

STUDY OF CONSUMER BUYING PATTERNS TOWARDS BRANDED AND NON-BRANDED BAKERY PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines consumer buying patterns toward branded and non-branded bakery products, focusing on factors influencing purchasing behaviour and preferences. With the advent of technology and evolving consumer lifestyles, shopping has transformed from a need-based activity into an experiential pursuit. The bakery industry, rooted in history, continues to adapt to consumer demands for healthier, organic, and customized options. Branded bakery products, often associated with quality and reliability, cater to health-conscious and convenience-driven consumers, while non-branded products, valued for their freshness and artisanal quality, appeal to those supporting local businesses. The study explores the consumer decision-making process, encompassing problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decisions, and post-purchase behaviours. A sample size of 530 respondents was surveyed using a structured questionnaire to collect primary data, while secondary data was sourced from various published and unpublished materials. Key findings reveal significant influences of health trends, taste, packaging, and brand reputation on consumer preferences. The research underscores the importance of blending traditional and digital marketing strategies to meet the diverse expectations of bakery product consumers. By analyzing these dynamics, this study aims to provide insights that can help businesses align their offerings with evolving consumer needs and preferences.

Keywords: Branded and Non- Branded Bakery Products, Consumer Decision Making Process, Consumer Buying Patterns.

1. INTRODUCTION

With advancements in technology, an increasing number of consumers are becoming tech-savvy and integrating their technological experiences into various aspects of daily life. Shopping, in particular, has evolved beyond being merely a need-based activity. Today, it is often pursued for enjoyment, experiences, and social outings. Alongside purchasing clothes, accessories, home essentials, and luxury items, consumers also buy bakery products through both offline and online channels. Technology has created significant opportunities for sellers and buyers alike, enabling them to connect more efficiently, conveniently, and cost-effectively. Online shopping has seen a significant surge in popularity, with the industry experiencing rapid growth over the years due to the numerous benefits it offers to consumers. However, traditional brick-and-mortar stores continue to play a vital role in the shopping experience. According to Solomon (1995), consumer behaviour involves examining the processes through which individuals or groups select, purchase, utilize, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to fulfill their needs and desires.

Consumer and Bakery Products

The food industry is evolving to meet changing consumer preferences, where food is viewed as more than just a source of calories. Customers now seek dining experiences that deliver diverse flavors and textures, with a particular interest in products perceived as organic and wholesome. Businesses are leveraging this shift by offering products that align with these preferences. This has led to a greater focus on nutritious options, natural flavorings, and innovative recipes that enhance the overall dining experience. Additionally, consumers are willing to pay a premium for bread positioned as natural and healthy, making it essential to prioritize cleaner labels in product development. Consumer behaviour has evolved significantly since the pandemic. Customers are increasingly seeking "power ingredients" that not only enhance flavor but also contribute to health, along with healthier food choices overall. In the Asia Pacific region, a large majority recognize the link between gut health and overall immunity and mental well-being, with 87% actively pursuing fiber-rich diets. This has created demand for specialized products tailored to individual lifestyles. According to the Taste Tomorrow study by Puratos, many consumers place high value on bread designed to align with their dietary needs. Additionally, as awareness grows about cocoa's nutritional richness and its potential to reduce anxiety, there is an opportunity to reshape perceptions of bread, pastries, and chocolate.

Driven by informed choices and the impact of the pandemic, consumers are becoming increasingly mindful of their purchases. Among dietary trends, the shift toward plant-based diets stands out, with 56% of respondents believing these

diets are healthier than animal-based options and more environmentally friendly. Bakers are well-positioned to capitalize on these shifts. While taste remains the top priority for consumers, the pandemic has heightened the importance of appearance, as today's customers "eat with their eyes." They seek familiarity and nostalgia while also exploring new ingredients and global flavors, presenting exciting opportunities for innovative and agile bakers.

Although most consumers prefer shopping in physical stores, experts from Taste Tomorrow recommend creating a "phygital" experience that blends online and offline channels. By leveraging AI and smart technology, businesses can offer personalized recommendations, helping consumers make healthier food choices. The bakery industry, with its rich history spanning thousands of years, continues to evolve and thrive to meet consumer demands. Advancements in baking technology, shifting market trends, and changing consumer preferences have driven significant global growth in the sector. To remain competitive in this dynamic market, businesses in the bakery industry must understand consumer behaviour and effectively cater to their expectations.

Branded and Non-Branded Bakery Products

Branded bakery products are those produced and sold under a recognizable brand name, often associated with consistent quality, reliability and customer trust. These products are manufactured by well-known companies that invest in standardized recipes, quality control, packaging and marketing to build a loyal customer base. Examples include packaged bread, cakes, and cookies from brands. Branded bakery goods are typically sold in supermarkets, convenience stores and online platforms, often commanding higher prices due to their perceived reliability and the added value of professional branding. Consumers choose these products for the assurance of hygiene, consistent taste and the convenience of readily available nutritional information. Non-branded bakery products are typically made and sold by local bakeries or small-scale businesses without a widely recognized brand name. These products often rely on the skill of local bakers and are sold fresh to customers in their immediate vicinity. Examples include locally baked bread, handmade cookies and cakes sold in small shops or at farmer's markets. Non-branded bakery items are often more affordable and may be customized to suit local tastes and preferences. While they may lack the sophisticated packaging and standardized production of branded products, many consumers prefer them for their freshness, artisanal quality and the ability to support local businesses.

Consumer Decision Making for Bakery Products

The consumer decision-making process for bakery products involves several steps that influence purchasing behaviour. At the problem recognition stage, consumers might realize a need for baked goods, whether it's for daily consumption, special occasions, or cravings. This recognition can trigger a search for specific bakery products that meet their needs, such as bread, pastries, cakes, or cookies. During the information search, consumers often rely on familiar brands, online reviews, word-of-mouth from friends or family, and packaging to learn more about different bakery options.

In the evaluation of alternatives stage, consumers compare bakery products based on factors like taste, freshness, price, nutritional value, packaging, and brand reputation. For example, a health-conscious consumer may prioritize whole-grain or low-sugar options, while someone planning a special event might focus on presentation and customization. Once satisfied with their evaluation, they make a purchase decision, selecting a bakery product that best aligns with their preferences and needs.

After the purchase, consumers engage in post-purchase behaviour, where they reflect on their choice by considering factors like taste, freshness, and overall satisfaction. Positive experiences may lead to repeat purchases and brand loyalty, while negative experiences could prompt future evaluations of other bakery options. Marketers who understand these decision-making stages can develop strategies that address consumers' needs at each point, from highlighting product quality and variety to emphasizing convenience and taste.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Hsieh and Chang (2004) found a connection between consumers' post-purchase experiences and their subsequent price sensitivity. They noted that whether the experience occurs before or after the purchase, it has an impact on how sensitive consumers are to price changes.

Lester *et al.* (2006) conducted a study involving over 780 university and college students to investigate their online shopping habits and behaviours. The findings revealed that an overwhelming majority, approximately 95% of the students, actively used the internet and spent over \$500 annually on online purchases, primarily using their own credit cards. The research also highlighted that the factors influencing students' purchasing decisions varied significantly, depending on the type of product and generational differences.

Agarwal and Mehrotra (2009) conducted a survey with 353 respondents from Northern India to assess customer perceptions of branded and unbranded clothing. The study revealed that among various factors, the cut and fit of clothing

were deemed most important by customers when making their choices. Regression analysis showed that variety had the greatest influence on customers' preferences for branded or unbranded clothing. The key distinction in Indian consumers' perceptions was that branded clothing is viewed as a status symbol.

Chitra (2014) conducted a study to analyze consumer buying behaviour towards branded apparel, using primary data. The researcher categorized the influencing variables into two groups: consumer-specific and brand-specific. Consumer-specific variables include factors like confidence, income level, lifestyle, and normative influence, while brand-specific variables encompass emotional value, brand equity, brand awareness, and perceived quality, all of which impact consumers' purchase intentions.

Siyabi & Shekaili (2021) have demonstrated that consumers with greater product knowledge are more likely to make well-informed purchasing decisions. These individuals are better equipped to evaluate products and choose those that best match their specific needs and preferences. This deeper understanding allows them to navigate available options more effectively, ensuring that their purchases are not only aligned with their desires but also meet their functional requirements. As a result, knowledgeable consumers tend to make more satisfying and targeted choices in the marketplace.

Kabra and Jadhav (2023) stress the importance of understanding consumer behaviour for the ongoing growth of payment gateways. They highlight that key factors such as convenience, security, and attractive rewards, including cashback offers, play a crucial role in driving the adoption and continued use of these platforms. By addressing these consumer preferences, payment gateways can not only attract new users but also foster greater loyalty among existing ones, ensuring their long-term success and sustainability in the competitive market.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the consumer buying patterns towards branded and non-branded bakery products.

Sample Size

In the present research study the researcher has taken 530 respondents. So, the sample size for the present research study is:

Sample Size- 530

Primary Data

In the present research study the primary data has been collected from the customers purchasing the bakery products. In the present research the researcher has employed the questionnaire as an instrument to collect the primary data. (ii)

Secondary Data

The researcher's secondary data was gathered from a variety of published and unpublished sources.

Data Analysis

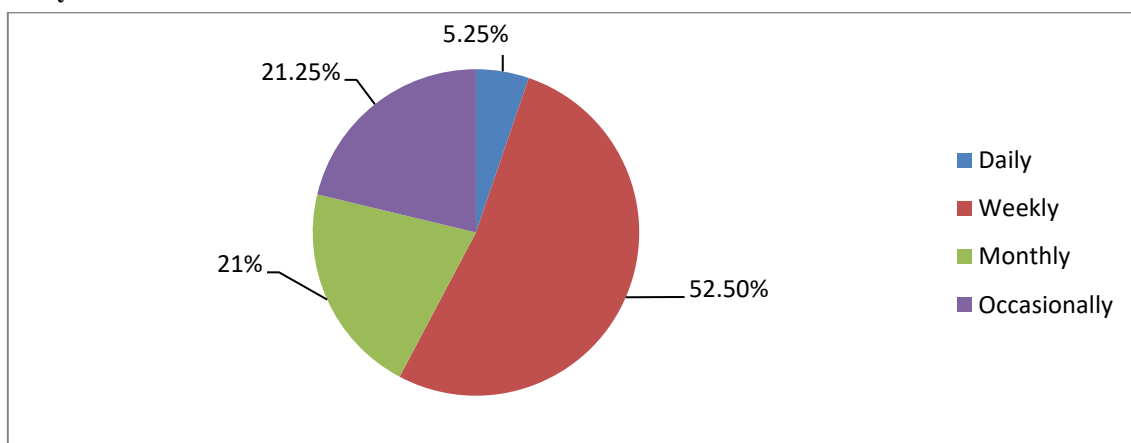


Figure 1: Response for “How frequently do you purchase bakery products?”

Analysis: The data indicates varied consumer preferences in terms of frequency of purchasing bakery products. A majority of respondents i.e. 52.5% reported purchasing bakery products on a weekly basis, 21%, purchase bakery products on a monthly basis, indicating that these consumers may reserve such purchases for specific needs. Similarly, 21.25% of respondents reported buying bakery products occasionally, which might reflect a tendency to associate bakery items with special events, the smallest group, 5.25%, purchases bakery products daily, likely representing consumers with a high preference for fresh bakery items or those who integrate these products into their daily meals, such as bread for breakfast.

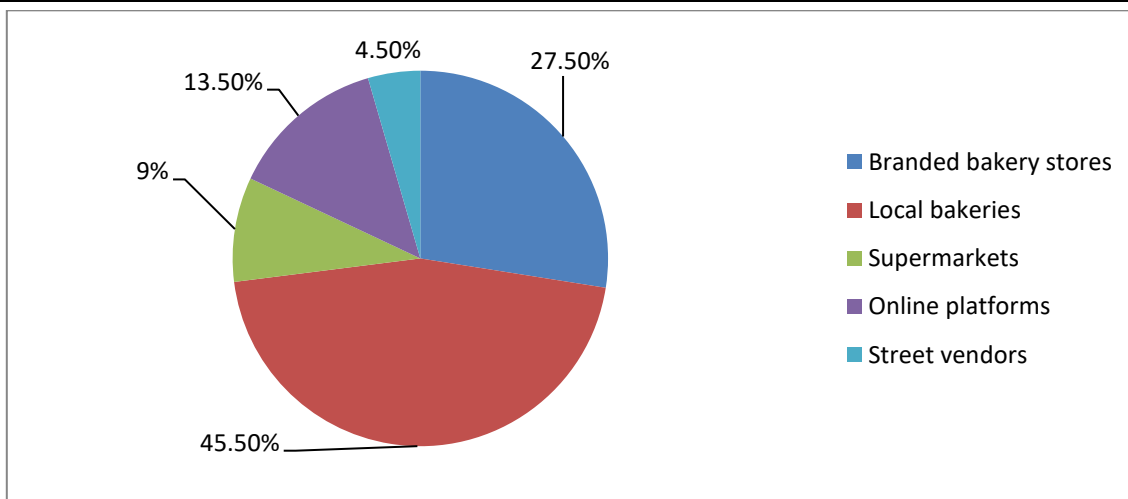


Figure 2: Response for “How frequently do you purchase bakery products?”

Analysis: The data reflects diverse consumer preferences regarding the purchase of bakery products, with a significant inclination towards local bakeries, which account for 45.5% of the responses. Branded bakery stores are the second most favored option, attracting 27.5% of consumers. This indicates a strong demand for consistent quality, brand recognition, and the variety offered by these outlets. Online platforms account for 13.5% of the responses, reflecting the growing acceptance of e-commerce in the bakery sector. Supermarkets, chosen by 9% of respondents, appeal to consumers who prefer one-stop shopping for all their needs, including bakery items. Finally, street vendors constitute smallest group at 4.5%, which could be attributed to limited trust in product hygiene and quality.

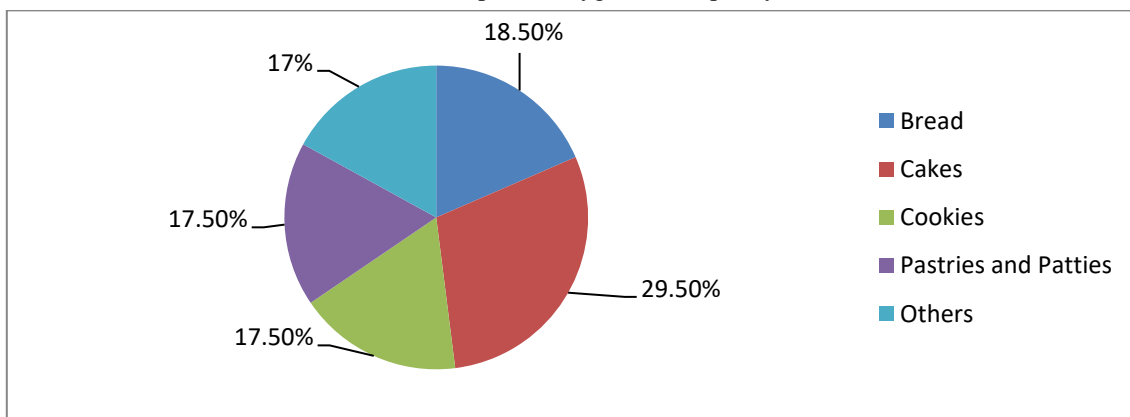


Figure 3: Response for “What type of bakery products do you buy most often?”

Analysis: The data indicates diverse preferences among consumers when it comes to the types of bakery products they purchase. Cakes emerge as the most popular choice, with 29.5% of respondents selecting them as their preferred product. Bread, chosen by 18.5% of consumers, reflects its role as a daily essential for many households. Both cookies and pastries and patties were preferred by 17.5% of respondents each, highlighting their popularity as snacks and treats. The others category accounting for 17% indicates a segment of consumers with diverse tastes and specific preferences.

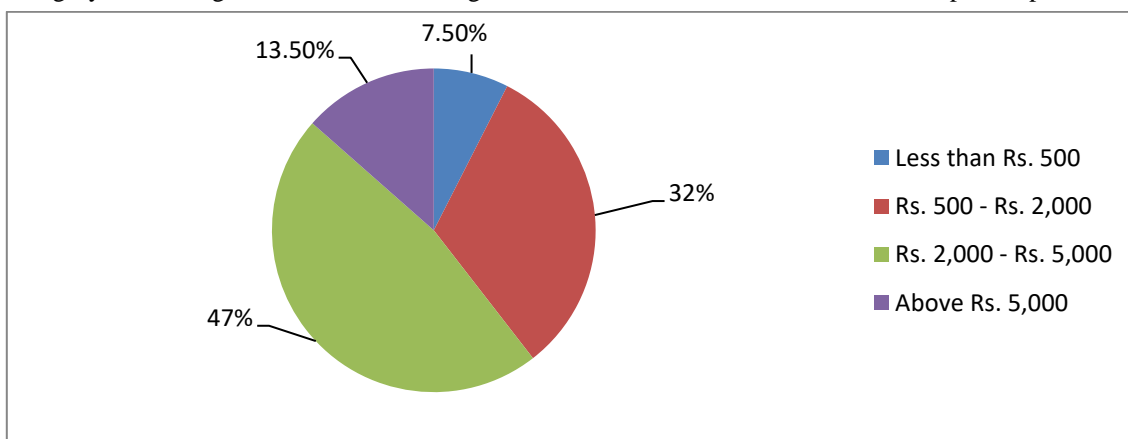


Figure 4: Response for “How much do you spend on bakery products monthly?”

Analysis: The data reveals significant variations in consumer spending on bakery products, reflecting diverse purchasing patterns and financial allocations. The largest group, accounting for 47% of respondents, spends Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 5,000 monthly on bakery products. The second-largest group, 32%, spends between Rs. 500 and Rs. 2,000, suggesting moderate consumption patterns. These consumers may purchase bakery products regularly but focus on essentials like bread and cookies, with occasional indulgence in higher-priced items. A smaller segment, 13.5%, reports spending above Rs. 5,000 monthly. This could represent high-income households and their spending highlights a niche market for premium and luxury bakery items. Finally, 7.5% of respondents spend less than Rs. 500 per month, reflecting minimal consumption.

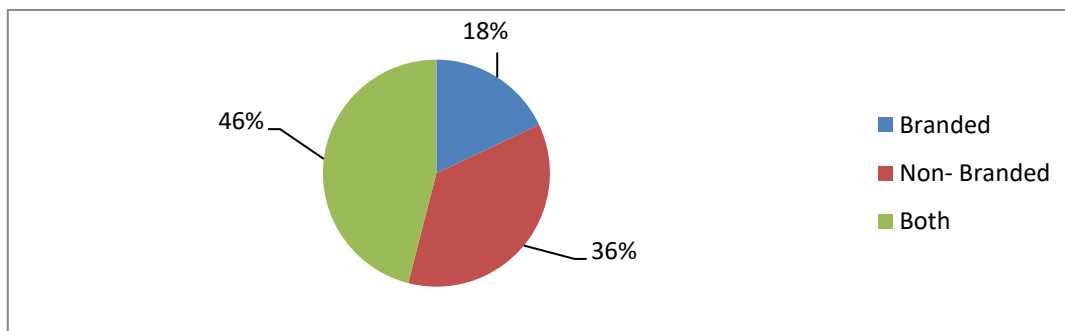


Figure 5: Response for “Do you purchase branded or non-branded bakery products more frequently?”

Analysis: The data indicates diverse consumer preferences when it comes to purchasing branded versus non-branded bakery products. A significant portion of respondents, 46%, reported buying both branded and non-branded products, suggesting a flexible approach where consumers balance quality, affordability, and convenience. Non-branded bakery products are preferred by 36% of respondents, reflecting their popularity among consumers who prioritize affordability, freshness, or local flavors. On the other hand, 18% of consumers prefer branded bakery products, signifying a demand for consistent quality, hygiene, and the trust associated with established brands.

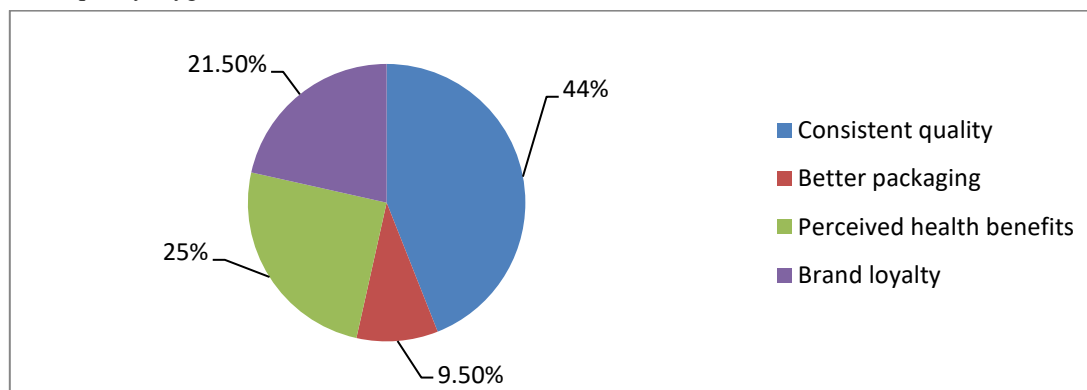


Figure 6: Response for “Why do you prefer branded bakery products?”

Analysis: The data highlights key factors driving consumer preference for branded bakery products, with consistent quality emerging as the most significant reason, cited by 44% of respondents. Perceived health benefits are the second most influential factor, accounting for 25% of preferences. Brand loyalty, chosen by 21.5% of respondents, underscores the importance of trust and emotional connection in consumer behaviour. Better packaging, cited by 9.5% of consumers, is a less prominent but noteworthy factor.

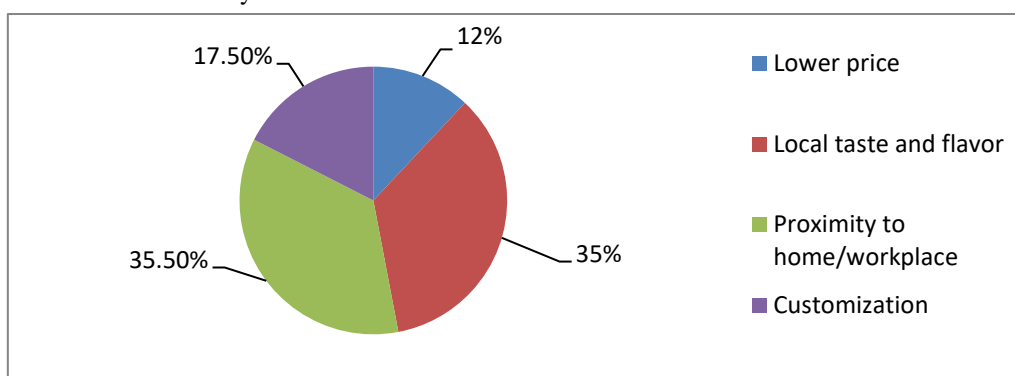


Figure 7: Response for “Why do you prefer non-branded bakery products?”

Analysis: The data highlights the primary factors influencing consumer preference for non-branded bakery products, with proximity to home or workplace being the most significant reason, cited by 35.5% of respondents. Local taste and flavor, chosen by 35%, is another major factor. Customization, cited by 17.5% of respondents, reflects the personalized service offered by local bakeries. Lower price, mentioned by 12% also contributes to the preference for non-branded bakery products.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The result shows that a majority of respondents i.e. 52.5% reported purchasing bakery products on a weekly basis, 21%, purchase bakery products on a monthly basis, indicating that these consumers may reserve such purchases for specific needs. Similarly, 21.25% of respondents reported buying bakery products occasionally, which might reflect a tendency to associate bakery items with special events, the smallest group, 5.25%, purchases bakery products daily, likely representing consumers with a high preference for fresh bakery items or those who integrate these products into their daily meals, such as bread for breakfast.

2. The result reflects diverse consumer preferences regarding the purchase of bakery products, with a significant inclination towards local bakeries, which account for 45.5% of the responses. Branded bakery stores are the second most favored option, attracting 27.5% of consumers. This indicates a strong demand for consistent quality, brand recognition, and the variety offered by these outlets. Online platforms account for 13.5% of the responses, reflecting the growing acceptance of e-commerce in the bakery sector. Supermarkets, chosen by 9% of respondents, appeal to consumers who prefer one-stop shopping for all their needs, including bakery items. Finally, street vendors constitute smallest group at 4.5%, which could be attributed to limited trust in product hygiene and quality.

3. The result found diverse preferences among consumers when it comes to the types of bakery products they purchase. Cakes emerge as the most popular choice, with 29.5% of respondents selecting them as their preferred product. Bread, chosen by 18.5% of consumers, reflects its role as a daily essential for many households. Both cookies and pastries and patties were preferred by 17.5% of respondents each, highlighting their popularity as snacks and treats. The others category accounting for 17% indicates a segment of consumers with diverse tastes and specific preferences.

4. The result reveals significant variations in consumer spending on bakery products, reflecting diverse purchasing patterns and financial allocations. The largest group, accounting for 47% of respondents, spends Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 5,000 monthly on bakery products. The second-largest group, 32%, spends between Rs. 500 and Rs. 2,000, suggesting moderate consumption patterns. These consumers may purchase bakery products regularly but focus on essentials like bread and cookies, with occasional indulgence in higher-priced items. A smaller segment, 13.5%, reports spending above Rs. 5,000 monthly. This could represent high-income households and their spending highlights a niche market for premium and luxury bakery items. Finally, 7.5% of respondents spend less than Rs. 500 per month, reflecting minimal consumption.

5. The result indicates diverse consumer preferences when it comes to purchasing branded versus non-branded bakery products. A significant portion of respondents, 46%, reported buying both branded and non-branded products, suggesting a flexible approach where consumers balance quality, affordability, and convenience. Non-branded bakery products are preferred by 36% of respondents, reflecting their popularity among consumers who prioritize affordability, freshness, or local flavors. On the other hand, 18% of consumers prefer branded bakery products, signifying a demand for consistent quality, hygiene, and the trust associated with established brands.

6. The result highlights key factors driving consumer preference for branded bakery products, with consistent quality emerging as the most significant reason, cited by 44% of respondents. Perceived health benefits are the second most influential factor, accounting for 25% of preferences. Brand loyalty, chosen by 21.5% of respondents, underscores the importance of trust and emotional connection in consumer behaviour. Better packaging, cited by 9.5% of consumers, is a less prominent but noteworthy factor.

7. The data highlights the primary factors influencing consumer preference for non-branded bakery products, with proximity to home or workplace being the most significant reason, cited by 35.5% of respondents. Local taste and flavor, chosen by 35%, is another major factor. Customization, cited by 17.5% of respondents, reflects the personalized service offered by local bakeries. Lower price, mentioned by 12% also contributes to the preference for non-branded bakery products.

5. CONCLUSION

The study reveals diverse consumer buying patterns and preferences for bakery products, highlighting significant differences between branded and non-branded options. A majority of respondents purchase bakery products weekly, indicating regular consumption patterns, with local bakeries emerging as the most preferred purchase point due to their

proximity, affordability and personalized offerings. Branded bakery products, while attracting a smaller segment, are favored for their consistent quality, hygiene and brand trust, appealing to consumers willing to pay in premium options. Consumer preferences also vary by product type and spending behaviour. Cakes are the most popular bakery item, followed by bread, cookies, and pastries, while monthly spending trends show a dominant preference for moderate to high expenditure on bakery items, reflecting their integral role in daily life.

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