

# Brand positioning and marketing strategies of D'KODE fragrance in the Indian perfume market.

## A study of consumer perception, competitive landscape and strategic recommendations.

Mohammad Yasir Emad Mohammad Aslam<sup>1</sup>, Prof. Kuldeep D. Tayade<sup>2</sup> MBA Final Year<sup>1</sup>, Assistant Professor<sup>2</sup>  
MBA Department.<sup>1, 2</sup>

Pankaj Laddhad Institute of Technology & Management Studies, Buldhana.<sup>1, 2</sup>  
Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati 1, 2

**Abstract:** The Indian perfume industry has undergone remarkable transformation over the past two decades, fuelled by rising disposable incomes, rapid e-commerce expansion, changing lifestyle aspirations, and a growing youth population increasingly conscious of personal grooming and self-expression. This research paper examines the brand positioning and marketing strategies of D'KODE FRAGRANCE, an emerging Indian perfume brand competing in the affordable luxury segment of the Indian fragrance market. Using a descriptive quantitative research design, primary data was collected from 65 respondents across urban and semi-urban areas in India through a structured 25-question questionnaire. The study evaluates brand awareness, consumer perception of brand positioning, marketing strategy effectiveness across the 4P framework, overall customer satisfaction, repeat purchase behavior, and future purchase intent. Key findings reveal that D'KODE FRAGRANCE has successfully differentiated itself through premium packaging design (Mean Score = 4.12) and a premium yet affordable positioning claim (Mean Score = 4.05) that resonates strongly with its target demographic. Overall consumer satisfaction stands at 67%, repeat purchase rate at 63%, and future purchase intent at 65%. Social media is the primary brand awareness channel (42%), validating the brand's digital-first strategy, and pricing is confirmed the strongest marketing asset with 69% affirming good value. Eight strategic recommendations are proposed covering brand identity investment, offline distribution expansion, micro-influencer programs, fragrance sampling kits, loyalty programs, portfolio diversification, elevated brand communication, and systematic online reputation management.

**Keywords:** Brand positioning, D'KODE FRAGRANCE, Indian perfume market, affordable luxury, marketing strategy, consumer perception, digital marketing, 4P framework, brand equity, consumer behavior, emerging Indian brands.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian fragrance industry stands at the intersection of rich cultural heritage and contemporary consumer aspiration. Rooted in a centuries-old tradition of attar-making most notably centered in Kannauj, Uttar Pradesh, the market has evolved dramatically over the past two decades. Economic liberalization in the 1990s introduced modern spray-based fragrances, shifting consumer preferences toward EDP and EDT formats. The rapid expansion of e-commerce platforms further democratized access to branded fragrances across tier-1, tier-2, and tier-3 cities (Euromonitor International, 2019). Today fragrances are integral to daily personal grooming routines, particularly among urban youth and working professionals who view fragrance as an expression of personality, confidence, and social identity.

The Indian perfume market is segmented across mass-market deodorants, mid-range domestic brands, and premium international luxury fragrances, creating a strategically attractive affordable luxury opportunity for homegrown brands. D'KODE FRAGRANCE has positioned itself within this space, offering premium-quality EDP and EDT fragrances priced between Rs.499 and Rs.1,499 for middle-income consumers, particularly youth aged 21 to 30 and salaried professionals who seek quality fragrance experiences without the price tags of luxury brands like Davidoff or Skinn by Titan. The brand's marketing approach is predominantly digital. While extensive literature exists on brand positioning theory and the Indian FMCG market, there is a notable gap in focused empirical research on emerging homegrown Indian perfume brands in the affordable luxury segment. This paper addresses that gap directly through a dedicated primary consumer study on D'KODE FRAGRANCE.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was undertaken with the following five clearly defined research objectives, each targeting a specific dimension of D'KODE FRAGRANCE's brand performance, consumer perception, and strategic positioning within the Indian perfume market:

- **Objective 1:** To analyze the current brand positioning of D'KODE FRAGRANCE in the Indian perfume market and understand how it is perceived relative to key competitors across product quality, price accessibility, packaging design, and brand communication dimensions.
- **Objective 2:** To evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies adopted by D'KODE FRAGRANCE across the 4P framework Product, Price, Place, and Promotion and assess their collective impact on consumer awareness, purchase decisions, and overall brand equity building.
- **Objective 3:** To assess consumer perception, overall satisfaction levels, repeat purchase behavior, recommendation

likelihood, and future purchase intention toward D’KODE FRAGRANCE among the brand’s primary target demographic of middle-income youth and working professionals.

- **Objective 4:** To identify and rank the key factors including fragrance quality, price competitiveness, brand image, packaging aesthetics, and peer recommendations that most significantly influence perfume purchase decisions among Indian consumers.
- **Objective 5:** To conduct a comprehensive SWOT analysis of D’KODE FRAGRANCE and recommend specific, evidence-based strategic measures for strengthening the brand’s market position and expanding its consumer base across urban and semi-urban India.

### III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The theoretical and empirical foundation of this research draws on established scholarship in brand positioning, consumer behavior, and the Indian fragrance industry. The following key academic works and industry reports directly informed the conceptual framework, questionnaire design, and analytical approach of this paper.

#### 3.1 Kotler & Keller (2016) — Marketing Management

Kotler and Keller’s foundational text establishes that perfumes are fundamentally emotional and symbolic products. Consumers do not merely purchase a scent but an identity, a lifestyle, and a mood statement. The authors emphasize that effective brand positioning in experiential product categories requires consistent brand communication across all touchpoints, sensory differentiation from competitors, and deep emotional resonance with the target consumer. Their comprehensive 4P marketing mix framework covering Product, Price, Place, and Promotion provides the primary analytical lens for evaluating D’KODE FRAGRANCE’s overall marketing strategy effectiveness in this research.

#### 3.2 Euromonitor International (2019) Fragrances in India

Euromonitor’s industry report documented the accelerating growth trajectory of the Indian perfume market, attributing expansion to urbanization, rising middle-class disposable incomes, and the increasing influence of western lifestyle aesthetics on Indian consumer preferences. The report specifically highlighted the growing appeal of local Indian brands offering premium-quality fragrances at accessible price points precisely the market positioning strategy adopted by D’KODE FRAGRANCE and identified e-commerce as the primary growth driver for fragrance brand discovery and purchase in non-metro Indian cities.

#### 3.3 Sharma & Verma (2018), KPMG India (2020), Chatterjee (2017) & McKinsey (2021)

Sharma and Verma identified four primary purchase influencers in the Indian fragrance category: fragrance longevity, price competitiveness, brand image, and packaging aesthetics findings that directly informed this research’s questionnaire design. KPMG India underscored the transformative role of e-commerce in democratizing fragrance access across Indian cities. Chatterjee revealed strong Indian consumer preferences for Oriental/Oud, Musk, and Sandalwood notes due to cultural and climatic factors, with direct product development implications for D’KODE. McKinsey identified growing demand for niche perfumes and natural ingredients signalling key differentiation opportunities for emerging Indian brands.

#### 3.4 Aaker (2014), Ries & Trout (2001) and Research Gap

Aaker’s brand equity model built on brand awareness, associations, perceived quality and loyalty provides the evaluative framework for assessing D’KODE’s brand equity standing. Ries and Trout’s positioning theory reinforces the importance of D’KODE owning a single, clear concept in the consumer’s mind specifically the premium yet affordable claim as the cornerstone of competitive differentiation. While substantial literature covers

brand positioning theory, there is a significant deficit in focused empirical research on emerging homegrown Indian perfume brands in the affordable luxury segment. This paper fills that gap through primary consumer research exclusively on D’KODE FRAGRANCE.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a Descriptive Research Design, most appropriate for studies aimed at describing and analyzing existing phenomena including consumer awareness levels, brand positioning perception, marketing strategy effectiveness, and purchase behavior without manipulating independent variables. A Quantitative Research Approach was employed, using a structured 25-question questionnaire across five thematic sections. Limitations include sample size of 65 respondents may not represent the full Indian market; geographic coverage restricted to selected urban and semi-urban areas; and brand perception is inherently subjective.

#### 4.2 Sampling Design Summary

| Parameter         | Details  |
|-------------------|--|
| Sampling Method   | Convenience Sampling — accessible perfume users in urban and semi-urban areas                  |
| Sample Size       | 65 Respondents (consumers who use fragrances and are aware of brands)                          |
| Geographical Area | Selected urban and semi-urban areas across India   |
| Study Period      | Academic Year 2025-26  |
| Questionnaire     | A: Demographics   B: Usage & Awareness   C: Brand Positioning   D: Marketing   E: Satisfaction |
| Analytical Tools  | Percentage Analysis, Mean Score Analysis (Likert Scale 1-5), SWOT Analysis                     |

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Primary Data   | Direct consumer survey — 65 respondents via structured 25-question questionnaire             |
| Secondary Data | Euromonitor (2019), KPMG India (2020), McKinsey (2021), Kotler & Keller (2016), Aaker (2014) |

Table 1: Research Methodology Summary

## V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The respondent profile strongly mirrors D’KODE FRAGRANCE’s intended target market, lending high validity to the study’s conclusions. The dominant age cohort is 21-30 years at 54% (35 respondents), confirming youth as the primary target demographic. A combined 85% of respondents are below 40 years. Salaried employees (42%) and students (34%) are the largest occupational segments. A significant 65% earn below Rs.40,000 per month, placing them squarely in the middle-income bracket that D’KODE targets with its affordable luxury positioning. Male respondents constitute 57% of the sample while 38% are female.

| Demographic Indicator      | Value     | Demographic Indicator     | Value    |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------|
| Age 21-30 years (dominant) | 35 (54%)  | Gender: Male              | 37 (57%) |
| Age 31-40 years            | 15 (23%)  | Gender: Female            | 25 (38%) |
| Age Below 20 / 41-50 / 50+ | 5 / 7 / 3 | Gender: Other             | 3 (5%)   |
| Occupation: Salaried       | 27 (42%)  | Occupation: Student       | 22 (34%) |
| Occupation: Business       | 9 (14%)   | Occupation: Self-employed | 5 (8%)   |
| Income below Rs.20,000     | 19 (29%)  | Income Rs.20,001–40,000   | 23 (35%) |
| Income Rs.40,001–60,000    | 15 (23%)  | Income above Rs.60,000    | 8 (12%)  |
| Regular perfume users      | 55 (85%)  | Daily perfume users       | 31 (48%) |

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=65)

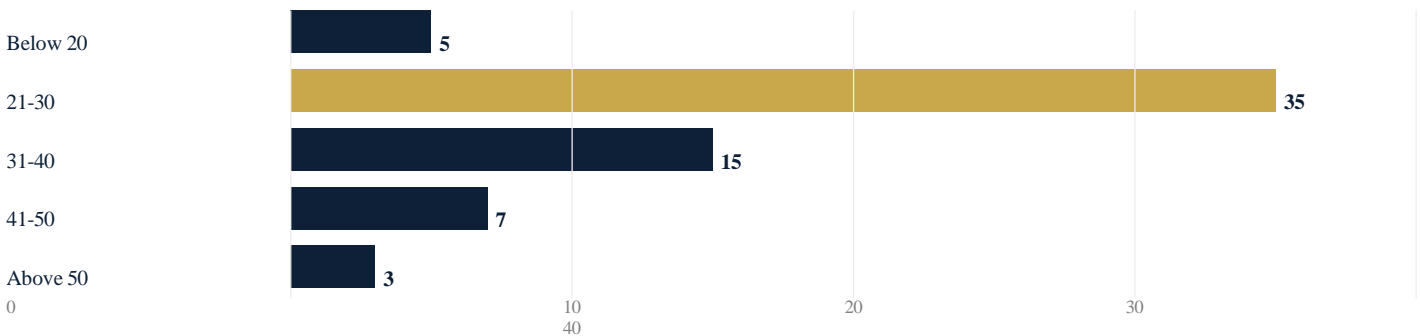


Figure 1: Age Group Distribution (n=65)

### 5.2 Perfume Usage and Brand Awareness Analysis

The brand awareness analysis confirms strong category penetration and validates D’KODE’s digital-first strategy. With 72% overall brand awareness (47 out of 65 respondents), D’KODE has achieved strong recall despite constrained advertising budgets. Social media (42%) is the dominant awareness channel, followed by word-of-mouth (23%), signalling strong organic advocacy from existing satisfied consumers. Oriental/Oud (29%) and Woody (23%) are the most preferred fragrance categories, consistent with Indian cultural preferences (Chatterjee, 2017). The 28% still unaware represent a significant growth opportunity.

| Indicator                         | Finding  | Strategic Implication   |
|-----------------------------------|----------|---|
| Regular perfume users             | 55 (85%) | Confirms strong category penetration and large addressable market |
| Daily perfume users               | 31 (48%) | High repeat purchase potential validating daily-use strategy      |
| Preferred fragrance: Oriental/Oud | 19 (29%) | Top preference — direct product development priority              |
| Preferred fragrance: Woody        | 15 (23%) | Second preference — key focus area for portfolio expansion        |
| Preferred fragrance: Fresh/Floral | 13 / 11  | Growing urban preferences for seasonal product launches           |
| D’KODE brand awareness (total)    | 47 (72%) | Strong recall for an emerging brand with limited ad budget        |
| Awareness: Social Media (#1)      | 27 (42%) | Top channel — fully validates digital-first marketing strategy    |
| Awareness: Friends/Family (#2)    | 15 (23%) | Strong organic word-of-mouth indicates positive brand experience  |

|                                |        |   |
|--------------------------------|--------|---|
| Awareness: Online Ads / Retail | 11 / 8 | Supporting channels confirming multi-touchpoint brand reach |
|--------------------------------|--------|---|

Table 3: Perfume Usage and Brand Awareness Analysis (n=65)

### 5.3 Brand Positioning — Mean Score Analysis

All five brand positioning dimensions exceed the critical 3.5 threshold, indicating broadly positive brand perception. Packaging (M=4.12) and affordable premium positioning (M=4.05) are D’KODE’s strongest equity assets, both above 4.0. Fragrance longevity (M=3.91) meets expectations. Fragrance quality (M=3.78) is positive but suggests room for product enhancement. Brand image (M=3.62) is the clearest priority for sustained storytelling investment to push above 4.0 (Aaker, 2014).

| Brand Positioning Dimension                | Mean (/5) | Consumer Perception Interpretation                              |
|--|-----------|---|
| Packaging attractiveness and visual appeal | 4.12      | Positive — D’KODE’s strongest and most distinctive brand asset  |
| 'Premium yet affordable' positioning claim | 4.05      | Positive — core brand identity resonates with target segment    |
| Fragrance longevity and staying power      | 3.91      | Moderately Positive — meets and slightly exceeds expectations   |
| Fragrance quality vs. comparable brands    | 3.78      | Moderately Positive — room for product improvement exists       |
| Overall brand image and recognition        | 3.62      | Moderately Positive — brand equity developing, needs investment |

Table 4: Mean Score Analysis — Brand Positioning (Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)

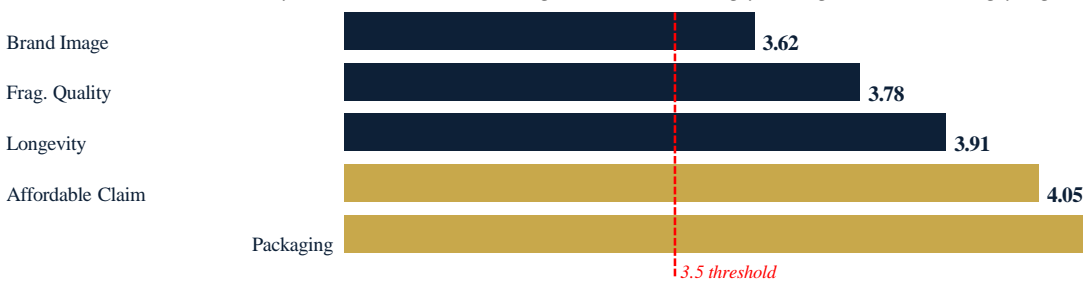


Figure 4: Brand Positioning Mean Scores (out of 5)

### 5.4 Marketing Strategy Effectiveness

Pricing is D’KODE’s strongest marketing lever (69% approval — 45 respondents). Promotional offers show the broadest consumer influence at 88% (57 respondents), making promotions the highest-impact purchase conversion tool. Social media marketing (63%) and influencer impact (60%) are effective and well-aligned with the target demographic’s digital habits. Only 8% find D’KODE hard to locate online, confirming good digital accessibility, though limited offline presence represents a gap requiring strategic attention.

| Marketing Strategy Parameter                       | Response (n/%) | Key Strategic Insight  |
|--|----------------|--|
| Pricing reasonableness (Agree + Strongly Agree)    | 45 (69%)       | Strongest marketing asset — excellent value-for-money perception |
| Promotional offer influence (Yes + Sometime)       | 57 (88%)       | Highest impact — promotions are the #1 conversion lever          |
| Social media marketing effectiveness               | 41 (63%)       | Digital strategy confirmed effective by target consumers         |
| Influence of online reviews and influencer content | 39 (60%)       | High impact — influencer marketing delivers strong ROI           |
| Primary access: Online e-commerce                  | 35 (54%)       | Confirms e-commerce dominance; 29% use both channels             |
| Difficulty finding D’KODE products                 | 5 (8%)         | Low — good digital accessibility, offline gap still exists       |

Table 5: Marketing Strategy Effectiveness — Consumer Perception Summary (n=65)

### 5.5 Customer Satisfaction and Purchase Behavior

The satisfaction and purchase behavior metrics confirm D’KODE is successfully delivering on its core brand promise. A 67% satisfaction rate (44 out of 65), 63% repeat purchase rate (41 respondents), and 89% positive recommendation sentiment together reflect strong and healthy brand performance. Fragrance quality (38%) as the top purchase driver confirms product excellence must remain D’KODE’s fundamental priority. The 22% neutral satisfaction segment represents a convertible group accessible through improved communication and sampling programs.

| Key Performance Indicator                            | Score (n/%) | Strategic Assessment  |
|--|-------------|---|
| Overall satisfaction — Satisfied + Highly Satisfied  | 44 (67%)    | Strong — well above benchmark for emerging Indian brands    |
| Neutral satisfaction response                        | 14 (22%)    | Significant convertible segment — engagement opportunity    |
| Dissatisfaction — Dissatisfied + Highly Dissatisfied | 7 (11%)     | Low — manageable through product and service improvement    |
| Repeat purchase rate (purchased more than once)      | 41 (63%)    | Good — healthy brand loyalty beyond initial trials          |
| Willingness to recommend (Yes + Maybe combined)      | 58 (89%)    | Excellent — very strong word-of-mouth advocacy potential    |
| Future purchase intent (Definitely + Probably Yes)   | 42 (65%)    | Strong — confirms sustained brand growth trajectory         |
| Value for money perception (Agree + Strongly Agree)  | 43 (66%)    | Validates affordable luxury pricing strategy directly       |
| Top purchase driver: Fragrance quality               | 25 (38%)    | Top driver — product excellence must be core brand priority |
| Second purchase driver: Price competitiveness        | 13 (20%)    | Reinforces value-for-money as key purchase decision factor  |
| Third purchase driver: Brand image                   | 11 (17%)    | Growing importance as brand continues to mature             |
| Fourth purchase driver: Packaging aesthetics         | 9 (14%)     | Confirms packaging investment delivers measurable impact    |

Table 6: Customer Satisfaction, Loyalty and Purchase Behavior KPIs (n=65)



Figure 8: Key Performance Indicators — % Positive Response (n=65)

## VI. STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Competitive Landscape

D’KODE FRAGRANCE occupies a strategically valuable affordable luxury position between mass-market deodorant brands and premium luxury labels, providing a defensible niche as India’s middle-income consumer segment grows and aspires toward better quality personal care products at accessible price points (KPMG India, 2020).

| Brand            | Segment           | Price (Rs.) | Distribution      | Key USP  |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|--|
| D’KODE FRAGRANCE | Affordable Luxury | 499–1,499   | Primarily Online  | Premium quality + affordability + modern packaging |
| Engage (ITC)     | Mass Market       | 150–500     | Pan-India Offline | Widest distribution; mass brand recognition        |
| Fogg             | Mass Market       | 200–600     | Pan-India         | Long-lasting no-gas formula; strong brand recall   |
| Skinn (Titan)    | Premium Domestic  | 1,500–3,500 | Retail + Online   | Established premium Indian brand with heritage     |
| Davidoff         | Luxury Import     | 2,500–6,000 | Select Offline    | Global brand prestige and international legacy     |

Table 7: Competitive Positioning Map — D’KODE FRAGRANCE vs. Key Market Players

### 6.2 SWOT Analysis

| Category               | Key Points  |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>S STRENGTHS</b>     | Premium yet affordable positioning resonates strongly (M=4.05); Attractive modern packaging is highest-scoring brand asset (M=4.12); S  |
| <b>W WEAKNESSES</b>    | Limited offline distribution restricts physical scent trial and impulse purchase; Brand image still developing with lowest posi score   |
| <b>O PPORTUNITIE S</b> | India’s perfume market growing rapidly driven by rising youth spending and lifestyle aspirations; Significant tier-2 and tier-3 expansi |
| <b>T THREATS</b>       | Intense competition from established global and domestic fragrance brands; Aggressive pricing pressure from mass-market competitors li  |

Table 8: SWOT Analysis — D’KODE FRAGRANCE

## VII. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the primary data analysis, brand positioning evaluation, competitive landscape assessment, and SWOT analysis, the following eight evidence-based strategic recommendations are proposed to strengthen D’KODE FRAGRANCE’s brand equity, expand its consumer base, and enhance its competitive standing:

### 7.1 Strengthen Brand Identity Through Consistent Storytelling

With 28% of the target market still unaware and a brand image score of 3.62, D’KODE must invest in a compelling brand narrative that bridges India’s rich fragrance heritage with contemporary lifestyle aspirations. Campaigns consistently deployed across Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and short-video platforms should communicate a singular brand story evoking confidence, elegance, and modern Indian identity. Sustained storytelling investment significantly elevates brand equity scores across all four Aaker dimensions including awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty.

### 7.2 Expand Offline Distribution Selectively

While 54% of D’KODE’s consumers access the brand primarily online, the absence of meaningful offline presence represents a missed conversion opportunity. A selective offline expansion targeting premium lifestyle retail outlets, perfumery chains, and high-footfall malls in tier-1 and tier-2 cities would create critical trial opportunities, reinforce the brand’s premium perception, and increase trust among first-time buyers who prefer experiencing fragrance before making a purchase commitment.

### 7.3 Build a Structured Micro-Influencer Marketing Program

Given that 60% of respondents are influenced by online reviews and influencer content, D’KODE should formalize its influencer strategy by building a curated network of micro-influencers with 10,000 to 100,000 followers in lifestyle, men’s grooming, and fashion niches. Long-term ambassador relationships generate consistent, credible brand content that builds sustained consumer trust and drives measurable sales conversions at manageable budgets (McKinsey, 2021).

### 7.4 Introduce Fragrance Sampling Kits

A structural barrier to online fragrance purchase is the consumer’s inability to experience the scent before buying. D’KODE should introduce affordable sample kits comprising 5ml miniature trial bottles of top-selling variants at nominal prices of Rs.99 to Rs.199. These kits dramatically reduce purchase risk, increase trials across new demographics, and create a cost-effective conversion pathway from first-time sample buyers to loyal full- bottle repeat customers.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

This research paper has presented a rigorous, comprehensive, and empirically grounded analysis of the brand positioning and marketing strategies of D’KODE FRAGRANCE in the Indian perfume market. The study was conducted using a descriptive

quantitative research design with primary data from 65 consumers across urban and semi-urban India and was theoretically anchored in frameworks from Kotler and Keller (2016), Aaker (2014), and Ries and Trout (2001), complemented by authoritative industry research from Euromonitor International, KPMG India, and McKinsey and Company.

The findings establish that D'KODE FRAGRANCE has successfully differentiated itself through a premium yet affordable brand positioning strategy. The brand's two strongest equity assets packaging design at M=4.12 and affordable premium positioning at M=4.05 are precisely aligned with the needs of its core target audience: middle-income youth and working professionals aged 21 to 30. With 67% overall consumer satisfaction, a 63% repeat purchase rate, 89% positive recommendation sentiment, and 65% forward-looking purchase intent, D'KODE demonstrates consistently healthy brand performance across the entire consumer lifecycle. The brand image score of 3.62 represents the clearest strategic priority requiring sustained investment in brand storytelling and premium communication quality.

D'KODE FRAGRANCE is on a clear, promising, and accelerating growth trajectory. India's fragrance market's powerful structural tailwinds including rising youth disposable incomes, rapidly expanding e-commerce penetration in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, the growing affordable luxury trend, and increasing youth interest in personal grooming collectively create a highly favorable strategic environment. With focused execution of the eight evidence-based strategic recommendations outlined in this paper, D'KODE FRAGRANCE has the strategic foundation and consumer goodwill to emerge as a leading name in India's growing affordable luxury fragrance segment.

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