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Product Availability, Preference and Challenges Faced by FMCG Retailers of Rajkot City in Gujarat

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Abstract
Retailers are the backbone of India's FMCG supply chain, yet very few studies have looked closely at what shapes their stocking choices, how satisfied they are with the brands they carry, and what practical difficulties they deal with every day. This empirical research study, utilizing the published theoretical literature and descriptive cross-sectional research design, focused on three food categories - honey, peanut butter, and organic products - and surveyed 75 retail outlets across Rajkot city in Gujarat to understand retailers' perspective on various aspects like product availability, brand preferences, satisfaction and constraints faced by them. A structured interview schedule was used, and the data were analyzed through percentage analysis, Likert scale analysis, and Garrett Ranking Method. The results showed that honey was stocked almost everywhere, peanut butter was slowly but steadily gaining ground in modern trade stores, and organic products were largely limited to specialized outlets. Dabur and Patanjali dominated honey sales, Dr. Oetker and Pintola led in peanut butter, and Amul held the strongest position in the organic segment. When retailers were asked what matters most in choosing a brand to stock, profit margin came out on top (mean score 4.24), followed by customer demand (3.95) and product quality (3.69). On the satisfaction side, regular and reliable supply was what retailers appreciated the most (mean 4.13), while they were least happy with the promotional support they received from manufacturers (3.30). The Garrett ranking placed low retailer margin as the single biggest challenge (mean score 55.24), with low consumer demand (55.13) and intense market competition (54.15) close behind. The findings make a strong case for improving retailer margins, strengthening supply chains, and building consumer awareness - especially for newer FMCG categories in tier-II cities like Rajkot.

Keywords: Brand Preference, FMCG, Garrett Ranking, Product Availability, Retailers, Supply Chain

Introduction

India's FMCG sector has grown into one of the most powerful engines of the country's economy. It contributes around 3% to the national GDP, employs close to three million people, and serves virtually every household in the country (IBEF, 2025). The market was valued at approximately USD 230 billion in 2024 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 17-18%, potentially touching USD 1.1 trillion by 2033, driven by rising incomes, urbanization, digital retail, and a fast-growing rural consumer base (IBEF, 2025). Within this ecosystem, retailers - whether a small kirana around the corner or a large modern trade outlet - are the final and most critical link between manufacturers and consumers. What they choose to stock, which brands they push, and how smoothly their supply chains function directly shapes what a consumer finds on the shelf.

Despite this central role, most research in the FMCG space has been written from the consumer's perspective - what drives purchase intention, why people prefer organic food, how price sensitivity affects buying behaviours. Comparatively little attention has been paid to the retailer's side of the story, particularly for newer product categories such as peanut butter and organic foods, and especially in smaller cities outside the major metros (Satyapriya *et al.*, 2019) [11]. This study set out to address that gap.

Rajkot city in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat was chosen as the study area. It is a commercially vibrant city with a diverse retail landscape - traditional kirana shops, local supermarkets, national chains, and specialized organic stores all operate side by side. This mix of formats makes Rajkot an ideal place to study how product availability and retailer behaviour vary across different types of outlets.

Three product categories were selected for the study: honey, peanut butter, and organic products. These represent three distinct stages of market maturity - a well-established category, a growing one, and an emerging one - making the comparison particularly meaningful.

The existing literature already tells us something about the supply-side challenges in these categories. The Food and Agriculture Organization (2018) and the National Bee Board (2020) found that while honey demand is strong and growing, adulteration concerns and supply chain inefficiencies continue to create friction at the retail level. In the organic space, research by Singh and Verma (2017) [13], Satyapriya *et al*. (2019) [11], and Joshi and Rahman (2015) [6] consistently points to two stubborn barriers: high retail prices and patchy product availability. However, these studies were largely consumer-focused and region-agnostic. What is missing is a granular, retailer-centered view of what actually happens on the ground in a city like Rajkot.

This study was therefore designed around four clear objectives: (i) To study the socio-economic characteristics of retailers in Rajkot city; (ii) To assess the availability of honey, peanut butter and organic product categories at retail outlets; (iii) To analyse retailers' perceptions and preferences towards specific FMCG brands; and (iv) To examine the challenges faced by retailers, using the Garrett Ranking Method.

Materials and Methods

The present research was conducted in Rajkot city of Gujarat, a major commercial center in the Saurashtra region, selected due to its vibrant and diverse FMCG retail ecosystem. Descriptive cross-sectional research design was employed to analyze various factors influencing retailers' product stocking, brand preferences and perceived constraints. Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were collected through a structured interview schedule administered to 75 FMCG retail outlets, while secondary data were obtained from research papers, industry reports, company websites and online sources. A non-probability convenience sampling method was adopted, with care taken to include different store types - General Trade (GT), Modern Trade - Local (MT-Local), Modern Trade - National Chains (MT-National) and Specialized Stores - to improve representativeness. Analytical methods included tabular presentation along with simple statistical tools such as percentage analysis, Likert scale analysis, cross-tabulation and the Garrett Ranking Method. This methodology aimed to provide a clear, data-driven understanding of FMCG retailers' buying behaviour, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques for robust and reliable results.

Results

Socio-economic profile of retailers

The retailer community in Rajkot was predominantly young and middle-aged, with 46% of respondents falling in the 26-40 year age group. This suggests that retail in the city is largely driven by people in their most economically active years. The sector was heavily male-dominated, with very few female retailers in the sample. Most retailers were graduates, reflecting a reasonably educated business community capable of managing inventory, supplier relationships, and customer interactions effectively.

In terms of experience, around 65% had been running their outlet for 4-7 years, indicating a stable and mature retail base. Monthly turnovers were mostly in the moderate-to-high range, suggesting that while the market is competitive, businesses are generally sustainable.

Table 1: Socio-economic profile of retailers (n=75)

Variable	Parameter	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group Below	25 years	17	22.67
	26-40 years	35	46.67
	41-55 years	18	24.00
	Above 55 years	5	6.67
Gender	Male	68	90.67
	Female	7	9.33
Education	Below SSC	2	2.67
	SSC	4	5.33
	HSC	17	22.67
	Graduate	43	57.33
	Post Graduate	9	12.00
Outlet Type	GT (General Trade)	19	25.33
	MT-LOCAL	44	58.67
	MT-NATIONAL	3	4.00
	Specialised Store	9	12.00
Years of Operation	Less than 1 year	3	4.00
	1-3 years	15	20.00
	4-7 years	49	65.33
	More than 7 years	8	10.67
Monthly Turnover	< ₹25,000	1	1.33
	₹25,000-50,000	11	14.67
	₹50,000-1,00,000	34	45.33
	₹1,00,000	29	38.67

Source: Primary data (2025)

Product availability and stocking patterns

Honey turned out to be the most universally stocked product in the survey. It was available in every MT-LOCAL outlet surveyed (100%), all specialized stores (100%), all MT-NATIONAL outlets (100%), and 89.47% of general trade shops - an availability rate that no other category came close to matching. Peanut butter showed a more uneven picture: it was stocked by 72.73% of MT-LOCAL outlets and 66.67% of MT-NATIONAL stores, but only 47.37% of general trade shops carried it and just 22.22% of specialized stores did. Organic products were almost entirely absent from mainstream channels. They were found in 88.89% of specialized stores but in only 11.36% of MT-LOCAL outlets, and not a single general trade retailer stocked them (Table 2). This sharp contrast in availability across channels helps explain why organic products continue to struggle to reach the average consumer.

Table 2: Distribution of product categories by outlet type (n=132)

Outlet Type| Products	Honey (%)	Peanut Butter (%)	Organic Products (%)
MT-LOCAL (n=44)	100.00	72.73	11.36
GT (n=19)	89.47	47.37	0.00
Specialized Stores (n=9)	100.00	22.22	88.89
MT-NATIONAL (n=3)	100.00	66.67	33.33

Source: Primary data (2025). Percentages indicate the proportion of outlets in each format that stocked the category.

Most retailers kept their honey inventory fairly narrow - 35.62% stocked just one brand and 27.40% stocked two, 23.29% stocked three, meaning over 86% of honey-stocking outlets carried three brands or fewer. This points to a preference for established, fast-moving brands rather than experimenting with a wider range. Peanut butter showed slightly more brand diversity, with equal shares (35.56%) stocking one brand and two brands respectively, and a few retailers offering three or more. Organic products had the thinnest brand representation of all, reflecting how early the category still is in its retail journey.

Honey was consistently rated as 'always available' by most retailers, and restocking happened weekly or bi-weekly - a clear sign of strong, predictable demand. Peanut butter availability was reasonably stable but not without occasional supply gaps. Organic products were a different story altogether: most retailers who carried them rated availability as 'rare', and restocking was largely on-demand rather than on any regular schedule. Pack size preferences were broadly consistent across categories, with medium sizes dominating - 250-500 g for honey, 201-400 g for peanut butter, and 0.5-1 kg for organic products - suggesting that consumers across all three categories are looking for a balance between value and convenience.

Brand preference and retailer perceptions

In honey, Dabur was clearly the market leader, named as the top-selling brand by nearly half of all retailers surveyed (49.32%). Patanjali came in second with 20.55%, and local brands together accounted for another 10.96%. Other national brands had very little top-selling presence, confirming that the honey market is dominated by just two players. Peanut butter was more competitive. Dr. Oetker led with 33.33%, followed by Pintola (20.00%), Sundrop (15.56%), and Kissan (11.11%) - a spread that shows consumers have more varied preferences in this category and no single brand has run away with the market. In organic products, Amul dominated strongly at 42.85%, with Nature Land and Nidhi Organic each holding 14.28%. The total retailer base for this category was small (n=14), which itself underscores how niche the organic segment still is in Rajkot. When asked to characterize their customers, retailers painted a nuanced picture. The largest group - 40% - said their customers consider both brand reputation and price when making a purchase decision. Another 32% described their customers as primarily brand loyal, while 28% saw them as mainly price sensitive. This suggests that for most retailers in Rajkot, neither pure brand loyalty nor pure price sensitivity alone drives sales - both matter.

Factors considered for brand choice

The Likert scale analysis of factors that influence brand stocking decisions made one thing very clear: retailers care most about margins. Retailer margin ranked first with a mean score of 4.24 - well ahead of the other factors. Customer demand came second (3.95), followed by product quality (3.69), product availability (3.50), and promotional or manufacturer support (3.25). The relatively low score for promotions suggests that while retailers appreciate marketing support, it is not what drives their core stocking decisions - profitability and sell-through rates are far more decisive (Table 3).

Table 3: Factors influencing brand choice — Likert scale analysis (n=75)

Factor	SA	A	N	DS	SD	CS	Mean	Rank
Retailer Margin	37	24	10	3	1	318	4.24	I
Customer Demand	26	28	14	5	2	296	3.95	II
Product Quality	17	30	19	6	3	277	3.69	III
Product Availability	14	26	23	8	4	263	3.50	IV
Promotions / Manufacturer Support	13	23	18	12	9	244	3.25	V

SA=5, A=4, N=3, D=2, SD=1. Mean = Cumulative Score / Total respondents. Source: Primary data (2025).

On the satisfaction side, regular supply stood out as the strongest positive: it received a mean satisfaction score of 4.13, ranking first among all factors. This tells us that manufacturers and distributors have generally done a good job of keeping shelves stocked consistently. Retailer margin came second in satisfaction (3.65), and customer preference alignment was third (3.46). However, satisfaction with product quality (3.37) and brand promotional support (3.30) trailed behind, signaling that there is meaningful room for improvement in both areas (Table 4).

Table 4: Satisfaction level with current brands — Likert scale analysis (n=75)

Satisfaction Factor	HS	S	MS	D	HD	CS	Mean	Rank
Regular Supply	32	28	10	3	2	310	4.13	I
Retailer Margin	17	26	19	9	4	274	3.65	II
Customer Preference	15	25	20	10	5	260	3.46	III
Product Quality	22	30	15	5	3	253	3.37	IV
Brand Promotion	14	23	18	12	8	248	3.30	V

HS=5, S=4, MS=3, D=2, HD=1. Mean = Cumulative Score / Total respondents. Source: Primary data (2025).

Constraints faced by retailers

Retailers were asked to rank eight challenges they face from most to least severe. Percent position values were calculated for each constraint and converted to Garrett scores to arrive at the final ranking (Table 5).

Low retailer margin emerged as the number one constraint, with the highest mean Garrett score of 55.24. For retailers, the margin they earn on a product is non-negotiable - if it does not make business sense, they simply will not stock it or promote it. Low consumer demand followed very closely at 55.13, reflecting the challenge of selling products that many consumers are either unaware of or not yet ready to pay for. High competition ranked third (54.15), capturing the reality of a crowded marketplace where multiple brands compete for limited shelf space. Seasonal sales patterns (50.55) and customer preference for competitor brands (50.52) were rated as moderate constraints. Lack of promotional support (49.84), expiry and inventory management issues (48.84), and irregular supply (45.87) rounded out the bottom of the ranking, suggesting that while these issues exist, they are not the primary source of frustration for most retailers.

Table 5: Garrett ranking of constraints faced by retailers (n=75)

Rank	Constraint	Mean Garrett Score
I	Low Retailer Margin	55.24
II	Low Demand	55.13
III	High Competition	54.15
IV	Only Seasonal Sales	50.55
V	Customer Preference for Other Brands	50.52
VI	Lack of Promotional Support	49.84
VII	Expiry / Inventory Issues	48.84
VIII	Irregular / Delayed Supply	45.87

Source: Primary data (2025).

Discussion

Honey is the most widely available product across retail formats, driven by long-standing consumer familiarity, broad distribution, and rising health awareness (Singh, 2021; National Bee Board, 2020). Dabur and Patanjali dominate here, reflecting the brand trust and distribution strength highlighted by IBEF (2023). Peanut butter appears more in modern trade than in kirana stores, aligning with its appeal to younger, urban, health-conscious shoppers (APEDA, 2021). Multiple brands (Dr. Oetker, Pintola, Sundrop, Kissan) show the category's maturity and emerging brand preferences, though general trade reach remains limited. Organic products are almost absent from general trade, a pattern linked to weak marketing and supply chains, high prices, and limited availability (Narayanan, 2005; Chakrabarti, 2010; Singh & Verma, 2017; Satyapriya *et al*., 2019) [9, 2, 13, 11]. As Joshi and Rahman (2015) [6] note, intentions to buy green products rarely convert without affordable pricing and mainstream presence. Retailer margin is the top factor in brand choice, underscoring retailers' profit focus. Reliable supply scored highly, indicating strong distribution by established brands, while low scores for promotional support reveal unmet expectations on in-store marketing. Kumar and Singh (2022) [7] link retailer profitability to supply chain performance; Kumari *et al*. (2025) [8] suggest digital supply-chain integration can strengthen retailer relations. Garrett ranking places low margin and low demand as the biggest pressures for Rajkot FMCG retailers, with seasonal demand (important for honey and organic items) also notable. The low ranking for irregular supply suggests distribution and stock availability have improved.

Conclusion

This study looked at the FMCG retail landscape in Rajkot city through the eyes of the retailer - a perspective that is often overlooked in the existing literature. The picture that emerged was one of three clearly different market realities sitting side by side: honey, a mature and universally stocked category with strong demand and reliable supply; peanut butter, a growing category gaining traction in modern trade but yet to fully penetrate general trade; and organic products, still a niche market confined to specialized outlets, held back by weak supply chains and limited consumer awareness. Across all categories, retailers consistently prioritized profit margins and product sell-through when deciding what to stock and which brands to support. Regular and reliable supply was what they valued most from their current brand partners, while promotional support was the area where they felt most underserved. The two major challenges found—low margins and insufficient consumer demand—point to a clear direction for companies that want to deepen their retail presence: competitive margin structures, stronger consumer awareness campaigns, and more active in-store support. The study was limited to 75 retailers in a single city over a short survey window, which means seasonal trends and broader regional patterns may not be fully captured. Future research could expand the sample and geographic scope and integrate both consumer-side and supply chain perspectives to build a more complete picture of the FMCG ecosystem in tier-II Indian cities.

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