

CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS UNPACKED MILK

Dr Kamran Siddiqui*

Dr Rukhsar Ahmed**

Dharminder Choudhry***

Abstract

Unpacked milk has been traditionally the most used milk by the households. With the introduction of packed and powder milk and the improvement and standardization in handling and packaging of packed milk has lead to shift of consumer preferences from unpacked milk to packed or powder milk. Perception of consumers about unpacked milk is changing because of a number of underlying reasons. This research is a systematic effort to assess the validity of such reasons in forming consumer perception about unpacked milk. The research findings and conclusions are as follows.

Problem Definition

Background of the problem is that unpacked milk has been traditionally the most used milk by the households. With the introduction of packed and powder milk and the improvement and standardization in handling and packaging of packed milk has lead to shift of consumer preferences from unpacked milk to packed or powder milk. Perception of consumers about unpacked milk is changing because of a number of underlying reasons. The research was carried out to assess the perception about unpacked milk in urban areas. Unpacked milk business is part of the economy that is undocumented and therefore, no secondary data analysis were possible

* Professor of Marketing, ICAR, New Delhi

** Professor of Business Administration, ICAR, New Delhi

*** Research Associate, ICAR, New Delhi

and only collection and usage of primary data was possible. A questionnaire was administered to the selected sample and the results were compiled and analyzed.

Approach to the Problem

Assessing the perception about a consumable item, like milk, is a complex area. Most of the time it relates to individual experiences of consumers and are also influenced by trends and class to which they belong. This aspect has been considered while deciding the sampling technique.

Research Design

The suitable research design for assessing the consumer perception about unpacked milk is Conclusive Research Design with Descriptive research. Single Cross-sectional design has been selected for this research.

Information needs

Perception about unpacked milk relates to the reasons for the perception. The respondents are asked to give reasons for preferring or not preferring unpacked milk as compared to packed or powder milk.

Unpacked milk may appear to be not good for health because of non-standardized handling procedures. The respondents should be asked whether they consider unpacked milk as unhygienic, contaminated with germs and injurious to health.

Price and buying decision makers are two things that are also relevant to the perception of a consumable, like milk. The respondents should be asked to show their opinion on these two factors.

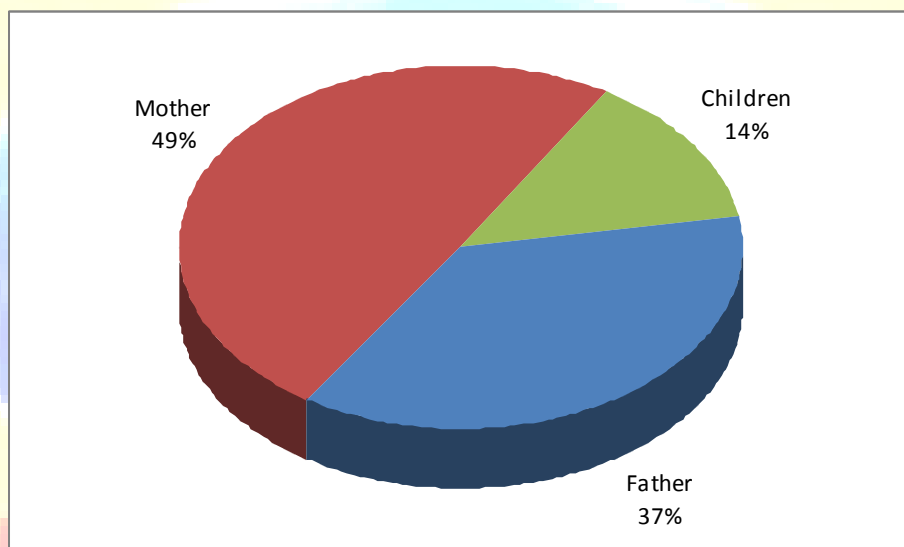
A number of aspects that affect consumer perception about milk are important. The respondents should be asked to rank unpacked, packed and powder milk based on hygienic, freshness, for drinking purpose, ease of availability, for deserts and other recipes, for making tea and coffee, and economy or price of the three types of milk.

Unpacked milk business is part of the economy that is undocumented and therefore, no secondary data sources were available. Data collection through survey by administering a questionnaire to the sample was decided. The questionnaire can be found in Exhibit at the end of this report. Rank order was used a comparative scaling technique whereas Likert scale was used

a non-comparative scaling technique. Based on information needs and type of interviewing method, a questionnaire was designed (see Exhibit I) for collecting information from sample. Pretesting of the questionnaire was done on individual similar to the sample.

Methodology

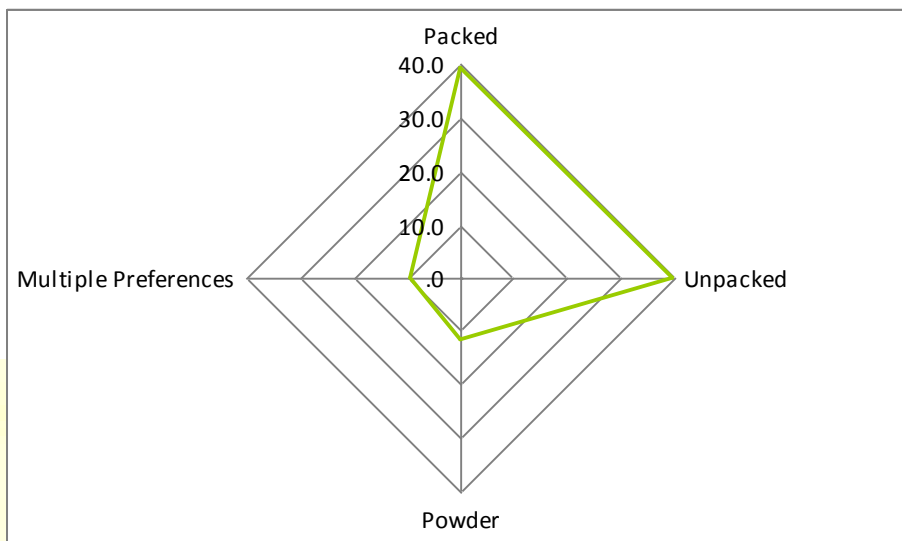
After editing, coding and transcribing, and cleaning the collected data, data analyses were carried out using SPSS software. Frequency distribution (univariate technique) and cross-tabulation (multivariate technique) were used to analyze the collected data for arriving at the results.



Mothers turned out to be the main decision makers in buying milk.

Which type of milk do you use?

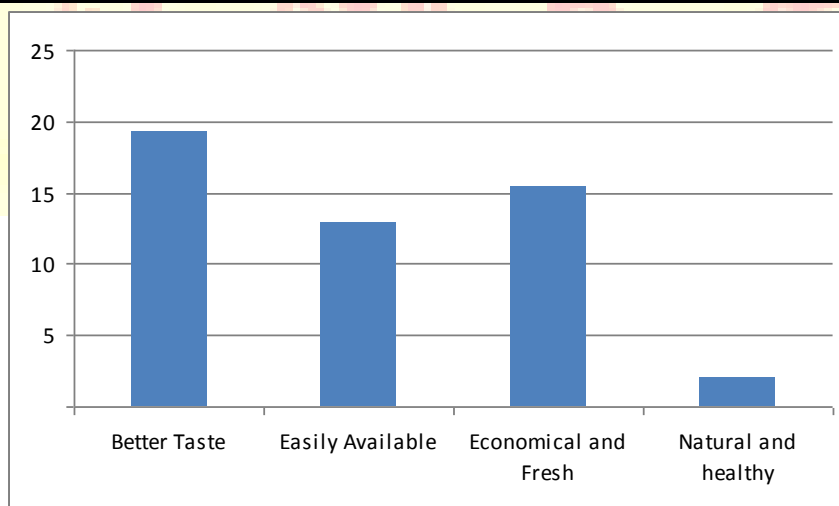
Type of milk	Frequency	Percent
Packed	79	39
Unpacked	80	40
Powder	23	11
Multiple Preferences	19	9
Total	201	100



Although most of the respondents belong to the areas that are considered middle or lower middle class areas of the urban areas, their usage of packed milk is nearly as much as unpacked milk.

If you do prefer unpacked milk, why?

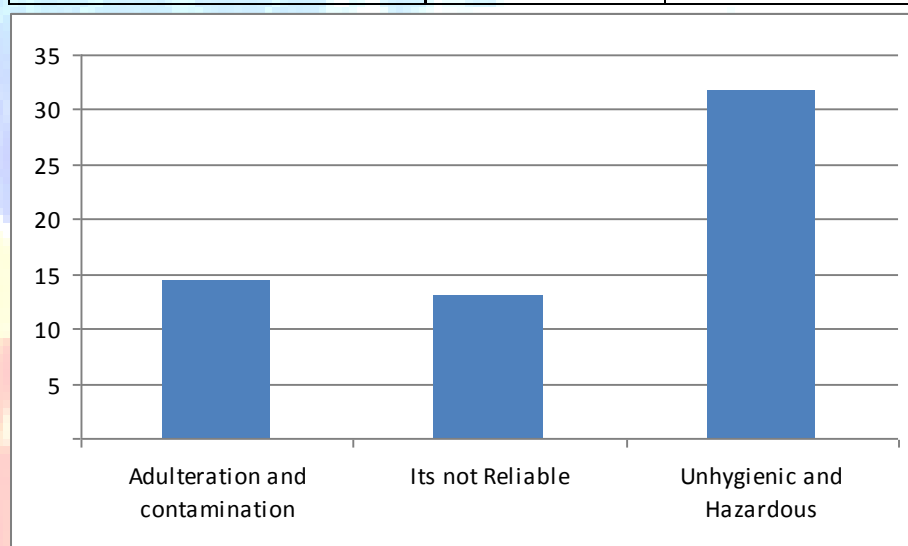
Reason for preference	Frequency	Percent
Better Taste	39	39
Easily Available	26	26
Economical and Fresh	31	31
Natural and healthy	4	4
Total	102	100



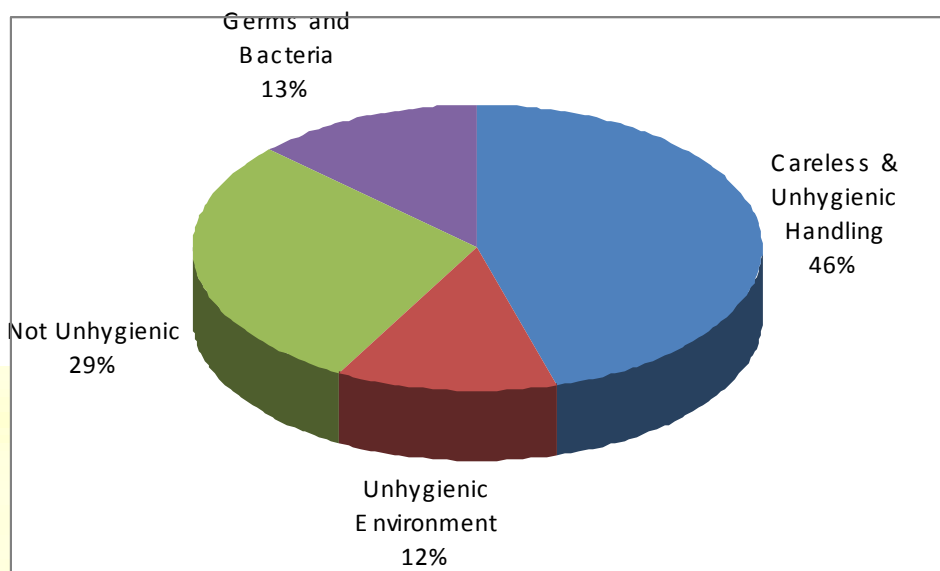
Better taste and freshness turned out to be the main reasons for preferring the unpacked milk.

If you do not prefer unpacked milk, why?

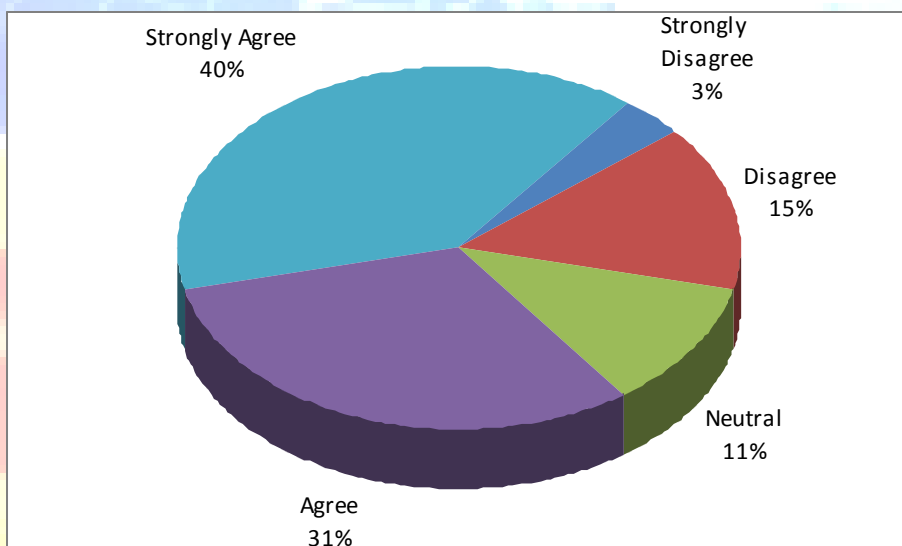
Reason for non-preference	Frequency	Percent
	6	5
Adulteration and contamination	29	23
Unpacked milk is not Reliable	26	21
Unhygienic and Hazardous	64	51
Total	125	100



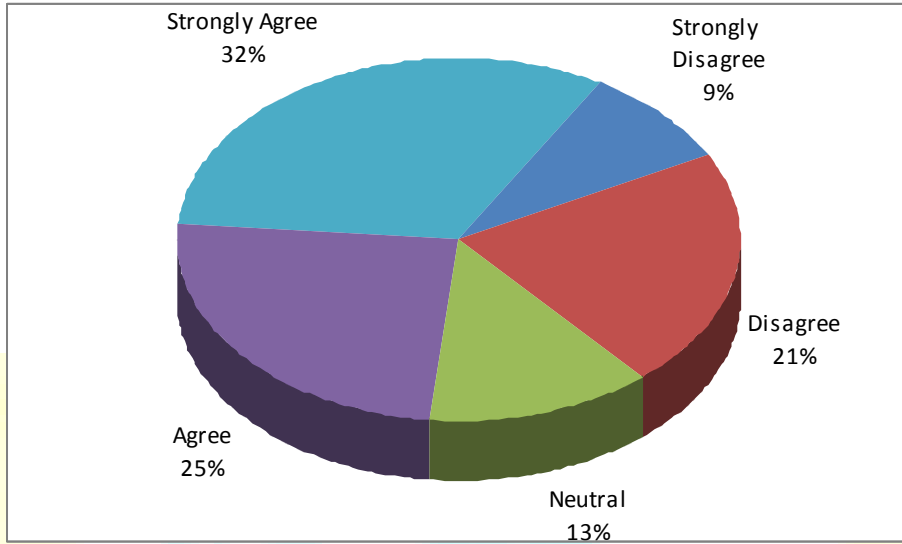
The prime reason for not preferring unpacked milk is the perception that it is unhygienic and hazardous.



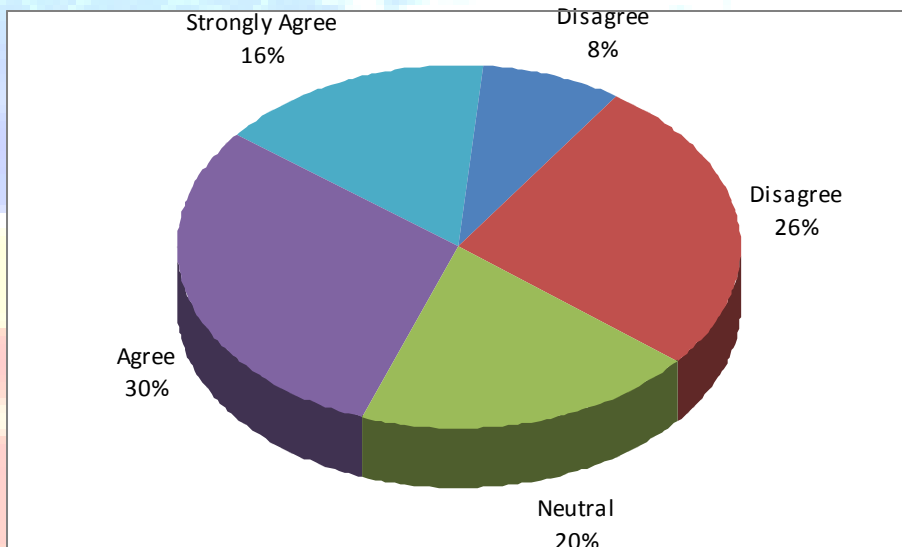
The main reason for perceiving unpacked milk as unhygienic turned out to be the handling that people generally consider unhygienic and increasing the hazard.



Overwhelming majority feels that there are germs in unpacked milk.



Presence of germs leads to the logical consequential opinion that unpacked milk is injurious to health.

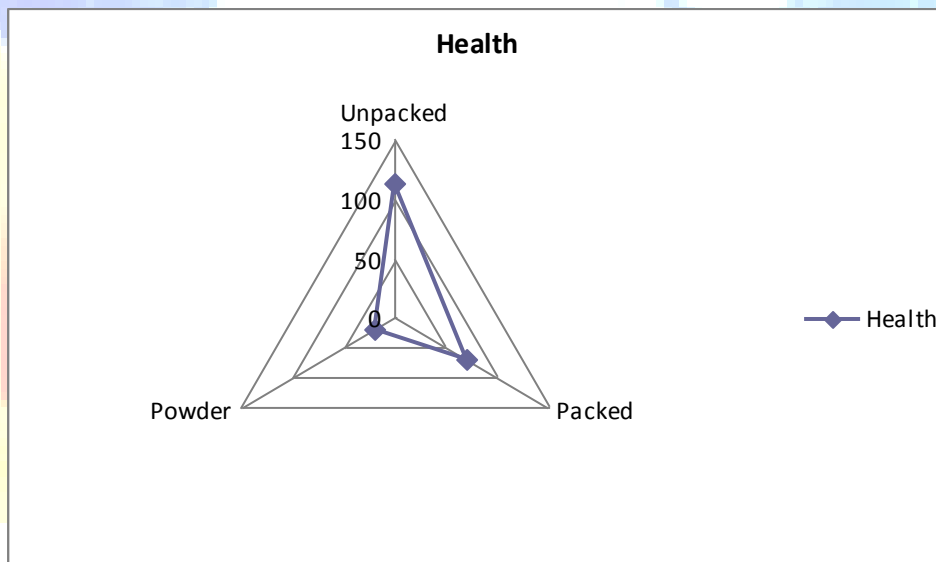


Respondent do not feel much price difference between unpacked and packed or powder milk. Price difference does not seem to affect the perception of consumers.

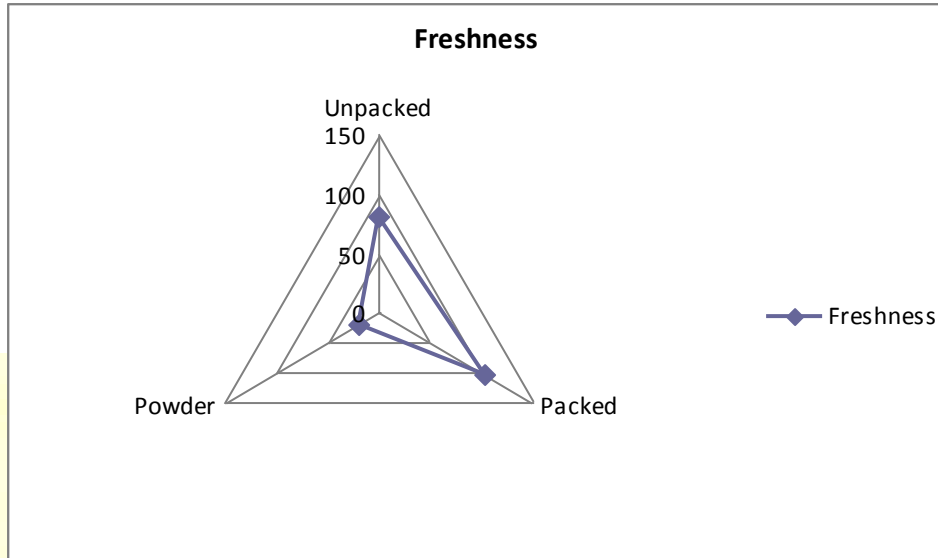
Highest priority milk

Aspect	Unpacked	Packed	Powder	Total
Health	113	70	18	201
Freshness	81	103	20	204
Drinking	95	95	10	200
Availability	91	95	33	219
Deserts	76	53	70	199
Tea	67	84	59	210
Price	25	152	29	206

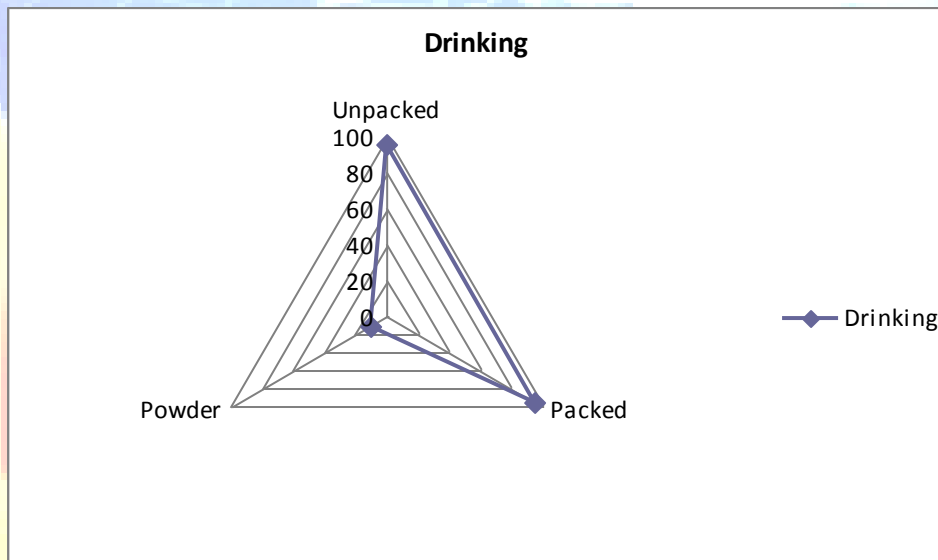
Respondents' preference among unpacked, packed and powder milk were assessed in six areas: health impact, freshness of milk, for drinking, ease of availability, suitability for preparing deserts, as tea whitener and price level.



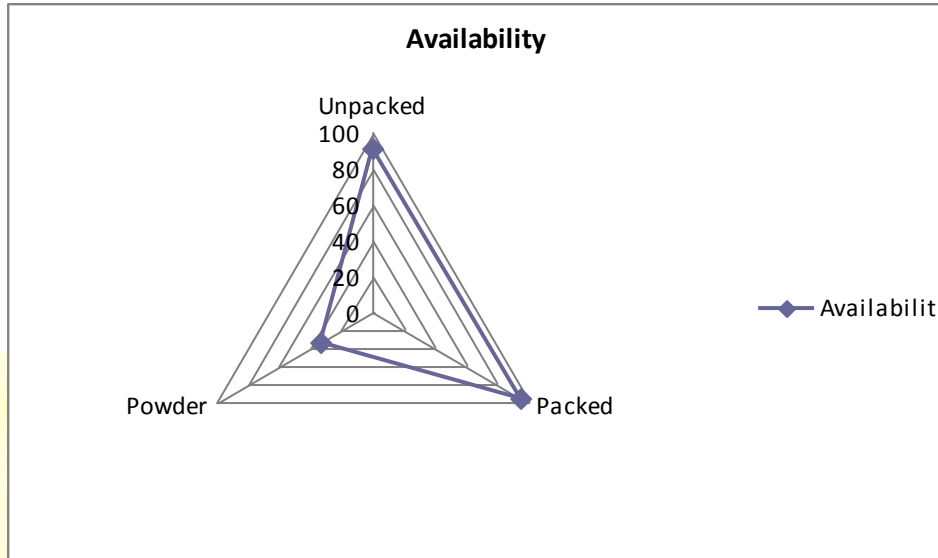
For health, respondents consider unpacked milk to be the most suitable followed by packed milk.



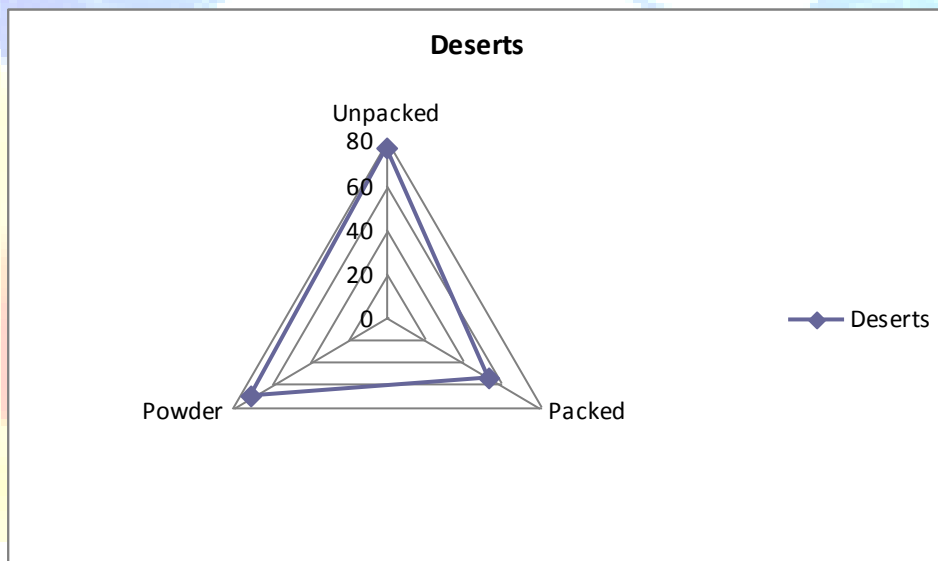
The respondent preferred packed milk to unpacked milk while considering freshness of the contents.



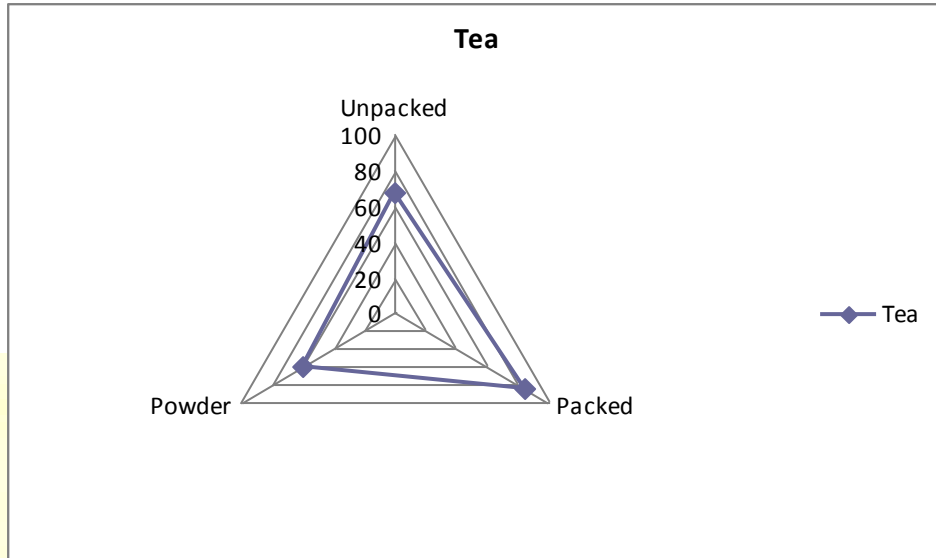
Respondents equally liked packed and unpacked milk for drinking. Packed milk has overcome the perception of being not that much preferable for drinking.



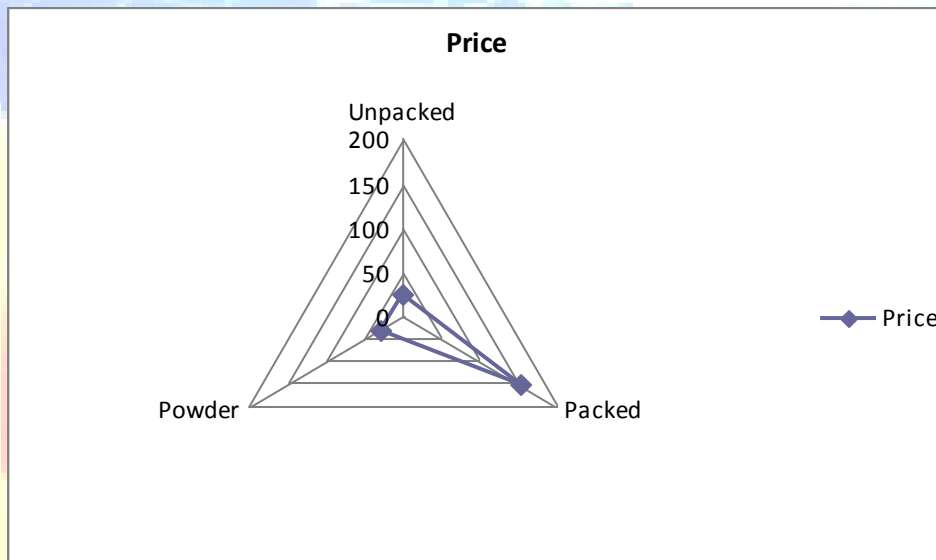
With increase in distribution of packed milk, availability is less a discriminating factor for packed milk.



The main usage of powder milk turned out to be in preparing deserts. While unpacked milk has an equal preference.



Unpacked milk is losing its share to packed milk when it comes to usage in tea.



Respondents feel that price of packed milk is very high as compared to unpack and powder milk. However the increase in price of unpacked milk is reversing the perception as shown in the results of questions concerning whether unpacked milk is economical.

Major Findings

Although most of the respondents belong to the areas that are considered middle or lower middle class areas, their usage of packed milk is nearly as much as unpacked milk. Better taste and freshness turned out to be the main reasons for preferring the unpacked milk. The prime reason for not preferring unpacked milk is the perception that it is unhygienic and hazardous. The main reason for perceiving unpacked milk as unhygienic turned out to be the handling that people generally consider unhygienic and increasing the hazard. Overwhelming majority feels that there are germs in unpacked milk. Presence of germs leads to the logical consequential opinion that unpacked milk is injurious to health. Respondent do not feel much price difference between unpacked and packed or powder milk. Price difference does not seem to affect the perception of consumers.

Respondents' preference among unpacked, packed and powder milk were assessed in six areas: health impact, freshness of milk, for drinking, ease of availability, suitability for preparing deserts, as tea whitener and price level. Respondents' preference among unpacked, packed and powder milk were assessed in six areas: health impact, freshness of milk, for drinking, ease of availability, suitability for preparing deserts, as tea whitener and price level. For health, respondents consider unpacked milk to be the most suitable followed by packed milk. Respondents equally liked packed and unpacked milk for drinking. Packed milk has overcome the perception of being not that much preferable for drinking. With increase in distribution of packed milk, availability is less a discriminating factor for packed milk. The main usage of powder milk turned out to be in preparing deserts. While unpacked milk has an equal preference. Unpacked milk is losing its share to packed milk when it comes to usage in tea. Respondents feel that price of packed milk is very high as compared to unpacked and powder milk. However the increase in price of unpacked milk is reversing the perception as shown in the results of questions concerning whether unpacked milk is economical.

Limitations

- Only 201 respondents have responded to the survey. There may be response error on the part of respondents.

- The survey is conducted in few locations of Urban areas which act as proxy of whole population of Urban areas.
- The data and the provided results contain 8-10 % chances of error.
- There is large variation in consumer perception about unpacked milk among a single income group.
- The consumption pattern is widely differentiating.

Conclusion

Based on the survey results, the research group considers that:

- There is an increased tendency of middle and middle-lower socio-economic classes to prefer packed milk to unpacked milk.
- The market share of unpacked milk is decreasing in terms of percentage. The sample responses suggest an equal liking of packed and unpacked milk.
- Main reasons for preferring unpacked milk are taste and freshness. Increase in prices of unpacked milk has decreased the economical image of unpacked milk
- Consumers state the unpacked milk is unhygienic for which they do not prefer unpacked milk. An increase in concern about health is one reason for no preference
- Majority of the consumers think that unpacked milk contains germs
- Less than half of the respondents feel that unpacked milk is economical. This shows the changing perception because of rising price of unpacked milk in Urban areas
- Easy availability of the alternate packed milk has given the consumers a choice and they do not feel it to be differentiating factor for preferring unpacked milk