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Consumer buying behaviour towards packed pulses in Washim City

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Abstract
This study examines the socio-economic profile of consumers and their preference towards packed pulses in Washim city, drawing on a sample of 90 consumers surveyed through personal interviews during 2025-26. The socio-economic analysis shows that the majority of consumers (61.11 per cent) belonged to the 26-60 years age group, and female consumers (57.78 per cent) outnumbered male consumers. More than half of the consumers (53.33 per cent) were graduates, and service employees (30.00 per cent) followed by housewives (26.67 per cent) formed the largest occupational categories. A majority of consumers (44.44 per cent) reported a monthly income between Rs. 50,001 and Rs. 1,00,000, and most belonged to nuclear families (71.11 per cent) with a family size of 4-5 members (65.56 per cent). On preferences, nearly half the consumers (48.89 per cent) favoured the moderate price range of Rs. 151-200 per kg, and an overwhelming majority (72.22 per cent) rated pulse quality as very important. One-kilogram packs were the most preferred pack size (37.78 per cent), and brand reputation was considered very important by 58.89 per cent of respondents, with Aashirvaad emerging as the most preferred branded product (18.89 per cent) alongside a strong 25.56 per cent share held by local brands. All respondents preferred plastic packaging, most found packed pulses convenient, and monthly purchase was the dominant buying frequency, with Toor dal ranking as the most preferred pulse variety.

Keywords: Packed pulses, consumer perception, characteristics, preference, study

Introduction
Pulses form an essential part of the Indian diet, valued as an affordable source of protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals, and India remains the world's largest producer and consumer of pulses. Maharashtra ranks among the leading pulse-producing states, contributing a significant share of the country's area and production, with Washim among its major pulse-growing districts. Rising incomes, urban growth and changing dietary preferences have fuelled increasing demand for hygienically packed, branded pulse products in place of loose, unbranded produce.

The packaged pulses industry covers cleaning, grading, processing, packaging, branding and marketing, with modern packaging helping preserve quality, extend shelf life and protect the product from contamination. As organised retail and e-commerce expand, understanding how consumers in a semi-urban market such as Washim city perceive packed pulses, and what socio-economic groups drive this demand, offers useful insight for manufacturers, retailers and policy makers seeking to strengthen product quality, packaging and marketing strategies in this following objective.

1. To study the socio-economic characteristics of the selected consumers.
2. To identify the preference of consumers towards packed pulses.

Methodology
Area and Period of Study
The study was conducted in Washim city, Maharashtra. Data pertains to the year 2025-26. Primary data were collected from 90 consumers through personal interviews using a specially designed schedule. Secondary data were drawn from research papers, journals and websites.

Analytical Tools
The socio-economic characteristics of consumers - age, gender, education, occupation, income, family type and family size - and their preferences towards packed pulses - price range, quality, pack quantity, brand reputation, preferred brand, packaging type, convenience level, frequency of purchase and preferred pulse type - were analysed using simple tabular and percentage analysis.

Results and Discussion
Socio-economic characteristics of selected consumers:
This section examines the socio-economic profile of the sampled consumers, including age, gender, education, occupation, income, and family type, as these characteristics are known to influence purchasing behaviour towards packaged food products.

Table 1: Distribution of Consumers on the Basis of Age

Sr. No.	Age (years)	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Up to 25	18	20
2	26-60	55	61.11
3	61 and above	17	18.89

The results indicate that the majority of consumers (61.11 per cent) belonged to the 26-60 years age group, suggesting that middle-aged consumers, who are typically responsible for household grocery shopping, are the primary purchasers of packaged pulses. Consumers up to 25 years accounted for 20.00 per cent, indicating a gradually emerging interest among younger consumers driven by health awareness and changing lifestyles, while consumers aged 61 years and above formed the smallest group (18.89 per cent), possibly reflecting a continued preference for loose pulses and traditional purchasing habits among older consumers.

Table 2: Distribution of Consumers on the Basis of Gender

Sr. No.	Gender	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Male	38	42.22
2	Female	52	57.78

Female consumers constituted the majority of the sample (57.78 per cent) compared to male consumers (42.22 per cent). This finding suggests that women play a more active role in the purchase and selection of packaged pulses, consistent with their traditional responsibility for household grocery shopping and meal preparation, making their perceptions particularly relevant for understanding consumer behaviour in the study area.

Table 3: Distribution of Consumers on the Basis of Education

Sr. No.	Education	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Illiterate	1	1.11
2	School level	27	30
3	Graduated	48	53.33
4	Post graduated	14	15.56

More than half of the consumers (53.33 per cent) were graduates, followed by those with school-level education (30.00 per cent) and postgraduates (15.56 per cent), while only 1.11 per cent were illiterate. This indicates that packaged pulses are predominantly purchased by relatively well-educated consumers, likely reflecting greater awareness of product quality, hygiene, and nutritional value among this segment.

Table 4: Distribution of Consumers on the Basis of Occupation

Sr. No.	Occupation	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Business	13	14.44
2	Service	27	30
3	Housewives	24	26.67
4	Student	12	13.33
5	Farmer	14	15.56

Service employees formed the largest occupational group (30.00 per cent), followed closely by housewives (26.67 per cent), with farmers, business persons, and students together accounting for the remaining consumers. The dominance of service employees and housewives suggests that convenience, quality, and hygienic packaging are especially valued by consumers with limited time for food preparation or with primary responsibility for household provisioning.

Table 5: Distribution of Consumers on the Basis of Income

Sr. No.	Income (Rs. /month)	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Below 20,000	9	10
2	20,001-50,000	28	31.11
3	50,001-1,00,000	40	44.44
4	Above 1,00,000	13	14.44

Consumers with a monthly income between Rs. 50,001 and Rs. 1,00,000 formed the largest group (44.44 per cent), followed by those earning Rs. 20,001-50,000 (31.11 per cent). This suggests that consumers in medium-to-higher income brackets are more inclined to purchase packaged pulses, likely because higher disposable income enables greater spending on branded, hygienic, and quality-assured food products.

Table 6: Distribution of Consumers on the Basis of Family Type

Sr. No.	Family type	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Joint family	26	28.89
2	Nuclear family	64	71.11

A large majority of consumers (71.11 per cent) belonged to nuclear families, compared to 28.89 per cent from joint families. Busy lifestyles, smaller household size, and a preference for hygienically packed, ready-to-use food items appear to make nuclear families the primary consumers of packaged pulses.

Table 7: Distribution of Consumers on the Basis of Family Size

Sr. No.	Family size	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	1-3	17	18.89
2	4-5	59	65.56
3	Above 5	14	15.56

The majority of consumers (65.56 per cent) belonged to medium-sized families of 4-5 members, indicating that such households form the core consumer segment for packed pulses because of their regular requirement for convenient, hygienic, and good-quality food items in moderate quantities.

Preference of consumers towards packed pulses: This section presents the findings relating to consumer preference towards packaged pulses across price, quality, pack size, brand reputation, packaging type, convenience, frequency of purchase, and type of pulse preferred.

Table 8: Distribution of Consumers According to Preferred Price Range for Packed Pulses

Sr. No.	Price range (Rs. /kg)	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Below 100	6	6.67
2	101-150	32	35.56
3	151-200	44	48.89
4	Above 200	8	8.89

Nearly half of the consumers (48.89 per cent) preferred pulses priced between Rs. 151-200 per kg, followed by 35.56 per cent who preferred the Rs. 101-150 range. This indicates that consumers largely seek a balance between quality and affordability, favouring moderately priced packaged pulses over very cheap or premium-priced options.

Table 9: Distribution of Consumers According to Importance of Quality

Sr. No.	Importance of quality	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Very important	65	72.22
2	Important	22	24.44
3	Neutral	3	3.33

Quality emerged as the dominant purchase consideration, with 72.22 per cent of consumers rating it very important and a further 24.44 per cent rating it important. Virtually no consumer regarded quality as unimportant, confirming that clean, hygienic, and good-quality pulses are central to consumer purchase decisions.

The 1 kg pack was the most preferred (37.78 per cent), closely followed by the 2 kg pack (35.56 per cent), together accounting for nearly three-fourths of consumers. This suggests that small and medium pack sizes are favoured because they are convenient, economical, and suited to regular household requirements

Table 10: Distribution of Consumers According to Preferred Pack Quantity

Sr. No.	Quantity (kg)	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	½	11	12.22
2	1	34	37.78
3	2	32	35.56
4	5 and above	13	14.44

Table 11: Distribution of Consumers According to Importance of Brand Reputation

Sr. No.	Importance of brand reputation	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Very important	53	58.89
2	Important	29	32.22
3	Neutral	8	8.89

Brand reputation was considered very important by 58.89 per cent of consumers and important by a further 32.22 per cent, indicating that a large majority of consumers rely on brand trust as a signal of quality, reliability, and safety when purchasing packaged pulses.

Table 12: Distribution of Consumers According to Preferred Brand of Packed Pulses

Sr. No.	Brand	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Aashirvaad (ITC Ltd.)	17	18.89
2	Fortune (Adani Wilmar Ltd.)	15	16.67
3	Tata Sampann (Tata Consumer Products Ltd.)	12	13.33
4	Patanjali (Patanjali Ayurved Ltd.)	11	12.22
5	Organic Tattva (Organic Tattva Private Ltd.)	5	5.56
6	Royal (Royal Foods)	4	4.44
7	Vedika (Vedika Foods)	3	3.33
8	Local brands (Sanjay Dal, Shree Balaji Dal, Mahalaxmi Dal, Naman Agro Foods)	23	25.56

Local brands, taken together, were the most preferred category (25.56 per cent), reflecting easy availability, reasonable pricing, and perceived freshness. Among nationally established brands, Aashirvaad (18.89 per cent) and Fortune (16.67 per cent) were the most preferred, followed by Tata Sampann (13.33 per cent) and Patanjali (12.22 per cent), suggesting that consumers weigh both local accessibility and established brand trust in their purchase decisions.

Table 13: Distribution of Consumers According to Preferred Packaging Type

Sr. No.	Packaging type	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Plastic packaging	90	100

All 90 respondents (100 per cent) preferred plastic packaging, citing its convenience, lightness, durability, and ability to protect pulses from dust and moisture. No respondent expressed a preference for any alternative packaging material.

Table 14: Distribution of Consumers According to Perceived Convenience Level

Sr. No.	Convenience level	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Very convenient	52	57.78
2	Convenient	31	34.44
3	Neutral	7	7.78

A large majority of consumers regarded packed pulses as very convenient (57.78 per cent) or convenient (34.44 per cent), together accounting for 92.22 per cent of respondents, underscoring the strong appeal of packaged pulses over loose pulses in terms of ease of carrying, storing, and use.

Table 15: Frequency of Purchase of Packed Pulses

Sr. No.	Frequency of purchase	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Weekly	4	4.44
2	Fortnightly	8	8.89
3	Monthly	65	72.22
4	Occasionally	13	14.44

Monthly purchase was the dominant pattern, reported by 72.22 per cent of consumers, reflecting the practice of buying packed pulses along with routine monthly household groceries rather than as frequent, small purchases

Table 16: Types of Packed Pulses Mostly Preferred by Consumers

Sr. No.	Pulse	Consumers (N=90)	Percentage
1	Toor dal	24	26.67
2	Chana dal	5	5.56
3	Moong dal	13	14.44
4	Urd dal	9	10
5	Masoor dal	7	7.8
6	Whole chana	8	8.89
7	Moth bean	11	12.22
8	Kabuli chana	9	10
9	Rajma	4	4.44

Toor dal was the most preferred packed pulse (26.67 per cent), consistent with its regular use and nutritional importance in Indian households, followed by Moong dal (14.44 per cent) and Moth bean (12.22 per cent). Chana dal and Rajma recorded the lowest preference (5.56 per cent and 4.44 per cent respectively), indicating comparatively limited demand for these pulses in packed form.

Conclusions

Consumers of packed pulses in Washim city are predominantly middle-aged, well-educated women from nuclear, medium-sized households with moderate-to-higher monthly incomes, a profile consistent with those managing regular household grocery decisions. Their purchase behaviour is anchored in product quality and brand trust rather than price alone: while a majority favour a moderate price band, quality and brand reputation are the leading considerations, and 1 kg and 2 kg plastic packs bought on a monthly basis represent the dominant buying pattern. Although Aashirvaad leads among branded products, the substantial combined share of local brands signals continued price and access sensitivity, particularly among value-conscious segments, and represents an opportunity for branded players to strengthen distribution and affordability in semi-urban markets such as Washim.

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