Exploring Customers Brand Preferences in Dhall and Spices Market

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Abstract - This research study explores customer brand preferences within the Dhall and Spices category. The research aims to identify the key factors influencing brand choice, assess satisfaction levels among current brand usage of customers. Utilizing a structured questionnaire with a sample size of 302, data analysis includes tools such as regression, averages, and chi-square tests. The findings reveal that price, availability of products, package and brand reputation are the primary drivers of preference with quality being the most significant.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Brand Choice, Product Attributes, Availability, Taste& Preferences, Quality, Brand Reputation

1.INTRODUCTION

Dhall, or lentils and pulses, is a staple in global cuisine, particularly in regions reliant on plant-based proteins. Varieties like red lentils, yellow split peas, and black gram are valued for their diverse textures, flavors, and nutritional richness, making them key ingredients in many diets. Spices enhance dishes with their rich flavors, aromas, and health benefits, such as antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. In consumer behavior, brand preference—shaped by recognition and recall—plays a critical role, especially in markets with minimal product differentiation. Strong brand preference, driven by brand equity, gives a competitive edge by fostering customer loyalty and increasing market share, making ongoing investment in research, advertising, and customer service essential for a brand's success.

The food production industry is a vast and diverse sector, encompassing a wide range of activities and products. Major segments within the industry include meats, dairy products, canned and frozen foods, baked goods, candy and confectionery, edible oils, and beverages. In the United States, the food manufacturing sector was valued at over $490 billion in the late 1990s, employing 1.5 million people. Meanwhile, India's food processing market reached INR 25,455 billion in 2022, with an anticipated growth to INR 45,345 billion by 2028 at a CAGR of 9.5%. Globally, the food market is projected to reach $9.13 trillion by 2024, with the meat segment alone accounting for $1.46 trillion.

Within this broad industry, the dhall and spices sectors are particularly significant in regions like South Asia. Dhall, or pulses, is a dietary staple known for its high protein, fiber, and nutrient content, essential in vegetarian diets. The global pulses market was valued at $90 billion in 2020, with a projected CAGR of 4.5% until 2026. India, a major producer and consumer, saw its mixed dal market valued at INR 105 billion in 2023, expected to grow to INR 186.2 billion by 2032. Similarly, the spices industry, vital for flavoring and preserving food, is experiencing robust growth. The global spices market was valued at $15 billion in 2021, with projections to reach $21 billion by 2026 at a CAGR of 6.0%. India leads in production and export of spices, with the domestic market valued at $6.05 billion in 2022 and expected to grow to $9.6 billion by 2030.

Despite the growth, these industries face challenges such as price volatility, supply chain disruptions, and stringent quality standards. However, there are significant opportunities for expansion into new markets, development of value-added products, and leveraging e-commerce for direct-to-consumer sales. Companies that focus on quality, innovation, and sustainability are well-positioned to capitalize on these opportunities, driving growth and ensuring long-term success in the global market.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nurlıya Apriyana, Lingga Yuliana, Alisia Putri Bestari, and Tito Iswanto (2024) explored the role of brand authenticity in influencing brand love and brand trust, specifically in the context of Indonesian presidential candidates, finding significant impacts of authenticity on both factors. **Jang Ko and Koh Y (2024)** examined how social media marketing influences brand preference among millennials, revealing that high social media engagement boosts brand preference in this demographic. **Mandalawatta S.D and Fazeela Ahsan (2024)** investigated the impact of green branding on brand preference, highlighting that customer perceived value moderates this relationship, with stronger effects observed when customers value green attributes. **Huang R and Sarıgolıı E (2023)** studied the impact of brand awareness and perceived quality on brand preference in the FMCG sector, finding that brand trust mediates this relationship significantly. **Dimple Ravindra Patil and Nitin Liladhar Rane (2023)** focused on customer reviews and perceived value, showing their significant influence on customer satisfaction and buying preference. **Rao V and Devi K (2023)** highlighted the critical role of supply chain management in the pulses industry, emphasizing its importance in cost reduction and product quality. **Das P and Sen A (2022)** emphasized consumer awareness and safety concerns in the spice market, suggesting the need for enhanced regulatory measures. **Gensler S, Verhoef P.C, and**

Böhm M (2022) conducted a meta-analysis on customer reviews, revealing their substantial impact on brand preference. **Chatterjee S and Roy D (2021)** provided an economic analysis of India's spices export, demonstrating its significant contribution to the national economy. **Gupta S and Jain S (2020)** explored the impact of branding on consumer preferences for dhall products, identifying branding elements such as reputation and packaging as strong influencers of consumer choices. **Tri Cuong Dam (2020)** examined the influence of brand trust and perceived value on brand preference and purchase intention, finding brand trust to be a crucial determinant. **Sharma R and Choudhary A (2019)** reviewed technological innovations in spice processing, noting improvements in quality and efficiency. **Dr. T. Vijayalakshmi and Ms. T. Padmasrimathi (2019)** investigated consumer brand preference for Nandhi Dhall Mills, concluding that the brand enjoys a strong customer network. **Sahoo U and Mishra A (2018)** studied consumer preferences for packaged dhall, finding that factors like price, brand reputation, and packaging significantly influence choices. **Kamil Picha and Ladislav Skorepa (2018)** explored consumer preference for local and regional food brands, emphasizing the support for local economies. **P. Hari Babu (2017)** analyzed the export performance of spices in India, observing mixed impacts on the economy. **Pramod Hanmantrao Patil (2017)** studied brand awareness and preference in the FMCG sector, finding a positive correlation between the two. **Aamir Abbas (2017)** examined the role of Islamic marketing ethics in customer satisfaction within Islamic banking, highlighting its significant impact. **Patel A and Shah A (2017)** assessed the quality of spices in local markets, finding widespread adulteration and contamination. **Singh J and Kumar A (2016)** compared consumption patterns of pulses and spices in rural and urban India, identifying taste preferences as the primary driver of consumption. **Reham Ebrahim, Ahmad Ghoneim, Zahir Irani, and Ying Fan (2016)** developed a model linking consumer experience to brand preference and repurchase intention, emphasizing the importance of satisfaction, emotional connection, and perceived value.

3. MODEL
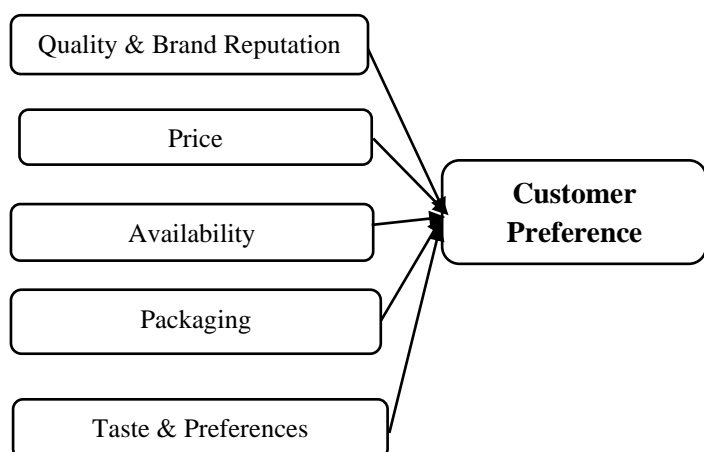
4. OBJECTIVES

1. To know the customers brand preference towards Dhall and Spices.

2. To identify the factors that influence customers preference for their current brand usage.

3. To evaluate the level of satisfaction that customers have with their current brand.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design of this study is descriptive in nature, utilizing both primary and secondary data. The sampling method employed is convenience sampling, with a sample size of 302 respondents. Primary data was gathered through a structured questionnaire, which included a 5-point scale, demographic questions, and other questions relevant to the study. Secondary data was sourced from existing materials such as journals, periodicals, dailies, research publications, and official records.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) tool is used to analyse the data collected for this study. The tools used is cross tabs, regression and mean average.

6.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation for Demographics factors

Table – 1 Demographic details of the respondents

Factors	Particulars	Responses
Location	Virudhunagar	76
	Arupukottai	47
	Madurai	74
	Kovilpatti	105
Age	18 – 25	35
	25 – 35	93
	35 – 45	88
	45 – 50	34
	Above 50	52
Gender	Male	134
	Female	110
Occupation	Student	24
	Employed	174
	Self-Employed	23
	Unemployed	3
	Retired	8
	Housewife	70
Family Monthly Income	Below 20000	4
	20000 – 30000	48
	30000 – 40000	86
	40000 – 50000	71
	Above 50000	93

nference

Data collected from the customers of Dhall and Spices in Virudhunagar, Arupukottai, Madurai, Kovilpatti districts and their demographics are presented in Table.1. The information collected narrates the factors such as the Location, Gender, Age, Occupation, Family monthly income, and the research study was carried out. It can be seen from Table.1.

6.2 Customers brand preference by their Location

Table – 2 Analysis between the customers brand preference and their location

Brand Name	Location				
	Virudhunagar	Arupukottai	Madurai	Kovilpatti	Total
Tata Sampann	10	11	14	21	56
Jothi Gold	18	10	14	**29**	**71**
Aiyan Arasann	19	12	9	21	61
Suriya	16	9	19	16	60
Thillais	7	4	5	9	25
Udhaiyam	4	0	4	5	13
Haldirams	1	0	2	2	5
Aashirvaad	0	0	2	0	2
Deepak	1	1	2	2	6
Anjali	0	0	3	0	3
Total	**76**	**47**	**74**	**105**	**302**

Inference:

The data indicates that Jothi Gold is the most preferred brand overall with 71 respondents, while Aashirvaad is the least preferred with only 2 respondents. Preferences vary by location, with Jothi Gold being particularly popular in Kovilpatti. The total number of respondents is 302, with the highest concentration in Kovilpatti.

6.3 Customers brand preference by their Age group

Table – 3 Analysis between the customers brand preference and their age group

Brand Name	Age				
	18 – 25	25 – 35	35 – 45	45 – 50	Above50	Total
Tata Sampann	7	17	9	8	15	56
Jothi Gold	8	17	**27**	9	10	**71**
Aiyan Arasann	8	21	15	5	12	61
Suriya	8	15	23	5	9	60
Thillais	1	12	4	5	3	25
Udhaiyam	2	5	4	1	1	13
Haldirams	1	3	0	1	0	5
Aashirvaad	0	0	1	0	1	2
Deepak	0	1	4	0	1	6
Anjali	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total	**35**	**93**	**88**	**34**	**52**	**302**

Inference:

The data shows that Jothi Gold is the most preferred brand across all age groups, especially among those aged 35 - 45 with a total of 71 respondents. Aashirvaad is the least preferred brand with only 2 respondents. The age group 25 - 35 has the highest number of respondents overall, totaling 93.

6.4 Customers brand preference by their income

Table – 4 Analysis between the customers brand preference and their income

Brand Name	Family monthly income					
	Below 20000	20000– 30000	30000– 40000	40000– 50000	Above 50000	Total
Tata Sampann	0	8	17	14	17	56
Jothi Gold	1	13	18	19	**20**	**71**
Aiyan Arasann	3	12	19	15	12	61
Suriya	0	8	18	12	22	60
Thillais	0	4	8	5	8	25
Udhaiyam	0	3	3	1	6	13
Haldirams	0	0	1	3	1	5
Aashirvaad	0	0	0	1	1	2
Deepak	0	0	2	1	3	6
Anjali	0	0	0	0	3	3
Total	**4**	**48**	**86**	**71**	**93**	**302**

Inference:

The data indicates that Jothi Gold is the most preferred brand across all income groups, particularly among families with an income above 50,000 with a total of 71 respondents. Aashirvaad is the least preferred brand, with only 2 respondents from the highest income brackets. The income group 30,000 - 40,000 has the highest number of respondents overall, totaling 86.

6.5 Analysis of level of satisfaction towards their current brand

Table – 5 Analysis of level of satisfaction towards their current brand

Factors	Average Score	Rank
Competitive Pricing	1.36	1

Taste and Preference	1.66	2
Availability	2.01	3
Packaging	2.25	4
Quality & Brand Reputation	2.57	5

Inference:

From the table, Competitive Pricing stands out with the highest average score of **1.36**, indicating it is the most significant factor among the options presented.

6.6 Factors influencing customers preference for their current brand usage.

This includes factors such as Product Quality, Price, Product Availability, Taste and Freshness, Packaging, and Brand Reputation.

Dependent Variable: Overall satisfaction of current usage of Brand.

Independent Variable: Factors influencing to prefer the current Brand.

Hypothesis:

H0: There is no significant relationship between factors influencing customers to prefer the current Brand and Overall satisfaction of current brand usage.

H1: There is a significant relationship between factors influencing customers to prefer the current Brand and Overall satisfaction of current brand usage.

Table – 6 Analysis of variables using regression

Inference:

In this analysis the regression result are,

$Y = 0.230X_2 + 0.198X_3 + 0.282X_5 + 0.214X_6 + 0.321$

Where, X_2 = Price

X_3 = Availability of products

X_5 = Package

X_6 = Brand Reputation

Y= Overall satisfaction of current brand usage.

Observing the results, it is evident that the significance value of 0.022, 0.023, 0.001, 0.018 is less than or equal to 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This finding indicates that there is a significant relationship between the independent variable (Factors which influence the most) and dependent variable (Overall satisfaction of current usage of brand).

7. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Customers brand preference towards Dhall and Spices:

Jothi Gold is strongly favored overall (71 respondents), contrasting with minimal preference for Aashirvaad (2 respondents). Kovilpatti exhibits the highest respondents concentration, indicating significant regional brand preference variations. Jothi Gold dominates all income groups, especially above 50,000 (71 respondents). Jothi Gold is the preferred brand for majority of respondents (71), contrasting sharply with Aashirvaad, which is the least favored with only 2 respondents indicating a preference.

Factors that influence customers preference for their current brand usage:

Price, product availability, packaging, and brand reputation significantly impact overall satisfaction with current Brand, as indicated by the regression analysis ($p \leq 0.05$). Among these factors, packaging and brand reputation have the strongest influence on customers satisfaction, based on their regression coefficients.

Level of satisfaction customers have with their current brand:

Competitive Pricing is identified as the most crucial factor influencing customers satisfaction with their current brand, with the highest average score of 1.36.

8. CONCLUSION

The analysis of customers brand preference towards their current brand usage of Dhall and Spices reveals that demographic variables such as gender, family monthly income, age, and location do not significantly influence brand preference. Therefore, marketing strategies should focus on other factors. The regression analysis highlights that price, product availability, packaging, and brand reputation significantly impact overall customers satisfaction, with

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.321	.184		1.745	.082
Product Quality	.047	.120	.025	.395	.693
Price	**.230**	**.099**	**.147**	**2.314**	**.022**
Availability of products	**.198**	**.087**	**.174**	**2.281**	**.023**
Taste and Freshness	.026	.100	.017	.257	.797
Package	**.282**	**.082**	**.252**	**3.424**	**.001**
Brand Reputation	**.214**	**.090**	**.163**	**2.378**	**.018**

packaging and brand reputation being the most influential factors. Consequently, marketing efforts should prioritize enhancing packaging and brand reputation while also maintaining competitive pricing and ensuring product

availability. Additionally, quality is identified as the most crucial factor for customers satisfaction, indicating the importance of continuous quality.

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