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### Marketing costs and marketing pattern of Stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana* Bertoni) based value-added products in Chhattisgarh

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#### Abstract

Value addition offers significant scope for enhancing farm and enterprise income, yet district-level evidence on the marketing costs, margins and marketing channels of stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana* Bertoni) based value-added products remains limited in India. The present study analysed the marketing costs and marketing pattern of four stevia-based value-added products dry leaves, powder, tablets and liquid extract in the Bilaspur and Raipur districts of Chhattisgarh. Primary data were collected from 14 retailers dealing in stevia products through a structured schedule during 2025-26 and analysed using percentage analysis, averages, ratios and the benefit-cost ratio. The purchase price and marketing cost rose with processing level, from ₹400/kg for dry leaves to ₹2,500/litre for liquid extract. Stevia liquid generated the highest net return ₹72,700 (₹8,077.77/litre), while dry leaves recorded the highest benefit-cost ratio 1.67 with all products ranging between 1.45-1.67, confirming commercial viability. Dry leaves were stocked by all retailers (100%) followed by powder (85.71%) tablets (57.14%) and liquid (50%). Direct procurement from manufacturers accounted for 42.86% of sourcing, while the Producer–Wholesaler–Retailer–Consumer channel dominated sales (59.09%). Demand rose steadily, with the index climbing from 100 (2021) to 165 (2025), reflecting strong and growing business potential. Strengthening local processing infrastructure, shortening the marketing chain through direct producer–retailer linkages and promoting stevia liquid and dry leaves as priority products could further enhance profitability and support the sustainable expansion of the stevia value chain in Chhattisgarh.

**Keywords:** Stevia, marketing cost, marketing channel, benefit-cost ratio, value-added products, Chhattisgarh

#### Introduction

The rising global burden of diabetes, obesity and other lifestyle-related disorders has intensified the search for natural, low-calorie alternatives to conventional sugar. Among these, Stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana* Bertoni) is a natural, zero-calorie sweetener belonging to the family Asteraceae and is native to the Paraguay region of South America. It has gained global attention as a healthy alternative to sugar. The worldwide demand for high-potency sweeteners is expected to increase, especially with the new practice of blending different sweeteners. The sweet herb of Paraguay, *Stevia rebaudiana* Bert. produces, in its leaves, just such an alternative with the added advantage that stevia sweeteners are natural plant products. It contains sweet compounds such as stevioside and rebaudioside- A, the sweeteners are diterpene glycosides and range between 30 and 320 times sweeter than sugar. In addition, the sweet steviol glycosides have functional and sensory properties superior to those of many other high-potency sweeteners. Stevia is likely to become a major source of high-potency sweetener for the growing natural food market in the future. (Brandle *et al.*, 1998) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana* Bertoni) has gained worldwide popularity because of its natural origin, zero-calorie content

and high sweetness. leaves of Stevia plants have functional and sensory properties superior to those of many other high-potency sweeteners, Stevia is likely to become a major source of high-potency sweetener for the growing natural food market in the future. Although Stevia can be helpful to anyone, there are certain groups who are more likely to benefit from its remarkable sweetening potential. These include diabetic patients, those interested in decreasing caloric intake and children. Stevia is a small perennial shrub that has been used for centuries as a bio-sweetener and for other medicinal uses such as to lower blood sugar. (Goyal *et al.*, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>. In India, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) approved the use of steviol glycosides as food additives in 2015. Stevia, being plant-based and calorie-free, has emerged as a promising alternative to conventional sugar and artificial sweeteners. Various studies have highlighted promising health benefits of stevia against diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cancer, dental caries, oxidative stress and microbial infections. (Ahmad *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[1]</sup>.

The study of consumer behaviour helps marketers, entrepreneurs and policymakers to understand how consumers make purchasing decisions and what factors influence the adoption of new food products. In the context

of stevia-based value-added products, analysing consumer acceptance can provide valuable insights into market demand, product improvement, promotional strategies and entrepreneurial opportunities. Such understanding can also help in strengthening the stevia value chain from cultivation to processing and marketing. The global stevia market size grew from ₹61.65 billion in 2022 to ₹67.40 billion in 2023 at a compound annual growth rate of 9.9%. (Dhange *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[4]</sup>.

India is one of the world's richest countries in terms of medicinal plant diversity. Major stevia-growing states include Chhattisgarh, Punjab andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Chhattisgarh, being an agrarian state with diverse agro-climatic conditions, has significant potential for the cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants, including stevia. The state has witnessed gradual interest among farmers, entrepreneurs and self-help groups (SHGs) in stevia cultivation and processing.

Chhattisgarh, owing to its favourable agro-climatic conditions, had begun witnessing modest commercial exploitation of stevia, with value-added forms such as dry leaves, powder, tablets and liquid extracts gradually entering local retail markets. However, the marketing dimension of the value chain costs, margins and channels of movement from producer to consumer remained under-examined at the district level, making marketing cost and margin analysis essential for guiding entrepreneurs, retailers and policymakers toward more efficient marketing arrangements. Perween (2022) <sup>[8]</sup>, studying stevia marketing in Jharkhand, emphasised that market linkages and promotional support were critical to profitability, while Bhakat and Tomar (2025) <sup>[2]</sup> called for stronger organised marketing networks to realise the crop's commercial potential. Value addition itself substantially improved returns: Madan *et al.* (2010) <sup>[7]</sup> and Ahmad *et al.* (2020) <sup>[1]</sup> reported that processing raised stevia's market value relative to raw leaves, though it added packaging, storage and promotional costs, while Schiatti-Siso *et al.* (2023) <sup>[9]</sup> noted that dried leaves and powdered extracts remained the most widely marketed forms internationally. Kamarulzaman *et al.* (2014) <sup>[6]</sup> further indicated that willingness to purchase stevia products was shaped jointly by price, availability and promotional exposure factors themselves outcomes of the marketing pattern adopted.

Despite this literature, few studies have jointly quantified marketing costs, profitability and channel structure of multiple stevia-based products within a single Indian district and none, to the authors' knowledge, had done so for Chhattisgarh—a gap significant because Bilaspur and Raipur, the state's principal stevia markets, were served almost entirely by out-of-state manufacturers, with the efficiency of these channels directly affecting retail prices, product availability and incentives for local value addition. The present paper, drawn from the second objective of a wider study on stevia's consumer acceptance and business potential in Chhattisgarh, was therefore undertaken to analyse the marketing costs and marketing pattern of stevia-based value-added products in Bilaspur and Raipur, informing retailers, entrepreneurs and policymakers on the comparative economic efficiency of different products and channels.

## Materials and Methods

### Study area

The study was conducted in the Bilaspur and Raipur districts

of Chhattisgarh, purposively selected for their concentration of retail outlets dealing in stevia-based value-added products and their growing consumer base. Within each district, urban centres and 2–3 nearby villages within an approximate 10 km radius were covered to capture both urban and rural retail activity.

### Research design and sampling

A descriptive and exploratory research design was adopted, focused on identifying marketing costs, channel structure and business opportunities along the stevia value chain. Chhattisgarh was purposively selected for its emerging stevia market and Bilaspur and Raipur were purposively selected based on the availability of retail outlets dealing in stevia products. For the marketing analysis, 14 retailers dealing in one or more of the four stevia-based products dry leaves, powder, tablets and liquid extract were surveyed using the convenience sampling technique.

### Data collection

Primary data were collected from retailers through personal interviews using a structured and pre-tested schedule covering purchase price, purchase quantity, monthly sales volume, selling price, itemised marketing costs (transportation, storage, packaging, advertisement and labour), source of procurement, marketing channel used for each product and retailer-perceived demand trend over the preceding five years (2021–2025). The reference period for cost and return data was one year.

### Analytical tools

Data were tabulated and analysed using percentage analysis, averages and ratios. Gross income (gross return) referred to the total revenue earned from the sale of stevia-based products before deducting any costs. The total marketing cost (Rs/kg or Rs/litre) included expenses on raw materials, packaging, labour, storage and transportation, comprising fixed costs (e.g. permanent storage cost) and variable costs (raw material, labour, transportation and packaging costs). Net income represented the actual profit earned from the enterprise and the Benefit–Cost Ratio (BCR) measured the economic efficiency by comparing total benefits with total costs incurred. These were calculated using the following formulas:

- Gross Return = Total quantity sold × Selling price per unit (Rs)
- Net Income = Gross Return – Total Cost
- Benefit–Cost Ratio = Net Income ÷ Total Cost

## Results and Discussion

### Cost and return from marketing of stevia-based value-added products

The economic marketing analysis of four stevia-based value-added products dry leaves, powder, tablets and liquid extract revealed considerable variation in cost structure, returns and profitability. Purchase quantities were 45 kg each of dry leaves and powder, 15 kg of tablets and 9 litres of liquid extract, procured at Rs. 400, Rs. 480, Rs. 1,200 and Rs. 2,500 per kg/litre respectively, with price rising with the degree of processing. Dry leaves recorded the highest monthly sales volume (1,500 units) and tablets the lowest (300 units), generating gross returns of Rs. 90,000, Rs. 95,000, Rs. 90,000

and Rs. 1,20,000 for dry leaves, powder, tablets and liquid extract, respectively liquid extract yielding the highest owing to its premium price realisation. The total marketing cost worked out to Rs. 33,600, Rs. 36,900, Rs. 36,600 and Rs. 47,300, respectively, translating into net returns of Rs. 56,400, Rs. 58,100, Rs. 53,400 and Rs. 72,700 (Rs. 1,253.33, Rs. 1,291.11, Rs. 3,560 and Rs. 8,077.77 per kg/litre). The Benefit–Cost Ratio was 1.67, 1.57, 1.45 and 1.53 for dry leaves, powder, tablets and liquid extract, respectively (Table 1), with dry leaves recording the highest ratio despite lower absolute returns, indicating superior cost efficiency. These

findings confirmed that all four value-added products were commercially viable, with stevia liquid offering the greatest absolute profit potential and dry leaves the highest return per rupee invested, profitability being largely influenced by processing extent, packaging, storage costs and market price. The results were consistent with Madan *et al.* (2010) <sup>[7]</sup> and Ahmad *et al.* (2020) <sup>[1]</sup>, who reported that value addition enhanced the commercial returns of stevia even as it raised associated marketing costs such as packaging, transportation and promotion.

**Table 1:** Cost and return from marketing of stevia-based value-added products (per kg/L per year)

| S. No. | Particulars                                       | (Stevia Dry Leaves)<br>Average Value | (Stevia Powder)<br>Average Value | (Stevia Tablet)<br>Average Value | (Stevia Liquid)<br>Average Value |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1.     | Total Purchase Quantity (Kg/L)                    | 45Kg                                 | 45Kg                             | 15Kg                             | 9L                               |
| 2.     | Purchase Price (Rs/Kg/L)                          | 400                                  | 480                              | 1,200                            | 2,500                            |
| 3.     | Monthly Sales Volume (unit)                       | 1,500                                | 500                              | 300                              | 600                              |
| 4.     | Average Selling Price (Rs/unit)                   | 60                                   | 190                              | 300                              | 200                              |
| 5.     | Average Selling Price (Rs/Kg/L)                   | 2,000                                | 2,111.11                         | 6,000                            | 1,333.33                         |
|        | Gross Return (Rs)                                 | 90,000                               | 95,000                           | 90,000                           | 120,000                          |
| 6.     | Purchase Cost (Rs)                                | 18,000                               | 21,600                           | 18,000                           | 22,500                           |
| 7.     | Transportation Cost (Rs)                          | 2,800                                | 2,800                            | 2,800                            | 2,800                            |
| 8.     | Storage Cost (Rs)                                 | 1,800                                | 1,500                            | 2,800                            | 5,000                            |
| 9.     | Packaging Cost (Rs)                               | 1,200                                | 1,200                            | 3,000                            | 7,000                            |
| 10.    | Advertisement Cost (Rs)                           | 3,000                                | 3,000                            | 3,000                            | 3,000                            |
| 11.    | Labour Cost (Rs)                                  | 6,800                                | 6,800                            | 7,000                            | 7,000                            |
| 12.    | Total Marketing Cost (Rs/Kg/L)                    | 746.66                               | 820                              | 2,440                            | 5,255.55                         |
| 13.    | Total Marketing Cost Including Purchase Cost (Rs) | 33,600                               | 36,900                           | 36,600                           | 47,300                           |
| 14.    | Net Return (Rs/Kg/L)                              | 1,253.33                             | 1,291.11                         | 3,560                            | 8,077.77                         |
| 15.    | Net Return (Rs)                                   | 56,400                               | 58,100                           | 53,400                           | 72,700                           |
|        | Benefit–Cost Ratio                                | 1.67                                 | 1.57                             | 1.45                             | 1.53                             |

Source: Primary data (2025-26)

### Comparative per-unit analysis of stevia-based value-added products

A per-unit comparison further clarified the profitability pattern across products (Table 2). Stevia tablets recorded the highest average purchase price (₹60.00/unit) and marketing cost (₹62.00/unit), reflecting the higher expenses associated with their processing and packaging, but also generated the highest average net income (₹178.00/unit) owing to a correspondingly higher selling price (₹300.00/unit). Stevia liquid ranked second, with an average net income of ₹121.16/unit, followed by stevia powder at ₹116.20/unit.

Stevia dry leaves, in contrast, recorded the lowest purchase price (₹12.00/unit) and marketing cost (₹10.40/unit), resulting in the lowest average net income (₹37.60/unit) despite comparatively lower investment requirements. This indicates that processed products command higher per-unit margins even though they require greater upfront investment, consistent with Ahmad *et al.* (2020) <sup>[1]</sup>, who observed that processed stevia products possess higher market value than raw leaves owing to rising consumer demand for convenient natural sweeteners.

**Table 2:** Comparative analysis of stevia-based value-added products (per unit basis)

| S. No. | Particulars (Average, Rs/unit) | Dry Leaves (30 g) | Powder (90 g) | Tablets (50 g) | Liquid (15 ml) |
|--------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1.     | Purchase Price (Rs)            | 12.00             | 43.20         | 60.00          | 37.50          |
| 2.     | Marketing Cost (Rs)            | 10.40             | 30.60         | 62.00          | 41.33          |
| 3.     | Selling Price (Rs)             | 60.00             | 190.00        | 300.00         | 200.00         |
| 4.     | Net Income (Rs)                | 37.60             | 116.20        | 178.00         | 121.16         |

Source: Primary data (2025-26)

### Distribution of stevia-based value-added products sold by retailers

Stevia dry leaves were stocked by all 14 surveyed retailers (100%), making it the most commonly marketed product, followed by stevia powder (12 retailers, 85.71%), stevia tablets (8 retailers, 57.14%) and stevia liquid (7 retailers, 50.00%) (Table 3). Traditional forms dry leaves and powder

thus enjoy wider retail acceptance and availability than more processed forms, likely on account of greater consumer familiarity, ease of use and lower unit cost. This finding is consistent with Schiatti-Siso *et al.* (2023) <sup>[9]</sup>, who reported that dried leaves and powdered extracts remain the most widely marketed forms of stevia internationally, with liquid and tablet formulations comparatively less available.

**Table 3:** Distribution of stevia-based value-added products sold by retailers (n = 14)

| S. No. | Stevia-Based Product | Number of Retailers | Percentage to Total |
|--------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1.     | Stevia Dry Leaves    | 14                  | 100.00              |
| 2.     | Stevia Powder        | 12                  | 85.71               |
| 3.     | Stevia Tablets       | 8                   | 57.14               |
| 4.     | Stevia Liquid        | 7                   | 50.00               |

Source: Primary data (2025-26)

#### Source of procurement of stevia products by retailers

Among the 14 retailers surveyed, the majority (6 retailers, 42.86%) procured stevia products directly from manufacturers, followed by wholesalers/distributors (5 retailers, 35.71%) and local suppliers (3 retailers, 21.43%) (Table 4). Direct procurement was the most preferred source, likely due to better assured quality, availability and favourable purchasing terms. These findings were in line with Perween (2022) <sup>[8]</sup> and Bhakat and Tomar (2025) <sup>[2]</sup>, who reported that direct producer–retailer linkages improved marketing efficiency and profitability, while Sidik *et al.* (2019) similarly highlighted the role of organised procurement in enhancing supply chain efficiency.

**Table 4:** Source of procurement of stevia products by retailers (n = 14)

| S. No. | Source of Procurement    | Frequency | Percentage to Total |
|--------|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1.     | Direct from Manufacturer | 6         | 42.86               |
| 2.     | Wholesaler/Distributor   | 5         | 35.71               |
| 3.     | Local Supplier           | 3         | 21.43               |
| Total  |                          | 14        | 100.00              |

Source: Primary data (2025-26)

**Table 5:** Marketing pattern/marketing channels of stevia-based products

| S. No. | Stevia Product    | Total consumer | Producer to Consumer (%) | Producer –Retailer– Consumer (%) | Producer – Wholesaler – Retailer – Consumer (%) |
|--------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1.     | Stevia Dry Leaves | 50 (100)       | 5 (10)                   | 15 (30)                          | 30 (60)                                         |
| 2.     | Stevia Powder     | 20 (100)       | 6 (30)                   | 3 (15)                           | 11 (55)                                         |
| 3.     | Stevia Tablets    | 9 (100)        | 2 (22.22)                | 2 (22.22)                        | 5 (55.56)                                       |
| 4.     | Stevia Liquid     | 9 (100)        | 1 (11.11)                | 2 (22.22)                        | 6 (66.67)                                       |
| Total  |                   | 88 (100)       | 14 (15.91)               | 22 (25)                          | 52 (59.09)                                      |

Source: Primary data (2025-26)

#### Sales volume of stevia-based products

Sales volume, reflecting market movement and demand, was moderate to high for most retailers: 6 retailers (42.86%) reported monthly sales of 500-1000 units and 5 retailers (35.71%) sold more than 1000 units, while only 3 retailers (21.43%) sold fewer than 500 units (Table 6). Thus, 78.57 per cent of retailers achieved sales above 500 units, reflecting growing consumer demand for natural sweeteners and health-oriented food products and suggesting scope for further market expansion with improved availability, promotion and consumer awareness. This is consistent with Kamarulzaman *et al.* (2014) <sup>[6]</sup>, who found that willingness to purchase stevia products was positively influenced by perceived health benefits, availability, promotion and reasonable pricing and with Perween (2022) <sup>[8]</sup>, who reported that stevia sales rose substantially in Jharkhand alongside growing consumer awareness and market promotion. The study further reported

#### Marketing pattern/marketing channels used by consumers for purchasing stevia-based products

The marketing channels adopted for the purchase of stevia-based value-added products by consumers were analysed and the results are presented in Table 4.20 and Figure 4.19. The findings revealed that consumers purchased stevia products through three major marketing channels, namely Producer → Consumer, Producer → Retailer → Consumer and Producer → Wholesaler → Retailer → Consumer. The results indicated that the majority of consumers (59.09%) purchased stevia-based products through the Producer → Wholesaler → Retailer → Consumer channel, making it the most preferred marketing channel. The Producer → Retailer → Consumer channel accounted for 25.00%, while only 15.91% of consumers purchased directly from producers. Among the products, Stevia Dry Leaves (60.00%), Stevia Powder (55.00%), Stevia Tablets (55.56%) and Stevia Liquid (66.67%) were mainly purchased through the Producer → Wholesaler → Retailer → Consumer channel. These findings suggested that wholesalers and retailers played a key role in the distribution of stevia products, whereas direct marketing by producers remained limited. The study indicated that strengthening direct marketing channels could improve producers' returns and enhance consumer access to stevia products.

These findings were consistent with earlier studies, which reported that wholesalers and retailers facilitate wider distribution and reduce transaction costs for producers of agricultural and value-added products. Perween (2022) <sup>[8]</sup> similarly emphasised the role of organised market linkages and promotional activities in improving profitability, while Sidik (2019) noted that cooperatives and intermediaries were crucial to the stevia supply chain, though excessive dependence on them could reduce producers' profitability under uncertain market conditions.

that stevia sales increased substantially during the COVID-19 period, demonstrating expanding market demand and commercial potential.

**Table 6:** Sales volume of stevia-based products (n = 14)

| S. No. | Sales Volume (Units) | Frequency | Percentage to Total |
|--------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1.     | Less than 500        | 3         | 21.43               |
| 2.     | 500-1000             | 6         | 42.86               |
| 3.     | More than 1000       | 5         | 35.71               |
| Total  |                      | 14        | 100.00              |

Source: Primary data (2025-26)

#### Demand for stevia-based value-added products during the last five years (as perceived by retailers)

The demand trend of stevia-based value-added products during the last five years was analysed based on the perception of retailers in the Bilaspur and Raipur. The

retailer-perceived demand trend, expressed as an index with 2021 as the base year (Demand index = 100), showed a continuous increase over the study period: the index rose to 112 in 2022 (12.00% growth), 126 in 2023 (12.50% growth), 143 in 2024 (13.49% growth) and 165 in 2025 (15.38% growth) a cumulative rise of 65 per cent over five years, with the growth rate itself accelerating in the later years (Table 7). Retailers attributed this rising trend to increasing health awareness, growing concern over sugar-related health problems and rising preference for low-calorie alternatives. The accelerating growth in the more recent years suggests that stevia-based products are gradually gaining wider acceptance and hold good potential for further market development in Chhattisgarh. This finding is consistent with Kamarulzaman *et al.* (2014) [6] and Goyal *et al.* (2010) [5], both of whom linked rising global stevia demand to its natural origin and suitability for diabetic and health-conscious consumers and with Schiatti-Siso *et al.* (2023) [9], who noted that expanding use of stevia across food and beverage categories has driven increasing consumer demand.

**Table 7:** Demand for stevia-based value-added products during the last five years (as perceived by retailers)

| Year | Demand Index<br>(Base Year 2021 = 100) | Growth over Previous<br>Year (%) |
|------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2021 | 100                                    | –                                |
| 2022 | 112                                    | 12.00                            |
| 2023 | 126                                    | 12.50                            |
| 2024 | 143                                    | 13.49                            |
| 2025 | 165                                    | 15.38                            |

Source: Primary data (2025-26)

## Conclusion

The analysis of marketing costs and marketing pattern of stevia-based value-added products in the Bilaspur and Raipur districts of Chhattisgarh establishes that stevia marketing is commercially viable across all four product forms studied, with benefit–cost ratios ranging from 1.45 to 1.67. Value addition clearly enhances profitability: processed products such as tablets and liquid extract fetch substantially higher net returns per unit than raw dry leaves, though dry leaves remain the most cost-efficient product per rupee invested and continue to dominate retail stocking and consumer purchase. Marketing of stevia products in the study area remains heavily dependent on indirect, multi-tier channels, particularly the Producer–Wholesaler–Retailer–Consumer route and on direct procurement from out-of-state manufacturers, reflecting the still-limited scale of local cultivation and processing. Nonetheless, moderate-to-high sales volumes and a steadily rising retailer-perceived demand index over 2021-2025 point to considerable and growing business potential. Strengthening local processing capacity, direct market linkages and promotional support could further improve marketing efficiency and profitability, benefiting retailers, entrepreneurs and the wider stevia value chain in Chhattisgarh.

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