisements, packaging, and brand image help create awareness, students are more likely to continue purchasing a soft drink if they enjoy its taste.

Coca-Cola emerged as the most preferred brand, which may be due to its strong brand image, market availability, advertisements, and familiar taste. The preference for Maaza also suggests that fruit-based beverages have a meaningful place in the soft drink market among students. Sprite and Mountain Dew also received notable responses, showing that carbonated drinks remain popular among youth consumers.

The consumption pattern shows that most students consume soft drinks occasionally. This indicates that soft drinks may be associated with leisure, refreshment, social gatherings, outings, and group consumption rather than regular daily consumption.

An important finding of the study is the growing demand for healthier ingredients. Half of the respondents preferred healthier soft drink options. This shows that health awareness is slowly influencing young consumers. While students still value taste, they are also becoming conscious of sugar content, ingredients, and possible health effects.

Overall, the study suggests that soft drink companies should balance taste, affordability, brand appeal, and health-conscious product innovation to attract college students.

## **8. Conclusion**

The study on brand preference of soft drinks among college students in Nadia District highlights that soft drinks are popular among students and are commonly consumed during social gatherings, outings, college breaks, and leisure time. The research shows that Coca-Cola is the most preferred soft drink brand among the respondents, followed by Maaza, Sprite, and Mountain Dew.

The study also reveals that taste is the most important factor influencing students while choosing a soft drink brand. Price, brand image, packaging, availability, and advertisement also play a role, but their influence is comparatively lower than taste. The findings further show that most students consume soft drinks occasionally rather than daily.

Another important conclusion is that students are becoming more health-conscious. A large number of respondents expressed a preference for healthier ingredients in soft drinks. This indicates a shift in consumer expectations, where young consumers want beverages that are tasty but also healthier.

Thus, brand preference among college students is influenced by both personal choices and promotional activities. The soft drink market in Nadia District is competitive, and companies need to focus on taste, health, pricing, packaging, and effective promotion to attract and retain young consumers.

## **9. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Soft drink companies should focus on improving taste, as it is the most important factor influencing student preference.
2. Brands should introduce healthier soft drink options with reduced sugar and better ingredients.
3. Companies should develop attractive packaging to appeal to young consumers.
4. Affordable pricing should be maintained because price influences student purchase decisions.
5. Brands should increase product availability in college areas, local shops, and student-friendly locations.
6. Promotional campaigns should be designed for youth consumers through social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook.
7. Companies should introduce more flavors and product varieties to attract different consumer groups.
8. Health-focused marketing may help brands connect with increasingly health-conscious students.
9. Beverage brands should use student-centered campaigns, campus promotions, and seasonal offers to improve brand loyalty.
10. Companies should regularly study changing student preferences to remain competitive in the market.

## **10. Limitations of the Study**

The study has certain limitations:

1. The sample size was limited to 50 respondents only.
2. The study was limited to college students in Nadia District.
3. Convenience sampling was used, so the results may not represent the entire student population.
4. The study used simple percentage analysis only.
5. The research focused only on selected soft drink brands.
6. Respondents' answers may be influenced by personal bias, memory, or current brand availability.
7. The study did not use advanced statistical techniques to test relationships between variables.

## **11. Future Scope of the Study**

### **11.1 Geographical Expansion**

The present study was limited to Nadia District. Future studies may include other districts of West Bengal such as Kolkata, Hooghly, Murshidabad, North 24 Parganas, and South 24 Parganas. An inter-district comparison may provide a broader understanding of soft drink brand preference among students.

A comparison between rural and urban students may also be conducted to understand whether location influences soft drink choices.

### **11.2 Methodological Improvements**

Future research may use a larger sample size, such as 500 or 1000 respondents, to obtain more accurate and generalizable results. Researchers may also include school students, working youth, and young professionals to compare preferences across different age groups.

Advanced statistical tools such as chi-square test, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and factor analysis may also be used in future studies.

### **11.3 Digital Media Influence**

Future studies may examine the role of online advertisements, Instagram reels, YouTube ads, Facebook promotions, and influencer marketing in shaping soft drink brand preference among students.

Research may also be conducted on the influence of celebrity endorsements and social media influencers on soft drink purchase decisions.

### **11.4 Health Consciousness**

As consumers are becoming more health-conscious, future studies may examine how awareness of sugar content, artificial ingredients, calories, and health risks affects soft drink consumption.

The preference for diet drinks, sugar-free beverages, fruit-based drinks, and healthier alternatives may also be studied.

### **11.5 Psychological and Socio-Economic Factors**

Future research may explore the influence of peer groups, family background, lifestyle, pocket money, and income level on soft drink brand preference.

The role of group consumption and social identity in choosing a soft drink brand may also be examined.

### **11.6 Market Competition and Product Attributes**

Future studies may analyze the impact of packaging design, bottle shape, color, label design, and promotional offers on student brand preference.

Brand loyalty may also be studied to understand whether students repeatedly purchase the same brand or switch brands based on discounts, availability, or peer influence.

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