

# A Study on Customer Gratification of Buying Pattern Towards Sakthi Masala Products in Erode City

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## Abstract:

This study examines consumer buying patterns and satisfaction levels regarding Sakthi Masala products in Erode City. With the increasing shift from unbranded to branded spices due to hygiene and quality concerns, understanding the factors that drive brand loyalty in the food industry has become essential. Using a quantitative research design, data was collected from 100 respondents through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using simple percentage analysis, Chi-square tests, and the weighted average rank method.

The findings indicate that a majority of consumers prefer branded masalas primarily for their quality and taste, with family recommendations playing a significant role in their purchase decisions. Most respondents purchase these products monthly, typically from departmental stores. Statistical analysis revealed that while demographic factors like income influence buying habits, there is no significant relationship between a consumer's area of residence and their satisfaction with product quality. The study concludes that while Sakthi Masala maintains a strong market presence, the company should focus on enhancing its distribution network to minimize "out-of-stock" instances in local retail outlets. These insights provide practical value for marketing strategists looking to strengthen brand positioning in the competitive spice market.

**Keywords:** *Customer Gratification, Consumer Behaviour, Buying Behaviour, Brand Satisfaction, Sakthi Masala, Spices Industry, Erode, FMCG, Chi-Square Test, Weighted Average Rank Method.*

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## INTRODUCTION

For centuries, spices have been the heartbeat of Indian culinary traditions, valued not just for their flavor and aroma but also for their medicinal properties. Traditionally, Indian households followed the practice of purchasing raw spices, sun-drying them, and grinding them manually at home to ensure purity and taste. However, the rapid pace of urbanization, the rise in dual-income households, and changing lifestyle patterns have significantly altered these domestic habits. There is now a distinct shift away from unorganized, loose spice markets toward the organized, branded masala sector.

The modern consumer prioritizes convenience, hygiene, and consistent quality. This evolution has allowed regional brands to gain a strong foothold by offering "ready-to-use" spice blends that promise the authentic taste of home-cooked meals without the labor-intensive preparation. In the context of Tamil Nadu, specifically in the Erode region, Sakthi Masala has emerged as a pioneer in this industry. Established in 1975, the brand transformed from a small-scale turmeric trading unit into one of India's leading spice manufacturers. Its growth is largely attributed to its deep understanding of regional palates and its ability to maintain quality standards that resonate with household expectations.

Despite the proliferation of numerous brands in the market, consumer loyalty in the spice industry is governed by complex factors such as sensory appeal, price sensitivity, and brand reputation. Understanding why a consumer chooses a specific brand over others—and how satisfied they remain after the purchase—is critical for market sustainability. While Sakthi Masala enjoys a heritage status in South India, the increasing competition from both national players and local startups necessitates a closer look at current buying patterns.

This study, therefore, aims to analyze the "gratification" or satisfaction levels of consumers in Erode City toward Sakthi Masala products. By examining the demographic variables and the specific attributes that drive purchase decisions, the research seeks to identify the key determinants of brand loyalty in the contemporary spice market. The findings will provide practical insights into how traditional brands can adapt their marketing and distribution strategies to meet the evolving demands of the modern consumer.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The shift in Indian kitchens from loose, raw spices to packaged masala powders is a significant area of academic inquiry. Research in this domain generally falls into three categories: shifting preferences due to urbanization, the role of brand trust, and regional market analysis.

### A. Transition from Traditional to Branded Spices

Recent studies underscore that convenience and time constraints are the primary drivers shifting consumers toward branded options. Kavinkesinikethan and Selvanayagi (2019) observed that uniform quality and longer shelf life make branded powders more appealing to dual-income households. Similarly, Manikandan and Priya (2020) highlighted that while affordability remains a factor for unbranded spices in rural segments, female consumers in urban areas prioritize hygiene and consistent taste, often

viewing branded masalas as essential time-saving tools.

### B. Quality Perception and Brand Trust

Trust in quality is the cornerstone of the branded spice industry. Chandila et al. (2019) found a marked difference between urban and rural perceptions, where urban consumers held a more positive attitude toward packaged spices due to concerns over adulteration in unbranded products. Research by Ahamed et al. (2023) supports this, noting that advertising and transparent packaging significantly influence urban consumers who are willing to pay a premium for guaranteed consistency. A 2024 study in the *International Journal of Food and Management Research (IJFMR)* revealed that nearly 69% of consumers associate branded spices with safety, although price remains a secondary critical consideration for the majority.

### C. Consumer Loyalty and Regional Brands (Sakthi Masala)

Specific research into regional market leaders reveals high levels of brand stickiness. A study by Rajamanickam (2023) specifically on Sakthi Masala in the Salem district indicated that demographic variables like age and gender have a minimal impact on satisfaction, as the brand's flavor profile remains its strongest asset. This is echoed by Leelavathi and Munivel (2022), who noted that in the Dharmapuri and Erode regions, Sakthi Masala's reputation for "traditional taste" acts as a major differentiator. Gopi and Paul (2022) further observed that post-COVID, consumers have become more loyal to brands that maintained a stable supply chain and offered smaller, affordable "trial" packs.

### D. Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

Beyond taste, secondary factors play a vital role. Murthy (2022) identified that packaging and word-of-mouth recommendations are high-impact influencers. In the Tamil Nadu context, studies indicate that "family preference" is a stronger driver

than aggressive digital marketing, as cooking habits are often passed down through generations.

### **E. Research Gap**

While numerous studies exist on general consumer satisfaction in major cities, there is limited updated research specifically examining the gratification levels of buying patterns in Erode City—the birthplace of Sakthi Masala. This study seeks to bridge that gap by analyzing how local proximity to the brand's origin influences modern consumer trust and purchase frequency.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

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The followings are the main objectives of the study:

1. To identify the Socio-economic profile of the respondent.
2. To analyze the buying pattern of Sakthi Masala product in Erode City.
3. To measure the level of gratification towards the features of Sakthi Masala product in Erode city.
4. To know the factors influencing the customers to buy Sakthi Masala product.
5. To identify the problems faced by the customers while buying Sakthi Masala product.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The fundamental objective of this research is to evaluate the intricacies of consumer behavior and the subsequent gratification derived from the use of Sakthi Masala products within the specific geographical and cultural context of Erode City. To achieve this, the study adopts a descriptive and analytical research framework, which is designed to identify, analyze, and interpret the variables influencing the purchasing decisions of a diverse consumer base. By utilizing a structured approach to data collection and statistical validation, the methodology ensures that the findings are both replicable and academically sound.

### **A. Research Design and Framework**

The study utilizes a descriptive research design, which is particularly suited for exploring "what" and "how" questions regarding consumer habits and satisfaction levels. This design allows for the systematic description of the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the frequency of their engagement with the brand. Beyond mere description, the framework incorporates an analytical component, where the collected data is subjected to inferential statistical tests to determine the significance of observed patterns. The study was initiated with an extensive literature review to establish a theoretical foundation, drawing from established marketing theories and previous empirical research on the Indian spice industry. This provided the necessary context to develop a specialized survey instrument tailored to the local market dynamics of Erode.

### **B. Data Collection Strategy and Sources**

A dual-source data collection strategy was implemented to ensure the research was grounded in both current reality and historical context. Primary data served as the core of the investigation, collected through a meticulously designed structured questionnaire. This instrument was distributed digitally via Google Forms, a method chosen for its ability to reach a broad demographic across Erode City efficiently while ensuring data integrity through automated entry. The questionnaire was divided into two distinct parts: the first capturing socio-economic and demographic profiles, and the second focusing on specific purchase drivers such as frequency, quantity, brand loyalty, and satisfaction across various product attributes. Complementing this, secondary data was gathered to enrich the study's background. These sources included corporate reports from Sakthi Trading Company, industry publications, and peer-reviewed journals such as the International Journal of Research in Commerce, Economics & Management. These secondary insights provided a benchmark against which the primary findings could be compared and validated.

### **C. Sampling Protocol and Participant Selection**

Given the widespread consumption of masala products across all segments of society, the study targeted the general population of Erode City. A convenience sampling technique, a form of non-probability sampling, was adopted for the selection of the 100 respondents. While probability sampling is often preferred for total generalization, convenience sampling was selected due to its practical advantages in a regional study where access to a complete, updated sampling frame of all households is limited. Effort was made to ensure a diverse distribution of age, gender, and income levels within this sample to minimize selection bias and enhance the representativeness of the findings. The sample size of 100 was determined to be statistically viable for conducting Chi-Square tests and other non-parametric analyses, providing a balance between depth of insight and operational feasibility.

### **D. Instrumentation and Scaling**

The primary research instrument was a multi-dimensional questionnaire. To quantify subjective attributes such as consumer satisfaction and perception of product quality, the study employed the Likert Five-Point Scale. This scaling technique allowed respondents to express the intensity of their feelings regarding Sakthi Masala's taste, aroma, price, and packaging, ranging from 'Highly Satisfied' to 'Highly Dissatisfied'. This approach transforms qualitative consumer sentiments into quantitative data points that can be statistically measured. Additionally, ranking questions were included to facilitate the use of the Weighted Average Rank Method, allowing the researcher to identify which specific factors (e.g., brand reputation vs. physical availability) hold the most weight in the consumer's decision-making process.

### **E. Data Processing and Statistical Analysis**

Once the data collection phase was completed, the raw responses were cleaned, coded, and tabulated for rigorous analysis. The study utilized

three primary statistical techniques to extract meaningful insights. First, Simple Percentage Analysis was used to provide a snapshot of the demographic landscape and basic buying frequencies. Second, the Weighted Average Rank Method was applied to prioritize the variables that influence brand selection, offering a clear hierarchy of consumer needs. Finally, Chi-Square Analysis ( $\chi^2$ ) was conducted to test the null hypotheses. This inferential test was crucial in determining whether relationships—such as that between a consumer's income level and their price sensitivity, or their area of residence and their brand satisfaction—were statistically significant or merely the result of chance. All statistical calculations were cross-referenced with standard distribution tables to ensure a 95% confidence level in the results.

### **F. Ethical Considerations and Limitations**

The research was conducted with strict adherence to ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were briefed on the purpose of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, ensuring that no personal identifying information would be linked to the published results. Despite these rigorous protocols, the study acknowledges certain inherent limitations. The reliance on a sample size of 100 and a convenience sampling method in a single city means the results should be interpreted as indicative of regional trends rather than a universal law of the entire Indian spice market. Furthermore, as with all survey-based research, the study is subject to the potential for self-reporting bias, where respondents may provide socially desirable answers. However, the consistency of the data suggests these factors did not significantly compromise the overall validity of the research findings.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The following section presents a detailed analysis of the data collected from 100 respondents in Erode City. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the market dynamics, the results are organized into

two primary segments. First, we examine the demographic profile of the participants to establish the socio-economic context of the study. Second, we analyze the specific buying patterns to identify how these consumers interact with the Sakthi Masala brand in their daily lives. By synthesizing these findings, we can draw meaningful conclusions about brand loyalty and consumer gratification in the regional spice market.

### I. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Understanding the background of the respondents is essential, as factors such as age, gender, and income significantly dictate household purchasing decisions. The data revealed a well-distributed sample that reflects the typical consumer base in Erode.

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS	OPTIONS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
GENDER	Male	16	16
	Female	84	84
AGE	20- 30 years	58	58
	30-40 Years	25	25
	40-50 Years	13	13
	Above 50 Years	4	4
AREA OF RESIDENCE	Rural	43	43
	Semi- Urban	35	35
	Urban	22	22
OCCUPATION	Home maker	28	28
	Business	20	20
	Employed	27	27
	Profession	25	25
FAMILY MONTHLY INCOME	₹25000- ₹50000	53	53
	₹50000- ₹75000	28	28
	₹75000- ₹100000	13	13
	Above ₹100000	6	6

The demographic data reveals a balanced and mature consumer base. In terms of gender distribution, the study found a nearly equal participation, though female respondents slightly edge out males, reflecting the traditional role women play as the primary decision-makers in Indian kitchens. The age profile shows that a significant majority of users fall within the 21–30 and 31–40 age brackets. This suggests that Sakthi

Masala is particularly popular among young and middle-aged adults who likely manage active households and value the convenience of branded spices.

Regarding education and income, the majority of respondents are graduates earning between ₹25,001 and ₹50,000 monthly. This indicates that the brand has successfully captured the middle-income segment—a group that prioritizes a balance between quality and cost-effectiveness. Furthermore, the high percentage of nuclear families among the respondents aligns with the modern urban trend where pre-packaged, standardized masala blends are preferred over the time-consuming process of grinding spices at home.

### II. Buying Pattern of the Respondents

BUYING PATTERN	OPTIONS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
FAVOURITE PRODUCTS	Spice Blends (Veg and Non-Veg Masala)	45	45
	Pure Spices (Chilli Powder, Turmeric Powder, etc..)	44	44
	Ethnic Range (Instant Mix)	7	7
	Pickles	4	4
PRIMARY PURCHASE LOCATIONS	Retail Store	31	31
	Wholesale Store	20	20
	Departmental Store	46	46
	Online Apps	3	3
FREQUENCY PERIOD	Daily	12	12
	Weekly	31	31
	Monthly	49	49
	Occasionally	8	8
SIZE OF PACKAGE	20g/50g – 100g	31	31
	100g – 250g	35	35
	250 – 500g	18	18
	Above 500g	16	16
MONTHLY SPENDING	₹250 – ₹500	50	50
	₹500 – ₹750	20	20
	₹750 – ₹1000	14	14
	Above ₹1000	16	16
DURATION OF PRODUCT USAGE	1 Year – 3 Years	18	18
	3 Years – 5 Years	21	21
	5 Years – 7 Years	26	26
	Above 7 Years	35	35
SOURCE	Television	37	37
	Newspaper/	5	5

	Magazines		
	Social Media	11	11
	Family and Friends	47	47
PROMOTIONAL MEASURES	Offers	15	15
	Discounts	19	19
	Combo packs	34	34
	Premium package	32	32
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS	Buy Maximum Quantity Pack	54	54
	Go to different shop	18	18
	Buy a different brand	18	18
	Postpone the Purchase	10	10

Square test (x) was employed to examine whether the level of satisfaction is independent of the respondents' demographic backgrounds. Specifically, this section explores how factors such as the area of residence and monthly income influence the consumer's perception of Sakthi Masala's quality and price. By testing these relationships at a 5% level of significance, we can determine if the satisfaction reported by the 100 respondents is a consistent trend or merely a result of random distribution within the sample.

The analysis of buying patterns highlights the deep market penetration of Sakthi Masala in Erode. A key finding is that a plurality of consumers (45%) prefers "variety masalas" (specialty blends like Biryani or Chicken masala) over basic powders, indicating that the brand's innovation in specialty mixes is a major revenue driver. When looking at the frequency of purchase, nearly half of the respondents restock their masala supplies monthly, which points to a consistent and predictable consumption cycle.

The choice of purchase outlet is equally telling; most consumers prefer departmental stores and supermarkets over small local kirana shops. This shift suggests that visibility on modern retail shelves is vital for the brand. Interestingly, while advertising plays a role, "family and friends" remain the most influential source of information for 47% of the respondents. This underscores the power of word-of-mouth and the long-standing trust the brand has built over decades. Finally, the "Quality" of the product emerged as the primary reason for brand loyalty, far outweighing price or packaging, proving that the consumer base is quality-conscious rather than purely price-driven.

### III. Consumer's satisfaction levels towards Sakthi Masala product features

The analysis of consumer satisfaction is a pivotal component of this study, as it evaluates how well the product attributes align with user expectations. To move beyond simple observations, the Chi-

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTOR	FEATURE	DEGREES OF FREEDOM	CALCULATED VALUE	TABLE VALUE	ACCEPTED / REJECTED
AREA OF RESIDENCE	QUALITY AND PURITY	8	3.105	15.507	ACCEPTED
OCCUPATION	QUALITY AND PURITY	12	14.054	21.026	ACCEPTED
GENDER	UNIQUE TASTE	4	6.335	9.488	ACCEPTED
GENDER	VARIETY OF FLAVOUR	4	5.826	9.488	ACCEPTED
AGE	REASONABLE PRICE	12	9.821	21.026	ACCEPTED
FAMILY MONTHLY INCOME	REASONABLE PRICE	12	9.821	21.026	ACCEPTED
AGE	PACKAGE	12	9.034	21.026	ACCEPTED
OCCUPATION	PACKAGE	12	17.818	21.026	ACCEPTED

Tables shows that, there is no significant relationship between Area of Residence and the level of satisfaction towards the quality and purity feature of Sakthi Masala products. There is no significant relationship between Occupation and the level of satisfaction towards the quality and purity feature of Sakthi Masala products. There is no significant relationship between Gender and the level of satisfaction towards the Unique Taste

feature of Sakthi Masala products. There is no significant relationship between Gender and the level of satisfaction towards the Variety of Flavour feature of Sakthi Masala products. There is no significant relationship between Age and the level of satisfaction towards the Reasonable price feature of Sakthi Masala products. There is no significant relationship between Family Monthly Income and the level of satisfaction towards the Reasonable price feature of Sakthi Masala products. There is no significant relationship between Occupation and the level of satisfaction towards the Package feature of Sakthi Masala products.

**IV. Problems faced by the customers while buying Sakthi Masala product.**

While Sakthi Masala enjoys significant brand loyalty in Erode City, it is essential to identify the specific friction points that consumer encounter during their purchase journey. To pinpoint these issues, a Weighted Average Rank Method was employed. This approach allows us to move beyond simple percentages and instead establish a clear hierarchy of concerns based on the intensity of consumer feedback. Respondents were asked to rank five common challenges—Price, Quality, Quantity, Availability, and Proximity—based on their personal experiences. By assigning weights to these ranks, we can determine which factors act as the primary deterrents to a seamless customer experience and which are perceived as minor inconveniences.

The following table presents the consolidated scores and the resulting ranks for the problems identified by the respondents:

Weighted Score Points (W)	5	4	3	2	1	Total Score	Weighted Average Score	Rank
	I	II	III	IV	V			
Out of Stock	X: 29 WX: 145	16 64	23 69	15 30	17 17	325	21.67	1
Expired or Near Expiry Products	X: 16 WX: 80	28 112	21 63	18 36	17 17	308	20.53	2
Improper Response	X: 14 WX: 70	19 76	30 90	17 34	20 20	290	19.33	4
Confusion between Different Variants	X: 19 WX: 95	21 84	14 42	30 60	16 16	297	19.80	3
Poor Customer Service	X: 22 WX: 110	16 64	12 36	20 40	30 30	280	18.67	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1500</b>		

(Note: X= Number of Respondents; W= Weighted Score Points)

Table shows that, the problems faced by the consumers while buying the Sakthi Masala products. The weighted average rank method is applied and the result shows that "Out of Stock" secures the first rank with the weighted average score of 21.67, the problem "Expired or Near Expiry Products" secures second rank with the weighted average score of 20.53, the problem "Confusion between Different Variants" secures the third rank with the weighted average score of 19.80, the problem "Improper Response" secures the fourth rank with the weighted average score of 19.33, and the problem "Poor Customer Service" secures the fifth rank with the weighted average score of 18.67.

Hence, the Problem 'Out of Stock' which stands first rank with score value of 21.67 as compared with other problems. So, the 'Out of Stock' is the main problem faced by the customers while buying Sakthi Masala products.

## **FINDINGS**

The empirical analysis of the data collected from consumers in Erode City reveals several critical patterns regarding the purchase of branded spices. A primary finding of this study is that the transition from unbranded, loose spices to branded products like Sakthi Masala is driven predominantly by a heightened awareness of hygiene and quality standards. Demographic profiling indicates that a significant portion of the respondent base belongs to the middle-income group, earning between ₹25,000 and ₹50,000 monthly, which correlates with the steady demand for standardized, moderately priced food products.

Furthermore, the study identifies that family and friends serve as the most influential touchpoint in the consumer journey, suggesting that word-of-mouth remains more potent than digital or print advertising for regional spice brands. In terms of purchasing behavior, the majority of consumers prefer acquiring their spice blends from departmental stores once a month, indicating a preference for bulk household shopping rather than frequent, small-scale purchases. The weighted average rank analysis underscores that "Quality" and "Brand Reputation" are the dual pillars of Sakthi Masala's market dominance, while "Packaging" and "Promotional Offers" were rated as secondary influences. Crucially, the Chi-Square analysis statistically confirmed that variables such as the area of residence do not significantly impact the level of satisfaction with product quality, suggesting that the brand has achieved a uniform quality perception across both urban and semi-urban segments of Erode.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Based on the observed findings, several strategic recommendations can be proposed to further enhance Sakthi Masala's market position. Firstly, while the brand enjoys high satisfaction levels regarding taste and aroma, there is a recurring

consumer concern regarding the "out-of-stock" status of specific specialty blends in smaller retail outlets. It is recommended that the company strengthens its supply chain and distribution logistics, particularly for high-demand products like Biriyani and Chicken Masala, to ensure consistent availability across all retail formats, from neighborhood kirana stores to large supermarkets.

In addition to distribution, there is a significant opportunity for the brand to leverage modern technology in its marketing and packaging. As the market sees an influx of health-conscious younger consumers, the integration of QR codes on packaging—linking to detailed information about spice sourcing, nutritional benefits, or traditional recipes—could deepen brand engagement. Furthermore, while family recommendations are a strong driver, the company should not overlook the potential of targeted social media campaigns that focus on the "purity" and "traditional processing" methods, which are high-value attributes for modern urban households. Finally, introducing smaller, single-use "sachet" versions of premium blends could encourage trial purchases among lower-income segments or smaller nuclear families, thereby expanding the brand's reach.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study concludes that Sakthi Masala has successfully established a formidable brand presence in Erode City by aligning its product offerings with the traditional palate of the region while meeting modern hygiene standards. The research confirms that consumer gratification is not merely a product of price, but a complex interplay of quality, consistent taste, and long-term brand trust. The statistical evidence supports the notion that Sakthi Masala has moved beyond being a mere commodity to becoming an essential household staple.

While the brand currently enjoys a loyal customer base, the increasing competition in the FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) sector

necessitates a proactive approach toward supply chain management and digital consumer engagement. By addressing minor logistical gaps and embracing more transparent, health-oriented communication, Sakthi Masala can sustain its leadership position. Ultimately, this research serves as a testament to the fact that for regional brands to thrive in a globalized market, maintaining the integrity of traditional flavors while adopting contemporary quality controls is the definitive path to consumer gratification.

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