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DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES FOR SPICES AND CONDIMENTS

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Abstract: We explore how consumers choose among spices and condiments, examining flavor intensity, health considerations, origin and price. A survey and segmentation analysis reveal distinct choice patterns, including experimentation-seeking and tradition-oriented segments. Results suggest that clear usage cues and credible quality signals can shift preferences more than minor price differences.

• Introduction

Consumer choice for spices and condiments combines sensory goals (flavor intensity, heat) with credence attributes (natural origin, brand/quality signals) and practical considerations (price, availability). This paper examines how these factors shape preferences in everyday cooking and dining. Building on a structured survey, we explore the relative salience of taste, health beliefs, and provenance, and we profile heterogeneity in attitudes toward novelty and tradition. We also assess whether purchase channels and spiciness tolerance align with distinct choice patterns, with implications for product positioning and communication.

• Material and method

A cross-sectional questionnaire recorded: primary eating context (home vs. out-of-home), most-used spices/condiments (multiple choice, free add), choice factors (taste, natural origin, price, brand, recommendations/recipes, packaging), main purchase channels, preferred spiciness (1–5), and agreement (5-point Likert) with attitude items (willingness to try new spices, preference for spicy food, health beliefs, creativity in cooking, salt reduction, home blending, "cook by taste," olfactory recognition, age-related change, preference for traditional over exotic). Basic demographics (age band, gender, urban/rural) were collected. Analysis is descriptive; an exploratory segmentation (attitudinal items + preferred heat, standardized) is used to outline consumer profiles.

• Results and discussions

Most respondents cook and season at home and report frequent purchases from the supermarket, with secondary use of specialty shops, markets, and local producers. Pepper, paprika, and garlic dominate stated use; oregano, thyme, basil, curry/chilli appear regularly among variety seekers. Taste is the primary driver; natural origin and, to a lesser extent, price and recipe recommendations are common secondary criteria; brand and packaging matter for a subset. Preferred spiciness centers on moderate levels, with a non-trivial high-heat group. Agreement is generally high for: "condiments make cooking more creative," "I use condiments to cut salt," and "trying new spices," though "prefer spicy even if slightly irritating" splits respondents. Self-reported ability to identify spices by smell and to mix blends at home distinguishes more involved users.

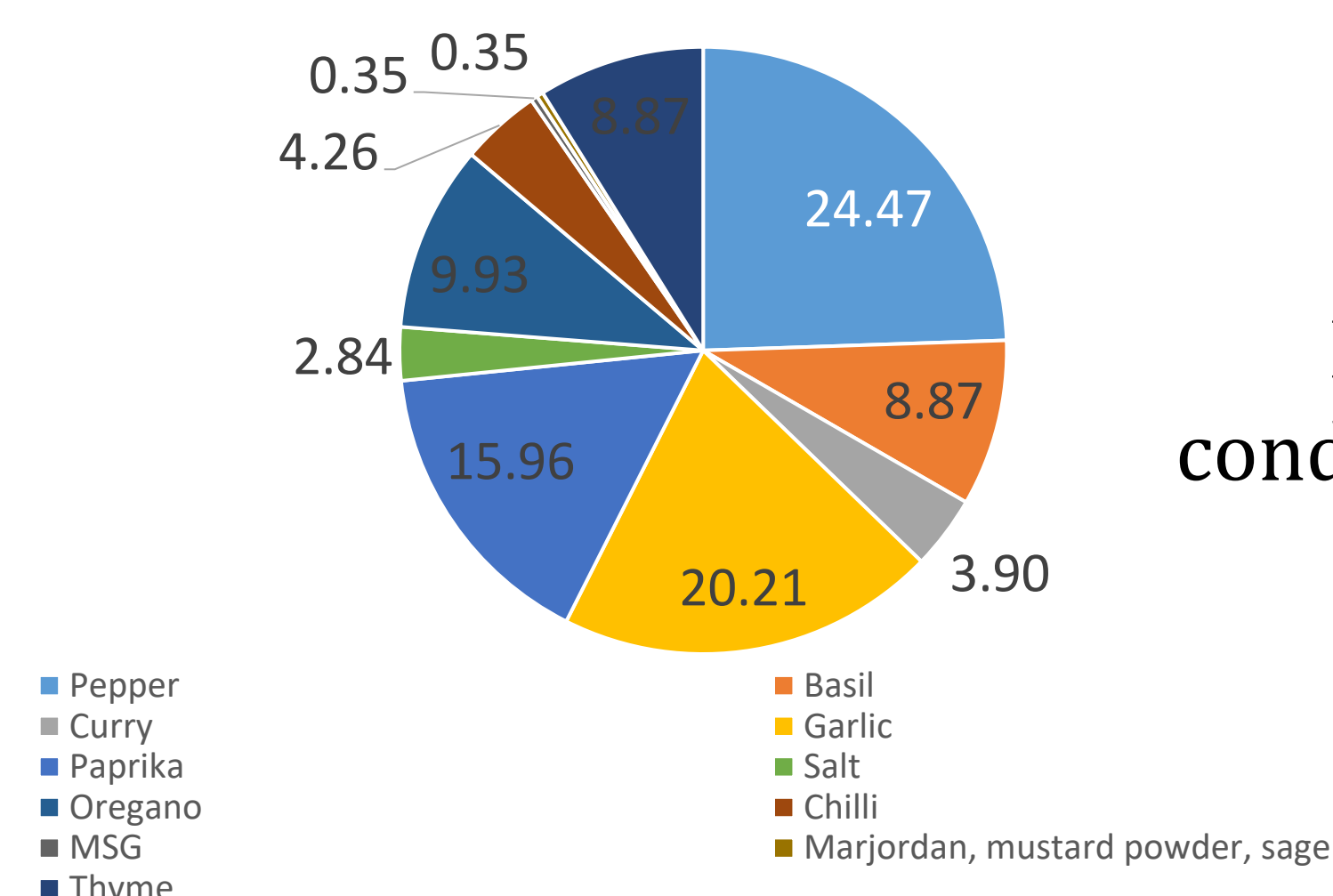


Figure 1: Used condiments and spices

Conclusions

Spice and condiment preferences are anchored in flavor (taste/heat) and reinforced by credible quality signals—notably natural origin and specialty provenance—while price differentiates choices mainly at the margin. Two actionable segments emerge: an experimentation-seeking group responsive to usage cues (pairings, recipes, heat scales) and provenance storytelling, and a tradition-oriented group responsive to reassurance (familiar flavors, natural sourcing, value packs).