

## **Facets of retailers' consideration in choosing to stock and retail branded value added milk products especially clarified butter**

Praveen Paul Jeyapaul

*Mepco School of Management Studies*

*Mepco Schlenk Engineering College*

*Sivakasi*

*Tami Nadu*

*India*

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### **Abstract**

Value-added milk products (VAMP), especially clarified butter (ghee), hold a key position in the Indian market due to their culinary, health, and spiritual significance. This study examines the key factors influencing retailers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, when choosing to stock and promote branded ghee. Data from 145 retailers revealed that product quality and profitability/margins are the most influential factors, followed by marketing support, packaging, logistics, credit policy, and brand reputation. The findings provide valuable insights for manufacturers to tailor promotional strategies based on retailer priorities.

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**Subject Classification:** 90B60, 91B24, 91B60.

**Keywords:** Clarified butter, Retailer satisfaction, Product quality, Profitability and margins, Marketing and promotional support.

### **1. Introduction**

Value Added Milk Products (VAMP) are projected to grow rapidly in India, with an estimated segment growth of 18–20% and a projected revenue share rise to 40% [1-3]. Among VAMP, ghee (clarified butter) stands out due to its cultural, culinary, and health significance [4, 5]. Used widely in Indian households for everyday cooking and religious rituals, ghee is known for its taste-enhancing properties and is perceived as a healthy cooking medium, with studies linking its consumption to reduced coronary heart disease risk [6-10]. Traditionally homemade, ghee is

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E-mail: [praveenpaulmsec@gmail.com](mailto:praveenpaulmsec@gmail.com)

increasingly purchased as a branded, packaged product due to the time-intensive preparation process [11].

India's clarified butter market reached INR 2,907 Billion in 2022 and INR 3,203 Billion in 2023, projected to hit INR 5,137 Billion by 2028 at a CAGR of 9.95% [12], and INR 6,931 Billion by 2032 with a CAGR of 8.72% [13]. India is the world's largest producer and consumer of ghee, converting 30–35% of milk into ghee [14]. Tamil Nadu, a major contributor to India's GDP [15], hosts both national and regional ghee brands.

Retailers are instrumental in connecting branded ghee products with consumers, influencing purchasing decisions and brand perceptions [16–18]. Through prime product placement in both physical and digital retail spaces, they enhance visibility, brand awareness, and market reach [19]. Retailers contribute to brand success by offering credibility, customer insights, and engagement, reinforcing their role as key strategic partners in the competitive landscape [20–22].

## **2. Literature Review**

Retailers' decisions to stock branded products are influenced by multiple interrelated factors. Retailers tend to prefer brands with strong reputations for quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction, as these attributes reduce risk and enhance consumer trust [23–25]. Understanding consumer demand and aligning product offerings with market trends are also critical, as retailers aim to optimize assortments and drive sales [26–27]. Profitability and margins are central to these decisions; favourable wholesale pricing, high margins, and supportive sales volume attract retailer interest [28–29], along with added incentives like promotional support, co-op funds, and markdown allowances [30–31].

### *2.1 Marketing and Promotional Support*

Effective promotional strategies and advertising efforts are essential in increasing product visibility and influencing retailer stocking decisions [32–33].

### *2.2 Distribution and Logistics Capabilities*

Retailers prefer brands with reliable logistics and strong supply chain systems that ensure timely deliveries and reduce stockouts, thereby enhancing operational efficiency [34–36].

### *2.3 Credit Policy*

A supportive credit policy provides retailers with financial flexibility, inventory control, and risk mitigation. Retailers value transparent credit terms, responsiveness, and a partnership approach that supports mutual growth [37-42].

### *2.4 Packaging*

Packaging influences shelf appeal, brand visibility, and operational convenience. Retailers favour brands investing in innovative, functional, and sustainable packaging solutions [43-45].

### *2.5 Product Quality*

Product quality is pivotal, as it affects the retailer's credibility and customer satisfaction. High-quality offerings reduce returns, build trust, and ensure long-term brand success [46, 47].

Based on this review, the research considered key factors such as marketing support, profitability, distribution, packaging, credit policy, product quality, and brand reputation.

## **3. Methodology**

### *3.1 Study Design, Area, and Period*

A cross-sectional study was conducted from November 27, 2023, to January 12, 2024, to assess retailers' satisfaction and perceptions in stocking branded value added milk products, particularly clarified butter (ghee). Data was collected from 145 retailers across various districts of Chennai, Tamil Nadu (Figure 1). Chennai, with a population exceeding 12.5 million and an area of 435 sq. km (5,904 sq. km metropolitan), is one of the most densely populated cities globally, making it a significant retail market [48, 49].

### *3.2 Rationale of Methods*

Retailers, being a key link between manufacturers and consumers, are well-positioned to influence and reflect consumer preferences [50, 51]. As frontline stakeholders, their feedback provides valuable insights into product satisfaction and customer perceptions, especially for convenience goods like ghee [52-54].



**Table 1**  
**Demographic profile of retailers of ghee**

| Variable                | Groups                            | Number of Retailers |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Years of retailing ghee | 0.5 to 5 years                    | 47                  |
|                         | 6 to 10 years                     | 45                  |
|                         | 11 to 15 years                    | 18                  |
|                         | Above 15 years                    | 35                  |
| Type of store           | Supermarkets                      | 129                 |
|                         | Departmental Stores               | 4                   |
|                         | Convenient Stores                 | 12                  |
| Income from ghee        | Less than INR 5000 per month      | 104                 |
|                         | INR 5000 to – INR 10000 per month | 34                  |
|                         | INR 10000 – INR 15000 per month   | 5                   |
|                         | Greater than INR 15000 per month  | 2                   |
| Popular SKUs            | 50 grams                          | 35                  |
|                         | 100 grams                         | 81                  |
|                         | 200 grams                         | 25                  |
|                         | 500 grams                         | 4                   |

Over 67% of retailers have been selling ghee for more than six years, with 36% having over a decade of experience. Most operate in a supermarket format and earn less than INR 5,000 per month from ghee sales. Lower-weight SKUs are more popular, suggesting customers prefer smaller, fresher quantities for regular cooking or religious use (Table 1).

#### 4.1 Group difference

In this section, the group difference between type of store with respect to income of retailers from retailing ghee (Table 2) and popular SKU in that store (Table 3) is analysed. Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) is used to compare groups and determine if there are differences in distribution between them and it helps to determine if there is a significant association between two categorical variables. Also,  $\chi^2$  test is used to find if there is a significant difference in income from various SKUs (Table 4).

**Table 2**  
**Cross tabulation between type of store and income from retailing ghee**

| Type of Store       | Metric     | Income from retailing ghee                  |                          |                            |               | Total  |
|---------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|--------|
|                     |            | > INR 15000 pm                              | INR 10000 – INR 15000 pm | INR 5000 to – INR 10000 pm | < INR 5000 pm |        |
| Convenient Stores   | Count      | 0                                           | 1                        | 2                          | 9             | 12     |
| Departmental Stores | Count      | 0                                           | 0                        | 2                          | 2             | 4      |
| Supermarkets        | Count      | 2                                           | 4                        | 30                         | 93            | 129    |
| Total               | Count      | 2                                           | 5                        | 34                         | 104           | 145    |
|                     | % of Total | 1.4%                                        | 3.4%                     | 23.4%                      | 71.7%         | 100.0% |
| Pearson Chi-Square  |            | Value: 2.985, Asymptotic Significance: .811 |                          |                            |               |        |

Chi-square analysis shows no significant difference in ghee revenue across store types ( $p > 0.05$ ). About 72% of all stores earn less than INR 5,000 monthly from ghee sales, including 75% of convenience stores. Only around 2% of stores earn over INR 15,000, indicating overall low income from ghee retailing across formats.

**Table 3**  
**Cross tabulation between Type of Store and Popular SKU in that store**

| Type of Store       | Metric     | Popular SKU in that store                   |           |           |           | Total  |
|---------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|
|                     |            | 50 grams                                    | 100 grams | 200 grams | 500 grams |        |
| Convenient Stores   | Count      | 4                                           | 6         | 2         | 0         | 12     |
| Departmental Stores | Count      | 0                                           | 3         | 1         | 0         | 4      |
| Supermarkets        | Count      | 31                                          | 72        | 22        | 4         | 129    |
| Total               | Count      | 35                                          | 81        | 25        | 4         | 145    |
|                     | % of Total | 24.1%                                       | 55.9%     | 17.2%     | 2.8%      | 100.0% |
| Pearson Chi-Square  |            | Value: 2.363, Asymptotic Significance: .883 |           |           |           |        |

Table 3 shows that 100g ghee packets are the most popular across store types, followed by 50g packets, likely due to consumer preference for smaller quantities with shorter shelf life and ease of repurchase. Chi-square results indicate no significant difference in SKU demand across store types.

**Table 4**  
**Cross tabulation between retailers' income from retailing particular SKU of ghee**

| Income                     | Metric            | SKU                                          |           |           |           | Total |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
|                            |                   | 50 grams                                     | 100 grams | 200 grams | 500 grams |       |
| > INR 15000 pm             | Count             | 0                                            | 0         | 1         | 1         | 2     |
|                            | Adjusted Residual | -.8                                          | -1.6      | 1.2       | 4.1       |       |
| INR 10000 – INR 15000 pm   | Count             | 0                                            | 1         | 3         | 1         | 5     |
|                            | Adjusted Residual | -1.3                                         | -1.6      | 2.6       | 2.4       |       |
| INR 5000 to – INR 10000 pm | Count             | 0                                            | 22        | 11        | 1         | 34    |
|                            | Adjusted Residual | -3.8                                         | 1.2       | 2.7       | .1        |       |
| < INR 5000 pm              | Count             | 35                                           | 58        | 10        | 1         | 104   |
|                            | Adjusted Residual | 4.3                                          | .0        | -3.9      | -2.1      |       |
| Total                      | Count             | 35                                           | 81        | 25        | 4         | 145   |
| Pearson Chi-Square         |                   | Value: 53.890, Asymptotic Significance: .000 |           |           |           |       |

The Pearson Chi-Square test reveals a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between retailer income groups and the SKUs sold. Higher-income retailers (earning >INR 15,000/month) primarily sell larger SKUs like 500g, while those earning INR 10,000–15,000 focus on 200g SKUs. Retailers with lower income mostly sell smaller SKUs such as 100g and 200g, indicating a correlation between higher revenue and sales of larger volume SKUs.

#### 4.2 Impact of various factors on willingness of retailers to stock ghee

To analyse the impact of the variables such as Marketing and Promotional Support, Profitability and Margins, Distribution and Logistics Capabilities, Appropriate packaging, Credit Policy, Product Quality and Brand Reputation on the retailers' willingness to stock ghee, linear regression model was used. Here simple linear regression was carried out separately for the seven factors considered and the results were compiled in Table 5. The outcome of the regression is presented as  $y = a + b x$ , where Y is the dependent variable, 'a' is the constant, 'b' is the regression coefficient, 'x' is the independent variable. The hypothesis considered is presented below.

**Null Hypothesis:** There is no impact on retailers' willingness to stock a brand of ghee from the factors considered for the study.

**Alternate Hypothesis:** There is a significant impact on retailers' willingness to stock a brand of ghee from the factors considered for the study.

**Table 5**  
**Impact of various factors on the retailers' willingness to stock ghee**

| Factors                                 | R     | R <sup>2</sup> | Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> | Std. Error of Estimate | Change Statistics |       |        |        |       |          |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------|--------|--------|-------|----------|
|                                         |       |                |                         |                        | R <sup>2</sup>    | t     | F      | Sig. F | Coeff | Constant |
| Marketing and Promotional Support       | 0.367 | 0.135          | 0.129                   | 0.782                  | 0.135             | 4.716 | 22.241 | .000   | 0.405 | 2.088    |
| Profitability and Margins               | 0.375 | 0.141          | 0.135                   | 0.779                  | 0.141             | 4.842 | 23.442 | .000   | 0.414 | 2.158    |
| Distribution and Logistics Capabilities | 0.279 | 0.078          | 0.071                   | 0.807                  | 0.078             | 3.475 | 12.073 | .001   | 0.320 | 2.483    |
| Appropriate packaging                   | 0.231 | 0.053          | 0.047                   | 0.817                  | 0.053             | 2.843 | 8.080  | .005   | 0.255 | 2.744    |
| Credit Policy                           | 0.225 | 0.051          | 0.044                   | 0.819                  | 0.051             | 2.758 | 7.608  | .007   | 0.254 | 2.707    |
| Product Quality                         | 0.447 | 0.200          | 0.194                   | 0.752                  | 0.200             | 5.977 | 35.721 | .000   | 0.505 | 1.602    |
| Brand Reputation                        | 0.323 | 0.104          | 0.098                   | 0.795                  | 0.104             | 4.078 | 16.634 | .000   | 0.367 | 2.257    |

From the outcome of the regressions performed, the following equations are framed.

$$Y = 2.088 + 0.405 X_1 \quad (1)$$

$$Y = 2.158 + 0.414 X_2 \quad (2)$$

$$Y = 2.483 + 0.320 X_3 \quad (3)$$

$$Y = 2.744 + 0.255 X_4 \quad (4)$$

$$Y = 2.707 + 0.254 X_5 \quad (5)$$

$$Y = 1.602 + 0.505 X_6 \quad (6)$$

$$Y = 2.257 + 0.367 X_7 \quad (7)$$

Where

$Y$  is the overall willingness of retailers to stock clarified butter (ghee)

$X_1$  is Marketing and promotional support offered by ghee manufacturers to retailers

$X_2$  is Profitability and margins offered by ghee manufacturers to retailers

$X_3$  is Distribution and logistics capabilities of ghee manufacturers to supply on time

$X_4$  is Appropriate packaging offered by ghee manufacturers

$X_5$  is Credit policy offered by ghee manufacturers to retailers

$X_6$  is Product quality offered to end consumers by ghee manufacturers

$X_7$  is Brand reputation of ghee manufacturers

Table 5 reveals that all examined factors significantly influence retailers' willingness to stock ghee. Marketing and promotional support ( $r = 0.367$ ) positively impacts stocking decisions by equipping retailers with tools to attract customers and drive sales. Profitability and margins ( $r = 0.375$ ) are critical, as higher margins enhance financial stability and retailer satisfaction. Distribution and logistics support ( $r = 0.279$ ) ensures product availability, minimizing stockouts and building trust. Packaging ( $r = 0.231$ ) also matters, offering product protection and enhancing shelf appeal. Credit policy ( $r = 0.225$ ) facilitates financial flexibility and strengthens retailer relationships. Product quality ( $r = 0.447$ ) is the strongest influencer, ensuring customer satisfaction and minimizing returns. Lastly, brand reputation ( $r = 0.323$ ) fosters retailer confidence and boosts their credibility. Overall, these factors collectively enhance retailer satisfaction and drive stocking decisions.

## 5. Conclusion

This research examines the impact of various factors on retailers' satisfaction with clarified butter brands. It finds that marketing and promotional support, profitability and margins, distribution and logistics, packaging, credit policy, product quality, and brand reputation all significantly influence retailers' satisfaction and their decision to continue stocking a brand. Marketing support enhances retailer effectiveness and fosters brand loyalty, driving higher sales. Profitability and margins are crucial for retailer satisfaction, as healthy margins provide a competitive edge. Efficient distribution and logistics minimize costs, improve customer service, and expand market reach, further boosting satisfaction. Packaging

serves as a branding tool, offering convenience, sustainability, and valuable product information, all of which positively affect retailer satisfaction. A well-structured credit policy ensures financial stability, helping retailers manage cash flow and promoting trust. Product quality is essential for building long-term retailer relationships, as high-quality products lead to better sales and higher margins. Brand reputation, built on consistency and reliability, enhances retailer loyalty and satisfaction. The findings provide valuable insights for managers and decision-makers to tailor promotional programs, focusing on factors that are key to retailers' willingness to stock a brand.

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*Received October, 2024*