BRANDED SPICES VS LOCAL & HOME MADE SPICES IN INDIA - WHICH IS PREFERRED MORE AND WHY?

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ABSTRACT

Various companies are manufacturing spices for cooking vegetarian and non-vegetarian food. The advanced technology and availability of cheap labor in India give an edge to the producers to produce quality spices. These spices have become very important in the daily life of consumers whether they are using it for cooking purposes or as a home remedy. As the technologies are advancing and the taste and preferences of consumers are continuously changing, the spice companies are providing customized options to customers. Many companies are mushrooming up with a variety of spices according to the taste of customers like MDH, CATCH, KITCHEN KING, and many local brands. Since there are so many varieties available in the market, marketers try to find out what are the reasons for the purchase of a particular brand. This research paper tries to explore the different factors that play an important role in the spice purchase behavior of consumers.

Keywords: Spices, Variety, Consumer Behavior, Local Brands.

INTRODUCTION

Spice or Masala are used by Indians for cooking vegetarian and non-vegetarian food for enhancing taste. The advanced technology and availability of cheap labor in India give an edge on to the producers to produce quality spices. Indian Spices are also popular in various countries across the world. Report on Spices of Trade Promotion of Council (2019) comments, "*India is the world's largest producer, consumer, and exporter of spices. It produces about 75 of the 109 varieties of spices listed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and accounts for half of the global trading in spices.*" Major players in the Indian market are Catch, MDH, and Everest. The growing awareness and the busy urban life of consumers have been the driving force behind the rise of branded spice consumption. Locally processed spices are also in demand as traditional thinking believes more in its quality. As locally processed spices require more time and energy by consumers in processing and other things, branded spices have found ways in every kitchen of the Indian citizen. They buy the product rationally accordingly evaluating the products. Taste, purity, and color have been found to be associated with the purchase of the spices among Indian consumers. There are many packaged spices powder with different brand names in India among the most common are Everest, Catch, MDH Bagal (2015).

The Indian spice market is full of varieties of different tastes, quantities, and prices. There are varieties of spices available to meet different food requirements of Indian households. The spices industry seems to be quite an innovative industry as lots of varieties can be prepared by food scientists to offer different tastes to consumers.

The present study tries to explore factors that play important role in the spice purchase behavior of the consumer. The following section tries to identify some of the factors and attributes associated with the purchase of spices with the help of a literature review.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a study conducted by Kumthekar and Sane (2010), it was found that taste and quality were the main factors considered while buying spices. Buvaneswari et al. (2013) in their study entitled " *Fast-moving consumer goods marketing with special reference to Sakthi masala products*", found that brand name and quality have been the deciding factors in the purchase process of spices. Ramesh et al. (2013) in their study on "*Brand preference and factors influencing the purchasing of masala products in Tirupur*" found that the consumers prefer Sakthi masala products because of convenience and time-saving.

Krishnakumar & Kavitha (2014), investigated the influence of brand loyalty on buying behavior of consumers regarding the Masala product and found that attributes like their shelf life, exotic flavor, taste and varieties, pleasant aroma, excellent ingredients, a taste enhancer, hygienically and good packaged, delicious, fresh and safe to use, price worthiness, promotion and offers, and availability of various quantity are most important aspects of the brand.

Kamarasan (2014) carried a study on 'Consumer Behaviour Towards Packaged Spices' in Madurai and concluded that the important factors that have influenced the consumer to prefer their brand are the taste of their brand and its property of being good for health.

The same kind of research outcome favoring Sakthi masala was also found in other studies Palanivel & Manikanda (2014); Thangamani & Arthi (2015) and Abinaya et al. (2015) whereas Begal (2015) found that Bengaluru city consumers have preferences for Everest masala owing to its various attributes. Leelavathi & Munivel (2016) studied on "*impact of customer satisfaction of Sakthi masala products to evaluate the existing varieties of Masala powders in Dharmapuri town*" and observed that most of the consumers were satisfied with products of Eagle brand processed spices.

Noor et al. (2017) analyzed "*the consumer's brand preference and acceptance of spice powder in Sadarupazila, Mymen district (Bangladesh)*" and observed that the consumers were becoming more dependent on readymade spice.

A study was done by Salma & Ramakrishnan (2017) on the purchase preferences of consumers for organic spices in Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, India, and found that organic spices are generally purchased and preferred by educated consumers for the betterment of their health.

ABOUT BRANDS IN INDIAN SPICES

Catch

Catch has shown its presence for three decades in India, and its name indicates quality and innovation. It is used both in homes and by professional cooks in India. It introduced tabletop salt dispensers in 1987, which is generally used by almost every household. This brand offers a wide range of spices and sprinklers for Indian housewives, hotels, and caterers. The spices are rich in aroma and freshness. It has the highest quality standards besides the best production, packaging, and delivery process to customers.

Everest

Everest, India's No. 1 spice brand, with fifty-two years of presence, offers 45 varieties of spices. It maintains purity, freshness, aroma, and flavour in every pack. It delivers freshest spices along with the best processing, blending and packaging (done in a highly automated factory) and distribution channel to customers in the shortest possible time across the country.

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MDH

'MAHASHIAN DI HATTI' (MDH) adopted the strategy of providing to the housewives ready-to-use spices who were habitual of grinding and using spices at home.

MDH manufactures through automatic machines to fulfil the demand for spices. Crores of rupees of spices, of the packaging of different sizes varying from 10g to 500g, are manufactured, packed, and sold. The raw material is collected by the company from the production centres, cleaned, dried, tested, and grounded with the help of automated machines to produce the finished product.

To study consumer behaviour and to find out their brand preferences, about different brands, the present study focuses attention on whether consumers prefer local spices or branded spices. Further, the study tells whether consumers give more importance to the taste or price of the brand. The following objectives have been formulated to conduct the research study:

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the female consumer purchase behavior about spices/ masala
2. To assess the importance of various factors for spices/ masala.
3. To learn the consumers perception towards branded and local spices/ masala.
4. To compare various brands of spices/ masala on different attributes

Following hypotheses have been stated to achieve the above objectives.

Hypothesis

***H_1**: There is no significant difference between the observed values and expected values on the perceived factors associated with a brand, purchase of spices, and influence to purchase.*

***H_2**: There is no significant difference between the observed values and expected values on the perceived factors associated with the brand, purchase of spices, and influence to purchase.*

***H_3**: Different brands are uniformly distributed on different factors important to spices.*

***H_4**: Different brands are not uniformly distributed on different factors important to spices.*

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive type of research design has been used to conduct this study. Data collection has been taken mostly from the primary sources through the online survey technique. Female consumers residing in the western part of the state of Uttar Pradesh, India formed the population of the survey. The total effective sample turned out to be 200 that were randomly collected across the targeted population. A self-structured questionnaire was developed to collect the data. MS Excel and statistical software SPSS have been used to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

Researchers received 214 filled in questionnaires. Out of these 214 questionnaires, 14 were not found suitable for data analysis as they were either incomplete or deemed to be biased. Thus, 200 questionnaires were found fit for the consideration of data analysis. All the collected responses were coded into excel and then transferred to statistical software SPSS for data analysis.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of 200 respondents. From the consolidated table, it can be seen that out of 200, 136 respondents are engaged with the private sector for their livelihood, 111 people are from the age group of 31-45 years, 124 have studied till post-graduation, majority of respondents are married (175) and belong to urban areas (147). Remaining respondents under various demographic characteristics are distributed in different characteristics

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as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Demographic characteristics of the respondents				
Occupation			Education	
Govt. Service	9		Illiterate	1
Pvt. Service	136		Highschool	4
Business	12		Upto SSC	12
Housewife	39		Graduation	59
Students	3		Post Graduation	124
Retired	1		Total	200
Total	200			
			Marital Status	
Age			Single	25
20-30 Years	65		Married	175
31-45 Years	111		Total	200
46-60 Years	21			
Above 60	3		Locality	
Total	200		Rural	9
			Urban	147
			Semi Urban	44
			Total	200

The survey instrument asked respondents a variety of questions around the consumption of and preferences for different spices. Table 2 captures the responses of participating female respondents.

The table suggests that the majority of the respondents (149) have favored stocking spices to meet their monthly consumption requirements. It can be believed that consumers do not perceive spices to get stale during this period. 250 gm pack size is the most preferred purchase quantity of spices. 89 respondents have picked 250 gm as their preferred pack size, 53 respondents have chosen 200 gm and 31 respondents for shown 500 gm as the quantity of purchase when they go to buy spices. When asked about the reasons for choosing a particular branded spices, advertising (86), availability (42) and brand awareness (40) have come in the sequential order as the influencing factors in their purchase decisions. Packaging (18) and shopkeeper recommendations (14) have also been found playing some role in this.

When enquired about the proportion of branded and unbranded spice use in their food preparation, it was found that unbranded spices are very much popular in consumers. 55 respondents show their preference for the unbranded spices in the ration of 30-70 and 87 believe that they purchase unbranded spices in the ratio of 50-50. In another question related to branded and homemade spices, 85 respondents vote for the branded purchase, 79 favored homemade and 36 prefer local prepared spices.

It is also worth noticing that perception about the branded product is that it guarantees (should guarantee) high quality, 131 respondents have quality as the synonym of branded spices. Surprisingly, the price has not emerged as an important association with branded spices. Similarly, prices are not considered to be an important factor in the purchase of spices as the majority of the

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sample (150) have shown interests to purchase their preferred spices irrespective of the increase in the prices. Only 41 sample members reflect their feeling to search for the substitute sources if an increase in the price happens.

With regards to factors influencing the purchase of spices, friends (68), advertising (58), relatives (41) seem to play an equal role.

Responses obtained in the table also provide conclusive evidence that strong brand loyalty is visible among consumers. 130 respondents out of 200 say that they rarely go for trying new brands. It seems that consumers are not interested in experimenting with new brands other than their trusted brands that suit their tastes. Though brand loyalty is visible this has only come after trying few available brands in the market. 107 respondents have said that they have tried 2-4 brands before making their choice, 46 people say that they have tried more than 4 brands Table 2.

Table 2
SAMPLE RESPONSES ON VARIOUS FACTORS

Responses on various factors						
(a) Frequency of Purchase	Daily	Weekly	Fort Nightly	Monthly	Once in two months	Total
	2	18	13	149	18	200
(b) Quantity of Purchase	100 gm	200 gm	250 gm	500	1 kg	
	18	53	89	31	9	200
(c) Reason for choosing branded spices	Availability	Advertising	Shop keeper recommendation	Attractive packing	Brand awareness	Total
	42	86	14	18	40	200
(d) Food Habit	Eggetarian	Vegetarian	Non Vegetarian	All		
	42	139	8	11		200
(e) Proportion of Branded to Unbranded	30-70	50-50	80-20	No Fixed proportion		Total
	55	87	25	33		200
(f) Factors that influence purchase	Family Friends	Advertising	Relative	Others		Total
	68	58	41	33		200
(g) Brand to you mean	Best Quality	High Price	Value for Money	Status Symbol		Total
	131	19	37	13		200
(h) Important factor to purchase	Price	Quality	Durability	None		Total
	48	127	21	4		200
(i) Do You Continue purchasing at price increase	Yes	Yes (5%)	No (substitute)	Discontinue		Total
	76	74	41	9		200
(j) Frequency in trying new brand	Frequently	Rarely Changed	Never Changed			Total
	36	130	34			200
(k) No. of Brand tried	Less than 2	2 to 4	More than 4			Total
	47	107	46			200
(l) Preference for Spices	Branded	Homemade	Local Made			Total
	85	79	36			200

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Hypotheses Testing

***H_5**: There is no significant difference between the observed values and expected values on the perceived factors associated with the brand, purchase of spices and, influence to purchase.*

***H_6**: There is a significant difference between the observed values and expected values on the perceived factors associated with brand, purchase of spices, influence to purchase, and types of spices purchases.*

To test the hypothesis, responses on the items (f), (g), (h), and (l) from Table No. 2 were extracted and here, chi-square test of goodness of fit was applied. Consolidated results have been shown in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 presents the observed and expected frequencies of the variables that this hypothesis intends to test and table 4 summarizes the chi-square statistics values for these hypothesis variables.

Table 3
OBSERVED AND EXPECTED FREQUENCIES

	Factors that influence purchase			
	Family Friends	Advertising	Relative	Others
Observed Frequency	68	58	41	33
Expected Frequency	50	50	50	50
	Brand to you mean			
	Best Quality	High Price	Value for Money	Status Symbol
Observed Frequency	131	19	37	13
Expected Frequency	50	50	50	50
	Important factor to purchase			
	Price	Quality	Durability	None
Observed Frequency	48	127	21	4
Expected Frequency	50	50	50	50
	Branded vs Home-made & local			
	Branded	Homemade	Local Made	
Observed Frequency	85	79	36	
Expected Frequency	66.7	66.7	66.7	

Table 4
TEST STATISTICS

	Factors that influence purchase	Important factor to purchase	Brand to you mean	Branded vs home-made vs local made
Chi-Square	15.160a	177.800a	181.200a	21.43
df	3	3	3	2
Asymp. Sig.	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) are having expected frequencies of less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 50.0.

Statistics results in Table 4 show that each variable under investigation has a significant difference in the observed and expected frequencies of categories and, hence null hypothesis is rejected. The Chi-square test of goodness of fit is rejected for all variables. Family friends and advertising seem to be influencing factors while purchasing spices (significant at .01 level). Quality is one dominating factor that is considered the most important factor (significant at .001 level) while purchasing the spices and the same is also considered to be the meaning of a brand too (significant at .001 level). As far as acceptance of branded, home-made and locally prepared spices are concerned, distribution is also not uniformed. The purchase of branded spices is more compared to the other two (significant at .000, $p<0.000$).

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***H_7**: Different brands are uniformly distributed on different factors important to spices.*
***H_8**: Different brands are not uniformly distributed on different factors important to spices.*

To test this hypothesis consumers' preference for five brands was tabulated against each important factor related to the product spices. Frequencies were counted for each factor concerning each brand. Chi-square goodness of fit test was applied to check if all the brands have a uniform distribution.

Table 5 notes down the observed frequencies concerning different factors for the brands under study. As there are five brands hence expected frequency is 40 each for each brand on each factor. Table 6 presents the chi-square test results.

Table 5
OBSERVED FREQUENCIES OF BRANDS ON DIFFERENT FACTORS

Responses on different factors						
Preference factor	Catch	Everest	MDH	Kitchen King	Local Spice	Total
Good Taste	23	32	110	18	17	200
Colour	22	46	86	29	17	200
Advertisement	27	49	90	24	10	200
Quality	25	57	84	17	17	200
Aroma	28	60	74	23	15	200
Packaging	32	69	68	20	11	200
Friends recommendation	23	70	72	22	13	200
Price	27	67	61	20	25	200
Availability	26	57	79	19	19	200
Quantity	24	54	86	24	12	200
Brand	24	56	76	28	16	200

Table 6
TEST STATISTICS OF DIFFERENT FACTORS

	Good Taste	Colour	Advertisement	Quality	Aroma	Packaging
Chi-Square	156.650a	78.150a	97.650a	87.700a	65.350a	73.250a
Df	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Friends	Price	Availability	Quantity	Brand	
Chi-Square	81.650a	49.100a	72.200a	90.200a	63.200a	
Df	4	4	4	4	4	
Asymp. Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

a. 0 cells (.0%) are having expected frequencies of less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 40.0.

Statistical results in table 6 fail to accept the null hypothesis calculated for each factor. Hence we can say that brands are not uniformly distributed on different associated factors important to the product spices. For each factor, null is rejected at the significance level of 0.001. Closure observation of the frequency table suggests that MDH is the most preferred brand on the majority of the factors. MDH through its marketing strategies and positioning has been able to maintain a dominant place in the market.

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DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Spice consumption has been a sensitive issue among Indian consumers. Spice purchase is a very important decision for every grown-up female of Indian households. The Indian market has many brands providing varieties of spices. Locally prepared spices also find good acceptance in the Indian market. This study has attempted to study the various aspects related to the spice purchase process among Indian consumers. Researchers asked many questions related to spice purchase and consumption preferences from female respondents to unearth buying behavior and their perception of this. It is seen from the data that the majority of respondents have said that they prefer to purchase spices on monthly basis and accordingly they set their purchase quantity. As far as the pattern of purchased quantity is concerned, 250 gm is the most preferred quantity and quite a few families also purchase spices in the quantity of 500 gms and 200 gms depending upon their family size. Advertising, availability, and brand awareness are important factors that guide consumers to select a particular brand. The findings of the chi-square test also suggest that family friends and relatives form important factors that influence the selection of a particular brand along with advertising. So, it can be said that word of mouth is going to play an important role in the marketing and selling strategies of spices.

The product spices also seem to be price insensitive products as results conclude that consumers generally have brand loyalty for a particular brand and are generally not very keen to change their preferred brand even if the prices rise marginally. Consumers are ready to absorb an increase in the price within a reasonable limit. Consumers generally would like to stick their preferences to only 2-4 brands of spices rather than experimenting with a variety of brands.

Quality is a standalone significant criterion in the purchase process of spices and no other factors like price, the value of money, or status are going to play any major role. Though branded products (89 responses) are accepted significantly among consumers, still homemade masala (79 responses) and local masala (36 responses) also constitute important considerations in the consumption pattern.

Five brands i.e Catch, Everest, MDH, Kitchen King, and Local Spices were compared for their popularity among customers on 11 factors - Good Taste, Color, Advertisement, Quality, Aroma

Packaging, Friends recommendation, Price, Availability, Quantity, and Brand. Chi-square results show that brands are not uniformly distributed on these factors and for most of the factors, brand MDH is a significant differentiating factor. MDH has taken lead on factors like Good Taste, Color, Advertisement, Availability, Quantity, Quality, and Brand. Brand Everest scores equally to MDH on factors of Availability, Quantity, and Brand recognition. Respondents have also mentioned that MDH has prices higher compared to other options.

Thus, it can be concluded that spices are the price-insensitive product (within reasonable limits) and consumers generally posses a loyal attitude towards preferred brands. Home-made and locally made spices, taken together, are equally common in the consumption but branded spices dominate the purchased quantity. Quality is standalone deciding criteria in the purchase decision of spices.

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