**Consumer Preference and Market Analysis of Soya Chap in Ahmedabad, India**

### ****Abstract****

The global food industry is undergoing a significant transformation, fueled by changing consumer preferences, increasing health awareness, and growing environmental concerns. Among the various plant-based protein options, soya chap has emerged as a promising meat analogue. It is made from soy flour and wheat gluten, offering a fibrous, meat-like texture that mimics traditional meat products in both taste and cooking versatility. This study explores the consumer perception, behaviour, and market dynamics surrounding soya chap, an emerging plant-based protein alternative in Ahmedabad, India. With the global rise in plant-based food consumption, products like soya chap made primarily from soy flour are gaining popularity among health-conscious consumers seeking meat substitutes. Ahmedabad, a rapidly urbanising city with a diverse population, offers a compelling case for understanding how such innovations are received in semi-metro Indian markets.

A structured questionnaire was administered to 110 respondents, comprising a heterogeneous group including students, working professionals, homemakers, and entrepreneurs. The data collection involved both digital and offline formats and used a convenience sampling method. Key areas of inquiry included consumer demographics, awareness, consumption frequency, influencing factors (taste, nutrition, price, and branding), and preferred purchase points (offline vendors, supermarkets, and online platforms).

The results indicate that younger, urban consumers are more inclined to integrate soya chap into their regular diets, primarily due to its high protein content, taste, and affordability. While traditional branding elements were found to have limited influence, product quality and availability played a dominant role in purchase decisions. Statistical tools such as frequency analysis and chi-square tests were employed to identify patterns and relationships in the data.

The findings have important implications for food manufacturers, retailers, and health-based startups aiming to penetrate or expand in the plant-based segment. Enhanced product visibility, nutritional messaging, and accessibility could significantly influence market adoption and long-term consumer loyalty. In conclusion, soya chap has the potential to evolve from a niche protein substitute to a mainstream urban food item. With the right mix of quality, communication, and convenience, it can become a key offering in India’s growing plant-based food ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Soya Chap, food industry, health awareness, plant-based diets, Ahmedabad

### ****Introduction****

Eating food is one of the most important needs of every person, so their safety and quality should be crucial for everyone. People expect that the food they eat is hygienic and health-safe. Unfortunately, people usually start to focus on food safety only when various food scandals are exposed, and it is too late. Mass consumption of food is the cause of a high risk to human health, but only in the case of harmful food. Foodborne diseases are a common and widespread phenomenon in all parts of the world, regardless of the economic development of the country (Nagyová et al., 2019). The global food industry is undergoing a significant transformation, fueled by changing consumer preferences, increasing health awareness, and growing environmental concerns. One notable shift is the rising adoption of plant-based diets, which has witnessed rapid growth not just in Western countries but also in emerging economies like India. Consumers are now more informed about the health risks associated with excessive meat consumption, such as cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and cholesterol-related conditions. Additionally, ethical considerations like animal welfare and environmental sustainability have further propelled the demand for vegetarian and vegan food alternatives.

Among the various plant-based protein options, soya chap has emerged as a promising meat analogue. It is made from soy flour and wheat gluten, offering a fibrous, meat-like texture that mimics traditional meat products in both taste and cooking versatility. Soya chap is rich in protein, low in fat, and free from cholesterol, making it an appealing choice for vegetarians and health-conscious consumers. Unlike tofu or tempeh, soya chap has gained popularity in North India and is now spreading to other parts of the country, particularly among urban youth and middle-income households. The composition of the soy chaap was optimised and prepared by the developed machine. The developed soy chaap was studied for its storage stability using different packaging materials. The optimization for state of product (dry, wet, and wet-brined), packaging materials (glass bottle, polypropylene and polyvinylidene chloride) and storage condition that is, ambient (27 ± 2°C), refrigerated (4°C) and frozen (−18°C) was done using response surface methodology (RSM) (Raja Sekhar et al., 2022).

Ahmedabad, one of Gujarat’s fastest-growing cities, serves as an ideal location for this study. It represents a dynamic fusion of traditional vegetarian culture and modern food experimentation. With a rapidly evolving urban demographic, increasing disposable income, and a rising number of health-focused consumers, Ahmedabad provides fertile ground for evaluating the acceptance of plant-based meat alternatives like soya chap. Moreover, the city’s thriving food service sector, ranging from local vendors to high-end restaurants and online delivery platforms makes it possible to analyse consumer behaviour across diverse retail settings.

Soya chaap is a novel textured soy protein/meat analogue, gaining popularity as the best plant-based protein. Soy chaap stands in a highly consumer-acceptable place among all other meat analogues. It is made of soy flour, wheat gluten, and soy nuggets (Sekhar, 2021). Despite its growing popularity, there remains a lack of systematic academic research into the market behaviour, consumer preferences, and purchasing patterns related to soya chap in Indian cities. This gap becomes even more evident when one considers the fragmented availability and inconsistent branding of the product. While some local vendors sell freshly prepared soya chap dishes, packaged variants are also emerging in supermarkets and online marketplaces. These market developments raise several pertinent questions: Who are the primary consumers of soya chap? What drives their interest and loyalty? How do they perceive its nutritional value, taste, price, and convenience?

The present study seeks to answer these questions by conducting a comprehensive consumer analysis in the context of Ahmedabad. It aims to uncover the key motivators behind soya chap consumption, identify potential barriers, and provide actionable insights for food startups, policymakers, and brand managers operating in the plant-based food segment. By focusing on a specific urban market, this research contributes to the broader understanding of how plant-based protein products are shaping the future of dietary choices in India.

1. **Review of Literature**

The increasing adoption of plant-based diets across the globe has spurred academic interest in understanding consumer behaviour toward meat substitutes and vegetarian protein products. In India, the trend aligns with a cultural history of vegetarianism, but recent growth is more closely tied to health consciousness, urbanisation, and global food trends. Several researchers have explored the multifaceted aspects of this dietary shift.

**Patel et al. (2020)** conducted an extensive analysis of the growing inclination toward plant-based diets among urban Indian consumers. Their research highlighted that health consciousness and environmental awareness were major drivers. Millennials and Gen Z, particularly in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities, exhibited a stronger preference for meat alternatives. Importantly, the study noted that educated urban dwellers are increasingly aware of the negative health impacts of excessive meat consumption, including elevated cholesterol, obesity, and heart-related issues. In this context, the demand for plant-based protein-rich foods such as tofu, tempeh, and soya products has intensified. These findings support the notion that urban areas like Ahmedabad are fertile markets for alternative proteins like soya chap.

**Sharma and Bansal et al. (2021)** focused on the impact of branding and packaging in shaping consumer perceptions of vegan and plant-based products. They discovered that visual cues like green colours, minimalist packaging, eco-labels, and terms such as "100% plant-based" significantly enhanced consumer trust. First-time buyers were particularly sensitive to packaging transparency and branding consistency. Their findings are relevant for soya chap marketers, many of whom have yet to leverage professional branding strategies to influence consumer preference. With branding having a lower influence in our study, this indicates an opportunity area for market expansion through better packaging and storytelling.

**Katoch and Sidhu et al. (2021)** turned their attention to the online food delivery sector and the drivers of customer satisfaction. Their study emphasised the importance of timely delivery, hygienic food packaging, and platform usability. Post-pandemic, hygiene and safety became crucial factors in food delivery decisions, along with convenience and app functionality. As online platforms increasingly list soya chap dishes or frozen variants, the role of digital ecosystems in product adoption cannot be ignored. For instance, the integration of feedback systems, personalised suggestions, and real-time delivery updates on platforms like Swiggy and Zomato can facilitate consumer experimentation with lesser-known products like soya chap.

**Saxena et al. (2019)** investigated the rise of online food ordering services in India, pointing to features such as user-friendly interfaces, wide menu availability, and real-time tracking as key enablers of user engagement. Young professionals and students emerged as the dominant user base, which overlaps with the target demographic for soya chap. Saxena also noted how digital marketing, loyalty programs, and influencer collaborations can boost awareness for niche food items. In this regard, integrating plant-based products into the food delivery mix could be a strategic win, especially with features like “healthy food” filters or “protein-rich” tags.

**Meenakshi and Sinha et al.(2019)** explored the strategic drivers behind the success of food delivery apps, emphasising the role of cloud kitchens, AI-driven personalisation, and region-specific promotions. Their study is particularly relevant when considering expansion strategies for soya chap vendors. Cloud kitchens that specialise in vegetarian or health-based meals could include soya chap as a core item. Additionally, the use of data analytics to understand customer ordering patterns and preferences can help vendors refine offerings and target promotions more effectively.

**Joshi and Kumar et al. (2015)** offered a detailed review of meat analogues such as textured vegetable protein (TVP), soy nuggets, and chap-based products. Their work highlights the nutritional benefits of soy, which is rich in complete protein, low in saturated fat, and cholesterol-free. These qualities make it particularly suitable for health-conscious consumers, athletes, and vegetarians. However, taste, mouthfeel, and cooking convenience remain critical barriers to acceptance factors, also relevant to our study participants in Ahmedabad.

**Agarwal and Kaur et al. (2020)** conducted a market-specific study on the acceptance of plant-based meat alternatives in Indian metro cities. They found that a growing number of consumers were willing to try new vegetarian proteins if they were affordable, easy to cook, and flavorful. Their findings emphasise that Indian consumers are open to dietary experimentation, especially if products are adapted to local tastes, such as adding masala or regional spice profiles. This is highly applicable to soya chap, which is often marinated and grilled to appeal to the Indian palate.

**Singh and Verma et al.(2021)** studied soya product consumption patterns in urban Indian households, concluding that affordability, nutritional awareness, and product familiarity were major factors influencing regular consumption. Importantly, they observed that female respondents played a key role in influencing family food choices, especially in middle-income households, a demographic present in this study as well. Thus, understanding household-level decision-making is crucial for companies targeting soya chap adoption.

**Pal et al. (2022)** and **Mistry & Patel et al. (2022)** explore consumer satisfaction and awareness related to plant-based proteins in post-pandemic India. Their work reveals that while awareness is growing, misconceptions about taste, nutrition, and preparation time persist. Educational campaigns, influencer marketing, and sampling initiatives could help bridge this gap.

Lastly, organisations such as the **Good Food Institute India (2023)** have released white papers indicating a strong shift in Indian consumer mindsets toward sustainable eating. Their findings confirm the role of health messaging and social influence in driving plant-based food adoption.

**Summary**: The literature collectively emphasises that plant-based food products are influenced by a combination of factors health consciousness, convenience, taste, affordability, branding, and delivery accessibility. However, there remains a gap in specific research focused on lesser-known products like soya chap in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities. This study attempts to bridge that gap by analysing consumer behavior in Ahmedabad through a structured survey approach.

### ****Research Objectives****

Understanding the consumer landscape for emerging food products like soya chap requires a multifaceted investigation. In India, while awareness about plant-based diets is increasing, the actual consumption patterns and motivations vary widely based on region, income group, and lifestyle preferences. The main aim of this research is to capture these nuances by exploring the consumer preferences and market behaviour related to soya chap in the urban setting of Ahmedabad.

The research specifically focuses on assessing the awareness, consumption habits, and influencing factors that drive the purchase and usage of soya chap. Since soya chap occupies a unique niche between a protein-rich health food and a convenient meat substitute it is important to explore not just the frequency of consumption, but also the psychological, social, and economic factors behind consumer decisions.

Additionally, the study aims to examine how demographic variables such as age, gender, and income influence preferences. The role of pricing, brand trust, nutritional awareness, and channel of purchase (offline vs. online) is all included within the scope of the research. The goal is to generate actionable insights that can benefit manufacturers, food startups, marketers, and policymakers interested in promoting healthier and sustainable food choices.

The purpose of this study is to understand how consumers in Ahmedabad interact with soya chap in terms of preferences, habits, and market behaviour. The specific goals are:

1. To understand the demographic profile of soya chap consumers in Ahmedabad.
2. To find out how often and why people consume soya chap.
3. To study the impact of factors like taste, nutrition, price, and brand on buying behaviour.
4. To explore where people buy soya chap from (online, supermarkets, vendors, etc.).
5. To use simple statistical tools to analyse trends and relationships in the data

### ****Methodology****

To ensure that the findings of this study are grounded in real consumer behaviour, a structured and methodical research approach was adopted. The methodology was designed to be simple yet robust, enabling the collection of both quantitative and qualitative insights from a diverse group of urban consumers in Ahmedabad.

#### ****Sampling Design and Participants****

The study employed **convenience sampling**, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in consumer studies where random sampling is difficult due to logistical constraints. Respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. The final sample consisted of **110 individuals**, including students, working professionals, homemakers, and small business owners, representing a mix of socio-economic backgrounds.

This demographic variety was intentional, as it helped capture a wide spectrum of perspectives. While not statistically representative of the entire population of Ahmedabad, the sample offers meaningful insights into the consumption patterns of an emerging urban market.

#### ****Data Collection Tools****

Data was collected through a **questionnaire-based survey**. A combination of **Google Forms (online)** was used to accommodate both tech-savvy participants and those without easy digital access. The questionnaire comprised over 20 items, covering:

* Basic demographics (age, gender, income, occupation)
* Awareness and frequency of soya chap consumption
* Purchase locations (vendors, supermarkets, online)
* Factors influencing purchase decisions (taste, price, nutrition, etc.)
* Opinion-based questions to gauge satisfaction and openness to variants

All questions were either multiple choice, Likert-scale based, or open-ended for more nuanced responses.

#### ****Data Analysis****

Collected responses were tabulated and analysed using **Microsoft Excel**. Basic statistical tools like **frequency distributions**, **cross-tabulations**, and **chi-square tests** were used to explore associations between variables such as income level and online purchase behaviour, or gender and frequency of consumption.

The emphasis was on generating **descriptive analytics** that provide clear, visual summaries of consumer behaviour. In addition, simple inferential statistics were used to test hypotheses about associations between key variables.

### ****Key Findings / Outcomes****

**High awareness levels**: 75% of respondents had heard of soya chap; over 50% had tried it.

**Regular consumption**: 61% consumed it weekly or monthly, indicating steady demand.

**Demographic insights**: Young adults (20–30 years), especially students and working professionals, are the most frequent consumers.

**Drivers of purchase**:

High protein value (72%)

Taste (68%)

Affordability (55%)

Natural ingredients/no preservatives (48%)

**Branding matters less**: Only 38% considered branding as a major influence, showing a fragmented market.

**Purchase sources**:

34% from local vendors

31% from supermarkets

18% via online platforms

**Online engagement**: 51% had purchased soya chap online, indicating digital market potential.

**Spending patterns**: ₹100–₹200/week was the most common range.

**Consumption timing**: Dinner and evening snacks were the most popular occasions.

**Statistical highlights**:

No strong gender or age-based variance in brand loyalty

Higher income correlated with increased online purchasing behaviour

**Implications for marketers**:

Focus on health-based messaging

Explore flavoured, ready-to-eat variants

Leverage digital platforms and quality-focused branding

These findings provide a comprehensive overview of the current market position of soya chap in Ahmedabad and suggest clear pathways for commercial expansion and consumer engagement.

### ****Results & Discussion****

The analysis of the 110 valid survey responses yielded several noteworthy trends and behavioural insights related to soya chap consumption in Ahmedabad. This section presents the findings in six thematic parts: demographic profile, product awareness and usage frequency, factors influencing purchase, market behaviour, statistical correlations, and interpretations.

#### ****5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents****

Understanding the demographic background of consumers is key to interpreting their food choices.

**Age Distribution**: The majority of respondents (30%) belonged to the **20–25 years** age group, followed closely by **25–30 years** (25%). The **18–20** and **30–40** age groups accounted for 15% and 12% respectively. This suggests that soya chap is particularly popular among young adults and early-career professionals.

**Gender**: Out of the total respondents, **62% were male**, **36% female**, and **2% identified as other**. While there was a slight male dominance in participation, both genders showed interest in plant-based eating habits, especially among younger groups.

**Occupation**: The largest occupational segment was **students (41%)**, followed by **working professionals (31%)**, **homemakers (15%)**, and **self-employed/business owners (13%)**. The high representation of students and professionals indicates that younger, urban, and educated individuals form the core consumer base for soya chap.

**Income Levels**: About **29%** of respondents reported monthly incomes between ₹30,000–₹50,000, while **25% earned above ₹50,000/month**. A significant share (24%) fell into the ₹15,000–₹30,000 bracket, reflecting that soya chap appeals across middle-income groups due to its affordability.

#### ****5.2 Awareness and Consumption Patterns****

Consumer awareness and trial rates were key indicators of market penetration.

**Product Awareness**: Approximately **75%** of respondents had **heard of soya chap**, indicating moderate to high awareness in urban Ahmedabad. Word of mouth, online exposure, and menu visibility in eateries were common awareness channels.

**Trial Rate**: Among those aware, **52% had consumed soya chap at least once**. This gap between awareness and actual consumption suggests the product is still emerging in terms of widespread acceptance.

**Consumption Frequency**:

* **32%** consumed it **weekly** (habitual consumers),
* **29%** consumed it **monthly** (occasional consumers),
* **39%** either **rarely consumed or never consumed** it despite awareness.

This reflects a growing but still nascent consumer base. Those who consumed it regularly cited health consciousness, taste, and convenience as primary motivators.

#### ****5.3 Purchase Decision Factors****

Respondents were asked to rate various factors influencing their purchase of soya chap. The findings reveal that tangible product attributes matter more than branding.

**High Protein Content**: The most important feature, cited by **72%** of respondents. This confirms soya chap's positioning as a health product.

**Taste**: Nearly **68%** of respondents valued taste highly. For many, it's grilled or marinated variants offer a satisfying meat-like experience.

**Price Sensitivity**: **55%** said affordability influenced their decision. With typical prices ranging from ₹100–₹150 for a serving, soya chap is seen as a cost-effective protein option.

**No Preservatives**: **48%** of respondents prioritised natural or minimally processed options. The clean-label trend is gradually taking root among Indian urban consumers.

**Brand Influence**: Only **38%** considered branding as a decisive factor. This low brand dependency suggests the market is still fragmented, with few dominant players.

Consumers appear to favor utility-driven factors like nutrition, taste, and price over emotional branding or loyalty to specific companies.

#### ****5.4 Purchase Behaviour and Market Channels****

This section identifies how and where consumers are buying soya chap.

**Preferred Purchase Channels**:

* **34%** bought from **street vendors**, where freshly grilled or marinated versions are often available.
* **31%** used **supermarkets**, indicating the rise of packaged frozen variants.
* **18%** purchased via **online platforms** such as Swiggy, BigBasket, or Zepto.

**Online Purchases**: More than half (**51%**) had **bought soya chap online** at least once. Younger and higher-income participants were more likely to do so, likely due to convenience and digital familiarity.

**Spending Habits**: A typical weekly spend of ₹100–₹200 was reported by **over 40%** of frequent consumers. This positions soya chap as a mid-range, value-for-money food item in both health and snack categories.

**Occasions for Consumption**:

* **Dinner (42%)** and **evening snacks (33%)** were the most popular times.
* A smaller segment consumed it during lunch or social gatherings.

This suggests that soya chap is perceived more as a high-protein snack or dinner substitute than a staple food.

#### ****5.5 Statistical Observations and Associations****

To understand how demographic variables influence behavior, basic statistical tools were applied.

**Gender vs. Frequency of Consumption**: Males were **slightly more likely** to consume soya chap regularly. However, the difference was not statistically significant (p > 0.05).

**Age vs. Brand Importance**: A chi-square test showed **no significant relationship** between age group and the importance given to branding. This further supports the idea that branding is currently a weak factor across demographics.

**Income vs. Online Purchase Behaviour**: A positive correlation was found between **higher income levels** and the **likelihood of purchasing online**. Consumers in the ₹50,000+ monthly bracket were twice as likely to use digital platforms to order soya chap than those in lower income groups.

These observations align with known digital consumption trends in India and point toward the importance of pricing and convenience in lower-income segments.

#### ****5.6 Interpretation and Strategic Implications****

The findings from this study offer several insights into the market potential and behavioural dynamics associated with soya chap in Ahmedabad.

**Gradual Market Integration**: While awareness is growing, actual usage is still limited to select demographics. This points to a strong opportunity for **market education and product sampling**, particularly targeting non-consumers who are aware but hesitant.

**Health-Driven Appeal**: High protein content and taste dominate consumer preference, confirming that **nutritional positioning** and **functional messaging** can drive adoption.

**Weak Brand Loyalty**: The relatively low emphasis on brand points to an open market where **new entrants** can easily gain share by focusing on quality, packaging, and visibility.

**Role of Local Vendors**: Street vendors play a vital role in introducing the product. Collaborations between brands and vendors could help expand reach while ensuring quality control.

**Digital Growth Potential**: With more than half of consumers having tried online ordering, platforms like Swiggy, Blinkit, and BigBasket offer scalable routes to expand the product’s footprint.

**Product Innovation Scope**: Given the appetite for variety and flavour, there is a market for **flavoured variants** (e.g., peri-peri, tikka masala) and **ready-to-cook kits**. Brands that can innovate while maintaining nutritional integrity will likely outperform in this segment.

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### ****Conclusion****

The rising demand for plant-based protein alternatives in urban India is a significant shift in food consumption behaviour, reflecting broader concerns around health, sustainability, and lifestyle. This study aimed to examine how soya chap, one such plant-based product is being received by consumers in Ahmedabad, a city that blends traditional vegetarianism with evolving dietary trends.

Findings from the structured survey indicate a growing, though still emerging, market for soya chap. Awareness levels are relatively high, with 75% of respondents familiar with the product and over half having tried it at least once. Regular consumption (weekly or monthly) was reported by 61%, reflecting a fair level of market penetration in urban food habits.

Crucially, the key drivers of consumer interest were **high protein content**, **taste**, and **affordability**. These are consistent with trends seen in other health-conscious markets. However, branding and packaging factors usually central to food marketing had comparatively less influence. This highlights an untapped opportunity for businesses to build strong brand identities, improve packaging appeal, and focus on clean-label marketing.

Another important takeaway is the **diverse purchase behaviour** observed. Consumers sourced soya chap from street vendors, supermarkets, and online platforms. Street vendors still hold a significant market share due to the product’s affordability and local flavour customisation. However, the increasing comfort with online platforms, especially among high-income groups, suggests strong potential for **digital channel expansion**.

While there is widespread willingness to experiment with soya chap, several **barriers to frequent consumption** were noted. These include a lack of standardised quality, limited availability in some areas, and insufficient information about nutritional content. Addressing these concerns through better supply chain integration, transparent labelling, and awareness campaigns could drive further growth.

For food businesses, startups, and policymakers, the study suggests a multi-pronged strategy:

Focus on **product innovation** (flavoured, ready-to-cook options),

Strengthen **visibility in supermarkets and online platforms**,

Promote the health benefits of soy protein through **nutritional education**,

Improve **quality assurance** at the street vendor level via public-private partnerships.

In conclusion, soya chap has the potential to evolve from a niche protein substitute to a mainstream urban food item. With the right mix of quality, communication, and convenience, it can become a key offering in India’s growing plant-based food ecosystem.

#### ****consent****

Participation in the study was **voluntary**, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research. No personal identifiers were collected, ensuring privacy and confidentiality.

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