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Consumer insights on branded spice blend powders

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Abstract
A comparative study conducted in Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh, revealed that both rural and urban consumers frequently use vegetarian and non-vegetarian branded spice blend powders multiple times during a week with preferred time majorly during lunch preparation. Rural consumers tend to consume less than 50 grams of instant rice mix and curry powders monthly, while urban consumers typically consume 51 to 100 grams. For garam masala, sambar, and chicken powders, both groups commonly consume 101 to 250 grams, while rasam and meat powders see consumption between 51 to 100 grams. In terms of brand preferences, rural consumers prioritize flavor, price, and advertising in their brand preferences, while urban consumers focus on price, reference group influence and advertising.

Keywords: Branded spice blend powders, Monthly Consumption, Brand Preferences, Brand attributes

Introduction
India stands as the leading exporter of spices and related products, encompassing items such as spice blends, freeze-dried, oleoresins, extracts, essential oils, and value-added spices. India boasts an extensive array of spices ingrained in its culinary culture. However, the cumbersome process of sourcing, grinding, and blending numerous spices has paved the way for the branded spice blend powder industry. The sector offers a diverse range of convenient pre-mixed spice powders playing a vital role in spice industry, which relies heavily on an extensive spice variety. Various factors, including the desire for ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat foods, busy lifestyles, growing workforce, limited cooking time, increased disposable income and expanding food processing industry have propelled the demand for Indian spice blends (Prabhavathi *et al.*, 2014; Kavinkesinikethan *et al.*, 2019) [10, 6] Consequently, spice blend powders have become an essential component in countless households.

According to the Spice Board of India, spice blend powders encompass instant rice mix powders, curry powders, garam masala powders, sambar powders, rasam powders, chicken masala powders, and meat masala powders. Branded spice blend powders have gained popularity in India due to their superior taste compared to homemade blends, along with the convenience of requiring no additional preparation or culinary expertise (Kumari, 2018) [7] Furthermore, these products are readily available through various distribution channels such as convenience stores, departmental stores, supermarkets, and hypermarkets. (Priya and Srivarshini, 2018) [11]. As the demand for standardized and high-quality spice blends continues to surge, numerous market players have arisen to provide consumers with consistent, innovative, and top-quality products. Moreover, the advent of branded spice blend powders has introduced a degree of professionalism and standardization into the spice industry. Manufacturers are dedicating resources to research and development, enabling the introduction of novel blends, flavors, and packaging styles, thereby stimulating product innovation. With this background, the present study is taken up to understand the consumer insights towards usage, frequency, timing, monthly consumption and brand preferences in rural and urban areas towards branded spice blend powders in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh with the following objectives

i. To understand the rural and urban consumer consumption patterns for various branded spice blend powders To identify the attributes of brand preferences among rural and urban consumer consumption patterns for various branded spice blend powders

Materials and Methods

The study was taken up in Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh state during the year 2023. The selection of district was done purposively as the researcher hails from the area. Within the chosen district, Tirupati city was selected as the urban study area, and five densely populated villages within a 15-kilometer radius from the city (Durga Samudram, Kuntrapakam, Mallamgunta, Mallavaram, and Thummalagunta)-were chosen for the rural study. The list of retail outlets in the urban area were collected and randomly five retail outlets (D-Mart, Reliance Fresh, More, Nilgiri's, and Pasupurthy) were selected from the list. Among the consumers visiting the store, 10 respondents purchasing spice blend powders were randomly chosen from each outlet. In the case of rural respondents, 10 individuals purchasing spice blend powders from unorganized and organized retail stores located within their radius in each of the selected villages were selected. This resulted in a total sample size of 100 consumers of branded spice blend powders for the survey. The data obtained was analyzed using percentage analysis and cross tabulation methods.

Results and Discussion

The consumption patterns of sample consumers family were analyzed by collecting the data pertaining to the type of branded spice blend powder use, cooking frequency, preferred time of using, monthly consumption and monthly expenditure of consumers towards branded spice blend powders

Table 1: Type of branded spice blend powders usage by sample consumer families

S. No	Type of Branded spice blend powder	Rural (n=50)		Urban (n=50)	
		No of Consumers	%	No of Consumers	%
1	Vegetarian	5	10	6	12
2	Non-Vegetarian	13	26	16	32
3	Both	32	64	28	56
	Total	50	100	50	100

It is inferred from Table 1 that majority of sample consumers i.e 64% and 56% of rural and urban consumers respectively use both vegetarian and non-vegetarian type of branded spice blend powders. However, more than 1/3rd of rural and urban consumers were exclusively using only non-vegetarian spice powders, while very few consumers were users of vegetarian spice powders only.

Table 2: Frequency of using branded spice blend powders in cooking

S. No	Frequency	Rural (n=50)		Urban (n=50)	
		No of Consumers	%	No of Consumers	%
1	Daily	5	10	3	6
2	Several times a week	29	58	31	62
3	Once in a week	10	20	9	18
4	Occasionally	6	12	7	14
5	Never	0	0	0	0
	Total	50	100	50	100

Table 2 reveals that, among rural consumers, 58% use branded spice blend powders several times a week, 20% use them weekly, 12% use them occasionally, and only 10% use them daily. Among urban consumers, 62% use them several times a week, 18% use them weekly, 14% use them occasionally, and only 6% use them daily. This indicates that both rural and urban consumers are using branded spice blend powders multiple times a week, even though it's not a daily occurrence.

Table 3: Preferred time of using of banded spice blend powders

S. No	Preferred time of using	Rural (n=50)		Urban (n=50)	
		No of Consumers	%	No of Consumers	%
1	Breakfast	12	24	7	14
2	Lunch	50	100	50	100
3	Dinner	22	44	17	34

Table 3 revealed that in the rural sample, 100% of consumers prefer using branded spice blend powders during lunch, 44% during dinner and 24% during breakfast. Among urban consumers, 100% prefer them during lunch, 34% during dinner, and 14% during breakfast. The findings indicates that forboth rural and urban sample consumers, lunch is the most favoured period for incorporating these spice blends into their meals.

Monthly consumption of Vegetarian branded spice blend powders mix: The information regarding the monthly consumption of instant rice mix powders, curry powders, garam masala powders, sambar powders and rasam powders by consumer families were obtained and analyzed and divided into 4 categories *viz.*, less than50 grams, 51 to 100 grams, 101 to 250 grams and more than 250 grams and theresults were depicted in Table 4.

Table 4: Monthly consumption of vegetarian branded spice blend powders mix

Monthly Consumption	Instant rice mix powders				Curry powders				Garam masala powders				Sambar powders				Rasam powders			
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 50 grams	21	42	15	30	28	56	13	26	9	18	12	24	7	14	5	10	13	26	12	24
51 to 100 grams	14	28	18	36	12	24	22	44	18	36	16	32	15	30	18	36	23	46	22	44
101 to 250 grams	8	16	10	20	6	12	11	22	20	40	20	40	18	36	21	42	10	20	14	28
> 250 grams	7	14	7	14	4	8	4	8	3	6	2	4	10	20	6	12	4	8	2	4
Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100

The findings in Table 4 indicated that, in rural areas, 42% consume less than 50 grams of instant rice mix powders and 56% consume less than 50 grams of curry powders monthly. While in urban areas, 36% consume 51 to 100 grams of instant rice mix powders, and 44% consume 51 to 100 grams of curry powders monthly. However, both rural and urban consumers equally consume 101 to 250 grams of garam masala powders (40%). For sambar powders, 36% of rural consumers and 42% of urban consumers consume 101 to 250 grams per month and for rasam powders, 46% of rural consumers and 44% of urban consumers consume 51 to 100 grams. The preference of sambar and rasam powders depends on the diet preferences of respective geography.

Monthly consumption of Non Vegetarian branded spice blend powders: The information regarding the monthly consumption of chicken masalapowders and meat masala powders by consumers were obtained and and divided into four categories *viz.*, less than 50 grams, 51 to 100 grams, 101 to 250 grams and more than 250 grams and the results are depicted in Table 5. The findings from Table 5 indicate that monthly 54 percent of rural consumers and 50 percent of urban consumers were consuming 101 to 250 grams of chicken masala powders respectively, while 38 percent of rural consumers and 42 percent of urban consumers were consuming 51 to 100 grams of meat masala powders respectively.

Table 5: Monthly consumption of non-vegetarian branded spice blend powders mix

Monthly Consumption	Chicken masala powders				Meat masala powders			
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 50 grams	5	10	4	8	9	18	8	16
51 to 100 grams	8	16	12	24	19	38	21	42
101 to 250 grams	27	54	25	50	17	34	16	32
> 250 grams	10	20	9	18	5	10	5	10
Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100

Attributes for preferring a particular brand in the rural area

The information regarding various attributes considered for preferring a particular brand of branded spice blend powders was collected and analyzed and the results were shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Attributes for preferring a particular brand in rural area

S. No	Categories	MTR		Aachi		Priya		Everest		Eastern		Sakthi		Others	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Price	8	16.33	14	28.57	14	28.57	0	0	0	0	9	18.37	4	8.16
2	Flavour	14	26.92	11	21.15	8	15.38	2	3.85	0	0	5	9.62	12	23.08
3	Quality	19	35.85	9	16.98	8	15.09	3	5.66	0	0	11	20.75	3	5.66
4	Variety	9	18	15	30	16	32	0	0	0	0	7	14	3	6
5	Colour	11	19.3	10	17.54	5	8.77	10	17.54	3	5.26	10	17.54	8	14.04
6	Packaging	6	10.71	10	17.86	11	19.64	3	5.36	7	12.5	8	14.29	11	19.64
7	Shelf life	7	14.29	14	28.57	7	14.29	0	0	5	10.2	9	18.37	7	14.29
8	Availability in preferred quantities	8	21.62	4	10.81	4	10.81	4	10.81	4	10.81	2	5.41	11	29.73
9	Easy Availability	11	22	8	16	10	20	0	0	5	10	10	20	6	12
10	Personal experience	8	17.02	6	12.77	6	12.77	8	17.02	9	19.15	6	12.77	4	8.51
11	Reference groups influence	0	0	4	8.16	7	14.29	18	36.73	10	20.41	5	10.2	5	10.2
12	Ads and promotions	1	2.04	0	0	2	4.08	14	28.57	19	38.78	3	6.12	10	20.41

It can be inferred from Table 6 that among rural consumers, the majority (35.85%) favored MTR for its quality, with 26.92% preferring it for its flavor and 21.62% for its availability in desired quantities. Aachi was chosen by 28.57% for its price and shelf life and 21.15% for its flavor. Priya was preferred by 28.57% for its price, 19.64% for its packaging and 15.38% for its flavor. Everest gained favor with 36.73% for its influence from reference groups, 28.57% for its advertising and promotions, and 17.54% for its color. Eastern attracted 38.78% for its advertising and promotions, 20.41% for its reference group influence, and 19.15% for personal experience. Sakthi was chosen by 20.75% for its quality and 18.37% for its price and packaging. Other brands were preferred by 29.73% for availability in desired quantities, 23.08% for advertising and promotions, and 20.41% for flavor. Overall, rural consumers mainly preferred brands based on flavor, price, and advertising and promotions (Asha and Joy, 2016; Balamurugan and Sindhu, 2017; Vijayalaksmi *et al.*, 2020; Kaur and Thomar, 2022) [1, 2, 5, 13]

Attributes for preferring a particular brand in the urban area

Table 7: Attributes for preferring a particular brand in urban area

S. No	Categories	MTR		Aachi		Priya		Everest		Eastern		Sakthi		Others	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Price	12	24	13	26	11	22	0	0	0	0	10	20	4	8
2	Flavour	15	29.41	12	23.53	8	15.69	1	1.96	2	3.92	5	9.8	8	15.69
3	Quality	15	27.78	9	16.67	6	11.11	3	5.56	2	3.7	13	24.07	6	11.11
4	Variety	6	12	17	34	13	26	1	2	1	2	7	14	5	10
5	Colour	11	20.37	6	11.11	4	7.41	9	16.67	4	7.41	14	25.93	6	11.11
6	Packaging	7	12.07	11	18.97	13	22.41	2	3.45	6	10.34	4	6.9	15	25.86
7	Shelf life	5	9.8	9	17.65	8	15.69	3	5.88	7	13.73	10	19.61	9	17.65
8	Availability in preferred quantities	9	25.71	5	14.29	4	11.43	4	11.43	2	5.71	2	5.71	9	25.71
9	Easy Availability	6	12.5	10	20.83	8	16.67	0	0	7	14.58	9	18.75	8	16.67
10	Personal experience	4	8.89	8	17.78	6	13.33	7	15.56	10	22.22	5	11.11	5	11.11
11	Reference groups influence	4	8.51	4	8.51	9	19.15	14	29.79	9	19.15	3	6.38	4	8.51
12	Ads and promotions	7	15.22	1	2.17	3	6.52	14	30.43	12	26.09	3	6.52	6	13.04

It can be inferred from Table 7 that, majority of urban consumers (29.41%) favored MTR for its flavor, with 27.78% preferring it for quality and 25.71% for availability in desired quantities. Aachi was chosen by 34% for its variety, 26% for its price, and 23.53% for its flavor. Priya was preferred by 22.41% for its packaging, 22% for its price, and 19.15% for reference group influence. Everest gained favor with 30.43% for its advertising and promotions, 29.79% for reference group influence, and 16.67% for color. Eastern attracted 26.09% for its advertising and promotions, 22.22% for personal experience, and 19.15% for reference group influence. Sakthi was chosen by 25.93% for its color, 24.07% for quality, and 20% for price. Other brands were preferred by 25.86% for packaging, 25.71% for availability in desired quantities, and 17.65% for shelf life. Overall, urban consumers primarily favored brands based on price, reference group influence and advertisement and promotions. (Gupta and Jain, 2014; Singh and Singh, 2014; Vijayalaksmi *et al.*, 2020) [3, 12, 13]

Conclusion

A comparative study on consumer insights with regard to usage, frequency, timing, monthly consumption and brand preferences in rural and urban areas towards branded spice blend powders in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh revealed that majority of rural and urban sample consumers consume both vegetarian and non- vegetarian type of branded spice blend powders several times a week. The preferred time of using branded spice blend powders by majority of the consumers was during lunch. On a monthly basis, rural consumers tend to consume less than 50 grams of instant rice mix and curry powders, while urban consumers typically consume 51 to 100 grams. For garam masala, sambar, and chicken powders, both rural and urban consumers commonly consume 101 to 250 grams. As for rasam and meat powders, the majority of both rural and urban consumers consume between 51 to 100 grams. The quantity consumed vary based on the family size and geographical cuisine preferences. Rural consumers favored MTR for flavor, quality, color, and easy availability, Priya for variety and packaging, Aachi for price and shelf life, Eastern for personal experience and advertising and Everest for reference group influence. Urban consumers preferred MTR for flavor, quality, and availability, Priya for variety, packaging and refence group influence, Aachi for price, variety, and easy availability, Eastern for personal experience, Everest for reference group influence and advertising, and other brands for packaging. Overall, rural consumers mainly preferred brands based on flavor, price, and advertising and promotions. Overall, urban consumers primarily favored brands based on price, reference group influence and advertisement and promotions

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