

Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Local Manufacturing: Consumer Perceptions of Branded and Unbranded Household Products in Tezpur, Assam



Dr. Babita Lahkar^{1*}

^{1*}Assistant Professor L.G.B.Girls' College, Tezpur, Assam EMail: boby Lahkar@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores consumer perceptions of branded and unbranded household products in Tezpur, Assam, within the context of sustainable entrepreneurship and local manufacturing. Data were collected from 100 respondents representing diverse income, occupation, and age groups to examine how socio-economic variables influence purchasing behaviour. The findings show that 84 % of consumers prefer unbranded household products, 16 % purchase both branded and unbranded goods, and none depend solely on branded items. Among product attributes, 74 % of respondents rated durability as most important, 66 % prioritised price, and 41 % valued appearance. Nearly 97 % agreed that branded goods are overpriced, while 91 % preferred unbranded alternatives because of affordability and accessibility. These unbranded items, produced by small and micro enterprises, demonstrate how local entrepreneurship supports sustainable consumption through affordability, adaptability, and community trust. The analysis shows that such enterprises advance economic sustainability by generating local employment and maintaining low-cost supply chains, social sustainability by promoting inclusion and equitable access, and environmental sustainability by minimising transport emissions and encouraging reuse. The study concludes that sustainable entrepreneurship in semi-urban regions can flourish when local producers align their manufacturing and marketing strategies with consumer values of affordability, durability, and ecological responsibility, making unbranded local production a viable and sustainable business model.

Keywords: Sustainable entrepreneurship, small enterprise innovation, local manufacturing, consumer perception, unbranded household products, sustainable consumption

Introduction

Tezpur town is located on the North Bank of the river Brahmaputra, 181 kilometres from capital city of Assam, Guwahati. Tezpur is the Head Quarter of the Sonitpur district of Assam. Tezpur town is a transport and commercial cum service town. It serves the entire district of Sonitpur as well as part of neighbouring districts Darrang, Nagaon and Lakhimpur. It is the gateway to Arunachal Pradesh and hence a portion of the people of Arunachal Pradesh depends on Tezpur town. The town is surrounded by tea gardens and agriculture which contribute to the local economy. Thus, Tezpur is a commercial, administrative and educational centre including army, air force, central university, water and land management, medical college etc, it is not only cosmopolitan but also proud of its traditional moorings and modern looks. Tezpur with its clear and tidy roads, pavements with a gifted drainage system kept the town spick and span. Flood does not occur during the monsoons as Tezpur has a number of small hillocks. The Tezpur Municipality area covers a number of markets namely Chowk Bazar, Kabar Khana Road Bazar, Natun Bazar including Gol Market, Mahabhairab Bazar, Jahazghat Bazar Rail gate Bazar etc. These markets comprise a number of stores and retail outlets of different products including household items. Some of the stores of the town are cloth stores, grocery shops, stationary

store, hard ware stores, automobile parts store, furniture houses, electrical item store etc.

In addition to its business value, Tezpur is also a promising center of grassroots entrepreneurship and local production. A significant part of the unbranded household products that the company sells in its markets includes furniture, kitchen and textiles, which are manufactured by micro and small enterprises (SMEs). These are local entrepreneurs who are the embodiment of sustainable entrepreneurship, serving local needs by using resource-efficient and inclusive methods of business. Locally produced products contribute to minimizing the environmental footprint by reducing supply chains, enhancing repairability, and reuse, which is in line with the economic, social, and environmental sustainability pillars.

The process through which a person by his/her senses perceived the meaningful and coherent picture of the world is called perception. Human being has the powers to hear, see, smell, touch and taste so that he/she can be able to sense what is going on outside and be conscious of what is going on around. It is through our perception that this process of sensing the outside world is completed (Qiong, OU,2017). Perception entails signals within the nervous system and consequently are the outcomes of physical stimulation of the sense organs (Sharma, A,2019). Perception therefore refers to the process whereby an individual picks, structures, and

makes sense of information inputs in an attempt to form a meaningful picture of the world (Yakup,D.) Consumer perception gains special significance in the framework of sustainable entrepreneurship. The manner in which people in Tezpur consider branded and unbranded household products does not only indicate how price and quality conscious they are but also displays the latent values of sustainability, trust in the community and local innovations. This research therefore places consumer perception in a wider context of entrepreneurial sustainability with the focus being on how local purchasing patterns can impact on SME growth, inclusive markets and resource-efficient production protocols.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of our study:

1. To analyse factors such as income level, social status, and price level with respect to the customers of household products.
2. To find out people's perception of branded and unbranded household products in Tezpur town of Assam.
3. To study the marketing aspects of the branded and unbranded household products.
4. To assess how local unbranded household producers contribute to sustainable entrepreneurship and inclusive local development.
5. To explore the socio-economic sustainability of the unbranded household goods market in Tezpur.
6. To identify strategic opportunities for small-scale producers to innovate and grow sustainably within the framework of regional SME development.

Scope of the Study

Generally, scope means the length and breadth of the problem to which a theory has been extended. It contains all the implicit and explicit ingredients of the study. Therefore, the scope of our study defines the boundaries or the extents within which the study has been undertaken. The relevant boundaries for the present case are-

- 1.The study has been undertaken to cover the customers of Tezpur Town. The study has selected some widely used household items and categorized in three major categories. From each category three widely used items are taken in this study to know the perception of branded and unbranded products. and restricted to household items that includes furniture, (chair, table, almirah), kitchen appliances (plate, bowl, pan) and cloth (bedsheet, blanket, towel)
- 2.The study is concentrating on the final customers only.
- 3.Only individual customers are being taken into account.

Research Methodology

Research design is a detail blue print used to guide a research study towards its objectives. To get the desired result study needs data. For collecting the

primary data 100 customers are selected and distributed questionnaire to fill.

Besides the quantitative consumer survey, a quantitative consumer research is also supplemented with qualitative information obtained through short interviews with local unbranded household products producers and shop owners. These discussions were to examine their entrepreneurship practices such as the sourcing of materials, pricing, product design innovation and creation of employment. These qualitative views assist in the contextualization of the consumer perception in the broader context of grassroots entrepreneurship and the local manufacturing sustainability.

It also focuses on the representation of various localities of Tezpur town and also of different income level in the selection of the respondent. Field study is the primary source to be used in data collection. The study involves the use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected and then tabulated.

Another aspect of sustainability that is looked at in the methodology is the production and consumption dimensions of Tezpur. In the interpretation of data, the focus is on how the local manufacturing practices can correspond to the three pillars of sustainability, i.e. economic viability, social inclusion, and environmental responsibility. The methodology will allow the research to fill the gap between the consumer perception and the strategic behavior of small and micro-enterprises (SMEs) in the region.

Primary data is collected and then tabulated. To analyze it, SPSS package is employed. In order to combine the quantitative and qualitative results, a conceptual framework was established between the consumer perception → SME strategy → sustainable growth. This framework aids in the analysis of how the local businesses may switch to changing consumer values and foster sustainable entrepreneurship in semi-urban Assam.

Results and Interpretation

The results of the research were obtained through the analysis of one hundred respondents of Tezpur town in terms of demographic and economic attributes, buying habits, and attitude to branded and unbranded household products. The interpretation explains the consumer behaviour and also puts it into perspective of sustainable entrepreneurship, inclusive markets, and local manufacturing ecosystems (Kotler and Keller 1999; Sarangi 2009; Qiong 2017). The findings reveal the importance of local micro-enterprises and mini-manufacturers in the development of economic, social, and environmental sustainability by producing low-end unbranded products.

Of the respondents as indicated in Table 1, seventy % were male and thirty % were female. It means that men in Tezpur continue to be the household

purchasers. Nevertheless, the involvement of women in almost one-thirds of the sample indicates that they are becoming ever more involved in the family-level financial and consumption decisions. This tendency is consistent with the social pillar of sustainability, in which the active involvement of households in the economy lays the groundwork of the resilience of local communities and enables women to be active consumers (Phillips, Weisbuch and Ambady 2014).

Table 1. Gender-wise distribution of respondents

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	70	70
Female	30	30
Total	100	100

Table 2 provides the age composition, which indicates that most of the respondents (49 %) fall in the 40–50 age bracket, with 39 % of the respondents being below forty years of age. This fact shows that the consumers who are active in the middle aged age group are the main consumers. Unbranded products are explored more by the younger generation due to their affordability and flexibility whereas the older generations prefer durability and confidence. All these generational distinctions testify to the shift in the perceptual values of consumption patterns, in which practicality frequently prevails over prestige (Sarma 2019; Yakup and Diyarbakirlioglu 2017).

Table 2. Age-wise distribution of respondents

Age group	Respondents	Percentage
Below 40	39	39
40–50	49	49
50 and above	12	12
Total	100	100

Table 3 on income distribution shows that almost half (49 %) of the respondents are in lower income category of less than 20,000 per month with the other 27 % in the 20,000 to 30,000 category. It is only 3 % of those who make above 50,000. This form of income is a reason why affordability is a powerful factor in the consumer decision. The high reliance on the unbranded local products demonstrates that the small and micro enterprises (SMEs) of Tezpur have a central role of offering economically viable alternatives to satisfy consumer demand without reducing quality (Pathak 2020; Statistical Hand-Book of Assam 2011).

Table 3. Monthly income of respondents

Monthly Income (₹)	Respondents	Percentage
Less than 20,000	49	49
20,000–30,000	27	27
30,000–50,000	21	21
Above 50,000	3	3
Total	100	100

As evident in Table 4, the majority of the respondents (46 % and 32 % respectively) are service holders and businesspersons. The self-employed category (14 %) is the grassroots entrepreneurship, local furniture producers, utensil producers and textile producers. These are people who do not only support their own living but also other people in their societies. Their contribution is an illustration of sustainable entrepreneurship, where small scale production will foster economic inclusivity, resource efficiency and small environmental impact due to short supply chains (Gohain 1973; Sarangi 2009).

Table 4. Occupational distribution of respondents

Occupation	Respondents	Percentage
Business	32	32
Professional	8	8
Self-employed	14	14
Service	46	46
Total	100	100

Table 5 shows that a majority of 84 % of respondents use unbranded products whereas the rest 16 % use a combination of branded and unbranded products. The respondents do not depend on branded goods only. This high propensity in the unmarked products is a manifestation of the confidence in the local production and the localized crafts. These products are cheap, repairable and responsive to local needs by the consumers. These preferences highlight the economic and environmental sustainability of the local production which minimizes transportation emissions and promotes the reuse of materials (Qiong 2017; Sarma 2019).

Table 5. Preference for branded and unbranded household products

Product Type	Respondents	Percentage
All branded	0	0
All unbranded	84	84
Mixed	16	16
Total	100	100

Table 6 reveal that individuals (35 %), spouses (29 %), or jointly (27 %) are the ones who make the majority of the purchasing decision. Only 9 % of decision influence is taken by the elders.

This trend represents the shift to the contemporary participatory family systems with social inclusion and collective financial accountability, as opposed to the traditional systems of decisions made by the elders. This type of collaborative consumer behaviour also empowers the local market base of SMEs (Kotler and Keller 1999).

Table 6. Influence of family members on purchasing decisions

Decision Maker	Respondents	Percentage
Elders	9	9
Joint	27	27
Self	35	35
Spouse	29	29
Total	100	100

Based on Table 7, durability (74 %) and price (66 %) can be considered the most significant factors that

affect the purchase decision, and the next important tool is product appearance (41 %). The proximity to dealers and peer pressure is of little value. This preference chain shows that Tezpur customers make rational choices and value-based choices based on the long-term utility and not brand position. They are product-life cycle oriented, which is consistent with environmental sustainability, because it minimizes waste and promotes reuse-repair culture that is inherent to local markets (Phillips et al. 2014).

Table 7. Importance given while buying household products

Attribute	Most Important	Important	Neither Important Nor Unimportant	Less Important	Least Important
Durability	74	26	–	–	–
Price	66	30	4	–	–
Look	41	50	9	–	–
Closeness to dealer	2	17	19	34	28
Peer pressure	1	15	12	25	47

There are a few important lessons as indicated in Table 8. A vast majority of the respondents (95 %) are of the opinion that branded products are durable, yet a majority of them (97 %) are of the opinion that they are overpriced. On the other hand, three-quarters of them view unbranded goods as affordable, and 91 % specifically like them because of their cheapness. The majority of the respondents do not care about the better appearance of branded products, which means that aesthetics do not have as much power as affordability and usefulness. Such results confirm that the greatest determinant of consumer choice is the price-value perception. Moreover, the credibility of unbranded products manufactured by local SMEs shows how they can support the existence of inclusive and self-dependent regional economies (Pathak 2020; Yakup and Diyarbakirlioglu 2017).

Table 8. Consumer attitudes toward product statements

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Durability of branded products	26	69	4	1	–
Unreasonably high price of branded products	19	78	3	–	–
Reasonable price of unbranded products	32	43	25	–	–
Sophisticated look of branded products	9	19	71	1	–
Better look of unbranded products	2	5	82	11	–
Preference for unbranded products because of price	28	63	9	–	–

Overall Interpretation

The results collectively demonstrate that unbranded, locally produced household products dominate Tezpur's consumer market. The preference is driven by affordability, availability, repairability, and the familiarity of local manufacturers. This behaviour reflects not only economic pragmatism but also an emerging awareness of sustainable consumption. Consumers recognize the reliability and resource efficiency of local goods, while small-scale producers benefit from stable local demand. Thus, consumer perception, SME strategy, and sustainable entrepreneurship are interdependent components of the same system (Gohain 1973; Kotler and Keller 1999; Sarangi 2009).

From a sustainability perspective, these findings illustrate how economic sustainability is achieved

through affordable local production, social sustainability through inclusive market participation, and environmental sustainability through reuse, repair, and short supply chains. The unbranded household sector of Tezpur thereby represents a model of community-based, circular economic development where perception and entrepreneurship reinforce each other.

Sustainability and Entrepreneurship Implications

The findings of this study reveal that consumer preference for unbranded household products in Tezpur is not merely a reflection of affordability but also a sign of grassroots economic resilience and sustainable entrepreneurship. Local manufacturing, driven by small-scale and micro-enterprises,

integrates traditional craftsmanship with adaptive market strategies, making it a critical component of Tezpur's semi-urban economy. The implications of these findings can be viewed through the interconnected lenses of economic, social, and environmental sustainability, followed by their relevance for entrepreneurial strategy and policy.

Economic Sustainability

The dominance of unbranded household products demonstrates the economic empowerment of small producers and artisans operating within Tezpur's informal manufacturing sector. These entrepreneurs maintain low-cost production cycles, source materials locally, and cater to nearby markets without extensive logistical expenses. Such cost efficiency not only allows consumers from lower- and middle-income groups to access essential goods but also sustains a network of micro-enterprise employment and income circulation within the community (Pathak 2020; Sarangi 2009). In essence, the unbranded sector embodies the bottom-up model of sustainable economic growth, where production and consumption remain regionally embedded and self-reinforcing.

Social Sustainability

Socially, the unbranded household goods sector supports inclusive access to affordable products, ensuring that economic limitations do not restrict participation in local markets. This inclusivity extends to both consumers and producers—many of whom are family-run units or small partnerships that engage multiple generations and genders in production and sales. The trust-based relationship between consumers and local producers fosters community solidarity, reduces dependence on external suppliers, and encourages social cohesion and shared responsibility (Phillips, Weisbuch and Ambady 2014; Gohain 1973). The participatory structure of this ecosystem therefore strengthens the social fabric of entrepreneurship, aligning with JAES's emphasis on equitable and inclusive development.

Environmental Sustainability

The local production system in Tezpur also carries clear environmental advantages. Because goods are manufactured and sold locally, the carbon footprint associated with transportation and packaging is significantly reduced. Consumers prefer products that are repairable and reusable, extending their life cycle and minimizing waste generation. Such practices reflect the principles of the circular economy, where value is derived through maintenance, durability, and resource conservation (Qiong 2017; Sarma 2019). The integration of traditional production methods with environmentally conscious behaviour demonstrates that sustainability need not rely solely on high

technology—it can thrive within community-scale systems supported by perception, necessity, and local trust.

Entrepreneurial Implications

From an entrepreneurial perspective, the study highlights key opportunities for the strategic advancement of small and micro-enterprises (SMEs) in Tezpur. Local producers can enhance their competitiveness by developing sustainable branding strategies, emphasizing attributes such as *eco-friendly materials, durability, and cultural authenticity*. Encouraging cooperative production models, microfinance access, and digital marketing integration can further strengthen their market presence. Moreover, policy support in the form of skill development, incubation programmes, and local eco-certifications would help standardize quality while preserving the unique character of local products. These measures would allow Tezpur's SME ecosystem to evolve into a replicable model of sustainable entrepreneurship that bridges tradition with innovation, aligning with both regional development goals and the broader JAES sustainability agenda (Kotler and Keller 1999; Yakup and Diyarbakirlioglu 2017).

Recommendations and Conclusion

The findings of the study clearly reveal that the perception of household product buying behaviour in Tezpur is significantly influenced by income levels. Lower-income groups generally prefer unbranded household products because they perceive them to be nearly equivalent to branded ones in function and quality but available at a much lower price. Their choices are largely driven by attributes such as durability, practicality, and the easy availability of these items across local markets and small factories in the town. As income levels rise, the preference gradually shifts towards branded products. However, the middle-income population, which forms the majority of Tezpur's consumers, continues to rely on unbranded goods because of affordability and trust in local craftsmanship. High-income groups, particularly business owners, display a stronger inclination towards branded products due to their focus on appearance and long-term quality assurance, while service holders remain loyal to unbranded items due to price sensitivity.

Tezpur's market is characterized by the presence of numerous small-scale factories, particularly those producing steel and wooden furniture, utensils, and textiles. The widespread availability of these unbranded goods keeps them accessible to consumers across income groups. Their appeal is enhanced by the option for customization, flexibility in payment, and the ability to repair items locally, which together make these products both functional and sustainable. Locally made products are perceived as trustworthy because of close producer–

consumer relationships within the community. This dynamic has established a circular, trust-based marketplace where affordability, functionality, and convenience coexist.

From a sustainability perspective, the preference for unbranded household products in Tezpur extends beyond economics—it represents an organic form of sustainable entrepreneurship. Local producers, operating as micro and small enterprises (SMEs), demonstrate how localized production can simultaneously achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Economically, they contribute to inclusive growth by providing affordable goods and generating local employment opportunities. Socially, they strengthen community ties and consumer trust through informal but reliable business relationships. Environmentally, these enterprises help reduce the carbon footprint by limiting long-distance transportation and supporting repair and reuse practices that extend product lifespans. The study shows that sustainability is not limited to large corporations but can thrive within small-town entrepreneurial ecosystems built on trust, necessity, and community interaction.

The continued success of unbranded household product manufacturing in Tezpur suggests a strong potential for expansion and modernization. Encouraging cooperative business models, improving design and packaging quality, and introducing eco-labelling or local certification systems could help these SMEs enhance their competitiveness while maintaining their sustainability edge. At the same time, policy interventions such as access to microfinance, entrepreneurship training, and digital marketing support can empower producers to formalize and scale their enterprises. Strengthening local skill development and creating small business incubation facilities would enable entrepreneurs to innovate responsibly while preserving traditional methods and materials.

In conclusion, the Tezpur model demonstrates how sustainable entrepreneurship can evolve naturally within local markets when affordability, accessibility, and environmental awareness intersect. Unbranded household products represent not a lack of modernization but an alternative path to sustainable progress—one that combines livelihood creation, responsible consumption, and environmental care. By fostering collaboration between consumers, producers, and policymakers, Tezpur's unbranded manufacturing ecosystem could serve as a replicable model for sustainable local enterprise development in other semi-urban regions of India and beyond.

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