

Consumer Insights Towards Branded and Non-Branded Spices in Barabanki District

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Abstract

Spices hold a pivotal position within the culinary traditions of India, esteemed for their unique flavors, alluring aromas, and health-promoting properties. However, the phenomenon of adulteration in spices has surfaced as a pressing concern, endangering food safety and public health. The objective of our study was to assess the consumer perceptions and price differences in branded and non-branded/unpackaged spices. Our survey-derived data represents the purchasing behaviors of 120 consumers. The majority of consumers exhibits a preference for packaged/branded spices, while significant number of consumers/purchaser like to purchase non-branded/unpackaged varieties. Consumers demonstrate confidence in the quality of branded spices, although pricing remained a critical consideration for majority of consumers in their purchasing decisions. Finding of this study reveals that people are aware about using safe and hygienic spices. Branded spices provide the confidence of quality but at a high cost. This forces poor people to purchase non branded/unpackaged spices at low prices that may sometimes, harmful. We strongly recommend consumer awareness and monitoring of the enforcement of FSSAI standards that are crucial for ensuring the availability of pure and safe spices in the open market for everyone.

Keywords: Spices, Food Safety, Branded, Consumer opinion, Purchasing,

1. INTRODUCTION

Spices add flavor and aroma to make a dish appetizing and delicious. India is well known for its spices. The fine aroma, texture, taste and medicinal value of Indian spices are the most sought- after globally. There is a massive range of spices like turmeric, red chili black pepper cinnamon, clove, coriander which give a particular flavor to Indian food. It is also used as food preservative (Banti et al, 2020) and some of the spices exhibit its medicinal importance too. People spend significant amount of money on food. However, at the end of the day, they come to know that the food is not up to the standards rather they are consuming dyes, stones, brick, and other contaminants. A foundational aspect of consumer behavior in the spice market revolves around the perception of quality and the associated trust in products. Studies indicate a significant concern among consumers regarding the quality of spices, particularly unpackaged or loose varieties. For instance, Sattar et al. (2019) found that a vast majority of consumers in Bangladesh suspected the quality of spices, with concerns about adulteration. This apprehension about low-grade raw materials and foreign additives (e.g., brick dust, sand) highlights a critical trust deficit in the unorganized sector. Similarly, Sharma and Singh (2019) revealed that rural consumers often preferred unpackaged spices despite having limited knowledge of adulteration, while urban consumers showed a more positive attitude toward packaged options, suggesting a link between awareness, perceived quality, and packaging.

This underlines the importance of transparency and quality assurance in building consumer confidence. Adulteration in foods decreases our moral and social value. There are several reasons of making a product adulterated (Maske et al, 2020). When demand is greater than supply, foods are usually adulterated to get more profit. Often by reducing commodity expenditures and to meet market competition (Ghosh et al, 2017). In addition, the object of adulteration was to increase the value of the commercial property of the commodity in general (Jaiswal et al, 2016). Even, because of the scarcity of genuine products at reasonable prices. Spices are consumed in various forms such as whole spices, grounded spices, oleoresins, extracts etc. Most of the people, mainly street food vendors buy loose spices from the local market. Behind food adulteration, consumer education/awareness also plays a major role in running such fowl business without any fear of questions from consumers. Uneducated or unaware consumers never ask or think before purchasing food items specially spices. They buy that cost less. High value ground spices are frequently adulterated for economic gains (Mohiuddin et al, 2020) therefore to maintain and ensure food safety, the biodegradable packaging materials are extensively used to preserve the quality and freshness of food products (Modi et al, 2020). In a latest study it has been observed that the viewpoints of urban and rural women over packaged spices were totally different. As compared to rural, urban women held positive attitude towards spice adulteration. Their finding indicates that only the educated women in rural areas of Faridabad showed interest regarding packaged spices, because they did not contain any insecticides, toxins, chemicals and pesticides (Chandila et al, 2019). Rao, S. (2024, June 22). Study on factors influencing the consumer preference towards branded and unbranded masala products in Theni District. Joshi, T. (2023, April 12). Packaged spices and seasonings are gaining traction in India, with Millennials as a key consumer target. This study have been conducted to receive the consumers' opinion about branded and non-branded spices and their purchasing behaviour and correlate it with pricing of major spice brands.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Collection of Samples

Spice samples were collected from local markets of Barabanki district. This is a small district and estimated population is about 38 Lakh. A total of 40 spice samples were collected for the study. A total of 20 Branded and 20 non-branded samples were collected from local market of city and subjected to price analysis. This study has been conducted during June 2024 to December 2024.

Pricing comparison

Pricing of all spice samples were noted and compiled. These prices were compared with the quality of spices.

Analysis of purchasing behavior and Consumer Perceptions

A survey study was carried out to examine how consumers view the quality of packaged and unpackaged spices. A detailed questionnaire was created to understand consumer awareness, buying habits, brand loyalty, and concerns about adulteration. Demographic information was also gathered to see how consumer preferences varied among different groups. This thorough approach offered valuable insights into both the objective quality of spices and the subjective factors that affect consumer decisions in the market.

3. RESULTS

The study aimed to compare the prices of packaged and unpackaged spices and analysing consumer

preferences towards both forms of spices. A questionnaire was prepared and a survey has been conducted to assess consumer perception. The price difference in both packaged and unpackaged spices has been recorded. Unpackaged samples had visible contaminants, while packaged spices met FSSAI standards (FSSAI, 2006, 2018).

Comparison of pricing and quality

Price of packaged and unpackaged spices were compared which indicates a marked difference in price range of all spice category. Unpackaged spices are sold in the range of ₹10-50 per 100 g while packaged and pure samples are sold in the range of ₹30-500 per 100 gm (Table 1). It has been noticed that prices of all packaged spices mentioned in this study are significantly higher than unpackaged spices. However, unpackaged samples of saffron were not found in anywhere in Barabanki city during the study period.

Table 1. Comparison of prices among branded and non-branded spices

Spices	Branded (Rs) (Per 100g)					Non-branded (Rs) per 100g
					Average price(Rs)	
Turmeric Powder	₹35 - ₹50 (approx.)MDH	₹40 - ₹60 Tata Sampann	35 - ₹55 (approx.) Everest	₹30 - ₹45 Catch	₹30-60	₹10-15
Chilli powder	₹65 - ₹110 MDH	₹48 - ₹65 Tata Sampann	₹54 - ₹110 Everest	₹42 - ₹77 Catch	₹52-90	₹20-25
Coriander powder	₹35 - ₹50 (approx.)MDH	₹43 - ₹60 Tata Sampann	₹40 - ₹55 (approx.) Everest	₹42 - ₹55 (approx.) Catch	₹40-55	₹15-50
Cumin whole	₹58- ₹75(Ashirwaad)	₹157 - ₹190(organic Tatva)	₹35 - ₹45 (bb royale)	₹90 - ₹100 Catch	₹85-102	₹40-50
Black pepper	₹176 - ₹204 Organic Tatva)	₹145 - ₹165(Vedaka black pepper corn)	₹73 - ₹118(bb royale)	130 - ₹150 Catch	₹131- 160	₹30-40
Saffron	₹350 to ₹450 (Lion saffron) per gram	₹300 to ₹500 per gram (tata) per gram	₹320 to ₹560 per gram.(Vedaka)	₹400 to ₹700(Kashmir box saffron per gram	₹ 342- 552	NA
Cinnamon	₹55 - ₹80 (approx.)	₹65 - ₹90 (tata, 50 gm	₹60 - ₹85 (approx.) 50 gm	₹70 - ₹95 (approx.), 50 gm	₹66-87	₹40-50

Salt (iodised plain salt)	₹22-₹30 (Patanjali)	₹25-₹35 (TATA)	₹28 - ₹38 (Ashirwaad)	₹30- ₹45(table salt)	₹26-37	₹20-30
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Opinions and purchasing behavior of consumers

Few factors that affect the consumer choices between branded and non-branded spices were also examined. Our survey-based data is a compilation of purchasing behavior of 120 consumers. Buying spices is a monthly task for more than 70% consumers (figure 1) and 65% consumers prefer to buy packaged while 35% goes for unpackaged spices primarily to save money (figure 2). Further, pattern observed on factors responsible for making choice of spice clearly indicates that 64% of consumers decide based on flavor and color of spice (figure 3). 44% consumers were not confident about the quality of unpackaged spices (figure 4) but 69% consumers strongly agree that unpackaged/non-branded spices are budget friendly (figure 5). Packaging and labeling is very important for spice purchase decisions for 56% consumers (figure 6). When it comes to spending more money for quality, 42% consumers show their willingness to pay even more for branded spices on any occasion as well as for any special spice also and 24% consumers value the brands (figure 7). More than 40% of consumers agree a perceived variety of packaged and unpackaged/non-branded spices while 36% of consumers do not agree. (Figure 8).

1. How frequently do you purchase spices for your cooking needs?
120 responses

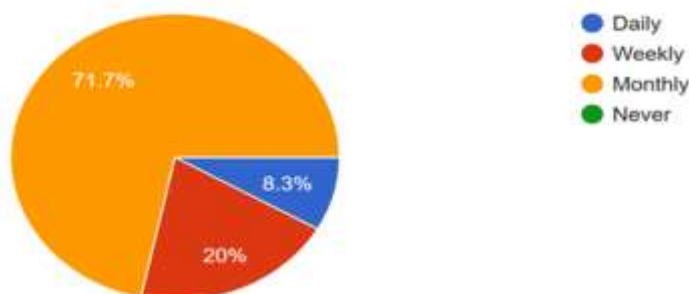


Figure 1: Frequency of Spice Purchase for Cooking Needs

2. When buying spices, do you prefer branded (well-known) or non-branded (generic) options?
120 responses



Figure 2: Preference for Branded/package vs. Non-Branded/unpackaged

3. What factors influence your choice between branded and non-branded spices? (Select all that apply)

120 responses

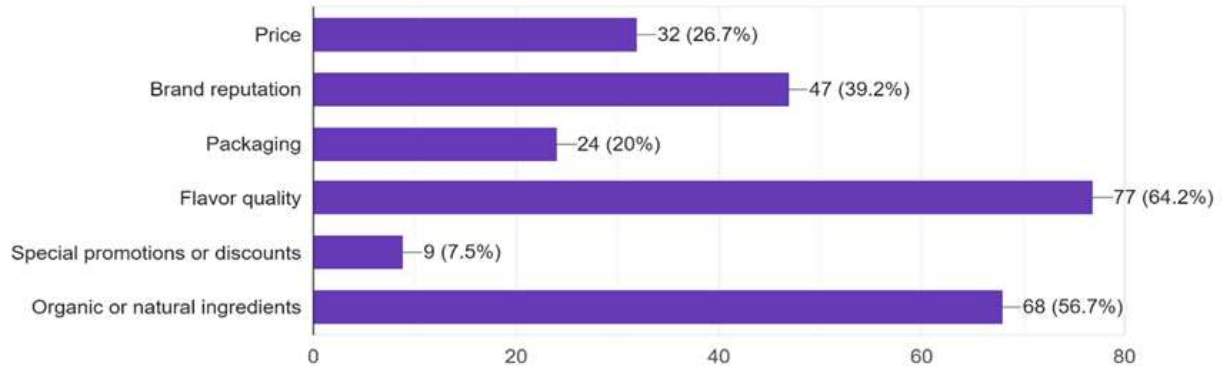


Figure 3: Factors Influencing Choice Between Branded/package vs. Non-Branded/unpackaged

4. How confident are you in the quality and safety of non-branded spices compared to branded ones?

120 responses

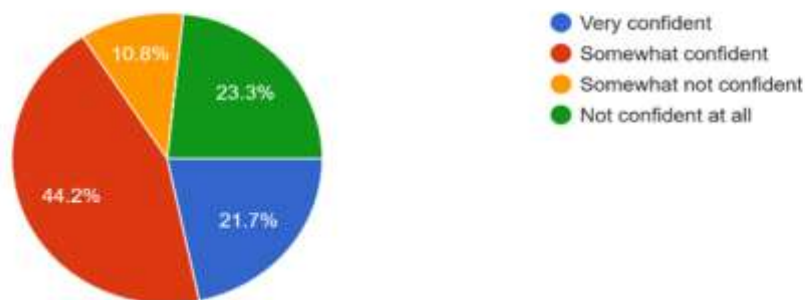


Figure 4: Confidence in Quality and safety of Branded/package vs. Non-Branded/unpackaged

7. Do you think non-branded spices are more budget-friendly than branded spices?

117 responses

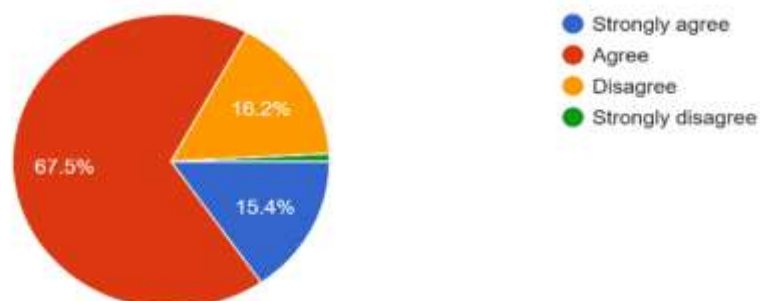


Figure 5: Perceived Budget-Friendliness of Branded/package vs. Non-Branded/unpackaged Spices

8. How important is the packaging and labeling of spices when making your purchase decision?
118 responses



Figure 6: Importance of Packaging and Labelling in Spice Purchase Decisions

9. Are you willing to pay high for branded spices compared to non-branded ones, assuming similar quality?
118 responses

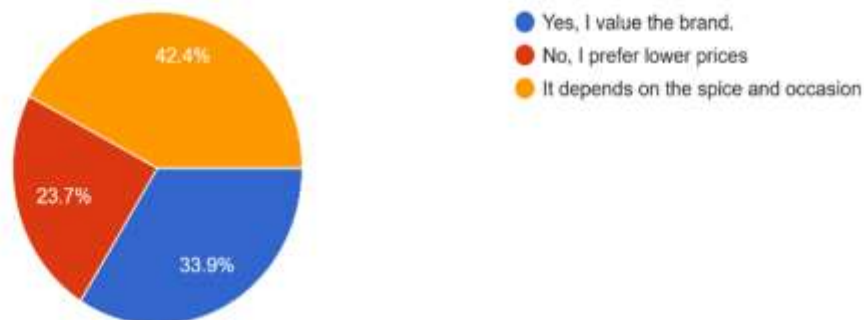


Figure 7: Willingness to Pay More for Branded/packaged Ones

11. Do you believe that branded spices offer more variety in terms of flavor options compared to non-branded spices?
118 responses

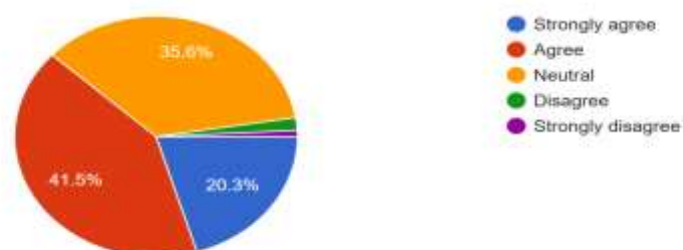


Figure 8: Perceived variety of Branded/packaged Spices

DISCUSSION

Spice is an indispensable need for us now. Just for limited economic benefits, major ingredients of foods are being adulterated (Bansal et al., 2017). The present study has been conducted with the objective of comparing the price of packaged and unpackaged spices in an urban area. Being such a low cost of unpackaged spice shows the profit business of sellers but adverse health effect to consumers. Moreover, low price also correlates with the quality of spices. In our previous study (Srivastava et al, 2025), a clear difference in packaged and unpackaged spices were found. Low quality and adulterated spices facilitate

the sellers to sell their products at low price. This practice may suit to sellers but poses health hazards to innocent consumers/purchasers. Additionally, opinions of consumers show a clear difference in how consumers/purchasers view branded/packaged versus unpackaged/non-branded spices, influenced by factors like quality, safety, cost, and availability. Consumers generally consider packaged/branded spices as safer and of better quality, especially those who are concerned about hygiene which is confirmed from our findings that non-branded/unpackaged spices are not safe and of poor quality. On the other hand, unpackaged/non-branded spices appealed to buyers mainly because they are cheaper, even though there are worries about contamination. A significant number of responders (35%) prefer unpackaged spices due to their price. These responders may be street food vendors/owners of food shops who go for cheap raw materials to gain profit in their business without worrying about customer's health. Our findings correlate with the previous one that reveals only the educated women in rural areas of Faridabad showed interest regarding packaged spices, because they did not contain any insecticides, toxins, chemicals and pesticides (Chandila et al, 2019). Joshi (2023) noted that a substantial majority of Indian consumers, especially those in metro areas, agree that unpackaged spices are often adulterated, further driving the demand for natural and organic packaged variants. While consumers are willing to pay more for organic options, there's also a need for brands to educate them on what "organic" truly means and justify the higher cost. This indicates a market opportunity for companies that can effectively communicate the naturalness and health benefits of their spice products. Our previous findings confirm that unpackaged spices are more prone to adulteration (Srivastava et al, 2025), posing health risks. While packaged spices offer better safety, price remains a deciding factor for many consumers. These results emphasize the importance of better consumer education and stricter quality control measures.

CONCLUSION

Due to lack of proper awareness and knowledge, the majority of consumers don't find fraudulent practices and tactics adopted by manufacturers and sellers relating to food adulteration. To ensure the safety and quality of food, it is very important that various food materials purchased by consumers should be free from adulteration. Indian spices are used not only for food purposes but also for the treatment of diseases and our study may aware people about using safe and hygienic spices, which is a major intention of food safety and quality management. We strongly recommend stronger regulations, consumer awareness, and monitoring of enforcement of FSSAI standards are crucial to ensuring the availability of pure and safe spices in the open market also.

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