

# **PROJECT DISSERTATION REPORT**

## **“THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENT MARKETING MESSAGES ON YOUNG ADULTS' PURCHASE DECISIONS”**

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# GUIDE CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project Dissertation Report titled, '**The effect of different marketing messages on young adults' purchase decisions**' which is a part of the Major Research Project for final year submission, is submitted by Ayush Singla, Roll Number 2K22/DMBA/31, in the fourth semester of MBA from Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University during the months of January to May 2024.

This Major Research Project is submitted to the Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University as a partial fulfilment of the requirement for awarding the Degree of Master of Business Administration to Ayush Singla

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# DECLARATION

I, Ayush Singla, final year student of Master of Business Administration of Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, hereby declare that the work done as part of my Project Dissertation Report titled '**The effect of different marketing messages on young adults' purchase decisions**' under the guidance of my mentor and faculty advisor Mr. Yashdeep Singh, is my original work and has not been copied or submitted anywhere else.

This report has been written in my own words after a thorough research and understanding of the topic and not copied from any existing work. The contents of anything in this report which is not my original work, has been duly and appropriately cited/ referred/ acknowledged and given due credit.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The impact of different marketing messages on consumer purchase intention and perceived product quality was examined by this exploration. Two survey forms were employed, one emphasizing the product's popularity and the other highlighting its unique features.

The study aimed to determine if distinct marketing approaches impacted purchase intention and perceived quality differently. Statistical analysis using parametric and non-parametric tests revealed a difference in average purchase intention scores among the groups which was different statistically. Participants exposed to the survey highlighting unique features displayed a higher inclination to purchase, suggesting this messaging strategy might be more effective in driving purchase intent.

Interestingly, the analysis did not reveal a statistically significant difference in perceived quality scores based on the type of marketing message presented. This implies that both approaches likely convey product quality equally well to consumers.

These discoveries offer significant bits of knowledge for marketing professionals who are looking to optimize their messaging strategies. While highlighting unique product features might be more effective in boosting purchase intent, both marketing messages appear to have a similar impact on consumers' perceived quality of product. Further explorations with sample sizes or larger number and potentially different product categories could provide more generalizable insights.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary marketplace, where consumer choices are abundant and competition is fierce, understanding the dynamics of marketing messages and their influence on consumer behavior is paramount. This exploration dives into the captivating domain of marketing psychology, especially highlighting on the effect of various advertising messages on the buy choices of youthful grown-ups. By exploring the contrasting strategies of leveraging the bandwagon effect and highlighting unique product features, this study aims to illuminate the nuanced mechanisms driving consumer preferences and perceptions.

The digital age has revolutionized marketing, with social media platforms emerging as powerful tools to influence consumer behaviour. Young adults, known for their active social media engagement, are a key target audience for many brands. Understanding the effectiveness of different marketing messages in influencing their purchase decisions is crucial for successful marketing campaigns.

## 1.1 Background

Marketing messages assume a critical part in forming purchaser discernments and ways of behaving. Among the arena of marketing tactics, two prominent approaches have emerged: leveraging the bandwagon effect and emphasizing unique product features. The bandwagon effect impact profits by friendly evidence, proposing that shoppers are bound to embrace ways of behaving or make buys assuming they accept others are doing likewise. On the other hand, highlighting unique product features emphasizes the distinct qualities and benefits of a product, aiming to differentiate it from competitors in the market.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the prevalence of these marketing strategies, their comparative effectiveness, particularly among young adults, remains a subject of inquiry. With the proliferation of social media and the increasing importance of peer influence, understanding how



marketing messages leveraging the bandwagon effect stack up against those emphasizing unique product features is crucial for marketers seeking to optimize their campaigns. Furthermore, discerning the impact of these messages on purchase intent and perceived quality provides valuable insights into consumer decision-making processes.

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The primary objective of this exploration is to compare the effectiveness of two distinct marketing messages—highlighting social media popularity (bandwagon effect) and unique product features—in influencing purchase intent and perceived quality among young adults. By elucidating the differential impact of these messages, this exploration aims to offer practical insights for marketers seeking to tailor their strategies to resonate with their target audience effectively.

## **1.4 Scope of Study**

This study focuses specifically on young adults aged 18-25 years old, who are active social media users and possess familiarity with the chosen product category—headphones. The decision to narrow the scope to this demographic segment and product category was informed by the desire to ensure relevance and specificity in the research findings. By honing in on a defined target audience and product category, this study aims to provide actionable insights tailored to the preferences and behaviors of young adult consumers in the context of headphone purchases.

This exploration seeks to add on to the burgeoning field of marketing psychology by shedding light on the comparative effectiveness of different marketing messages on young adults' purchase decisions. By elucidating the interplay between the bandwagon effect and unique product features, this study endeavors to equip marketers with valuable insights to inform their strategic decision-making and enhance the efficacy of their marketing campaigns.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The computerized age has introduced another time of promoting, where online entertainment stages have become useful assets for impacting buyer conduct. Young adults, known for their high social media engagement, represent a key target audience for many brands. Understanding the effectiveness of different marketing messages in influencing their purchase decisions is crucial for successful campaigns. This literature review explores the potential impact of two distinct marketing approaches on young adults: leveraging the bandwagon effect and highlighting unique product features.

The bandwagon effect posits that the consumers are more likely to adopt products or behaviours perceived as popular among their peers (Biddle, 1991). This social proof phenomenon stems from a desire to conform and avoid the fear of missing out (FOMO) on something potentially valuable or enjoyable (Griskevicius et al., 2009). Social media platforms amplify the bandwagon effect by providing readily available information about product popularity through metrics like likes, shares, and influencer endorsements (Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2005).

Research suggests that the bandwagon effect can be particularly effective in influencing young adults' purchase decisions (Ahuja et al., 2003). This is likely due to their heightened social awareness and susceptibility to peer pressure (Flanagin & Metzger, 2003). Studies have shown that highlighting product popularity in marketing messages can lead to increased perceived value, purchase intentions, and actual purchasing behaviour (KWON, 2012; Donthu & Gilliland, 1996).

Knobloch-Westerwick et al. (2005) analyzed the effect of popularity indicators on readers' particular openness to online news. Their discoveries propose that people are more disposed to draw in with content that is seen to be famous or supported by others, showing the enticing force of social impact in forming customer inclinations.

Similarly, Geissler et al. (2006) investigated the influence of homepage complexity on consumer attention, attitudes, and purchase intent. They found that consumers were more positively disposed towards products or brands featured on visually appealing

and popular websites, highlighting the importance of social cues in influencing consumer perceptions.

An alternative marketing approach focuses on emphasizing a product's distinct qualities and benefits, signalling its superiority over competitors (Boulding & Kirmani, 1993). Highlighting features that address specific needs or preferences can resonate with young adults seeking to express individuality and make discerning choices (Teas & Agarwal, 2000).

Kirmani and Rao (2000) conducted a critical review of the literature on signaling unobservable product quality, highlighting the importance of signals such as warranties or brand reputation in shaping consumer perceptions. Their findings underscore the role of unique product features as signals of quality, suggesting that consumers are more likely to perceive products with distinctive attributes as superior.

Lee and Lin (2005) explored customer perceptions of e-service quality in online shopping, focusing on the role of unique features in influencing consumer evaluations. Their study revealed that consumers place greater value on products or services that offer unique features or customization options, suggesting that unique product attributes contribute to perceived value and satisfaction.

Research indicates that focusing on unique features can lead to positive consumer evaluations, increased perceived value, and higher purchase intentions (Grewal et al., 1998; Sweeney et al., 1999). Studies have shown that consumers are willing to pay a premium for products with demonstrably superior features (Dodd et al., 1991).

Young adults navigate a complex landscape of social influence and individual preferences when making purchase decisions. While the bandwagon effect can be a powerful motivator, their desire for self-expression and individuality can also lead them to value unique product features.

Several factors may influence the relative effectiveness of these marketing approaches. Firstly, product category wherein the type of product being marketed can influence the weight given to social proof versus unique features. For example, the bandwagon effect might be more pronounced for trendy fashion items, while technical features might be more critical for electronics (Jung & Kellaris, 2004).

Secondly perceived risk, wherein when purchasing unfamiliar products, young adults may rely more heavily on social proof to mitigate perceived risk (Cases, 2002; Lee & Lin, 2005).

Thirdly information processing wherein young adults often engage in heuristic processing, relying on readily available cues like popularity to make quick decisions (Chaiken et al., 1989). However, they can also engage in systematic processing when evaluating product features that align with their specific needs and preferences (Geissler et al., 2006).

While both the bandwagon effect and unique product features have been shown to influence consumer behaviour, limited research directly compares their effectiveness, particularly among young adults. This research gap presents an opportunity to investigate whether leveraging social media popularity through the bandwagon effect leads to higher purchase intent and perceived quality compared to highlighting unique product features, specifically within the target audience of young adults.

The present study aims to address this gap to expose participants to marketing messages for a specific product category, utilizing either the bandwagon effect or unique product features. Purchase intent and perceived quality will be measured immediately after exposure to assess the relative effectiveness of each message type. By looking at these variables, this exploration tries to contribute significant bits of knowledge into the ideal promoting procedures for impacting youthful grown-ups' buy choices in the computerized age.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Product Selection**

A pretest was led to choose a category suitable for the members in our exploration, youthful grown-ups (18-25 years of age). This aligns with our target demographic for the marketing messages we will be testing ([Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989]).

We utilized focus groups to gather data and gain insights into the products young adults tend to purchase. Focus groups are a qualitative research technique that allows researchers to explore participants' attitudes, opinions, and experiences in a collaborative setting (Morgan, D. L., & Krueger, R. A., 1997). More than 35 students were involved in focus groups and discussion was around products that participants had recently purchased. We specifically inquired about products both males and females were likely to consider purchasing. Based on the focus group discussions, wireless headphones emerged as a suitable product category for the study.

This selection aligns with the criteria that wireless headphones are a popular product among young adults, who often use them for listening to music, attending online classes, and engaging in other activities ([Technavio, 2020]). Also, wireless headphones are a product category that is generally considered gender-neutral, making it suitable for our research design which compares marketing messages to a male and female audience. Focus group discussions indicated that many participants had recently purchased wireless headphones, suggesting a level of familiarity with the product category that would allow them to effectively evaluate the marketing messages.

### **3.2 Participants & Procedures**

This research employed convenient sampling to gather data from 171 respondents, primarily within the 18-25 years old age range. This age group aligns with the target demographic for the marketing messages being tested, as supported by previous research (Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989). This sampling was chosen because

studies have shown that college students often exhibit online shopping behavior and motivations similar to non-student populations, making them suitable participants for research on online consumer behavior (McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002; Lee & Lin, 2005; Geissler, George & Watson, 2006; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Participants were recruited from various universities and other backgrounds through a Google form. All participants were active social media users and familiar with wireless headphones, as confirmed through a screening question at the survey's beginning.

This convenient sampling approach aimed to capture diverse perspectives and experiences within the target young adult demographic, enhancing the potential generalizability of the findings.

### **3.3 Survey Design & Administration**

To gather data for the research on the effectiveness of different marketing messages on young adults' purchase decisions, two survey forms were designed and administered. The survey was conducted using two versions of a professionally designed marketing creative selling wireless headphones, each featuring a distinct persuasive claim: product popularity and product features. This approach aligns with a similar survey design employed by Kwon, H. J.-N. (2012) in their research on the effectiveness of online persuasion claims (Kwon, 2012, p. 99). Each version of the survey form was distributed among different sets of students.

Following exposure to the marketing materials, participants responded to questions assessing perceived product quality, purchase intentions, and information about demographics. Participants were given independence to finish the survey at their own speed. This sampling and experimental design allowed for the assessment of the impact of different marketing messages on consumer perceptions and intentions, pertinent to the research objectives.

### 3.3.1 Independent Variables

Online persuasion claims were designed for two conditions; product popularity highlighting bandwagon effect and unique product features. For the former claim the image of wireless headphones being used by everyone in the crowd was provided along with the hashtag “Everyone Wants Them”. For the later claim, the image of headphone and description of the wireless headphones were given, with the hashtag: “Take Your Music Anywhere” (See Appendix). A follow up question was asked to cross check whether the indented message was perceived the respondent.

### 3.3.2 Dependent Variables

Purchase intention scale was used to measure a consumer's overall likelihood of buying a particular product that is being offered at a certain price (Chandran & Morwitz, 2005). The scale consists of four, seven-point likert-type statements that ask consumers how likely they are to purchase the product (Chandran & Morwitz, 2005). The scale's reliability (alpha) was reported at 0.89 by Chandran and Morwitz (2005). Responses of the four items were used to calculate the index score of purchase intention by taking an average of the them.

Product Quality Scale was used which aims to assess consumers' perceptions of a product's overall quality [Grewal et al., 1998; Sweeney et al., 1999]. Perceived quality is a key factor influencing consumer purchase decisions [Grewal et al., 1998]. The scale is composed of several Likert-type items used to assess the perceived quality with an emphasis on various attributes related to performance like durable, reliable & dependable. The reliability of 0.91 was reported by Grewal, Monroe, and Krishnan (1998) for the version of scale used in their studies. The responses were used to arrive at the index score for perceived quality by taking an average of the them.

## **3.4 Hypothesis Formulation**

Based on the survey forms and the discussion presented in the research paper, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Participants exposed to marketing messages emphasizing social media popularity will exhibit different purchase intent compared to those exposed to messages highlighting unique product features.

Hypothesis 2: Participants exposed to marketing messages highlighting unique product features will perceive different product quality compared to those exposed to messages emphasizing social media popularity.

## **3.5 Data collection**

The survey forms were distributed electronically to participants majorly college students via social media platforms. Additionally, researchers physically approached customers in electronics shops to ensure a diverse sample. Participants were requested to complete the survey forms voluntarily and provide honest responses.



## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected through the two survey forms were analysed using SPSS software.

### 4.1 Normality Testing

Prior to conducting further analysis, the normality of the data was assessed for the average individual scores of purchase intention and perceived quality in each survey form having different persuasive claim. Normality testing is crucial to ensure that the chosen statistical tests are appropriate for the data.

**Table 4.1.1 Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
DataSet1	62	43.7%	80	56.3%	142	100.0%
DataSet2	62	43.7%	80	56.3%	142	100.0%
DataSet3	62	43.7%	80	56.3%	142	100.0%
DataSet4	62	43.7%	80	56.3%	142	100.0%

**Source: SPSS**

**DataSet1** = Average individual purchase intention score for survey form claiming product popularity

**DataSet2** = Average individual perceived quality score for survey form claiming product popularity

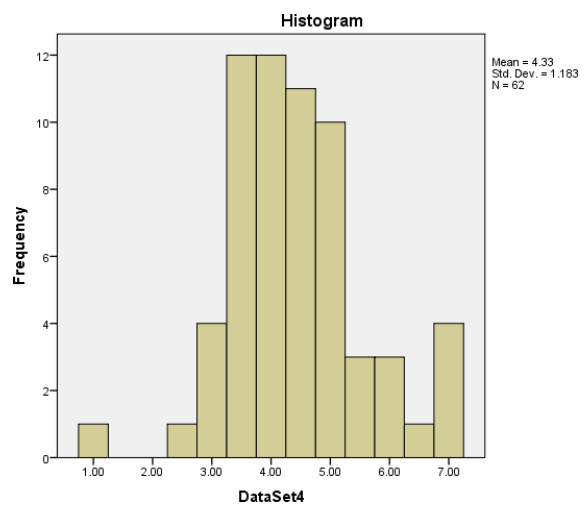
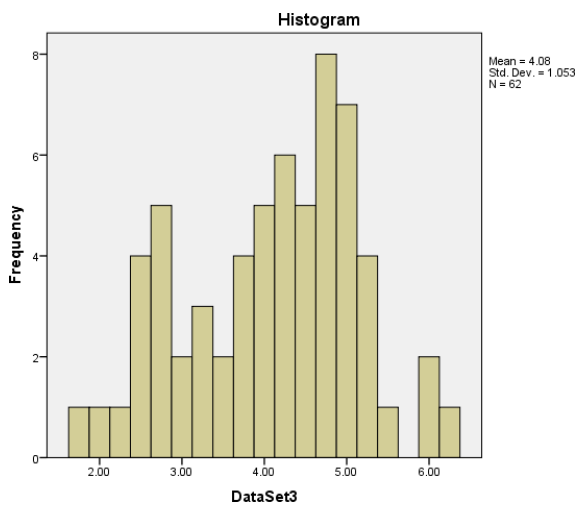
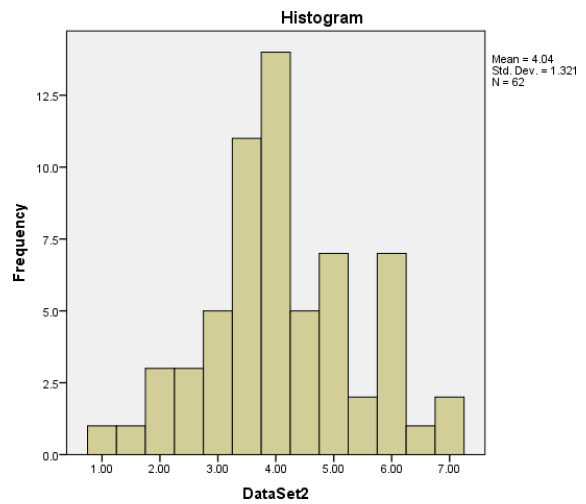
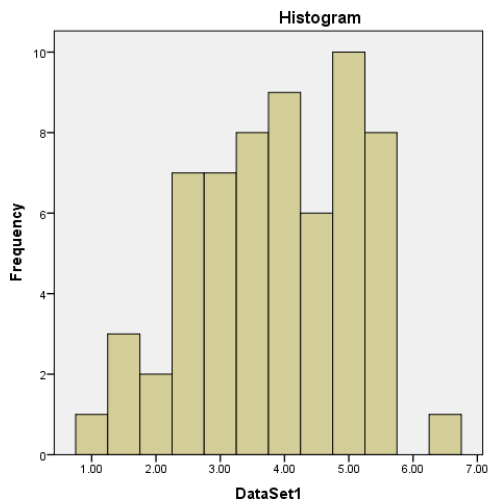
**DataSet3** = Average individual purchase intention score for survey form claiming unique product features

**DataSet4** = Average individual perceived quality score for survey form claiming unique product features

**Table 4.1.3 Tests of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
DataSet1	.099	62	.200*	.970	62	.128
DataSet2	.125	62	.017	.977	62	.303
DataSet3	.111	62	.056	.967	62	.090
DataSet4	.107	62	.014	.959	62	.036

**Source: SPSS**



**Source: SPSS**

Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests indicate that the distribution of purchase intention scores is normal for both DataSet1 ( $p > 0.05$ ) and DataSet3 ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, normality cannot be conclusively confirmed for DataSet2 and DataSet4 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Purchase intention scores appear to be normally distributed for two datasets (DataSet1 and DataSet3), while normality cannot be definitively confirmed for the other two datasets (DataSet2 and DataSet4) consisting of perceived quality scores

Since normality is confirmed for two datasets (DataSet1 and DataSet3), an independent samples t-test can be used to compare the mean purchase intention scores between the two survey forms claiming product popularity and unique product features

Due to the non-normal distribution of perceived quality scores, a non-parametric test, such as the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test, should be employed to compare the means between the two survey forms.

## 4.2 Independent Samples T-Test

**Table 4.2.1 Group Statistics**

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Purchase Intention Scores	Dataset1	62	3.6310	1.13705	.12406
	Dataset3	80	4.1724	1.05675	.11330

**Source: SPSS**

**Table 4.2.2 Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means
		F	Sig.	t
Purchase Intention Scores	Equal variances assumed	.705	.402	-3.227
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.223

**Source: SPSS**

**Table 4.2.2 Independent Samples Test**

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Purchase Intention Scores	Equal variances assumed	169	.002	-.54146
	Equal variances not assumed	167.041	.002	-.54146

**Source: SPSS**

**Table 4.2.2 Independent Samples Test**

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
			Lower
Purchase Intention Scores	Equal variances assumed	.16779	-.87270
	Equal variances not assumed	.16801	-.87316

**Source: SPSS**

**Table 4.2.2 Independent Samples Test**

		t-test for Equality of Means
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
		Upper
Purchase Intention Scores	Equal variances assumed	-.21022
	Equal variances not assumed	-.20976

**Source: SPSS**

The Levene's test for Equality of Variances statistic ( $F = 0.705$ ) and its corresponding significance value ( $p = 0.402$ ) indicate that the assumption of equal variances between the two groups (product popularity vs. unique product features) is not violated. Therefore, it's appropriate to use the independent samples t-test with equal variances assumed.

The t-statistic ( $t = -3.227$ ) for Equality of Means and its corresponding significance value ( $p = 0.002$ ) are less than 0.05, indicating that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean purchase intention scores for the two groups. This statistically significant difference allows us to reject the null hypothesis, which stated that there would be no difference in purchase intention between the two groups exposed to different marketing messages.

The mean difference in purchase intention scores is -0.541, suggesting that the group exposed to the survey form highlighting unique product features (DataSet3) had a higher average purchase intention score compared to the group exposed to the form emphasizing product popularity (DataSet1).

The standard error of the difference (0.168) provides an estimate of the sampling error associated with the mean difference. The 95% confidence interval of the difference (-0.873, -0.210) indicates that we can be 95% confident that the true population mean difference in purchase intention scores falls within this range.

The results of the independent samples t-test demonstrate a statistically significant difference in mean purchase intention scores between the two groups exposed to different marketing messages. The group exposed to the survey form highlighting unique product features had a higher average purchase intention score, suggesting that this marketing message might be more effective in driving purchase intent compared to the message emphasizing product popularity in case of headphones.

## 4.3 Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test

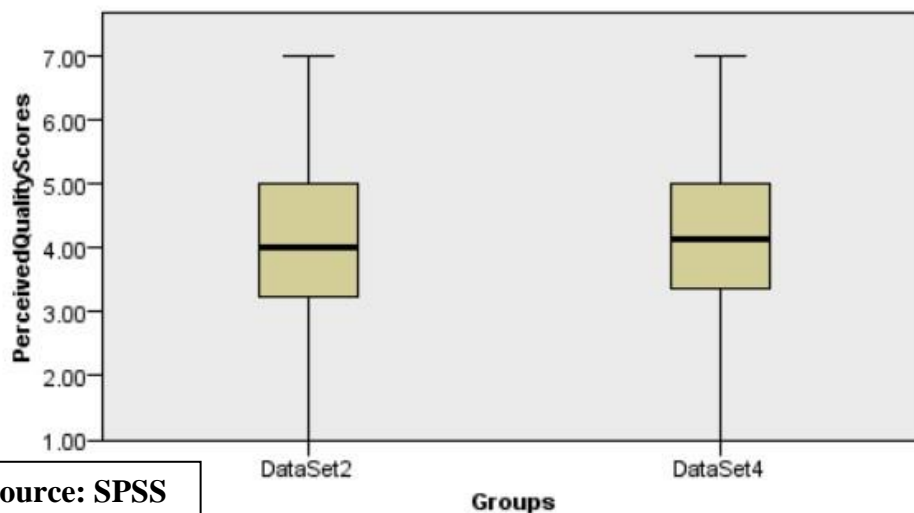
### Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of PerceivedQualityScores is the same across categories of Groups.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.285	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Source: SPSS

### Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test



Source: SPSS

Total N	142
Test Statistic	1.143
Degrees of Freedom	1
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.285

1. The test statistic is adjusted for ties.
2. Multiple comparisons are not performed because the overall test does not show significant differences across samples.

Source: SPSS

The Kruskal-Wallis test statistic (H) was 1.143 with a significance value (p) of 0.285. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is not a statistically significant difference in the medians of perceived quality scores between the two groups exposed to different marketing messages (product popularity vs. unique product features).

In simpler terms, based on the Kruskal-Wallis test, there is no statistically significant evidence to conclude that the perceived quality of the product differs based on whether the participants saw a survey form emphasizing product popularity or highlighting unique product features.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This exploration examined the effect of various marketing messages on customer purchase intention and perceived quality of a service or a product. Two survey forms were circulated, one emphasizing product popularity and the other highlighting unique product features.

The analysis uncovered that there was a difference in mean purchase intention scores between the two groups which is statistically significant. The group exposed to the survey form highlighting unique product features had a higher average purchase intention score, suggesting that this marketing message might be more effective in driving purchase intent compared to the message emphasizing product popularity. The Kruskal-Wallis test did not reveal a difference which is statistically significant in the medians of perceived quality scores between the groups exposed to different marketing messages. This suggests that perceived quality was not significantly influenced by the type of marketing message presented in the survey forms.

This finding suggests that focusing on highlighting the unique features of the product might be a more effective strategy for increasing purchase intent, while both approaches might be equally successful in conveying the overall quality of the product to consumers.

It's important to note that further research with larger sample sizes and potentially different product categories could provide more definitive insights into the generalizability of these findings.



## 6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research offers valuable implications for marketing professionals. When targeting young adults, emphasizing unique product features might be a more effective strategy for driving purchase intent compared to solely focusing on product popularity.

Both highlighting unique features and emphasizing product popularity appear to have similar effects on young adults' perceived quality of the product. This suggests that focusing on quality might be a consistent strategy regardless of the specific persuasive claim employed.

Further examination with bigger, more diverse samples and longitudinal designs could give more generalizable and robust insights into the long-term effect of various advertising messages on youthful grown-ups' buy conduct. By addressing these limitations, future studies can further refine marketing strategies to optimize the influence on young consumers.

## 7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This exploration, while offering important experiences into the effect of marketing messages on youthful grown-ups' buy choices, recognizes specific constraints. The study relied on a sample of 171 participants, primarily within the 18-25 age range. While quota sampling aimed to capture diverse perspectives, the limited sample size restricts the generalizability of findings to the broader young adult population. Future examination with bigger and all the more geologically different examples could improve the generalizability of the outcomes.

The study relied on self-reported data on purchase intentions and perceived quality. While convenient, this approach is susceptible to potential biases, such as social desirability or memory recall inaccuracies. Utilizing objective proportions of procurement conduct, for example, actual records, could reinforce future examination.

The examination utilized a cross-sectional design, giving a preview of members' discernments at a solitary moment. Longitudinal investigations tracking purchase behavior over the long run could offer a more nuanced comprehension of the drawn out effect of various marketing messages.

## 8. DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that highlighting unique product features might be a more effective strategy for driving purchase intention among young adults compared to emphasizing product popularity. This aligns with previous research suggesting that consumers often prioritize product features that differentiate them from competitors (Kwon, 2012). However, the lack of a significant difference in perceived quality across both marketing messages indicates that both approaches might be equally effective in conveying the overall quality of the product to young consumers.

It's essential to consider the limits referenced above when deciphering these discoveries. The moderately little sample size and dependence on self-detailed information require alert in summing up the outcomes to the more extensive youthful grown-up populace. Also, the cross-sectional design restricts the capacity to evaluate the drawn out impact of the advertising messages on buy conduct.

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# APPENDIX

## 1) Product Popularity Claim



(Source – Canva Artificial Intelligence)

## 2) Unique Product Features Claim



(Source – Canva Artificial Intelligence)



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