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CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SPORT SHOES BRAND

Abstract:

Indian economy has substantially changed in last 3 decades. The economic upliftment has given considerable purchasing power to Indian consumers. Now, Indian consumers are more inclined towards branded products. Specifically, youth is considerably influenced by the branding of the multinational companies in different product categories. This paper focuses on the comparison between marketing strategies of sports shoe brand i.e. Nike and Adidas in particular. Segmentation, Positioning and marketing mixes will be stated. Consumers perception while giving preferences to a particular brand will be told. Innovative market practices implemented by global brands as well as its influence on consumers will be stated. Consumers viewpoints will also be told. Lastly, conclusion and point of view from my side on comparative marketing strategy will be stated.

Keywords:

Consumers perception, Marketing strategy, Branding. Purchasing Power

JEL Classification: D40

Introduction

Sports is an integral part of modern contemporary society. Professionals and sportsmen need their specific qualities and specifications in their shoes so that they can compete better. Both the companies named NIKE and ADIDAS started as the makers for the modern athletes and have innovative designs and creating technologies for the convenience of the athletes. NIKE and ADIDAS have their worldwide presence among world's top corporations. They compete on a wider platform of footwear, apparel, and accessories. This study concentrates specifically on Athletic footwear.

1.1 Evolution of Nike as a Brand

Nike's co-founders meet at the University of Oregon. Phil Knight and Bill Bowerman were the co-founders of Nike. Nike grew with the fusion of Bowerman's sporting innovation and Knight's marketing Know-how. It is said that Jeff Johnson came with the idea for the new name, deciding to honor the Greek Goddess of victory, and thus Nike was born. It was also that the fledgling company had to decide the logo for the brand, and another of the legends that the company managed to create for itself was developed. Nike took off instantly in US, and within a year company sales were almost 2 million pairs. In 1981, Nike decided to take another major step, with the UK becoming the company's first wholly owned foreign distributorship. In 1985, Nike became one of the major players in the market. In that year they managed to pursue the little known Chicago Bulls Basketball rookie Michael Jordan to endorse his own range of shoes. It had major effect which even Nike didn't imagine. To stay a step ahead of competition Nike showed continuous streaming of developments and inventions of technology. In 1988, Nike introduced itself strongly with its slogan, "Just do it." It had to introduce itself strongly because Reebok actually overtook Nike to become No.1 market leader. This resulted in Nike regaining its position. In 2006, Nike and Apple released a sport kit called "Nike+iPod" through which the runners could monitor their runs via iTunes and Nike+website. In 2008 Nike introduced shoes featuring new fly wire and lunarlite foam materials. Fly wires are 5 times stronger than steel and never loose strength. Lunar foam is a type of material that was developed by NASA which acts as an excellent shock absorbent and light in weight.

1.2 Evolution of Adidas as brand

Adidas entered the marketplace in 1949. Adidas entered the market place in 1956 in India. It launched in India in 1989. It concentrates on producing shoes that are manufactured specially for running and soccer players. In 1996, it joint ventured with

magnum international trading company limited. Adidas gained his position as No.2 athletic shoe company in the world behind Nike. Authenticity, inspiration, honesty and commitment are the brand values of the company. Adidas's key to success is the deals that they have signed with famous athletes. Adidas got his brand value up in U.K with signing a deal with David Beckham. Adidas's marketing strategy and product line's key was the reinvention. They create a lot of new product every year to be in the same league as others. In 1999, they introduced the cheapest range of shoes that they had ever sold. In 2001, they aired first televised advertisement for India. Adidas introduced Climacool, an innovation which added breathable material to the shoe and light weight in year 2002. In 2005, Andreas Gellner became new M.D, India. In 2006, Adidas announced the acquisition of Reebok LTD. This collaboration made Adidas presence more strong in the market. Adidas continued to build its value through reinvention.

1.3 Objectives

- 1) To study the market practices adopted by Nike and Adidas.
- 2) Identify consumer's perception while giving preference to a particular brand.
- 3) To ascertain innovative marketing practices implemented by this global giants pertaining to brand building and its influence on consumers' viewpoint.

Literature Review

“Zoe Jacobson, ADIDAS TURNS AROUND ITS GLOBAL BRAND STRATEGY,
August 5 2014

<http://www.bidnessetc.com/business/adidas-turns-around-its-global-brand-strategy/>

The german sportswear brand Adidas AG is refurbishing its strategy. Adidas has decided to have separate brand teams for different sports categories. This would lead to having a focus on all the categories of sports as the company has not been performing well in the brand Taylor made which targets Golf. This will give rise to golf segment, as it has not been performing well as compared to other brands of the company. There would be lot of expenditure done behind marketing in coming months, like sponsorship given to football club like Manchester United. The B.O.D has observed poor performance. The company has declined its revenue target from 1248 million dollars to 873 million dollars. The dividends were cut by 30%. Whereas Nike, on the other hand, has strategy of not sponsoring in sports events and tournaments but on athletes and sports team as said by Charlie Brooks, Spokesperson of Nike. Even after Adidas being the official sponsor of FIFA WORLDCUP 2014, Nike has observed a positive growth rate as compared to

Adidas. 25% of the sales were allocated for marketing expenditure which resulted in enormous growth in sales by 15.5%. After this observation in sales growth, it can only be hoped that the makeover to have a global strategy turns out to be fruitful for the company.

“ Siegel Gale, NIKE, AND ADIDAS: DIFFERENT STRATEGIES FOR TELLING THEIR BRAND STORIES

February 5, 2013”

<http://www.siegelgale.com/blog/nike-and-adidas-different-strategies-for-telling-brand-stories/>

This article describes how company's selling similar services and comparable products differentiate themselves from each other. To observe this difference Nike and Adidas as a brand has been considered.

As we observe the exclusive stores of Nike and Adidas, Adidas follows a typical layout of sportswear that store has, while Nike has a diverse way of displaying its product. Adidas has the pattern of displaying its apparels in a section and the shoes are displayed at the front of the wall. Nike does it differently by creating a different section for all the sports segment. The customer can directly approach the category of the sport segment they wish to buy like basketball, soccer, running, etc. Both the companies fall under same product line. According to the Global Strategy Simplicity Index 2014 (<http://simplicityindex.com/2014/region/india>) Nike ranks #23 while Adidas ranks #29. They scored similarly. But seeing to the Global Strategy Simplicity Index 2017 (<http://simplicityindex.com/2017/region/india>) Nike has upgraded its position to 17 and Adidas has slip down to 43rd rank. Nike and Adidas can also be differentiated on the basis of how they communicate with the customers online.

In my opinion, Nike provides customers with simpler ways and has distinctive ways to create an identity for each sport as well as its sport shoes. It makes life easier for the customers and frame a clear mindset for what the customers actually need.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

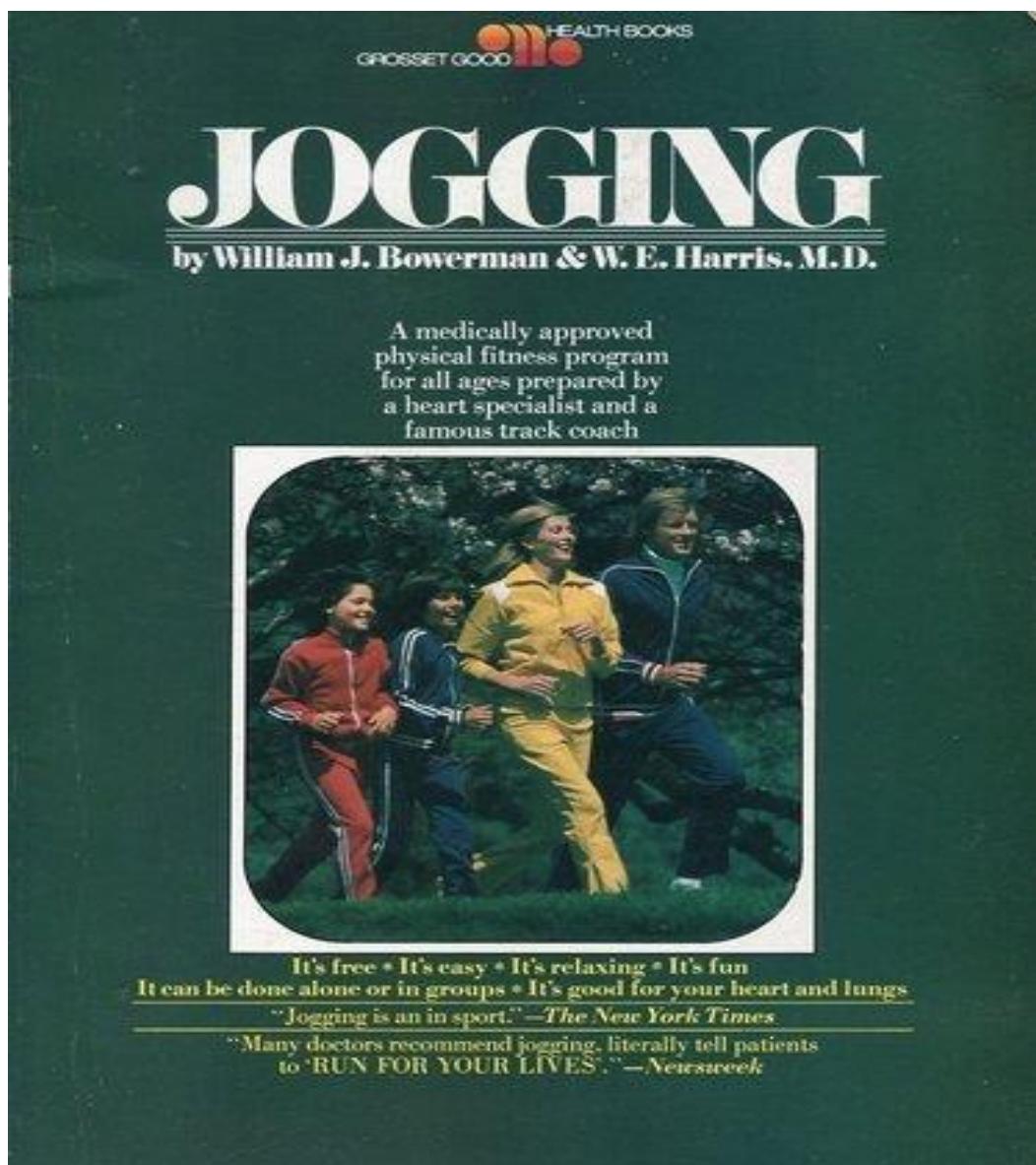
- The sample has been selected randomly and has been selected on the basis of convenience. Each and every respondent has been given equal chance to participate in the questionnaire. However, it does not guarantee that every response is true.
- Here, 85 samples have been taken randomly.
- Primary data is collected through questionnaire while secondary data is collected through magazines, newspapers, websites, etc.

LIMITATIONS

- 1) The study has been confined to very few selected areas of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar city (in Gujarat state) only, so the results cannot be generalized to other areas in these two cities.
- 2) The primary research has been kept limited to 85 samples of respondent .
- 3) The study covers only few selected brands of sportswear i.e. Nike and Adidas mainly.

BRANDING

4.1 Nike's First Marketing Strategy



Jogging, the accidental content marketing showpiece by Nike founder Bill Bowerman.

Fig 1.1 :<http://coschedule.com/blog/nike-marketing-strategy/>

William Bowerman was a field coach as well as one of the co-founders of Nike.

In late 70's Jogging was not an exercise or activity that was popular. Later Bowerman realized that jogging should be the part of daily fitness routine process. He made people understand the benefits of jogging through the articles, pamphlets and book named "Jogging" which he wrote. The book was released before the first shoe of Nike which was one of the marketing strategies for Nike.

4.2 Strategies of Nike

Many strategies have been followed by Nike in order to become world's leading designer and distributor in category of Athletic footwear, apparels and accessories. Nike mainly focuses on innovation and it gives more importance to research and development which leads to elimination of injuries, giving maximum comfort level as well as their performance has a good effect because of footwear. They try to reach as many as business operations in USA, Europe, Asia, Middle east, Africa, etc. Nike has adopted the combination of best cost provider along with broad differentiation strategy. Nike mainly emphasis on best cost provider strategy. They heavily rely on strategic outsourcing. One reason behind Nike following cost provider strategy could be their widespread network structure they have. They can cancel the alliance with any company that fails to meet the standards which have been set by Nike brand. The suppliers maintain the superior quality of the product to be produced at low price with the latest technology, as Nike works diligently with theirs suppliers. In order to match with the standards and quality of product maintained by Nike, other brands have to try hard to produce similar products nearby to their quality and standards to survive in the market. Nike puts in lot of effort to work hard on its strategies as it is required to create different brand image in mindset of consumers, which could be the primary reason for its success. In order to be a spokesperson of Nike, a 7-year contract was signed by the famous footballer Cristiano Ronaldo and then the contract was converted to lifetime contract in 2016. The contract was signed for \$1 Billion. Nike has even made deals with tennis player Serena Williams and Tiger Woods. According to the reports that has been published on (www.bizjournals.com) shows that Nike has planned to focus on 5 major programs to keep their strategies sustainable. It emphasis more on concerns about global warming. Following were the steps taken:

- Focus on product design process.
- Eliminate waste and toxics.
- Started GreenXchange web market place
- Establish a Lean manufacturing and human resource management.

4.3 Strategies of Adidas

Both Adidas and Nike have almost similar strategies that they practice. Adidas mainly focuses on Brand differentiation strategy. According to (www.adidasgroup.com) Adidas rely on corporate level strategy that focuses on innovation and new product design. Adidas group in 2009 decided to switch their approach from vertical to horizontal that resulted in creation of global sales function for commercial activities and global brand functions. This directed to sustainability of the corporate level strategy for a long run. It led to elimination of regional headquarters and moved towards more direct communication between the local markets and local functions. They implemented multi-brand strategy by having a diverse brand portfolio which allows them to cater all segments of the market from players to almost everyone. This helped them to keep a unique identity and concentrate on their core competencies. Using latest technology the products that are produced enhance the performance of players. New technology led to creation of Climacool, a shoe with the ventilation system that guides and drives an athlete's foot through each stride. Following are players who use Adidas: Football player Zinedine Zidane and basketball player Kobe Bryant. Zinedine Zidane also launched Adidas Soccer center in Berlin in 2015. Even Adidas has signed the contract with famous Footballer Lionel Messi which would expire in 2018, but in April 2017 Adidas again made deal with Messi and this time the deal was for life-time. The deal is a lifetime contract so Messi has a deal with Adidas until the end of his career.

➤ Comparing Nike and Adidas:

Both Nike and Adidas have similar marketing strategies but their implementation methods are different. Both have produced innovative products using the advanced technology. Both the brands focuses on different regional markets. Adidas is concerned about European market while Nike is concerned about American market. Nike only design, distribute and market their product as they don't have any production plants. While Adidas carry out all their production work in Germany and also outsources to Asian countries. Both the brands follows the strategy of premium pricing which according to Kotler is the strategy where brands charge higher prices for the products.

5.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NIKE AND ADIDAS

Design:

The products of Nike have swoosh on them



Nike Free 5.0

Adidas Shoes have three strips



Adidas energy boost.

Flagship products of Nike and Adidas are Adidas Energy boost and Nike free 5.0 so we will be comparing its technology to know the difference between these two brands.

Technology:

Nike uses the flywire technology. So what it does is, it basically turns the whole upper part of the trainer into the suspension bridge for the foot. The thin sole gets divided into sections, which brings the flex in the shoes. So Nike sports shoes are dynamic and Flexible.

In Adidas, the boost is very different as compared to Nike. Rather than flexibility, Adidas focuses on comfort and support which comes from the sole. The boost provides highest energy return in the running Industry which improves the performance of the shoe.

So, Nike shoes are all about comfort and flexibility while Adidas shoes are all about speed and performance.

Quality:

Most of the Nike shoes are made up of artificial synthetic material which is not only better for comfort but it looks nicer too.

The sole of the Adidas shoes are soft, protective yet strong and highly durable.

Quality of both the shoes is good without any doubt.

Variety and Price:

Nike has a lot more variety of shoes than Adidas. Even Nike has more number of colors in sports shoes than Adidas. Adidas has consistency in sports shoes while Nike keeps on innovating.

The price of Adidas shoes are bit higher than Nike because you can get good Nike shoes in less price while in Adidas, the shoes with less price are very basic. Nike makes shoes according to the consumer's requirements while the preferences of consumers are less taken into account on the other side.

5.5 MARKET SEGMENTATION

Adidas and Nike both fall under niche marketing. They mainly focus on the people who seek mix of benefits. Nike and Adidas both have earned and lived up to their reputation in the world of sports shoes. Nike and Adidas brands aim to have both male and female sportswear collection.

Nike:

Nike pays top dollar for their product technology, design and to the athletes for its promotion to give their best everywhere. Nike had sponsored the Indian cricket team for 5 years from 2006 to 2010. Nike beat Adidas and Puma by bidding the highest. Then again in 2011 Nike renewed its sponsor membership and it sponsored Indian team till 2016.

Adidas:

Adidas has been kit sponsor for Australian and England cricket team. They are also key sponsors to some Indian cricketers like Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli. Adidas has sponsored some teams in IPL like Dehli daredevils till 2013, Mumbai Indians till 2014 and Royal challenger Bangalore till 2015.

Both Nike and Adidas target athletes of age between 15-35 years. The market would always target the customers who identify sport as the way of life as well as brand conscious and loyal towards it.

5.6 STRATEGIC POSITIONING

Nike:

Strategic positioning is basically how the brand competes in the market and how it serves the customers. How Nike captures the imagination of customers is important. It is extremely necessary for a business to focus on the customer so that their needs, demands, desires and aspirations can be examined. Nike serves their customers with better products, services and good experience. Nike keeps innovating in their business so that they can know their customers better and serve them better.

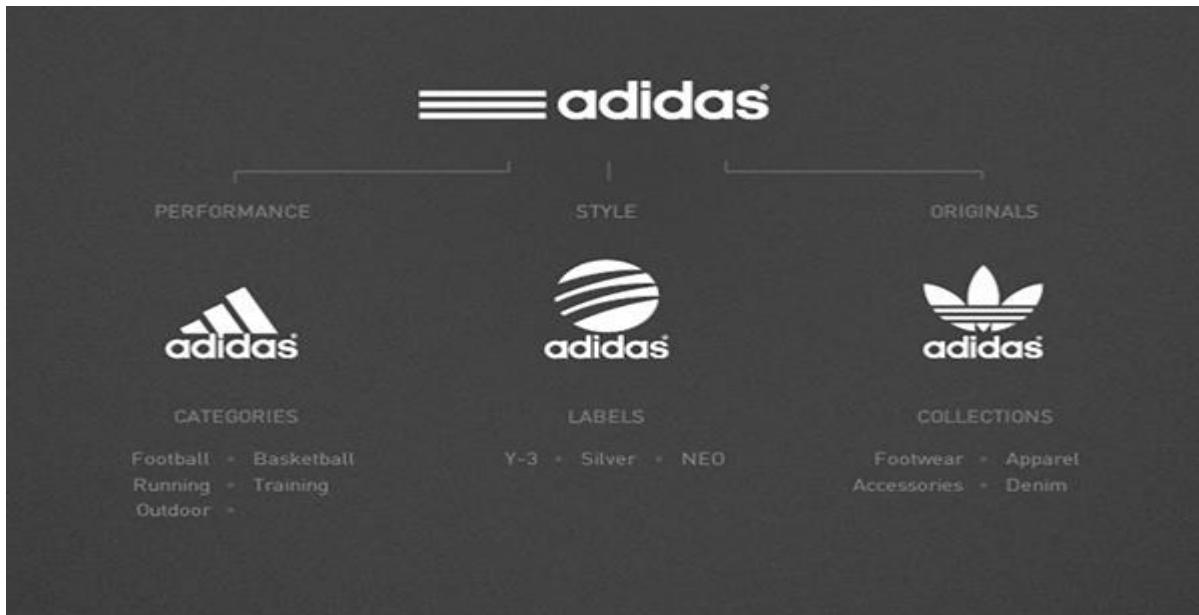


<https://www.famouslogos.net/nike-logo/>



Adidas:

Adidas has the strongest connections with sports than any other brand. Adidas consumer ranges from professionals to simply who loves sports. Football, running and basketball are the sports Adidas concerns about.



<https://www.behance.net/gallery/16482709/Adidas-Brand-Design-study>

To survive in this market brand, credibility plays a major role and Adidas keeps itself interesting by introducing these logos. Adidas originals tries to stay ahead in the game, be a trend setter. Adidas market strategy for the younger group of people, prices conscious generation NEO label was established. Neo targets teenaged between 14-20 years. NEO is all about them only.

5.7 MARKETING MIX



Source: Kotler (2002)

Product:

Nike manufactures all the types of products such as sports footwear, apparel, accessories and equipments. Initially, Nike targeted only the sports person but gradually as a part of strategy they targeted Indian customers as well, as it was observed that Indians put on sports shoes with casuals other than sports.

Adidas designs products which are not need based but satisfies desires and wants. Adidas footwear focuses on design and technology they use.

Price:

Nike has always maintained and provides customers with best of its quality, innovations which is very necessary to keep customers attracted towards brand which is being viewed frequently and the latest technology has been used to produce such products. So it can surely afford to have premium prices for all of its products.

Adidas has to decide the prices by keeping in mind the competitors like Nike, Puma and Reebok. Adidas prefers skimming prices for newly launched products in the market. Adidas targets upper-middle-class people as well as high-end customers and applies prices according to its brand equity that leads to high pricing.

Promotion :

Nike observed that in India, cricket is a sport which is believed as a religion. So to create brand awareness there could not be a better opportunity. Nike associated itself with Indian Cricket Team as a sponsor for 5 years for the first time in 2005 which later got renewed in 2011 at INR 270 crore. Nike sponsored Indian Team till 2016.

Most of Adidas marketing is done through Advertisement and product placement. The tagline of the brand “impossible is nothing” itself is a powerful statement which attracts customers. Adidas sponsors few football team like Real Madrid, cricket teams like South Africa and England.

Place:

In the initial stage, Nike started its business in India through licensing routes. It didn't turn out well because of which Nike opened few of its stores at Delhi, Mumbai and gradually spreads to other cities.

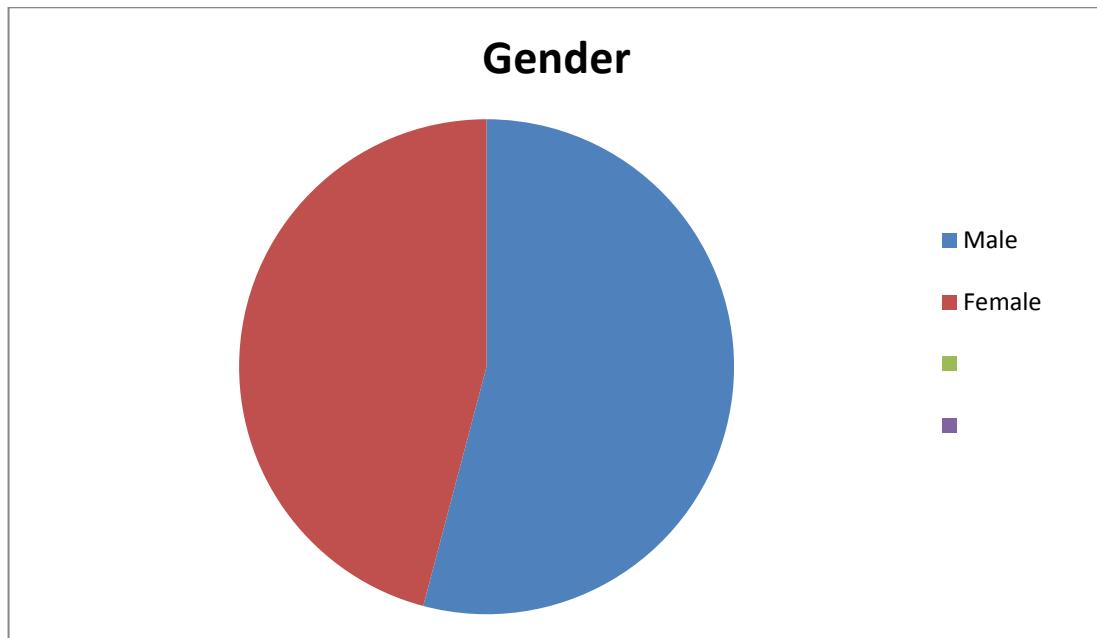
Adidas is sold through retail outlets. The exclusives stores get the supply of material directly from the company. The multi-brand stores are available that has both the brands in it. The next mode is online selling websites

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Demography :

1) Gender:

Chart 1:



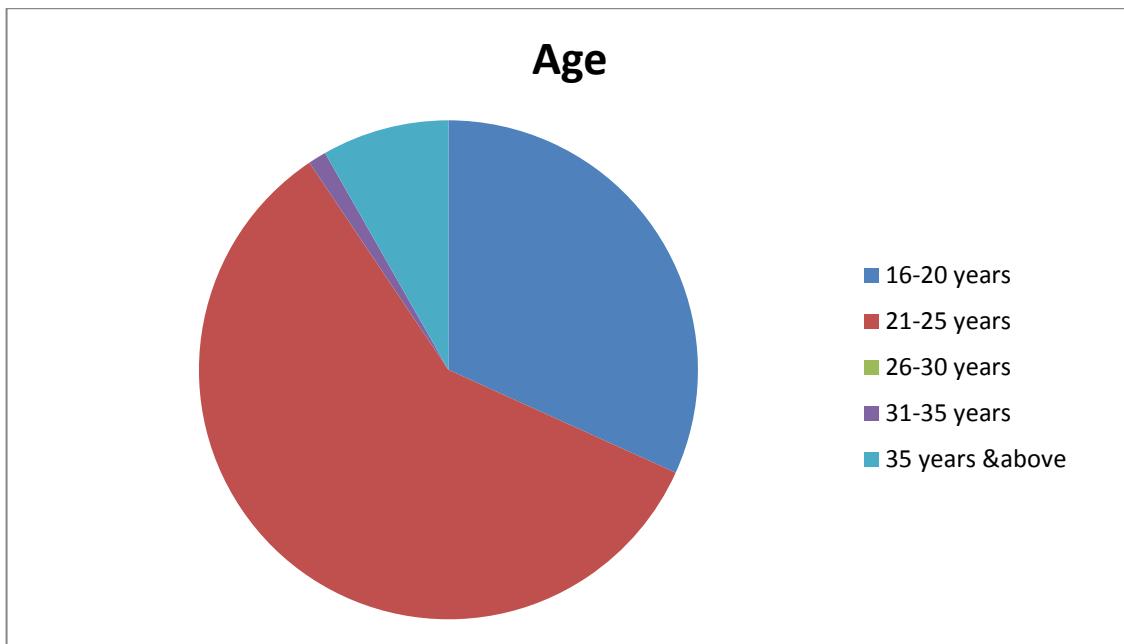
Female (39) 45.9 = 46%

Male (46) 54.1= 54%

So, there are almost same number of male and female who participated in the Questionnaire.

2) Age:

Chart 2:

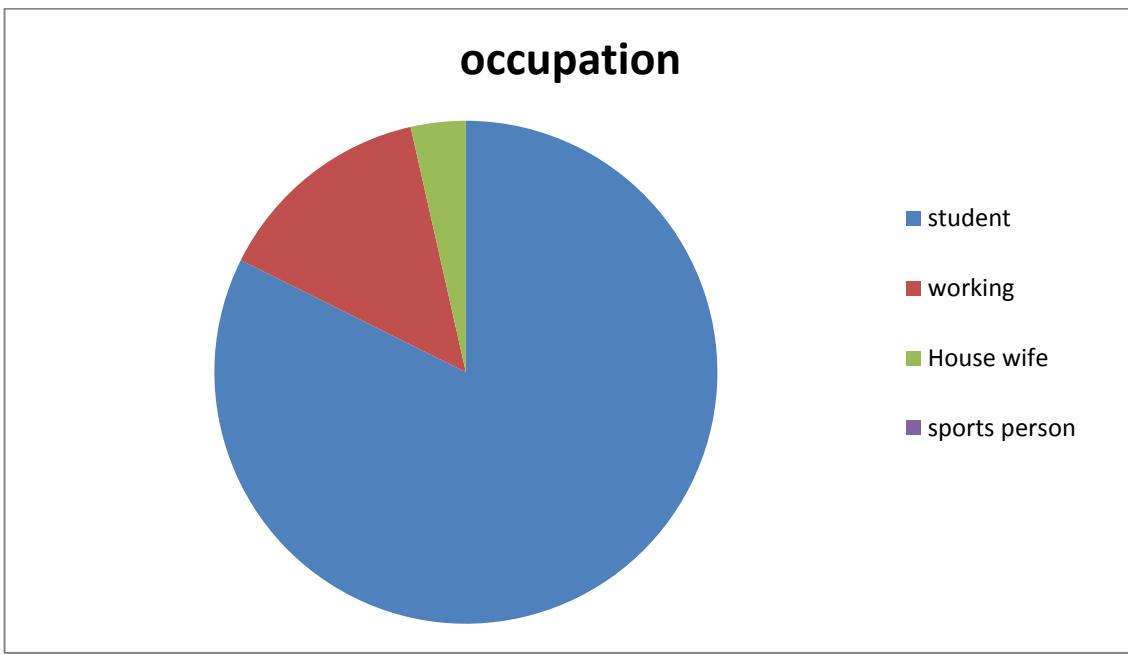


16-20 years	(27)	31.8%
21-25 years	(50)	58.8%
26-30 years	(0)	0%
31-35 years	(1)	1.2 %
35 years & above	(7)	8.2 %

Out of total sample population of 85, 59% population belongs to the group of 21-25 years, 31.8% in 16-20 years and rest in group of 31-35 years and >35 years. So, there are more youngsters between 21-25 years as the consumer of sports shoes.

3) Occupation :

Chart 3:



Student (70) 82.4%

Working (12) 14.1%

House Wife (3) 3.5%

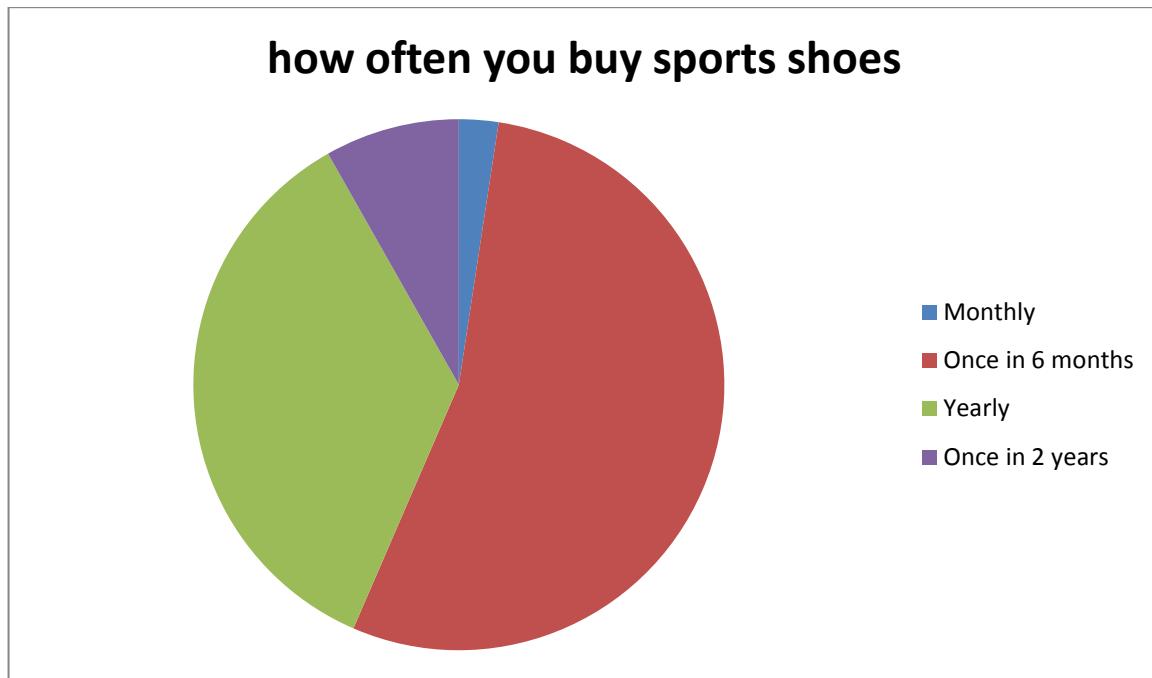
Sports person (0) 0%

82 % of the total sample population were students and working category was 14%. It can be said that a lot of students uses sport shoes as compared to working people.

Sample Buying Behaviour:

4) How often do you buy sports shoes?

Chart 4:

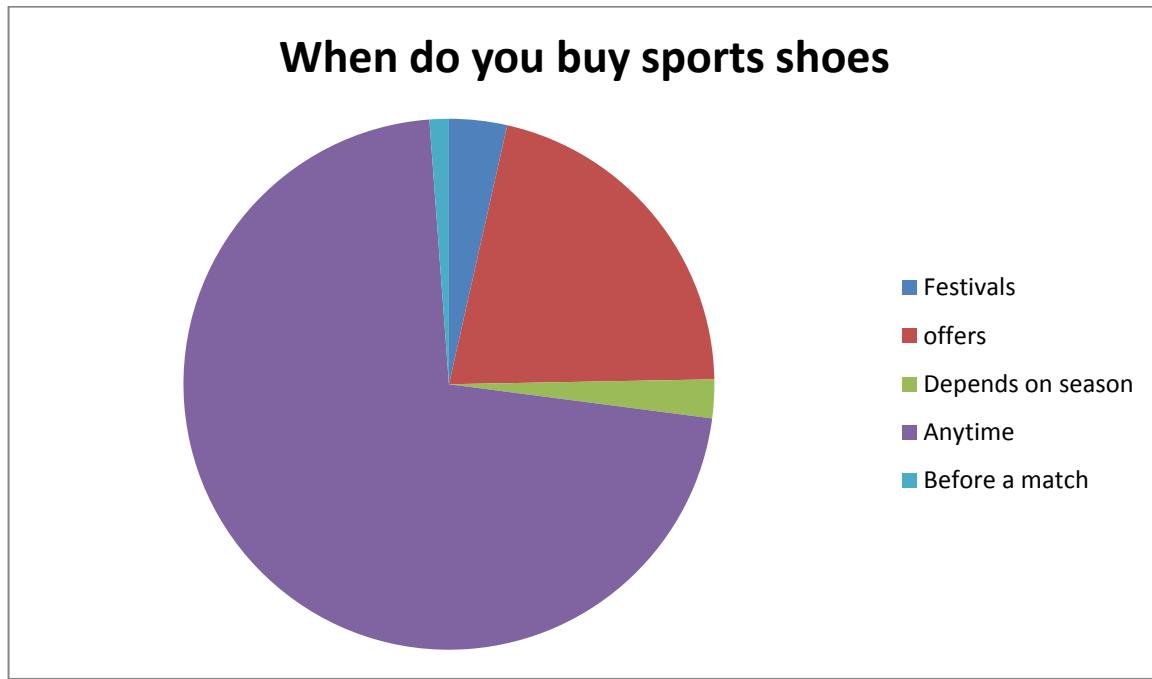


Monthly	(2) 2.4%
Once in 6 months	(46) 54.1%
Yearly	(30) 35.3%
Once in 2 years	(7) 8.2 %

54% of sample population buys a pair of shoes once in 6 months, 35% yearly, 8% once in 2 years and 2% in a month. There are lot of respondents who buy sports shoes once in 6 months and next people prefer buying it yearly. So, it can be assumed that students actively participate in the sports activities which leads to wear & tear due to which they buy sports shoes frequently.

5) When do you buy sports shoes?

Chart 5:

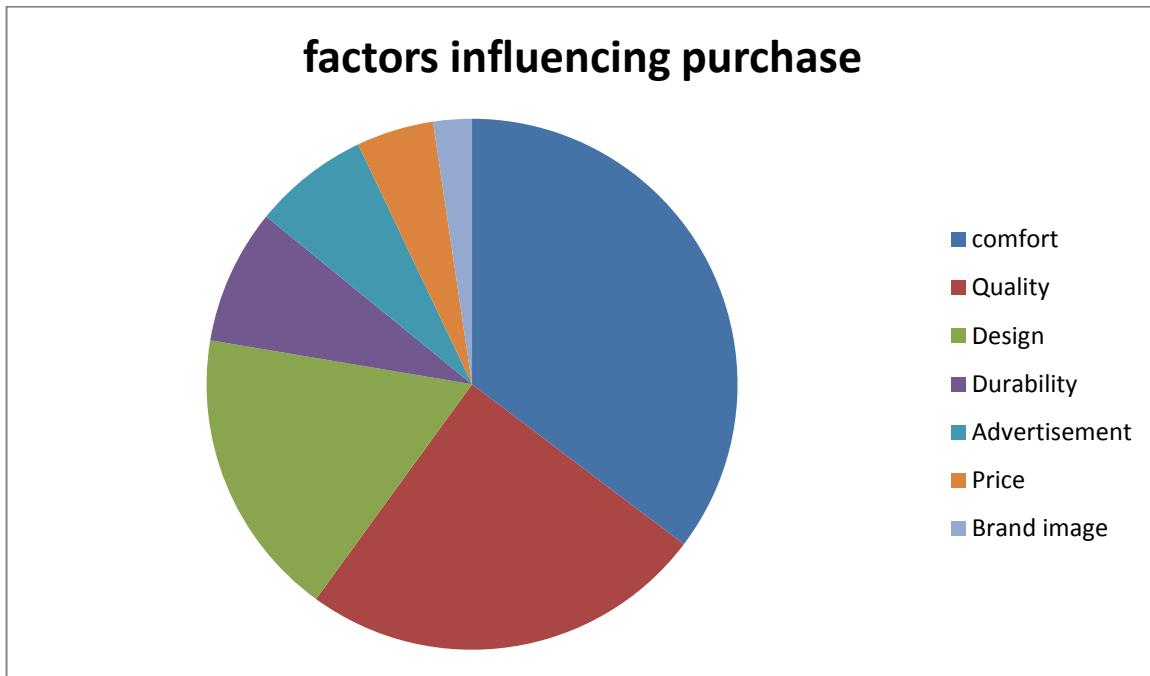


Festivals	(3)	3.5%
Offers	(18)	21.2%
Depends on season	(2)	2.4%
Anytime	(61)	71.8%
Before a Match	(1)	1.2%

72% of population buys shoes any time of the year while 21% of the population buys them during offers going on and 4% buys during festivals. There are a lot of people who come in the slot of any time which means that the customers buy sport shoes at any time of the year. It doesn't require any festivals or season to arrive. They buy it according to their requirement.

6) Factors influencing the buying preference of consumer

Chart 6:



Rank 1 – Comfort (30)

Rank 2- Quality (21)

Rank 3- Design (12)

Rank 4- Durability (8)

Rank 5- Advertisement (6)

Rank 6- Price (5)

Rank 7- Brand image (3)

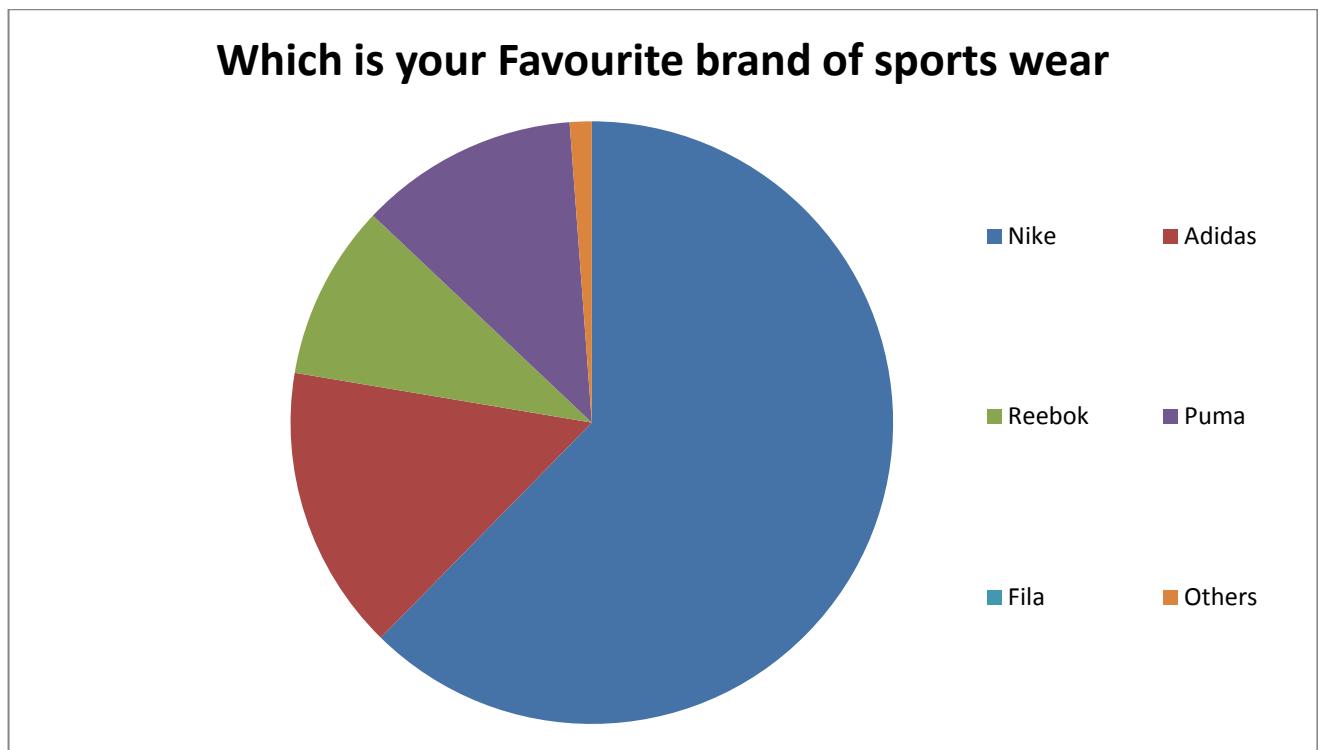
Comfort is the first preference for all the consumers while buying sports shoes. It's the most important factor that is considered while purchasing shoes. Comfort is point of concern for all. The consumers nowadays considers comfort as the top most priority as compared to price and brand image. After comfort, quality comes the next. Quality is an important factor that the consumers will look for in their product. Quality plays the significance role in building up the brand image. Today youth gives the preference to design of shoes as compared to durability and brand image as they prefer wearing varieties. Designs should b unique and contemporary. There is very little difference between quality and durability. Durability is not that important because customer's buys shoes according to their requirements. An advertisement does not really affect customer's choice for

buying sports shoes. Influence of the advertisement is very low. Brand consolidation has become a unique selling proposition too. It just adds to the cost and not value. Price and brand image are the least important factors. For youth brand image really doesn't matter as far as comfort level is good. Customers have respect for all the brands these days. Therefore, it can be said that every factor have their own importance but customers are more concentrated towards comfort as their prime preference before buying sports shoes.

Purchase Information

7) What is your Favourite brand of sportswear

Chart 7 :



Nike (53) 62.4%

Adidas (13) 15.3%

Reebok (8) 9.4%

Puma (10) 11.8%

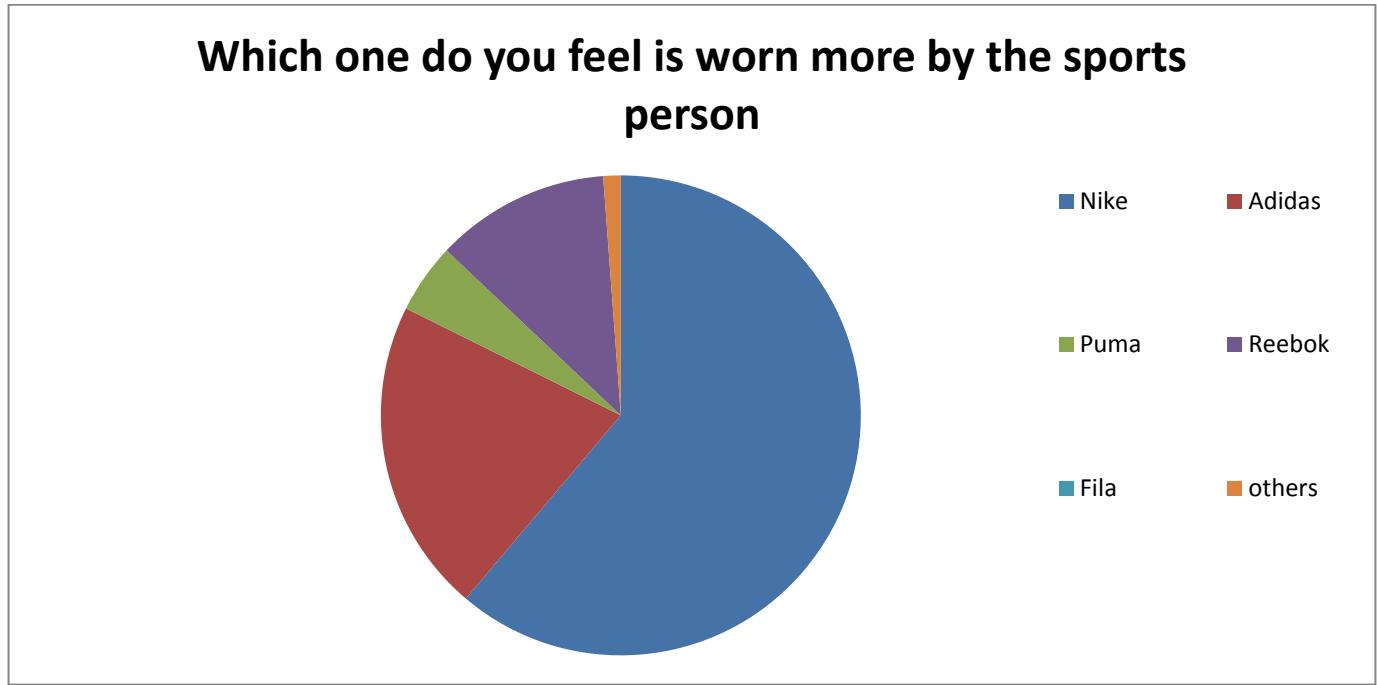
Fila (0) 0%

Others (1) 1.2%

Maximum of the population that is 62% had Nike as their favorite brand, whereas only 15% of the population has Adidas as its favorite brand. From the above data, it is observed that Nike is the favorite brand of sportswear among maximum customers.

8) Which one do you feel is worn more by the sports person?

Chart 8:

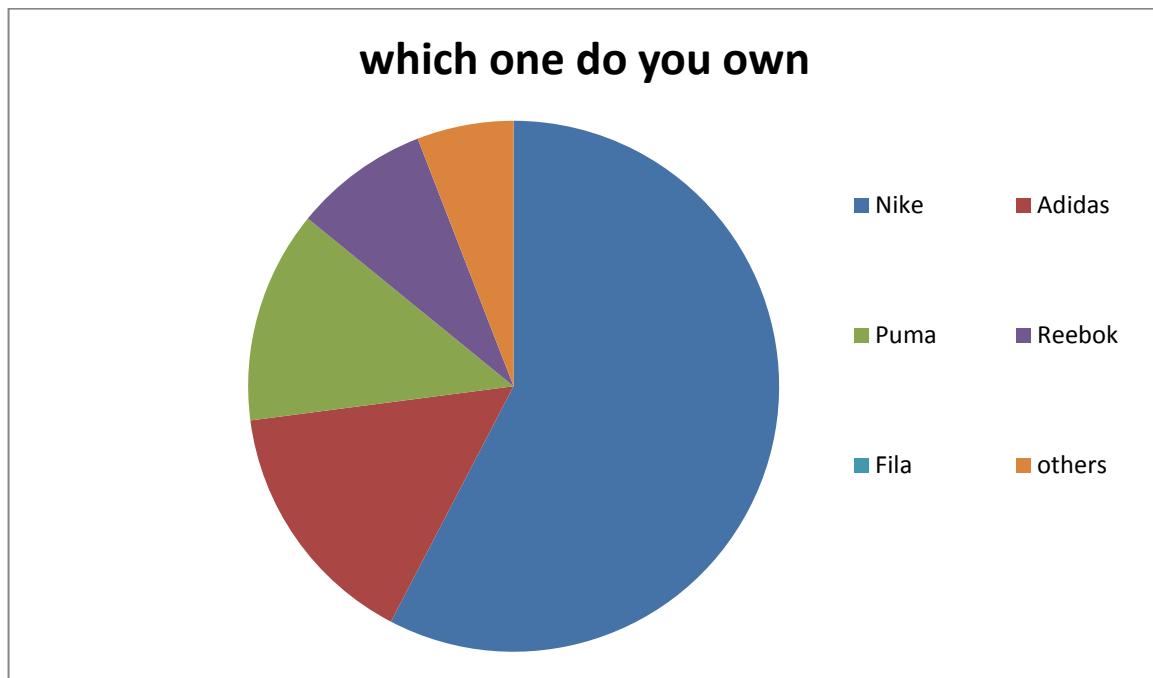


Nike	(52) 61.2%
Adidas	(18) 21.2%
Puma	(4) 4.7%
Reebok	(10) 11.8%
Fila	(0) 0%
Others	(1) 1.2%

52% of the population feels that Nike is worn more by the sports person while 21% are with Adidas. This generally depends on what sports do they follow.

9) Which one do you own?

Chart 9:



Nike (49) 57.6%

Adidas (13) 15.3%

Puma (11) 12.9%

Reebok (7) 8.2%

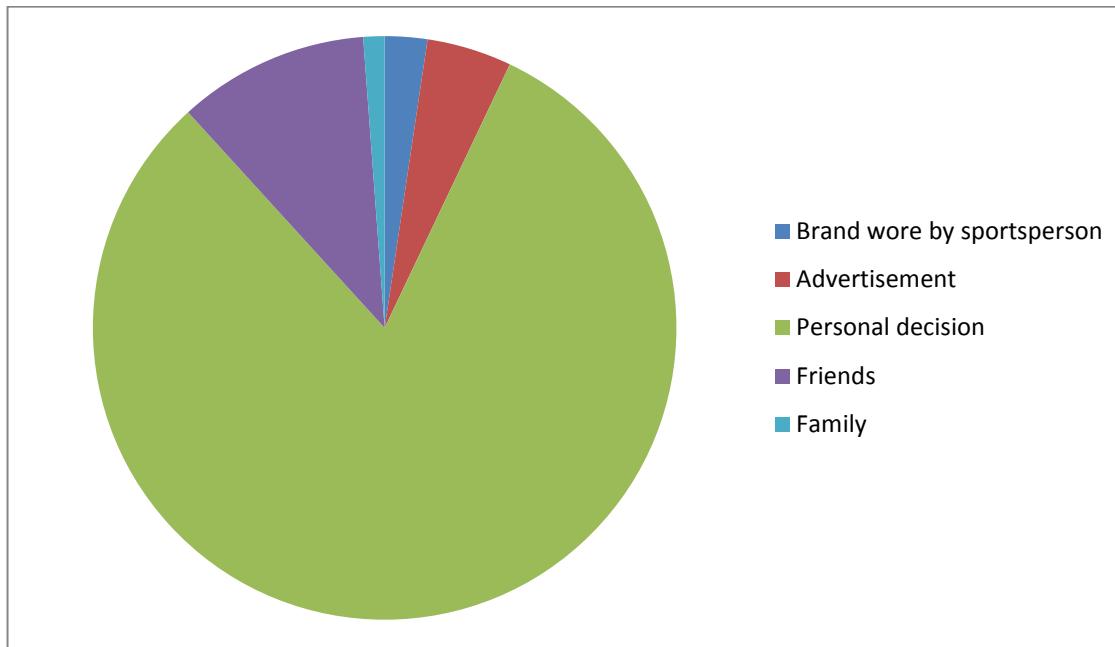
Fila (0) 0%

Others (5) 5.9%

58% of the population owned Nike, while 15% owned Adidas. Adidas and puma have a close competition as we have 13 respondents who owns Adidas and 11 who owns Puma.

10)Who influences your purchase decision for buying sportswear?

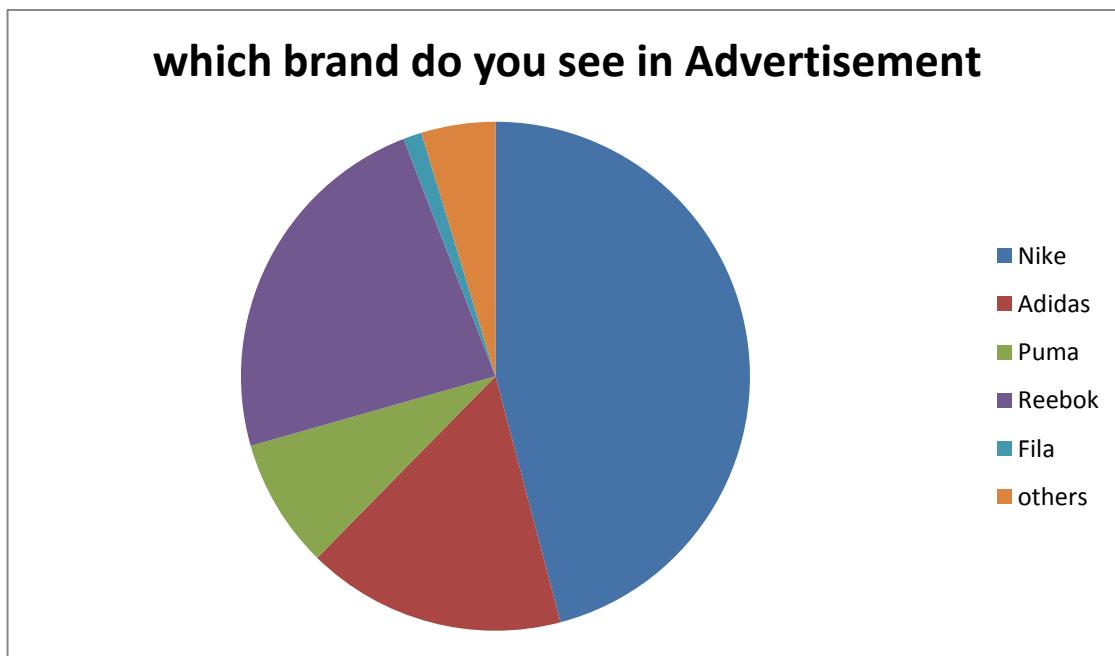
Chart 10:



69 people out of 80 people which is around 80% have their own personal decision before buying sportswear and next is getting influenced by friends.

11)Which brand do you see more in Advertisement?

Chart 11:

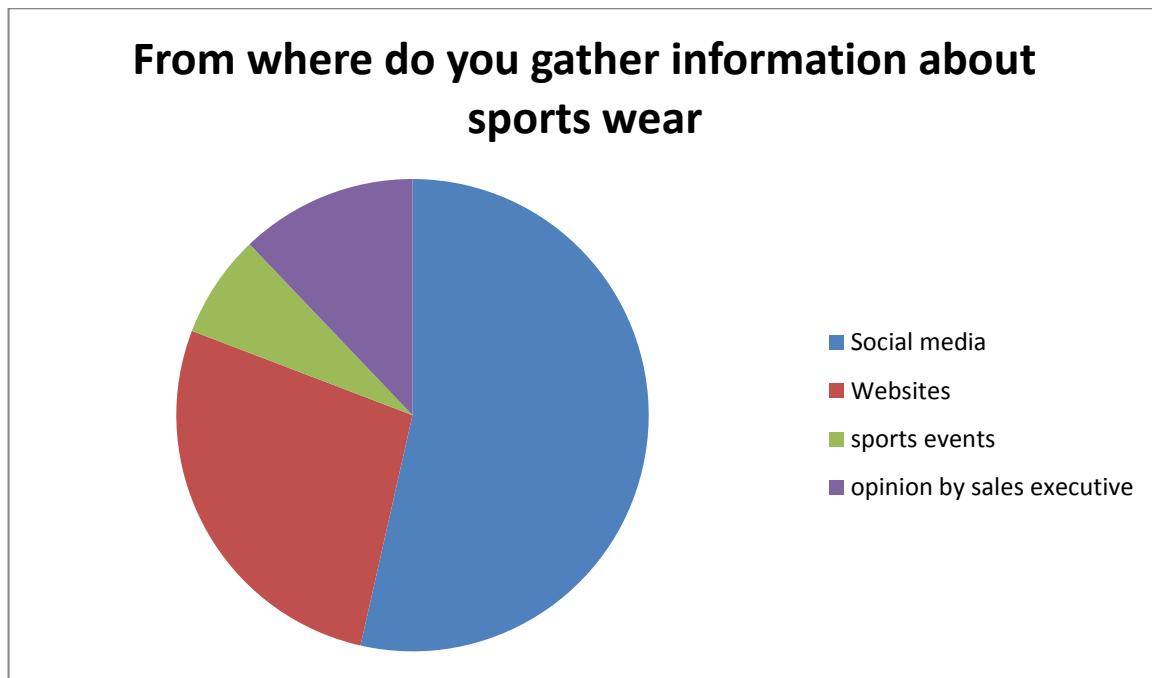


Nike	(39) 45.9%
Adidas	(14) 16.5%
Puma	(7) 8.2%
Reebok	(20) 23.5%
Fila	(1) 1.2%
Others	(4) 4.7%

46% of the population sees Nike advertising more, while 24% of population fees Reebok advertises even more than Adidas.

12) From where do you gather information about sportswear?

Chart 12:



Social Media	(53) 62.4%
Websites	(27) 31.8%
Sports Events	(7) 8.2%
Opinion by sales executive	(12) 14.1%

63% of the population believes in gathering information from the personal experience gained from the usage of product, which they share on social media, while 31.8% believes gathering information from website.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nike and Adidas both have been competing with each other to gain first position in market. Both the brands are growing immensely in the footwear market where Nike always makes effort to put in innovative ideas and uses the latest technology to fulfill the needs, wants and desires of consumers. Though Nike has premium pricing but due to its brand value, people don't hesitate to pay the amount. According to the survey conducted Nike is preferred most over Adidas by maximum respondents and they own it too. So Nike is the clear winner between them. Adidas before becoming well known they used to produce maximum 60 new products every year that have drastically come down after becoming well-known. So it would be suggested to launch a good number of new products as the loyal customers would love to wear the change.

Adidas concentrates too much on advertisement and adapting similar market practices as their competitor would not help instead they should look after more innovations in business. For example, Nike started "Just do it" after which Adidas launched "Impossible is Nothing".

Adidas should focus more on customer needs and bring more innovation and technology in its smart shoe designs that can record the stamina of the runner through the body temperature and heartbeats. Adidas shoes bring more varieties and colors in the sports shoes because in some way or other they are consistent and stagnant at one place in introducing new and interesting features in footwear industry.

Questionnaire

1) Gender

- Male
- Female

2) Age

- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- 31-35 years
- 35 years and before

3) Occupation

- Student
- Working

- House Wife
- Sports-person

4) How often do you buy Sports Shoes?

- Monthly
- Once in 6 months
- Yearly
- Once in 2 years

5) When do you buy Sports Shoes?

- Festivals
- Offers
- Depends on season
- Anytime
- Before a match

6) Factors influencing the buying preference of consumer

- Comfort
- Quality
- Design
- Durability
- Advertisements
- Price

7) What is your Favourite brand of sports wear?

- Nike
- Adidas
- Reebok
- Puma
- Fila
- Others

8) Which one do you feel is worn more by sports Person?

- Nike
- Adidas
- Puma

- Reebok
- Fila
- Others

9) Which one do you own?

- Nike
- Adidas
- Reebok
- Fila
- Others

10) Who influences your purchase decision for buying sports wear?

- Brand worn by sports person
- Advertisement
- Personal Decision
- Friends
- Family

11) Which brand do you see more in Advertisements?

- Nike
- Adidas
- Puma
- Reebok
- Fila
- Others

12) From where do you gather information about sports wear?

- Social Media
- Websites
- Sports Event
- Opinion by sales Executive

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