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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The way Indians eat food has changed a lot over the ten years. Because of more people moving to cities hours at work higher salaries and knowing more about health from around the world people in cities and big towns are eating differently. It is easy to get food that's ready to eat and food that is packaged so people like that. But at the time people are worried about their health so they want to know what they are eating.

Snacking is a part of this change. For people who work snacks have become like meals. The problem is that snacks like biscuits, namkeen and chips are not good for people. They do not have nutrients. This means that there is a chance for snacks that are healthy and easy to eat. These new snacks want to be good, for people and easy to get.

Protein bars are really popular. They used to be for people who go to the gym and take fitness supplements. Now people eat them as a snack. All sorts of people are eating protein bars. People with jobs, college students, parents. They like to eat them when they're in a hurry. The market for protein bars is getting bigger.. It is not fully grown yet especially in India. In India people care about how much things cost, what they taste like and what they eat. This is different from countries where many protein bars come from. Protein bars are still a growing thing, in India.

The purpose of this research is to have an understanding of the interaction of Indian customers with the product. This research intends to discover consumer expectations regarding the product, the amount that they are ready to pay for it, the sources from which they purchase the same, and also the issues faced by the customers regarding the products available in the market. This research can be helpful to the company Urban Grain Natural LLP, as it helps to introduce their product Puretein, a plant-based protein bar to the market.

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1 Changing Food Habits in Cities of India

Indians living in cities have altered their dieting habits. They do not have their meals at those times when they had them previously. Breakfasts are skipped, opting for quick bites. Their lunch too tends to be eaten quickly. In between meal gaps, they opt for packaged snacks. All these factors have contributed to the growth of the snacks industry, especially in urban centers. Most of the snacks being favored by people tend to be those which have high-calorie content, which is unhealthy. The reason for the increased growth of the snack industry has been brought on due to all these factors. Urban Indians are snacking a lot more than previously and these snacks are not very healthy.

There has been awareness of the nutritional values of food, particularly among consumers who are in their late twenties and thirties. It seems to be genuine awareness. As these people are often the breadwinners of the family and make decision regarding food purchases in households.

1.2.2 The Rise of Health Awareness

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India has a problem with diseases that come from the way people live. These diseases include diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems. People in India are now more aware of these health issues. This is because they have access to a lot of information about health on the internet they use apps to track their wellness. They like to stay fit.

This is not just happening in cities. People over India are starting to care more about what they eat. They read the labels on food packages they ask what is in their food. They think about what nutrients they are getting. They do this now than they did just a few years ago. People, in India are really paying attention to what they put in their bodies.

People are now more aware of what they eat. This has not just made them buy the diet food. It has made them want food that's really healthy not just food that says it is healthy on the package or in the ads. People want food like the Food products that are authentically healthy. The Food products that are authentically healthy are, in demand now.

1.2.3 Functional Foods and Healthy Snacking

Functional foods are products that give you health benefits not just calories. They are becoming popular in India. Some examples are high-protein snacks, low-sugar sweets cereals with nutrients and drinks with good bacteria.

* High-protein snacks are a hit with consumers.

* Low-sugar confectionery is also doing well.

* Fortified cereals are another example.

* Probiotic beverages have found their audience.

Protein bars are leading the way in this market. They are easy to carry make you feel full and give you protein. These are things that people who buy these products really want. The protein bars are very popular. Their market is growing fast. They are good, for people who want to eat on the go. Protein bars give you an easy way to get protein.

16 1.2.4 The Protein Bar Market in India

The Indian protein bar market is still growing. It has been getting bigger over the few years. Some companies were the first to sell protein bars to people who go to the gym. Now companies like Max Protein, The Whole Truth and Yoga Bar are selling to people who care about their health. They are selling protein bars online in stores and through ways.. There are still some problems with Indian protein bars. The Indian protein bar
20 market has problems with price, taste and people not knowing what is, in the protein bars. The Indian protein bar market needs to work on these things.

1.2.5 Shortcomings of Existing Products

The existing products have the following weaknesses: Most protein bars in India fit into one or more of the following traps, they are over priced when compared to what an average consumer would pay for a normal snack, they use whey protein which is not suitable for a large section of Indians who are sensitive to lactose, the taste often tastes artificial and the list of ingredients does not match what they are actually selling as. In many instances, however, consumers who ignored the packaging and went further into the claims have been disappointed. There is a rising trend toward eating plant-based protein.

1.2.6 Plant-Based Protein: A Growing Preference

Such a transition towards plant-based foods is seen around the world and is underway in India as well. Plant protein alternatives are naturally appealing to a country where lactose intolerance is common and where the majority of the population is vegetarian. However, quality plant-based protein bars, which are both affordable and available in the market, are still scarce in India. This is a market need and a business opportunity!

1.2.7 Urban Grain Natural LLP and PureTein

Urban Grain Natural LLP was established to meet this need. The company's product, PureTein is a plant-based protein bar with clean-label, locally-sourced ingredients. It appeals to the health-conscious but budget-conscious group who wish to taste good and know exactly what's in the product. An understanding of the "in-depth" consumer segment was one of the aims of this study.

1.3 Problem Statement

Although there has been a rise in awareness among consumers about the need for healthy snacks, the Indian protein bar market is facing a basic disconnect: The protein bars being sold do not support the consumers that wish to purchase them. High prices, artificial formulations, culturally inappropriate flavours and over dependence on whey protein have all contributed to limited use.

Further, the research base knowledge about how Indian consumers perceive the protein bars—what really motivates them to buy, what they are willing to pay for, how they assess ingredient claims, and the effectiveness of marketing and social recommendations—is lacking. New and existing players in the market don't have this understanding and are working with incomplete information.

The problem this study aimed to address can be stated as follows: There is a difference in the perception of the consumers to what they are looking for in protein snack bar products and what is available in the market and this difference is not understood with the available evidence.

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1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 Primary Objective

To examine consumer attitudes to health protein snack bars products in India and analyse the parameters influencing consumer buying decision and preferences for the product.

1.4.2 Secondary Objectives

- To determine how often and when participants used protein bars.
- To determine the top factors that are influencing the purchase of protein bars.
- To gain insight into consumer preference for texture, protein source and product attributes.
- To gain insights into brand awareness and consumer perception in the protein bar category
- The relative effect of marketing channels, peer recommendations and social media on purchase behavior was to be studied.
- To identify price ranges and price sensitivity levels that are acceptable to the market.
- To determine specific consumer dissatisfaction and gaps in the products available.
- To evaluate the market potential of a protein bar based on plant protein in India

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1.5 Scope of the Study

1.5.1 Geographical and Demographic Scope

The study centered on urban and semi-urban consumers, predominantly health conscious, tech-savvy and working professional or student population in India. The questionnaire was open for geographies but most of the respondents were from metros which represents the main market for protein bars.

1.5.2 Product and Variable Scope

Only protein snack bars were studied within the product category. This included protein products based on plants and whey. Factors that were analyzed were usage frequency, preferences of product attributes, buying channel behavior, price sensitivity, brand awareness, and marketing influence.

1.5.3 Limitations Within Scope

The study was based on self-reported responses to surveys and was convenience-sampling, thus subjecting the study to selection and response bias. The number of respondents (89) is appropriate for descriptive analysis but results cannot be generalized. Data is for a specific time and does not necessarily show changing consumer trends.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A review of literature related to consumer behavior in the protein snack bar market is discussed in this chapter. The review explores some interconnected themes: the rise of functional foods, the nutritional status of commercial protein bars, consumer psychology and product perception, the clean label trend, plant-based protein, pricing sensitivity, and the effect of marketing influence. The intention is to place the present study in the context of existing knowledge and determine the gap in the literature.

2.2 Growth of Functional Foods and Healthy Snacking

In the last decade the global market of functional foods has grown enormously, as these foods provide additional health benefits beyond their nutritional content. The heightened prevalence of lifestyle disease and the wider availability of health information via digital channels has empowered consumers to make more conscious choices about food.Lifestyle disease has increased and the accessibility of health information on digital platforms has influenced consumers to make more conscious food choices. Protein bars have been positively influenced by the trend because of its alignment with a number of consumer priorities, such as convenience, portability, and satiety (Grasso et al., MDPI Foods, 2023).

This is especially prevalent in Indian markets in urban areas by young working professionals. Studies have demonstrated that the frequency of snacking among this population has increased and so has the desire to eat what they perceive to be healthful snacks. The protein bars, granola, and high fibre biscuits are in the functional snack category, which is one of the most active categories in the Indian packaged food market in 2024 (IMARC Group).

2.3 Nutritional Composition: Claims versus Reality

Protein bars are also available as health products, but the scientific research is more complex. Research review of commercially available protein bars has found that many of these products are loaded with significant amounts of added sugar, artificial sweeteners and preservatives which are in direct conflict with their health positioning. In a study published in MDPI Foods (2023), 51 commercial bars were assessed for how they compare to standard nutritional criteria, with under one third of the bars meeting the criteria and being considered nutritionally balanced. A study published in

PubMed Central (2024) also confirmed that in many bars, the actual protein content is different from what is written on the label, which is in line with consumer perceptions that they are being misled. Furthermore, Health.com (2024) noted that some protein bars could have lower digestibility due to interactions with fat, fiber, and processing techniques, potentially delivering the nutrition consumers hope for that may not necessarily be provided.

2.4 Consumer Perception and Purchase Drivers

The category of food is the area where the existence of such discrepancies between consumers' perception and reality becomes evident. In the case of protein bars, academic studies have proved that the use of such health claims on their packaging increases consumer purchase intention (regardless of any critique towards its content). A basic study of meal replacement bars (Mitchell et al., 2018, PubMed) showed that packaging cues and health-related language on product labels was a much more powerful motivator for first-time purchases than price or nutrition.

Meanwhile, brand awareness, eye-catching visuals, and word-of-mouth recommendations are also found to be equally significant in purchase decisions. The results of this study are similar to those of various other studies concerning health food purchasing habits: consumers' personal networks are more credible than advertising.

2.5 Product Attributes and Taste as Primary Drivers

It is one of the most stable results revealed by the literature on health food acceptance that taste is the most important factor affecting repeat purchase even for health motivated consumers. Research show that despite the nutrients a product has, consumers will not keep buying the product if it is not working on taste. The problem of protein bar manufacturers is that high protein content can be sacrificed for the trade of taste and texture - especially when artificial sweeteners and chalky protein isolates are involved.

Texture stability is recognized as a secondary but significant consideration (MDPI, 2023). Those bars which are either too hard, too chewy, or prone to breaking easily in various weather conditions are sure to receive negative comments from consumers. Such an aspect is particularly significant with regard to the Indian market as the products could be exposed to extreme heat.

2.6 The Clean-Label Movement

The Clean Label foods with their straightforward ingredient composition and lack of any artificial ingredients have attracted substantial attention in the academic literature for some time now. According to a study in PubMed (2023), consumers have a high and increasing demand for products that communicate their ingredients transparently, especially for health-conscious consumers aged 25–45.

What is particularly important is that clean-label is not just about excluding the artificial ingredients, it is also about knowing what's in the food and why it is there. Brands with good ingredient stories are more likely to be loyal than brands with ingredients listed.

2.7 Plant-Based Protein: An Emerging but Significant Trend

The market for plant-based protein has increased significantly in developed and emerging economies. These findings support the notion that health, environmental and ethical concerns are all drivers for making a transition to plant-based diets. The formulation of protein bars has been studied with plant-based protein sources (soy, pea, or oat) and found to be nutritionally similar to whey-based bars when ingredients are chosen and used appropriately. (MDPI, 2023)

The case for formulations containing plants is further bolstered by the presence of a large vegetarian population in India, and the high percentage of people who are lactose intolerant, making whey-based formulations unsuitable for a large proportion of potential consumers. However, the scope for low cost high quality plant-based protein bars in India is still undeveloped and provides an opportunity for an appropriate product to come to market.

2.8 Pricing and Market Accessibility

The functional food category is known as being price sensitive. Consumers always say that they want to eat healthier, but the more expensive it gets, the less they actually do. According to premium health snacks research in developing markets (IMARC Group, 2024), price is a crucial constraint to frequent consumption – items that are more expensive than a certain threshold are bought from time to time as a reward.

In India, this seems to be a solid benchmark of Rs. Based on industry data, it is recommended that 80-120 be used for a single serve item. Any product that is priced much greater than this level narrows its own addressable market.

2.9 Marketing Influence: Peer Recommendation vs. Paid Channels

Peer recommendation is a characteristic of an online community whereas paid channels are not.Peer recommendation is a feature of a community online, whereas paid channels are not. Various marketing channels' effect on health food purchase decisions is studied extensively. One thing that keeps coming up is that referrals from friends, family or trusted people in the community are always more effective than ads or influencer recommendations. This can be particularly true in certain categories, such as protein bars, where consumers know that the content is being promoted by the company and are more sceptical of the claims made by the influencers. This is an interesting take for newcomers to the market: sampling products, marketing locally and creating actual advocates for the product is less expensive than going to social media channels and spending a ton of money.

2.10 Identified Research Gaps

During the literature review for this study, the amount of literature available in the western context is large, but there are some gaps in the Indian research context. The protein bar market in India has not been studied in detail with respect to consumer behavior. The studies that incorporate both the product attributes and marketing factors with purchase behaviour is limited in the Indian context. Studies on Indian consumers' acceptance of plant-based protein bars are especially limited. The chief reason to conduct this study was due to these gaps.

2.11 Summary

People really like protein bars. They are becoming more popular.. There is a big difference between what people want from protein bars and what they actually get. Protein bars that have natural ingredients and taste good and are not too expensive are the ones that will do really well. A lot of people in India prefer protein bars that are made from plants. When people talk about protein bars with their friends and family it means more, than seeing ads on television. We used these ideas to plan our research and to understand what people told us when we asked them about protein bars.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The following section outlines the research design, data collection techniques, sampling strategy, and the methods used for data analysis in the current study. These elements were carefully crafted in such a way that would ensure relevant data on consumer behaviors in regard to protein snack bars were generated.

3.2 Research Design

A descriptive research design was employed. The key characteristic of a descriptive research design is that it focuses on describing characteristics of either the phenomena or the population in question. In the present study, the descriptive design is relevant to the aims of understanding what is taking place in the market and how the consumers act in regard to the protein snack bars.

3.3 Research Approach

The current study employed a quantitative research approach. Data was collected in numeric form and analyzed using statistical tools. Quantitative approach was deemed most appropriate for the present study in that it allows for objective measurement, pattern recognition in a sample, and comparing across variables.

3.4 Method of Collecting Data

3.4.1 Primary Data

The primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire, which was created by the researcher and named 'Your Protein. The Pure Way'. Respondents were asked a series of questions on the subject areas of demographics, consumption, preference, purchase, influencers, and brand knowledge. Multiple choice and multi-select questions were asked for quantitative analysis.

3.4.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data was obtained from existing research paper and journal articles from sources such as MDPI Foods, PubMed, PubMed Central, IMARC Group market research, and Health.com. Such data was used to develop the literature review and contextualise results.

3.5 Sampling

3.5.1 Sampling Technique

The convenient sampling technique was applied in this study. Respondents were chosen based on their convenience to participate in the study and willingness to do so. The questionnaire was shared through various online media including social networking sites. While convenient sampling is not statistically representative, it is quite common in academic studies due to constraints of time and resources.

3.5.2 Sample Size and Profile

A total of 89 responses were obtained and considered in the analysis. The sample was composed mostly of consumers living in urban and semi-urban areas, where there is a heavy presence of those aged between 35-44 (61.8%). Women made up 61.8% of the sample. The sample consists of working professionals, fitness buffs, and health-conscious people, who make up the main target market of protein snack bars.

3.6 Research Instrument

Structured questionnaire was the main research instrument used in this study. It was constructed into seven parts, namely: (1) Contact and identification information, (2) Demographic profile, (3) Consumption behaviors, (4) Product preferences, (5) Purchase behavior and channels, (6) Brand awareness and perceptions, and (7) Label checking practices and protein source preferences. The research instrument was distributed through Google Forms.

3.7 Variables

Independent variables

Price, product attributes (flavor, texture, ingredients, source of protein), brand name and reputation, marketing strategy (advertising, influencer, referrals from friends).

Dependent variables

Purchase decision, brand preference, protein source preference, willingness to pay.

3.8 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using the following tools:

- Frequency distribution and percentage analysis: Used to understand the distribution of responses across each question and identify dominant trends
- Cross-tabulation: Used to examine relationships between demographic variables and behavioral responses
- Graphical representation: Bar charts and pie charts were used to present findings visually

- Thematic analysis: Open-ended responses were read and grouped by recurring themes to capture qualitative insights

3.9 Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire was developed according to the research aims and goals of the study, which indicates content validity. All questions were stated clearly and unambiguously to avoid any confusion on the part of participants. Structured questions as well as uniform administration through one and the same digital channel made the survey more reliable.

3.10 Ethical Aspects

Respondents participated voluntarily. They were informed that the survey was conducted for academic purposes. No sensitive private data was requested, except basic demographics. Email and phone contact information provided by respondents was used solely for inviting sample testers as announced in the survey introduction section.

3.11 Limitations

The current study has its limitations associated with the selected methodology and sample population. Being conducted as convenience sampling, it may be prone to selection bias as health-oriented customers can take part in the research rather than those who are not concerned about protein bars. Respondents may provide idealized rather than real behaviour patterns. With the selected sample size of 89 respondents, it is impossible to generalize conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The primary data collected through the structured questionnaire 'Your Protein' has been analyzed and interpreted in this chapter and the analysis is presented on the basis of 89 respondents. The Pure Way.' The data has been structured around the thematic sections of the study corresponding to the research questions. The results of each table are followed by a short interpretation of the results and its implications for the Indian protein bar market. The data from open-ended responses has been used to enrich the quantitative data.

4.2 Demographic Analysis

4.2.1 Gender Distribution

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	55	61.8%
Male	34	38.2%
Total	89	100%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89)

Of the respondents, 61.8% (55) were female. This is similar to other studies that have revealed a greater active involvement of women in health and diet in Indian households. It also indicates that the women population is a commercial market segment that can be considered more receptive to protein bars.

4.2.2 Age Distribution

Table 4.2: Age Group Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 18	2	2.2%
18–24 years	10	11.2%
25–34 years	17	19.1%

35–44 years	55	61.8%
45 years and above	5	5.6%
Total	89	100%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89)

The 35–44 age group dominates the sample at 61.8%, followed by 25–34 at 19.1% and 18–24 at 11.2%. This distribution is reflective of the survey network and is also very similar to the actual primary consumers of protein bars in India: health-aware, working adults who have the finances to regularly spend on something they choose and are mindful about their dietary habits. The percentage of under 18 respondents (2.2%) is normal for an online professional network survey.

4.3 Consumption Behavior Analysis

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4.3.1 Frequency of Protein Bar Consumption

Table 4.3: Frequency of Protein Bar Consumption

Consumption Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	5	5.6%
A few times a week	14	15.7%
Occasionally	60	67.4%
Never consumed	10	11.2%
Total	89	100%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89)

67.4% consume protein bars occasionally, 15.7% a few times a week and 5.6% on a daily basis. 11.2% of respondents have never used a protein bar, further supporting the idea that this is a growing market. Still, it is uncommon to consume it daily. The discovery suggests there's a huge opportunity for brands to take some risks on habit-formation initiatives — trial packs, product sampling, and low-cost entry-level SKUs — rather than targeting only regular customers.

4.3.2 Reasons for Consuming Protein Bars

Table 4.4: Reasons for Protein Bar Consumption (Multiple responses permitted)

Reason	No. of Responses	% of Respondents
Snack on-the-go / convenience	58	65.2%
Healthy alternative over junk	47	52.8%
Mid-day energy snack	23	25.8%
Post-workout recovery	11	12.4%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89, multiple selection)

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The data has been collected from Primary sources with multiple selection method and the result is as per the following table: Convenience was the top reason for eating (65.2%) followed by wanting to choose a healthier food over junk food (52.8%). There was one last category, Post-workout recovery, at 12.4%. This is a major revelation – protein bars in India are not just for fitness; they are a convenient, good-for-you snack for everyday life. This does have a big impact on how PureTein should be placed and marketed. Gym use cases will only appeal to a small segment of potential buyers.

4.4 Product Preference Analysis

4.4.1 Texture Preference

Table 4.5: Consumer Texture Preference

Preferred Texture	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Crunchy	51	57.3%
Soft and Chewy	17	19.1%
No preference	21	23.6%
Total	89	100%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89)

Of the 57.3% who prefer crunchy, 19.1% like it soft and chewy, and 23.6% don't care. One respondent referred to its ideal as a 'biscuit like crunch' as it was very familiar to their Indian consumers. This raises an immediate product development question – should PureTein focus on a crunchy formulation and make sure that it remains a crunchy product throughout shelf life and packaging design?

4.4.2 Label Checking Behavior

Table 4.6: What Consumers Check on the Label Before Buying

Label Element Checked	Frequency	% of Respondents
Protein content	32	35.9%
Clean / natural ingredients	23	25.8%
Calorie count	13	14.6%
No particular preference	8	9.0%
Fibre content	3	3.4%
Multiple / other combinations	10	11.2%
Total	89	100%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89)

The most widely seen label element is protein (35.9%), followed closely by clean or natural ingredients (25.8%) and calorie count (14.6%). The three together make up more than 75% of label-checking behavior — and they are the very characteristics a clean-label, plant-based bar should emphasize on the label. Open-ended responses included several comments regarding the presence of sugar, including one that stated they preferred 'no hidden sugars. This shows a great appreciation for the good labelling practices of PureTein.

4.4.3 Preferred Protein Source

Table 4.7: Preferred Protein Source

Protein Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)

Whey protein	39	43.8%
Soy protein (plant based)	18	20.2%
Pea protein (plant based)	17	19.1%
No preference / Either	14	15.7%
Other (Ragi, blends, etc.)	1	1.1%
Total	89	100%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89)

However, Whey has a slightly higher percentage at 43.8%, although when you add up the percentages for Soy (20.2%) and Pea (19.1%), the total percentage becomes 39.3% - just short of Whey's percentage, and when you consider that some people don't care about the ingredient, the market for plant-based protein is more than half of our population. 'Ragi' is another ingredient used by one of our respondents in particular. This data is a good confirmation of a plant-driven positioning for PureTein.

4.5 Purchase Behavior Analysis

4.5.1 Purchase Channels

Table 4.8: Preferred Purchase Channels (Multiple responses permitted)

Purchase Channel	No. of Responses	% of Respondents
Retail stores (neighbourhood / wellness)	41	46.1%
Supermarkets / Modern trade	39	43.8%
Quick commerce (Swiggy/Zepto/Blinkit)	35	39.3%
Online (Amazon, brand websites)	25	28.1%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89, multiple selection)

Retail stores were the most frequently used channel (46.1%) followed closely by supermarkets (43.8%). Quick commerce is picking up pace and is on the rise at 39.3%, which includes the phenomenal rise of platforms such as Blinkit, Zepto and Swiggy Instamart. 28.1% used online purchasing via Amazon and brand websites. The results of this report are very favorable for PureTein's omni-channel distribution approach. Offline presence is a must for volume, and quick commerce listing should be considered for purchases that are speed and convenience driven.

4.5.2 Price Sensitivity — Willingness to Pay

Table 4.9: Willingness to Pay Per Protein Bar (15g protein in 50g bar)

Price Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rs. 50–100	38	42.7%
Rs. 100–150	35	39.3%
Rs. 150–200	12	13.5%
Rs. 200 and above	4	4.5%
Total	89	100%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89)

As seen from the data, the consumer is very price-sensitive. The Rs. The preference group of 42.7% used 50-100 band.The band user group of 50-100 was the largest preference group. The Rs. A combined 82% of respondents feel good up to Rs. 100–150. 150. The products with price greater than Rs. Just 4.5% of 200 is an audience that is viable. The product pricing of PureTein needs to be made towards the Rs. The maximum market capture range is 90–130. A smaller, less expensive trial product with a code of Rs. under. 80 might make the first trial easier.

4.6 Purchase Decision Factors

4.6.1 Factors Influencing the Purchase Decision

Table 4.10: Factors Influencing Protein Bar Purchase Decision (Multiple responses permitted)

Influencing Factor	No. of Responses	% of Respondents
Recommendation by friends & relatives	65	73.0%
Company & brand name	46	51.7%
Influencer recommendation	14	15.7%
Advertising & promotion	14	15.7%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89, multiple selection)

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Word-of-mouth ranked at 73%, well above brand name (51.7%) and the last were influencer marketing and paid advertising, which shared 15.7%. One of the most commercially significant findings of this study is the one mentioned above. Influencer marketing is the hot topic of the moment, but it seems that in reality, peer trust is the strongest driver of purchase conversion. This means, for PureTein, that sampling campaigns and the incentives given to referrals, plus community development, will yield greater impact per dollar invested than common digital advertising.

4.7 Brand Awareness Analysis

4.7.1 Brands Currently Consumed

Table 4.11: Protein Bar Brands Currently Consumed by Respondents

Brand	Frequency	% of Respondents
Max Protein	28	31.5%
The Whole Truth	26	29.2%
Yoga Bar	11	12.4%

Others (RXBAR, Nature Valley, YouBe, etc.)	15	16.9%
None / Not currently consuming	9	10.1%
Total	89	100%

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89)

Max Protein is the top brand consumed (31.5%), followed closely by The Whole Truth (29.2%) and Yoga Bar (12.4%). Interestingly, 10.1% of the respondents aren't consuming any brand today, which is a direct opportunity for trial. The market is not dominated by a single brand, so there is a chance for PureTein to penetrate the target consumer's mind, as long as it offers something they need that they don't have yet. One respondent had actually sampled PureTein and agreed it was a great taste factor.

4.8 Consumer Sentiment — What They Like and Dislike

4.8.1 Qualitative Themes: What Consumers Appreciate

Responses were evaluated individually in order to look out for recurring positive aspects, especially within the open-ended questions. The most common positive attributes were:

- Taste and flavour — respondents who liked their current brand best most often said this was because of the taste and flavour of the product.
- Clean ingredients — The Whole Truth consumers often brag about the transparent list of ingredients and lack of unnatural additives in their products
- Convenience and portability — several respondents pointed out that protein bars are a natural addition to their commute or travel diet
- Protein-to-calorie balance — consumers appreciated bars with actual protein without having to deal with too many calories per bar
- Filling quality — several respondents commented that once they consumed a quality protein bar, they were able to stay full for more than they had anticipated

4.8.2 Qualitative Themes: Areas of Dissatisfaction

The 'What could be improved?' question was open-ended and led to several themes for action. The following complaints were made most often:

- Multiple people from multiple brands indicated price; common theme – "protein bars are expensive for daily consumption"
- High or hidden sugar content – the complaint was about both the amount of sugar and its source, e.g., one respondent indicated that they preferred "'natural sugars like dates, honey, jaggery as opposed to refined sugar'"
- Chewiness or hardness – the taste was compared to medicine.
- Limited flavor choice; lack of variation – specifically noted in relation to Max Protein and Yoga Bar brands
- Caloric imbalance – a feeling that the bars had an excess number of calories considering the protein gain
- A desire for something more homemade/local – i.e., bars produced locally or home-made.

Complaints present obvious opportunities to improve the product and marketing. These three factors will make the brand stand out in a competitive market environment – price, authenticity of flavor, and ingredient content.

4.9 Summary Table: Key Findings from Primary Data

Table 4.12: Summary of Key Findings

Parameter	Key Finding
Consumption frequency	67.4% consume occasionally; market is in growth stage
Primary reason for use	Convenience (65.2%) and healthier snacking (52.8%) — not gym use
Preferred texture	Crunchy — 57.3%
Preferred protein source	Whey 43.8%; Plant-based combined 39.3%

Price sensitivity	82% prefer Rs. 50–150; sweet spot is Rs. 90–130
Top purchase influence	Word-of-mouth from friends/family — 73%
Top brand consumed	Max Protein (31.5%), The Whole Truth (29.2%)
Top dissatisfiers	High price, hidden sugar, texture, limited flavours

Source: Own Analysis (Primary Data, n=89)

4.10 Recommendations

4.10.1 Product Development

From the findings above, the PureTain product would have to be developed with a crunch texture by default. Authenticity is one factor considered when developing flavors, and therefore it would be essential that only natural sugars and not artificial sugars or white sugar be used, given that the consumers know better. The ingredients in the product would be kept as minimal and known as possible. A number of people have requested for variation and therefore the product would include at least three flavors.

4.10.2 Pricing Strategy

The optimum launch price for PureTein is in the Rs. 90 to 120 for a full size bar. A smaller or lower weight sample SKU is Rs. 50-70 would reduce the risk of first trial and catch the huge chunk of Rs. 50–100 preferrers. Bundle offers and subscription options should be introduced once initial trial has been established, to encourage repeat purchase and increase purchase frequency.

4.10.3 Marketing and Communication

With 73% of purchases made based on recommendation from friends and family, product sampling should form the backbone of PureTein's to market strategy. School/College tie-ups, Gym sample distribution, and Corporate gifting should be focused on. Community marketing will help sustain brand equity because this strategy will enable the formation of an authentic community consisting of loyal advocates of the product and its benefits. Any influencer campaign should be carefully targeted and only with micro-influencers who already have audiences that are interested in a health-focused topic.

4.10.4 Positioning and Messaging

PureTein should come across as a protein bar for a normal Indian whose protein needs are not met by the gym supplement culture. The message should appeal to the person who is seeking a smarter option to grab when they next reach for a snack, not the professional body builder. Telling the story behind each ingredient, explaining what it is and where it comes from would distinguish PureTein in a market where consumer confidence is still emerging.

4.10.5 Distribution

There shouldn't be any question about the need for an omni-channel approach. The presence of wellness shops in neighbourhood shops should be decided at the launch. With its increasing popularity, quick commerce listing should come soon after. Having a website that is owned by your brand offers complete brand storytelling and direct communication with your customers. Amazon listing is another way to uncover and increase volume.

4.10.6 Product Transparency

There was one thing that all of them were looking for in any brand/product they purchased. That being a transparent product without any hidden agenda. For PureTein, the message that needs to be put on the packaging has to be 'No hidden sugar', 'No artificial preservatives', and ‘Clean Ingredients’, followed by support claims that back it up.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview

This research was intended to provide valuable information concerning the consumer behavior in the expanding but unprofessional market for protein-based snack bars in India. This paper analyzes consumption behaviors, preferences, buying habits, price sensitivity, marketing impacts, and brands recognition through a primary survey conducted among 89 consumers and through a literature review. All the findings are relevant to market opportunities and strategic positioning of Urban Grain Natural LLP's product PureTein.

5.2 Summary of Findings

And finally, the most important point from our research is that people in India do not perceive these protein bars as health supplements for their fitness, but as a healthy alternative to junk food as it is easier and more convenient. It is the only finding which can affect PureTein's marketing strategy upon entry. And again, this is not limited only to those individuals going to the gymnasiums but all working adults who would like to choose an alternative snack.

The 'must have' elements of a successful product in this category were taste and texture. When it comes to the consumer who loves their product, they will always mention taste. The most frequent complaints by those who aren't happy with the products already on the market are artificial flavour, texture issues or that the health benefits they claimed were not realised in the product. The majority definitely favors crunchiness. Clear and identifiable ingredients are highly appreciated, not only by health conscious people, but by more label-savvy consumers.

The real price elasticity here is quite high. Ideally, the market likes to remain in the happy medium of prices ranging between Rs. 90–130 per regular sized bar. Anything that goes beyond these will find its own ceiling of customers that will be reached. For under Rs. 1000/-, a trial SKU was introduced. Starting with 80 would be ideal. Word of mouth is one of the most reliable drivers of sales, which is why it must be leveraged properly – it beats both paid marketing and influencer marketing any day. It is tough, but at the same time, it offers tremendous opportunities too – a great product that people love will do the trick. With 39.3 percent of the stated source preferences, plant protein is already a significant part of consumer awareness — and the population profile of India is vegetarian and lactose intolerant, making this figure likely to increase. It is unfortunate that the positioning of PureTein is plant based, but well-timed and well-targeted.

5.3 Implications for Urban Grain Natural LLP

22 PureTein has the right idea at the right time. The market it is aiming for — affordable, clean label, plant-based, taste-forward — is the exact market that this study identified as the gap consumers are looking for but can't find in a product. The problem is implementation. The success of PureTein as a brand with a loyal customer base or a niche product will depend on three factors: product quality, price discipline and marketing by the community.

The company must not be tempted to brand PureTein as a high-end product; the market doesn't like the idea of being inaccessible. It should also be able to withstand some of the most popular marketing tactics that many health brands employ – namely influencer marketing – as the data clearly demonstrates that sampling and peer recommendation are much better conversion drivers.

5.4 Contribution of This Study

The current research is one of few conducted to date exploring consumer behavior in regard to protein bars in India. Insights were collected based on an analysis of the data on product choice and dissatisfaction with certain products available on the market currently. The entry niche for a plant-based protein bar brand may possibly be found.

It seems that insights derived from the research may be applicable to product development and pricing strategies in marketing. This concerns such companies as PureTein and possibly other organizations researching health bars in India.

5.5 Areas for Future Research

The main limitations associated with this research include low sample size and a non-representative location of participants. More participants from other regions should be included to increase the quality and accuracy of findings. There is also an opportunity to see whether the consumption increases with time in the same consumers. Some of the participants may become bored with the experiment and withdraw, but understanding how to motivate them to use the products constantly proves to be difficult.

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5.6 Final Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the study, the market for protein snack bars appears to be quite immature but shows signs of having potential. Consumers appear to need healthy snacking alternatives.

As far as the issues surrounding the market seem to be quite concrete, they can be addressed. In this regard, there may be an opportunity for a brand that puts emphasis on flavor and transparency, maintaining its products as plant-based, affordable, and tasty at the same time. It may very well be the case that PureTein will find success in this area if it acts according to the conclusions from the study.

While it can be argued that there truly appears to be demand among consumers for this product, they might not shift their preferences instantly. What can be considered particularly crucial in this case is pricing, although other aspects of the study may prove useful.