

Impact of the 'Vocal for Local' Campaign on the Buying Habits of Urban Consumers

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Abstract:

This research examines the influence of the 'Vocal for Local' campaign on the purchasing patterns of urban consumers. Utilising a descriptive research design, the study investigates how factors like nationalistic sentiment, perceived quality, and price competitiveness drive the shift from global to indigenous brands.

Through an empirical analysis of urban respondents, the study identifies a growing preference for local goods in the FMCG sector, though brand heritage remains a hurdle in durables. The findings offer critical insights into consumer ethnocentrism, suggesting that while awareness is high, sustainable adoption depends on closing the quality-price gap. This research provides vital insights for marketers aiming to leverage the "local" tag to gain a competitive edge.

Keywords: Vocal for Local, Consumer Behaviour, Urban Consumers, Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Ethnocentrism, Indigenous Brands.

Introduction

The global economic scenario has witnessed a significant shift towards "Economic Nationalism," where nations are increasingly focusing on self-reliance and domestic production. In India, this transition was formalised through the "Aatmanirbhar Bharat

Abhiyan" (Self-Reliant India Mission), launched in May 2020. A core component of this mission is the 'Vocal for Local' campaign. This initiative is not merely a call to buy Indian products but a strategic economic move to upgrade local supply chains, improve manufacturing standards, and position indigenous brands on a global stage. Historically, the concept of preferring local goods traces back to the Swadeshi Movement of the early 20th century. However, the

modern 'Vocal for Local' movement operates in a broadly different environment - the one dominated by globalisation, e-commerce, and high-intensity brand competition. For a developing economy like India, reducing import dependency and strengthening the MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) sector is vital for sustainable GDP growth and employment generation.

The success of such a massive economic shift ultimately rests in the hands of the urban consumer. Urban markets in India are the primary battlegrounds for global vs local brands. These consumers are typically characterised by high brand consciousness, exposure to international quality standards, and digital savvy. Therefore, understanding the Impact of the 'Vocal for Local' Campaign on the Buying Habits of Urban Consumers is critical. It involves exploring whether "National Pride" is a strong enough driver to override traditional factors like price, prestige, and quality.

This research aims to bridge the gap between policy intent and consumer action. It explores the extent to which urban buyers are willing to modify their consumption patterns in support of the national goal of self-reliance, thereby evaluating the long-term commercial viability of indigenous brands in a competitive market.

Literature Review

The "Vocal for Local" movement is a multifaceted economic strategy that intersects national policy, industrial growth, and consumer psychology. To understand its impact on urban buying habits, the existing literature can be categorised into three major themes:

1. The Theoretical Foundation: Consumer Ethnocentrism (CET)

Scholarly research frequently utilises the CETSCALE (Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies Scale) to measure how nationalistic sentiments influence purchase decisions. Studies in the Indian context reveal that while urban consumers exhibit moderate to high ethnocentric tendencies, this "brand patriotism" is often sector-specific. Research by D.M. Arvind Mallik and others (2025) suggests that ethnocentrism positively influences Indian youths' attitudes toward Khadi as a culturally significant and eco-friendly product. However, purchase decisions are constrained by factors such as price and limited fashion appeal, indicating that while the *Vocal for Local* sentiment encourages preference for indigenous goods, practical factors continue to shape actual buying behaviour.

2. Policy Framework: Aatmanirbhar Bharat and MSME Growth

The 'Vocal for Local' campaign is a critical subset of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-Reliant India Mission) launched in 2020. Literature highlights that the campaign's primary objective is to reduce import dependency by strengthening the MSME sector, which contributes nearly 30% to India's GDP. Recent studies (2024-2025) indicate that government initiatives like Production Linked Incentives (PLI) and the GeM portal have significantly enhanced the visibility and market access of local producers. However, researchers note a "missing middle" where small firms struggle to scale up to global standards despite increased consumer interest.

3. Shift in Urban Consumer Behaviour

Urban consumers are increasingly viewing the "Made-in-India" label as a symbol of moral purchasing and economic resilience rather than just origin. A PwC 2024 Survey indicates that 75% of Indian consumers plan to increase spending on categories like clothing and groceries, with a marked preference for brands that align with their values. However, a significant "Quality-Price Gap" remains. Literature suggests that while urban buyers support localism for FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods), they still rely on global brands for high-involvement categories like electronics due to perceived technological superiority.

While extensive research exists on the macro-economic benefits of self-reliance, there is a research gap in understanding the long-term sustainability of this shift in urban markets post-pandemic. Most studies focus on initial "patriotic surges," leaving room for this project to analyse whether "Vocal for Local" has truly transformed habitual buying or remains a temporary trend.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the awareness and perception of the 'Vocal for Local' initiative among urban consumers.
- To identify key drivers (such as patriotism, price, and quality) influencing the shift to indigenous brands.
- To analyse sector-wise preferences by comparing the impact on FMCG versus high-end consumer durables.
- To evaluate demographic variations (age and income) in the adoption of local products in urban markets.
- To examine the barriers that prevent urban consumers from choosing local alternatives over global brands.

HYPOTHESIS

- (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant awareness among urban consumers regarding the 'Vocal for Local' campaign's role in Self-Reliant India.
- (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant level of awareness and positive perception of the 'Vocal for Local' campaign among urban consumers.

Research Methodology

Research Method

The research study has applied a Quantitative and Descriptive Research design. This method is chosen to systematically describe the impact of the 'Vocal for Local' campaign and to quantify the buying habits of urban consumers through statistical data.

Data Collection Tool

Primary data collection has been carried out through a structured Questionnaire administered via Google Forms. This digital approach ensured a wide reach and allowed for the collection of individual respondents' opinions in a standardised format.

The study utilises a Self-Constructed Structured Questionnaire. To measure the intensity of consumer perceptions and attitudes accurately.

Data Types and Sources

The present study relies on a combination of primary and secondary data to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the 'Vocal for Local' campaign's impact on urban consumers in Moradabad.

1. Primary Data

First-hand information gathered is referred to as primary data.

- Source: The data was gathered directly from individual respondents residing in the urban areas of Moradabad.
- Method: A structured, self-constructed questionnaire was administered via Google Forms.
- Nature: The data is quantitative, recorded to measure consumer attitudes, awareness levels, and buying preferences toward indigenous brands.

2. Secondary Data

Secondary data consists of information that has already been collected, analysed, and published by other agencies. This data provides the theoretical framework and historical context for the study.

Sources include:

- Government Publications: Reports from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, NITI Aayog, and the Press Information Bureau (PIB) regarding Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- Academic Literature: Scholarly articles, journals (e.g., Indian Journal of Commerce), and previous research theses available on Shodhganga.
- Financial Reports: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and industry associations such as FICCI and CII provide data on MSME growth.
- Digital Media: Authentic news portals, official websites of Indian brands, and economic magazines (e.g., The Economic Times).

Research Variables

The study identifies and analyses the following variables to understand the relationship between the 'Vocal for Local' campaign and urban consumer behaviour:

1. Independent Variable

The Independent Variable is the factor that remains constant and "causes" a change in the other.

- The 'Vocal for Local' Campaign: This includes government initiatives, promotional advertisements, social media awareness, and the policy framework of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

2. Dependent Variables

Dependent Variables are the factors that "change" as a result of the independent variable. In this study, they include:

- Awareness Level: The degree of knowledge urban consumers have about the campaign.
- Consumer Perception: The mental image or attitude (positive/negative) toward indigenous brands.
- Purchase Intention: The willingness of consumers to choose local products over foreign brands.
- Buying Habits: The actual frequency and preference of purchasing local goods in sectors like FMCG or electronics.

3. Demographic (Moderating) Variables

These are background factors that may influence how much the campaign affects a person:

- Age
- Income Level: Middle to Higher Income Group
- Level of Education: Higher Education to Post Graduate

Findings and Discussion

Increased Awareness and Positive Perception

The findings of the study indicate that the Vocal for Local campaign has been highly effective in generating widespread awareness among urban consumers. A significant proportion of consumers are now more conscious about the origin of the products they purchase and actively recognise the importance of supporting domestic industries. This increased awareness has led to a shift in perception, where local products are no longer viewed as inferior alternatives but are increasingly associated with positive attributes such as national pride, sustainability, and economic contribution. Consumers tend to perceive locally manufactured goods as environmentally friendly and culturally rooted, which enhances their overall appeal. Moreover, emotional factors such as patriotism and a sense of responsibility toward supporting small and local businesses play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes. This emotional connection has strengthened the image of local brands, making them more acceptable and desirable in the urban market.

Shift in Buying Intent

The study further reveals a noticeable shift in the buying intent of urban consumers toward local products. Many consumers express a growing willingness to support Indian brands, not only through their purchases but also by recommending them to others within their social circles. This behavioural inclination reflects a broader trend of conscious consumption, where individuals are increasingly motivated by values rather than mere convenience. Additionally, there is a rising interest in exploring indigenous alternatives across various product categories, including fashion, food, and personal care. This shift in intent has been significantly amplified by marketing efforts and digital platforms. Social media campaigns, influencer endorsements, and brand storytelling centred around “Made in India” narratives have effectively influenced the appeal of local products. As a result, urban consumers are more open to experimenting with domestic brands and integrating them into their regular purchasing habits.

Gap Between Intent and Actual Purchase

Despite the positive shift in awareness and buying intent, the study highlights a considerable gap between consumers' intentions and their actual purchasing behavior. While many consumers express support for local products, this does not always translate into consistent buying decisions. One of the primary factors contributing to this gap is price sensitivity. Urban consumers, particularly those in middle-income groups, tend to compare prices closely and prefer local products only when they are competitively priced against global alternatives. Additionally, concerns regarding product quality and consistency continue to influence consumer trust. Any perceived compromise in quality discourages repeat purchases and weakens brand loyalty. Another significant barrier is the limited variety and lack of modern design, especially in categories such as fashion and premium goods. These factors collectively highlight the existence of an intention-behavior gap, where consumers ideologically support local products but make practical decisions based on value, quality, and variety.

Role of Marketing and Branding

Marketing and branding have emerged as critical factors in shaping the success of the Vocal for Local campaign. The study finds that brands which effectively integrate the campaign's message into their marketing strategies tend to achieve higher consumer engagement and acceptance. Emotional storytelling that emphasises themes of nationalism, heritage, and community support resonates strongly with consumers and enhances brand recall. Furthermore, cultural positioning of products, such as highlighting traditional craftsmanship or indigenous origins - adds authenticity and uniqueness to local brands. Digital campaigns, particularly those leveraging social media platforms and influencer collaborations, have played a significant role in amplifying these messages. By creating relatable and aspirational content, brands are able to connect with urban consumers on both emotional and practical levels. This strategic use of marketing not only strengthens brand identity but also encourages consumers to actively participate in the Vocal for Local movement.

Influence of Demographics

The study also reveals that demographic factors significantly influence consumer responses to the Vocal for Local campaign. Younger consumers, especially those belonging to the millennial and Gen Z segments, demonstrate higher levels of awareness and engagement with the campaign. Their exposure to digital media and evolving value systems makes them more receptive to ideas related to sustainability and local empowerment. Gender differences are also evident, with women showing a stronger preference for local products in categories such as clothing and handicrafts, including traditional fabrics like Khadi. This preference is often driven by a greater appreciation for design variety and cultural aesthetics. Additionally, income levels play a crucial role in shaping buying behaviour. Middle-income consumers tend to be more price-sensitive and are likely to evaluate products based on affordability and value for

money. These demographic insights highlight the need for targeted marketing strategies that address the specific preferences and constraints of different consumer groups.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The primary data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms. The responses were gathered from individuals residing in urban areas of Moradabad. The study comprised a sample size of 52 survey participants. The questionnaire aimed to understand consumer awareness, perception, and buying behavior regarding the *Vocal for Local* campaign.

Data Collection and Sample Profile

Table 1. Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	23	44.23
26-35	16	30.77
36-45	8	15.38
46 and above	5	9.62

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

The sample comprised 52 respondents. The largest age group was 18–25 years (23; 44.23%), followed by 26–35 years (16; 30.77%). Respondents aged 36–45 and 46 years and above represented smaller proportions of the sample.

Table 2. Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	39	75.00
Male	13	25.00

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

Female respondents constituted 75.00% of the sample, while male respondents constituted 25.00%. Thus, the sample is predominantly female.

Table 3. Occupation-wise Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	17	32.69
Student	16	30.77
Self-employed / Business	13	25.00
Other	4	7.69
Homemaker	2	3.85

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

Employed respondents formed the largest occupational group (32.69%), closely followed by students (30.77%) and self-employed/business respondents (25.00%).

Table 4. Awareness of the 'Vocal for Local' Campaign

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	49	94.23
No	3	5.77

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

Awareness of the campaign was high: 94.23% of respondents reported that they were aware of the campaign, while 5.77% reported that they were not aware.

Table 5. Source of Awareness

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media	22	42.31
Friends/Family	12	23.08
News/TV	9	17.31
Class/Coaching	6	11.54
Advertisements	2	3.85
Other	1	1.92

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

Social media was the most frequently reported first source of awareness (42.31%), followed by friends/family (23.08%) and news/TV (17.31%). This indicates that digital and interpersonal channels were prominent sources of campaign awareness in this sample.

Perceptions and Buying Behaviour

Table 6. Perceived Equivalence of Local and International Products

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	34	65.38
Not Sure	15	28.85
No	3	5.77

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

A majority of respondents (65.38%) considered local products to be as good as international brands, while 28.85% were not sure and 5.77% disagreed. The result indicates generally positive perceptions, although a sizable group remains uncertain.

Table 7. Importance of Supporting Local Businesses

Importance	Frequency	Percentage
Very Important	31	59.62
Important	20	38.46
Neutral	1	1.92

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

Support for local businesses was considered important or very important by 98.08% of respondents, with 59.62% selecting 'Very Important' and 38.46% selecting 'Important'.

Table 8. Frequency of Purchasing Local Products

Purchase Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Often	17	32.69
Depends upon availability	16	30.77
Always	12	23.08
Sometimes	5	9.62
Rarely	2	3.85

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

The largest group reported purchasing local products often (32.69%), while 30.77% stated that their purchases depended on availability. A further 23.08% reported always purchasing local products. Availability therefore appears relevant to actual purchasing behaviour.

Table 9. Influence of the Campaign on Buying Behaviour

Influence	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Influenced	21	40.38
Moderately Influenced	20	38.46
Slightly Influenced	6	11.54
Not Influenced	5	9.62

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

The campaign was reported to have a strong or moderate influence on buying behaviour by 78.84% of respondents (40.38% strongly influenced and 38.46% moderately influenced). A smaller proportion reported slight or no influence.

Table 10. Perceived Need for Improvement in Local Products

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	37	71.15
Maybe	14	26.92
No	1	1.92

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

A substantial 71.15% of respondents believed local products need improvement, while 26.92% selected 'Maybe'. Only 1.92% selected 'No'.

Table 11. Trust in Indian Brands After the Campaign

Trust	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	53.85
Neutral	17	32.69
Always buy made in India products	6	11.54
No	1	1.92

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

After the campaign, 53.85% of respondents reported greater trust in Indian brands, while 32.69% were neutral. A further 11.54% stated that they always buy made-in-India products, and 1.92% reported no increase in trust.

Table 12. Willingness to Recommend Local Products

Recommendation	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	43	82.69
Maybe	8	15.38
No	1	1.92

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

A large majority (82.69%) stated that they would recommend local products to others. 15.38% were uncertain and 1.92% would not recommend them

Multiple-Response Analysis: Questions relating to associations, preferred product categories and purchase factors allowed respondents to select more than one option. Therefore, percentages for these questions are calculated against the number of respondents and do not add up to 100%.

Table 13. Associations with Local Products (Multiple Response)

Association	Frequency	Percentage
Support for Small Businesses	35	67.31
Eco-friendly / Sustainable	34	65.38
National Pride	33	63.46
Affordable Pricing	32	61.54
Better Quality	23	44.23

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

The most frequently selected associations were support for small businesses (67.31%), eco-friendliness/sustainability (65.38%), national pride (63.46%), and affordable pricing (61.54%). Better quality was selected by 44.23%. Because this was a multiple-response question, percentages do not sum to 100%.

Table 14. Preferred Categories of Local Products (Multiple Response)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Clothing (e.g., Khadi)	42	80.77
Food & Groceries	40	76.92
Handicrafts	38	73.08
Stationary	33	63.46
Personal Care Products	32	61.54
Home Appliances	19	36.54
Electronics	18	34.62

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

Clothing (80.77%), food and groceries (76.92%), and handicrafts (73.08%) were the most frequently selected categories. Stationery and personal care products were also selected by more than half of respondents. Percentages exceed 100% in total because respondents could select multiple categories.

Table 15. Factors Influencing Purchase of Local Products (Multiple Response)

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Quality	44	84.62
Price	39	75.00
National Pride	27	51.92
Availability	26	50.00
Design/Variety	20	38.46
Brand Image	15	28.85

Source: Primary data collected through Google Forms.

Quality was the most frequently selected purchase factor (84.62%), followed by price (75.00%), national pride (51.92%), availability (50.00%), design/variety (38.46%), and brand image (28.85%). This suggests that practical product attributes were prominent considerations alongside national sentiment.

Overall Interpretation

The survey results indicate high awareness of the 'Vocal for Local' campaign among the respondents and a generally positive orientation towards supporting local businesses. A substantial proportion of respondents reported that the

campaign had a strong influence on their buying behaviour. At the same time, actual purchasing of local products was affected by practical considerations such as availability. Quality and price emerged as the leading factors influencing purchase decisions, while many respondents also associated local products with support for small businesses, sustainability and national pride. The findings also indicate that respondents see scope for improvement in local products, particularly in areas such as quality, pricing, availability, variety, packaging and promotion, as reflected in the open-ended responses.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The study found a high level of awareness of the 'Vocal for Local' campaign, with **94.23%** of respondents reporting awareness of the campaign.
2. **98.08%** of respondents considered supporting local businesses to be important or very important.
3. A majority of respondents (**65.38%**) perceived local products to be comparable to international brands.
4. More than half of the respondents (**55.77%**) reported that they always or often purchase local products.
5. The campaign was reported to have a strong or moderate influence on buying behaviour by **78.84%** of respondents.
6. **71.15%** of respondents believed that local products still require improvement, indicating that consumer support does not eliminate expectations regarding product quality and other attributes.
7. **53.85%** of respondents reported greater trust in Indian brands after the campaign.
8. **82.69%** of respondents stated that they would recommend local products to others.
9. **Quality (84.62%)** and **price (75%)** were the two most frequently identified factors influencing the purchase of local products.
10. Social media emerged as the most frequently reported source of awareness of the campaign, highlighting the role of digital communication in reaching urban consumers.

Conclusion

The study examined the impact of the 'Vocal for Local' campaign on the buying habits of urban consumers. The findings from the survey indicate a high level of awareness of the campaign and generally positive attitudes towards local businesses and Indian products among the respondents.

A substantial proportion of respondents reported that the campaign had influenced their buying behaviour, with 78.84% indicating either strong or moderate influence. The findings also show that 55.77% of respondents reported purchasing local products always or often. Furthermore, 53.85% reported greater trust in Indian brands after the campaign, while 82.69% expressed willingness to recommend local products to others.

However, the findings also indicate that consumer preference for local products is influenced by practical considerations. Quality and price emerged as the most frequently identified factors influencing purchase decisions. In

addition, 71.15% of respondents believed that local products require improvement. Availability was also identified as an important consideration.

Overall, the survey findings suggest that the 'Vocal for Local' campaign is associated with positive attitudes towards local products and reported changes in purchasing behaviour among the respondents. At the same time, sustained consumer preference for local products appears to depend not only on campaign messaging or national sentiment but also on product quality, competitive pricing, availability, variety and brand image.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions may be considered:

1. **Improve product quality:** Since quality was the most frequently identified purchase factor, local businesses should focus on maintaining consistent and competitive product quality.
2. **Maintain competitive pricing:** Local products should remain reasonably priced to compete effectively with domestic and international alternatives.
3. **Improve availability:** Businesses should strengthen distribution channels and online availability so that consumers can access local products conveniently.
4. **Increase product variety and design:** Local producers can expand their product range and incorporate contemporary designs while retaining local identity and craftsmanship.
5. **Strengthen digital marketing:** Since social media was the leading reported source of campaign awareness, local businesses can use digital platforms to increase product visibility and consumer engagement.
6. **Build stronger brand identities:** Local businesses should invest in packaging, branding, storytelling and customer experience to build consumer trust and differentiate their products.
7. **Communicate the value of buying local:** Campaign communication can highlight not only national pride but also product quality, sustainability, support for local entrepreneurs and community-level economic benefits.

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