Original Research Article

VALUE ADDITION AND CONSUMER PREFERENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: A CASE STUDY OF THE KAZHANI FARMERS MARKET

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of value addition in shaping consumer preferences through social media marketing, focusing on Kazhani Farmers' Market in Erode district, Tamil Nadu. Conducted in June 2024, the research explores how value-added features, such as improved health benefits, enhanced product quality, and innovative characteristics, influence consumer choices. Using open-ended questions, data were collected from market members on their preferences for value-added products and the reasons behind these preferences. Qualitative analysisperformed with NVivo software, revealed that consumers are drawn to products that offer significant benefits, dietary value, and superior quality. The findings indicate that social media marketing strategies highlighting these value-added attributes can effectively engage consumers and drive purchasing decisions. This study provides insights for businesses aiming to optimize their social media presence and cater to health-conscious consumers by emphasizing the unique value of their products.

Keywords: Health, Nutrition, Standardization, Quality, Convenience.

1. INTRODUCTION

India's economy is based primarily on the agricultural sector, which will account for 18% of the country's GVA in FY24. India's economy has benefited greatly from the sector's extraordinary tenacity and resilience in the face of challenges created by the global health crisis and climatic instability (PIB, 2024). The total quantity of food grain produced in the fiscal year 2023 was 329.7 million tonnes, an increase of 14.1 million tonnes over the year before. The average yearly production of food grains rose from 233 million tonnes in the previous ten years to 289 million tonnes between the fiscal years 2015 and 2023. Production of coarse cereals, oilseeds, wheat, pulses, and rice increased significantly. India is the world's biggest producer of milk, pulses, and spices, and it continues to hold a leading position in the agricultural commodities market. India also holds the second-place position worldwide for producing various agricultural goods, including sugarcane, wheat, rice, cotton, fruits, vegetables, tea, farmed fish,

and sugar. The third advance estimates show that the horticulture industry produced 355.25 million tonnes, a record-breaking amount. Improved performance is demonstrated by the notable increase in agricultural exports, which surpassed previous records to reach ₹4.2 lakh crore in the fiscal year 2023. Indian farmers have shown their ability to meet global food demands with the right opportunities and policies in place, indicating enormous potential for further growth (FAO, 2024). Despite significant industrialization over the past 60 years, agriculture continues to hold a central position in society. Although agriculture has given us food security, it has not yet succeeded in giving us nutritional security. The process of adding value involves processing, packing, improving quality, or using other methods to realize a high price for a primary product with the same volume. The two strategies for maximizing profits and ensuring nutritional security are diversification of crops and value addition (UNCCD, 2024).Post-harvest processing is essential for converting, adding value to, and preventing losses in agricultural products. The establishment of Agro Processing Centers (APCs) has facilitated the processing and value addition of food commodities at the village level. This initiative not only reduces post-harvest losses but also creates additional employment opportunities for farmers and residents (Mann & Chahal, 2021). Value chains can also be analyzed from the perspective of food safety and health (Trench *et al.,* 2011). This encourages the Kazhani Farmers Market in Erode district of Tamil Nadu, to produce value-added products tailored to consumer preferences. The value-added productsproduced and marketed by the Kazhani Farmers Market based on the preferences of consumers through social media marketing were discussed in the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Value Addition

Value addition refers to altering the physical state or structure of a product, such as transforming wheat into flour or strawberries into jam. It involves physically separating agricultural products or commodities in a manner that enhances their worth (USDA, 2024).Global agricultural markets have grown more complex as a result of shifting consumer demand, the creation of intricate food standards largely associated with food safety and quality, technological advancements and changes in the industry structure along the value chain (Goldsmith et al., 2002; Humphrey &Memedovic, 2006).Value addition in agriculture is necessary for farmer profitability, the empowerment of farmers and marginalized groups in society, the provision of branded, safe, and high-quality food to consumers, the reduction of post-harvest losses, the decrease in imports and the increase in exports, for the growth of

subsidiary industries, for the mitigation of marketing risk, for the promotion of crop diversification, and the enhancement of farmers' financial stability(FAO, 2024). The global millets market is valued at US$ 14.22 billion in 2023 and is expected to expand at a CAGR of 5.3%, reaching US$ 23.83 billion by 2033, as reported by FactMR. India's leading position in the millets market is evident, with the market valued at US$ 5.05 billion in 2022 and the country producing over 40% of the world's millets.

Consumer Preference

Besides providing fresh produce, farmers' markets often carry shelf-stable value-added products such as sauces, jams, and fermented items (Quick *et al.,* 2022). Farmers markets possess the capability to yield a broad range of benefits both socially and economically for communities, farmers, and consumers (Berning, 2012; Bimbo *et al.,* 2015). Farmers markets are especially crucial for low-income neighborhoods in cities with limited grocery store access and high food insecurity (Evans *et al.,* 2015; McGill, 2015; Ruelas *et al.,* 2012; Spalding *et al.,* 2012). Food quality and nutrition have become major concerns for consumers. Because moringa has both nutritional and medicinal potential, domestic consumption of value-added moringa products is too low when compared to exports. which is easily obtained locally in both India and other countries, and where the demand for moringa and its products with added value is growing, year-round supply is becoming necessary (Gil *et al.,* 2000; Sandeep *et al.,* 2018).

Social Media Marketing

Social media is a comprehensive term that refers to software tools enabling the creation and sharing of user-generated content (O'Reilly, 2005). Social media marketing is the use of social media platforms to foster conversations and positively impact consumer behavior, including actions like product purchases, newsletter subscriptions, online community registrations, and other consumer activities (Tuten & Solomon, 2014). Social media marketing offers small firms more opportunities to reach a large target audience with a limited budget, provided they can use it effectively (Charoensukmongkol&Sasatanun, 2017). Firms adopt social media marketing to achieve the marketing objective of generating value for customers by integrating social media marketing with other marketing communication tools (Dahnil*et al.,* 2014).Beyond just the type of platform influencing how consumers interact with brand messages on social media, the platforms themselves have also undergone significant changes over time. The evolution of social media sites may have impacted their overall effectiveness (Voorveld, 2019).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was undertaken at Kazhani Farmers' Market in the Erode district of Tamil Nadu as a case study during June 2024. The choice of this location was intentional, given its dynamic market atmosphere and its typical representation of the region's agricultural practices. The research aimed to investigate the concept of value addition in agriculture and assess consumer preferences for products that have undergone value-adding processes, with a specific focus on those marketed via social media channels. To gather quantitative data, a meticulously designed questionnaire was employed, concentrating on the demographic details of the participants. This questionnaire featured sections that collected information about the respondents' age, gender, education level, and other pertinent demographic details. The structured format of the questionnaire ensured that the data gathered was both comprehensive and aligned with the study's objectives. To delve deeper into understanding consumer preferences regarding value-added agricultural products, the questionnaire included open-ended questions. This analysis was crucial in uncovering patterns and trends in consumer behavior, providing insights into how demographic attributes affect the efficacy of marketing. Additionally, the correlation analysis using SPSS Software illuminated the link between social media marketing tactics and consumer interaction through closed ended questions. For the qualitative component of the study, the NVivo software was used. This tool enabled the researchers to conduct a thorough analysis of the textual data derived from the open-ended responses. With the help of features like word clouds and weightage tables, the researchers were able to visualize and interpret the findings efficiently. Word clouds offered a visual depiction of the most frequently mentioned terms and concepts, while weightage tables assisted in quantifying the significance of various factors based on their prevalence and relevance in the responses.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kazhani Farmers' Market in Erode district of Tamil Nadu has been selling various value-added products through traditional and online marketing. Kazhani Farmers' Market uses online marketing to expand their audience reach beyond the local community, potentially attracting customers from other regions or even internationally. This approach enables them to implement targeted advertising strategies that appeal to specific demographics or interest groups likely to be interested in their products. Moreover, online marketing provides valuable insights into

customer behavior, preferences, and feedback, allowing Kazhani Farmers' Market to make informed decisions and adjust their products and marketing strategies accordingly. Establishing an online presence enhances brand awareness and credibility, with a well-maintained website and active social media profiles boosting the market's image and attracting more customers. Online platforms also facilitate direct interaction with customers via social media, email newsletters, and blogs, helping to build a sense of community and loyalty similar to the study discussed by Nehir El & Simsek (2012).The importance of value added products through social media marketing correlated with variables such as age, gender, education, product quality, health benefits, innovativeness and consumer choices as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between variables with marketing behavior through social media

S. No.	Variables	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
1.	Age	-0.014
2.	Gender	-0.024
3.	Education	0.201*
4.	Product Quality	0.232**
5.	Health Benefits	0.303**
6.	Innovativeness	0.196*
7.	Consumer choices	0.546**

* 5% significant level

** 1% significant level

Table 1 presented that age and gender had no significant relationship with marketing behavior, while variables such as education and innovativeness were significant at 5% level and product quality, health benefits, and consumer choices were significant at 1% level. The lack of correlation between age and gender with the outcome variable (-0.014 and -0.024, respectively) suggests that these demographic factors are not crucial in this context. This observation aligns with existing studies that indicate age and gender may not significantly impact consumer behaviors or preferences in certain markets. Therefore, strategies or interventions aiming to influence the outcome should not primarily target these demographic attributes. Conversely, the positive correlation between education and the outcome variable (0.201*) indicates that higher levels of education are linked to more favorable outcomes. This result suggests that educational programs could be instrumental in enhancing the desired outcome, possibly by boosting awareness or comprehension of the product or service among the target audience. The analysis

also uncovered a notable positive correlation between product quality (0.232**) and health benefits (0.303**) with the outcome variable. These findings highlight the critical role of product attributes in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. Consumers are more inclined to prefer products that are perceived as high-quality and offer health benefits, suggesting that efforts to enhance these aspects could lead to better market acceptance and success. Innovativeness was found to have a positive but weak correlation with the outcome variable (0.196*), indicating that while innovation is valued, its impact is not as significant as other factors. This finding implies that although innovation can serve as a differentiating factor, it should be paired with other strategies, such as enhancing product quality and emphasizing health benefits, to maximize its impact. The most substantial correlation was observed between consumer choices and the outcome variable (0.546**), underscoring the significant role of consumer decision-making processes in influencing the outcome. This finding is consistent with the broader literature on consumer behavior, which stresses the importance of understanding and accommodating consumer preferences to achieve favorable outcomes. Strategies that aim to influence consumer choices, such as targeted marketing campaigns or personalized product offerings, are likely to be most effective in achieving the desired outcomes.

(Output: NVivo)

Figure 1: Word cloud of value-added products preferred by consumers

Table 1: Word frequency of value-added products preferred by consumers

S. No.	Word	Weighted Percentage (%)
1.	millet	17.39

2.	mix	14.49
3.	cookies	7.73
4.	dosa	5.80
5.	multi	4.35
6.	finger	3.86
7.	jaggery	3.86
8.	chips	2.42
9.	adai	1.93
10.	badam	1.93
11.	banana	1.93
12.	candy	1.93
13.	chappathi	1.93
14.	foxtail	1.93
15.	gram	1.93
16.	health	1.93
17.	honey	1.93
18.	horse	1.93
19.	palm	1.93
20.	dry	1.45
21.	fruits	1.45
22.	multimillet	1.45
23.	pearl	1.45
24.	flour	0.97
25.	masala	0.97
26.	oil	0.97
27.	powder	0.97
28.	snacks	0.97
29.	wheat	0.97
30.	chikki	0.48
31.	chilli	0.48
32.	crunchy	0.48
33.	dates	0.48
34.	doughnut	0.48

35.	food	0.48
36.	indian	0.48
37.	peanut	0.48
38.	pearlmillet	0.48
39.	processed	0.48
40.	products	0.48
41.	pulse	0.48
42.	sweet	0.48
43.	turmeric	0.48

Figure 1 describes the value-added products mostly preferred by consumers bought from Kazhani Farmers' Market through social media marketing.The term "millet" has the highest weighted percentage (17.39%), indicating strong consumer interest and preference for millet-based products, making millet a key focus for value-added products in social media marketing. "Mix" ranks second (14.49%), reflecting significant interest in mixed products, likely multi-grain or multi-ingredient mixes, showing that consumers favor diverse and versatile offerings. "Cookies" are quite popular (7.73%), indicating a preference for millet or multi-grain cookies. These could be effectively promoted as value-added products on social media, highlighting the importance of millet-based bakery products as discussed in the study by Verma and Patel (2013). "Dosa" (5.80%) suggests a preference for traditional South Indian foods, possibly made from millet or other healthy grains, highlighting a market for healthier traditional food products. Kazhani Farmers' Market offers dosa mixes from millets and multi-grains on social media. The term "multi" (4.35%) indicates a general interest in multi-grain or multi-nutrient products, aligning with the trend toward health-conscious consumer choices. Both "finger millet products" and "jaggery-based products" have a weighted percentage of 3.86%, indicating a balanced interest in these healthy and traditional ingredients as suggested by Tharanathan&Mahadevamma (2003). "Chips" at 2.42% shows demand for healthy snack options like millet or multi-grain chips, suitable for social media marketing in Kazhani Farmers' Market. Adai (1.93%), Badam (1.93%), Banana (1.93%), Candy (1.93%), Chappathi (1.93%), Foxtail (1.93%), Gram (1.93%), Health (1.93%), Honey (1.93%), Horse gram (1.93%), and Palm (1.93%) each have a similar weighted percentage, indicating a diverse interest in various traditional and health-focused products and ingredients similar to , suggesting multiple niche markets. In addition, there is an interest in dry fruits, pearl millet, and multi-millet products, reflecting a preference for nutritious

and convenient options, where adai dosa mix, badam powder, candies, chappathi mix from pearl millet, foxtail millet, multi millets; banana chips, horse gram powder, honey-dippedproducts were various products had been marketed by the farmers' market. Flour (0.97%), Masala (0.97%), Oil (0.97%), Powder (0.97%), Snacks (0.97%), and Wheat (0.97%) reflect diverse consumer needs for essential cooking ingredients and snacks, making them ideal for promotion through social media marketing. Terms with lower percentages, such as Chikki (0.48%), Chilli (0.48%), Crunchy (0.48%), Dates (0.48%), Doughnut (0.48%), Food (0.48%), Indian (0.48%), Peanut (0.48%), Pearl millet (0.48%), Processed (0.48%), Products (0.48%), Pulse (0.48%), Sweet (0.48%), and Turmeric (0.48%), represent a broad range of interests from traditional sweets to spices and processed foods as suggested by Devi & Narayanasamy (2013), indicating potential areas for targeted social media marketing campaigns. Products like dosa mixes and health mixes from pearl millet and pulses, as well as processed food items such as millet snacks, sweets, chikki, chili powder, turmeric powder, crunchy snacks, Indian doughnuts, and dates were least preferred by consumers from the farmers' market through social media marketing.

(Output: NVivo)

Figure 2: Word cloud of reasons for consumer preference toward value-added products

Table 2: Word frequency of reasons for consumer preference toward value-added products

S. No.	Word	Weighted Percentage (%)
1.	products	9.49
2.	value	7.30
3.	added	6.57
4.	health	2.92
5.	benefits	2.19
6.	dietary	2.19
7.	life	2.19
8.	quality	2.19
9.	shelf	2.19
10.	better	1.46
11.	brand	1.46
12.	consumers	1.46
13.	enhanced	1.46
14.	features	1.46
15.	healthy	1.46
16.	improved	1.46
17.	innovative	1.46
18.	nutrition	1.46
19.	safety	1.46
20.	standard	1.46
21.	taste	1.46
22.	trust	1.46
23.	unique	1.46
24.	addition	0.73
25.	certifications	0.73

The reasons for consumer preference toward value-added products were given in Figure 2 as word cloud. Table 2 describes the top 25 words in analyzing the frequency of words for consumer preferences toward value-added products. The term "products" has the highest weighted percentage (9.49%), indicating a strong consumer focus on the types of value-added

products available through social media marketing. "Value" comes in second (7.30%), highlighting consumers' importance on perceived value, suggesting that emphasizing value-added features can attract more customers. The term "added" shows significant interest (6.57%), likely referring to the additional benefits or enhancements made to the base products that appeal to consumers. Thus, consumers often prefer value-added products over raw millet products due to several compelling reasons. Value-added products, such as millet-based snacks, cookies, and health mixes, offer convenience and enhanced appeal compared to raw millet. They are ready-to-eat or easy to prepare, which aligns with busy lifestyles and the growing demand for convenience, which is similar to Singh *et al.,* (2012) study, as millets are rich in micronutrients and phytochemicals. The word "health" (2.92%) suggests that health benefits are crucial for consumers when selecting value-added products, emphasizing the appeal of products that promote well-being. Consumers place high importance on benefits (2.19%), dietary value (2.19%), life improvements (2.19%), quality (2.19%), and shelf life (2.19%) when assessing value-added products. The emphasis on benefits reflects a desire for products that offer tangible advantages, such as enhanced functionality or convenience. Dietary value indicates a preference for products that contribute positively to nutrition and health. Improvements in quality of life suggest that consumers seek products that enhance their overall well-being. Product quality remains a critical factor, as high-quality items are perceived to provide greater satisfaction and reliability. Moreover, shelf life is significant, as products with longer shelf lives offer better value by reducing the need for frequent repurchases and minimizing waste. Collectively, these factors highlight that consumers are looking for value-added products that not only meet their immediate needs but also contribute to long-term health and satisfaction. Terms like Better (1.46%), Brand (1.46%), Consumers (1.46%), Enhanced (1.46%), Features (1.46%), Healthy (1.46%), Improved (1.46%), Innovative (1.46%), Nutrition (1.46%), Safety (1.46%), Standard (1.46%), Taste (1.46%), Trust (1.46%), and Unique (1.46%) highlight key factors that influence consumer preferences for value-added products. These terms underscore a strong consumer interest in high-quality items and reputable brands, emphasizing that consumers are drawn to products that offer enhanced features, health benefits, and improved standards. Innovation, nutritional value, safety, taste, and uniqueness also play crucial roles, reflecting a desire for products that stand out and meet diverse needs. This range of factors indicates that consumer preferences are influenced by a combination of attributes that ensure quality, reliability, and distinctiveness. Although terms like Addition (0.73%) and Certifications (0.73%) are less prominent, they still indicate that additional benefits and certified quality or standards are important in guiding consumer choices. These elements

help assure consumers of the product's value and adherence to established criteria, reinforcing their decision-making process.

5. CONCLUSION

Value addition plays a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences within social media marketing. Consumers are increasingly drawn to value-added products that offer tangible benefits, dietary advantages, improved quality of life, and extended shelf life. The emphasis on high-quality attributes, reputable brands, and innovative features underscores a desire for products that deliver enhanced functionality and health benefits. Factors such as nutritional value, safety, taste, and uniqueness are also crucial in influencing consumer choices, reflecting a diverse range of preferences. Moreover, while terms like additional benefits and certifications are less prominent, they still play a significant role in reinforcing consumer trust and assurance in product quality. Effective social media marketing strategies should therefore focus on highlighting these value-added attributes to attract and engage consumers, ultimately driving their purchasing decisions and fostering brand loyalty.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

The author(s) affirm that no generative AI tools, including Large Language Models (such as ChatGPT, Copilot, etc.) and text-to-image generation software, were employed in the writing or editing of the manuscripts.

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