

## Adding value to Kashmir Saffron: could ingredient branding be a solution?

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### ABSTRACT

The world is dominated by brands. The majority of food products are branded. However, the farmer does not sell the majority of farm commodities as branded products. The promotion of brands for domestic agricultural commodities can be interpreted as a necessity for agribusiness commodities to be differentiated. Differentiation is accomplished through the use of branding strategies. Agribusiness commodities, which have historically lacked incentives to differentiate themselves, must develop branding strategies in order to establish a prominent consumer position. Additionally, ingredient branding is a strategy for differentiation. Saffron from Kashmir is currently under threat of adulteration by unscrupulous elements and increased competition from cheaper Iranian saffron. In such a situation, bringing Kashmir saffron under geographical indication can serve as a branding tool for the spice, and branding strategies such as ingredient branding appear to be a rational response.

Keywords: Kashmir Saffron, Ingredient branding, Geographical indication.

### RESUMEN

El mundo está dominado por las marcas. La mayoría de los productos alimenticios son de marca. Sin embargo, el agricultor no vende la mayoría de los productos agrícolas como productos de marca. La promoción de marcas para productos agrícolas nacionales puede interpretarse como una necesidad de diferenciar los productos agroindustriales. La diferenciación se logra mediante el uso de estrategias de marca. Los productos agroindustriales, que históricamente han carecido de incentivos para diferenciarse, deben desarrollar estrategias de marca para establecer una posición destacada entre los consumidores. Además, la marca de ingredientes es una estrategia de diferenciación. El azafrán de Cachemira está actualmente amenazado de adulteración por parte de elementos sin escrúpulos y de una mayor competencia por parte del azafrán iraní, más barato. En tal situación, incluir el azafrán de Cachemira bajo indicación geográfica puede servir como una herramienta de marca para la especia, y las estrategias de marca, como la marca de ingredientes, parecen ser una respuesta racional.

Palabras clave: Azafrán de Cachemira, Marca de ingredientes, Indicación geográfica.

### INTRODUCTION

With the global economy changing at a breakneck pace and customers becoming more sophisticated, agricultural firms are being compelled to adopt more proactive marketing and branding strategies. These strategies will enable them to respond more quickly and flexibly to changing competitive situations in the supplier

industry and dynamic customer needs. Firms and organisations are increasingly realising that one of their most significant assets is the brand names connected with their products or services. The benefits of a strong and attractive brand have long been assumed in consumer goods. However, a new trend has emerged: branding the ingredients used to create the final product. After all, what is the final result if not the sum of its components? Why not advertise and profit from the precise factors that lead to the intended outcome? If done correctly, branding ingredients may be a win-win situation for manufacturers of both components and finished products. For the consumer, there can be no doubt that developing into a more robust and intelligent shopper, i.e., having the ability to demand high-quality ingredients in the products he or she purchases, is a positive development. Numerous studies have demonstrated that educated consumers value products with branded ingredients and are willing to pay a premium for them. For example, Intel's corporate success is owed to its "Intel Inside" marketing campaign.

Branding as a whole may have reached a point of saturation, resulting in the emergence and popularity of "Unbranded." However, the emergence of Ingredient Branding has given brands a whole new dimension. It is critical to develop and promote a strong brand for the Kashmir agribusiness commodity saffron. Additionally, as Kashmir saffron faces adulteration and competition from Irani saffron, the search for differentiation becomes more critical. Pursuing geographical designation for Kashmir saffron and utilising branding strategies such as ingredient branding are emerging as solutions to this problem. The purpose of this paper is to define ingredient branding and to demonstrate how Kashmir saffron can leverage it as a competitive strategy to differentiate and endorse its saffron in the global marketplace. While Kashmir saffron has a long history of high quality, it is facing increasing competition from cheaper saffron from Iran and adulteration. As a result, it must differentiate its brand image and product from competitors through the use of distinct brand strategies. This paper will propose a future integrated programme for saffron.

## 2. Literature review

### Branding: A Value-Adding Activity:

. The term "brand" is not universally understood, and numerous definitions have been proposed in the literature. According to Aaker (1991), a brand is a distinctive name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) used to identify and differentiate the goods or services of a single seller or a group of sellers from those of competitors. Additionally, Mellerowicz (1998) defines a brand as "a distinguishing feature of a particular product that symbolises its consistent quality, size, and quantity." According to Keller (2006), brands can help consumers by simplifying their choices, assuring a certain level of quality, reducing the risks associated with purchasing, and/or instilling confidence in the product in question. Thus, a brand identifies the source of the product and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who may attempt to provide identical products. Reichheld (2001) asserts that a company's brand is its most valuable intangible asset, serving as a powerful differentiator for the business and a tool for consumer decision-making. Branding initiatives impart individuality and distinguish one

brand from the others, enabling consumers to associate a particular brand with kept promises. These actions foster loyalty through trust, resulting in sustained demand and profitability. Panda (2006) discovered that customers make purchasing decisions based on the unique quality or property of a service or product. A brand is frequently regarded as a source of competitive advantage due to its ability to distinguish itself from competitors and thus provide customers with a unique value proposition (Kapferer, 2008). Differentiation based on a brand's identity and attributes (such as brand identity, brand image, and brand promise) fosters the development of a strong, favourable, and unique association (Keller, 2001). According to Hoeffler & Keller (2003); Keller & Lehmann (2006), a firm with a strong brand in a product category benefits from the following: a) a more favourable positioning in consumers' minds, b) a premium price, c) lower levels of price sensitivity, d) more effective marketing communication programmes, e) more accessible access to marketing channels, f) a powerful position in marketing channel dealings, and g) higher profits. According to Beierlein and Woolverton (1991), branding is a collection of marketing strategies and activities aimed at developing and managing brands in the market. Increased market segmentation, increased customer loyalty, increased repurchase probability, facilitation of new product introduction, and improved marketing image are all benefits of branding. A branding strategy's objective is to strengthen the brand's image, increase the brand's perceived value to the customer, and foster brand loyalty (Rooney 1995). Branding is widely regarded as a critical factor in the success of a wide variety of products and services, both in consumer and industrial markets.

#### Ingredient branding

Ingredient branding adds value to the product by enhancing customer evaluations through strong perceptions of quality and credibility; this lowers the perceived risk associated with the purchase (Cordeiro et al., 2016). Ingredient branding success is contingent upon customer involvement, consumer values, and a fit between the branded ingredients and the host brand (Krampe et al., 2020). Consumers must understand the characteristics, benefits, and functions of the ingredients in order to make logical judgments about the alliance (Panwar and Khan, 2020). According to a recent survey conducted in Europe, the United States of America, and Asia, up to 73% of customers would pay a premium for a product that contained an ingredient they trusted and recognised (Dalman and Puranam, 2017 ). Ingredient branding increases product recognition by incorporating key attributes (ingredients) from one brand into another (Keller, 2003; McCarthy and Norris, 1999; Panwar & Khan, 2020, Vaidyanathan and Aggarwal, 2000). Additionally, Pfoertsch and Mueller (2006) define ingredient branding as the process by which a brand's attributes are incorporated into another brand as ingredients. The ingredient brand and the host brand are the two parent brands, while the new brand is referred to as the incorporated brand. Ingredient Branding is a type of alliance between two products that is based on the collaboration of both firms in developing and delivering the product, with an emphasis on consumer recognition and identifying component parts in the final product. In other words, Ingredient Branding can be thought of as a business-to-business branding strategy between a manufacturer and a supplier in which the supplier's end product becomes a component of the manufacturer's strategic concept (Ervelles et al. 2007). Ingredient branding occurs when a

branded crude product or service is incorporated into a finished product that is promoted to the end user. Additionally, ingredient branding can be defined as "strategic branding for manufacturing goods such as components, raw materials, auxiliary materials, and substances that are later incorporated into an end product." Thus, ingredient branding aims to "promote a brand within a brand to the end user." At the moment, the majority of ingredient branding concerns are focused on the functional benefits provided by attributes that may impact the success of the incorporated brand/product (Desai and Keller 2002). Levin et al. (1996) discovered that adding a well-known ingredient brand to a host brand improved product evaluations regardless of whether the host brand was known or unknown. Additionally, the mere presence of a well-known ingredient brand in the final product fosters positive associations with the host brand, which has a positive effect on consumer evaluations, even when the host brand is unfamiliar. Additionally, the host brand can achieve 4 Paradigm differentiation based on the functional characteristics of the final product, as the ingredient brand seeks to improve the end product's functionality (Panwar & Khan, 2019). The ingredient branding strategy can be applied to a wide variety of products, including food, automobiles, household goods, consumer electronics, and clothing (Rodrigues Vaz, 2019). Computers with Intel inside, Chevron gasoline with Techron, Diet Colas with Nutra sweet, music systems with Dolby noise reduction, and nonstick cookware with Teflon coating are all well-known examples of ingredient brands. While Techron, NutraSweet, Lycra, and Intel are used as ingredients in other brands, they are well-established brands in their own right, marketed to other manufacturers as brands, and are well-known by their brand names. Creating a co-branded product by combining two or more brands has become a popular strategy over the last decade, particularly in the food industry" (Bengtsson, 2002). In agribusiness, an example of ingredient branding is fermented dairy beverages that promote the strain and type of microorganisms that enrich the product. Each company has its own patented variety or strain of *Lactobacillus* spp. and uses it to advertise to customers as a trademark. The most well-known example is Yakult Fermented Milk, which contains the *Lactobacillus casei* Shirota bacteria. While this is not yet a widely used marketing concept, it is gaining traction. Ingredient branding communicates to customers that we are superior to the competition due to the products contained within the product. The ingredient used in a product is a significant differentiator and pre-purchase cue for customers. They view ingredient branding as a way to alleviate the confusion caused by the proliferation of brands serving similar needs. The existing literature on ingredient branding assumes that products and brands can be represented as Schemata, or structured lists of attributes (Desai and Keller 2002). Each attribute provides a functional benefit or property that aids in competitive differentiation. This is referred to as functional branding (e.g., Tide with the scent of Irish Spring bath soap). Other researchers, on the other hand, view brands as telling stories and embodying cultural meanings that contribute to the development of emotional bonds between brands and consumers (Fournier, 1998; Thompson, Rindfleisch, Arsel, 2006). This type of emotional branding enables consumers to identify with a brand and internalise brand values, thereby fostering a strong bond between consumers and brands (de Chernatony 1999, 2006). Given that consumers' evaluations of ingredient branding can be influenced by two types of values (emotional and functional), opportunities for the use of ingredient branding

arise whenever an ingredient can add value to the host brand, either functional or emotional. Adding functional value entails enhancing the perceived performance of the host brand, which could be attributed to the inclusion of a well-known branded ingredient. On the other hand, the added emotional value strengthens consumers' bond with the host brand. Ingredient branding is increasingly important as a marketing strategy in today's volatile markets, as evidenced by the growing number of products sold with embedded branded components (Prince and Davies 2002; Cooke and Ryan 2000; Washburn, Till, and Priluck 2004). In comparison, the most recent research demonstrates that Ingredient Branding has the potential to enable successful brand management and increased profits for businesses, as well as product offerings that add value to the customer. Assume a customer is aware of and understands the function, characteristics, and benefits (ingredient). They will then pay greater attention to this offering, which, if it results in a truly unique product offering, can result in loyal and profitable customer relationships.

### 3. The Need for an ingredient branding of saffron

Saffron is an extremely expensive and one-of-a-kind spice extracted from a natural flower. *Crocus Sativa* is the scientific name for the natural flower. Saffron is believed to have been introduced into the Kashmir valley by Persian migrants, who also introduced a variety of other plant species, including the Maple Tree, locally known as Chinar or Bourne, as well as carpet weaving, embroidery, and paper manufacturing. Kashmir is proud to produce the finest quality saffron (moongra), which is renowned worldwide for its colour and flavour. 90% of saffron production in Kashmir valley comes from the Pampore uplands, locally known as 'wudar,' on the southern outskirts of Srinagar. As the world's most valuable industrial/medicinal product, Kashmir saffron is critical to the agricultural economy of Jammu and Kashmir. Saffron production in India is almost entirely confined to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Five thousand seven hundred seven hectares of land are devoted to the cultivation of saffron. Jammu and Kashmir is the state that produces the most saffron, with 4,496 hectares dedicated to saffron cultivation alone. According to scientific research and studies, Kashmir saffron is the best in the world due to its distinctive long silky threads of dark red colour, extraordinary aroma, and superior melanin retarder that imparts a golden glow to the skin. However, every good thing on earth has drawbacks, which are analogous to those of Kashmir saffron.

**Adulteration:** Due to saffron's unique characteristics, it is also one of the most adulterated products on the market. Despite repeated efforts to put an end to the adulterated practise and strict enforcement, saffron adulteration continues to be a problem in Kashmir. Pure Kashmir saffron is one of the most popular varieties, and as a result of these frauds, purchasing saffron has become a daunting task. Saffron from Kashmir is popular among the masses due to the unique taste and flavour it imparts to the food to which it is added. Adulteration of the product began in European regions and has spread to Kashmir, where saffron is mixed with various types of beets and low-quality silk fibres, and even saffron is mixed with oils to add weight. Saffron is also adulterated with the styles, anthers, corolla, and other floral parts of certain Asteraceae family members, such as safflower and corn silk floral material dyed with coal tar. These mixtures are then marketed as pure Kashmir saffron, a practise that has deprived Kashmir growers of a significant portion of their income.

Iranian saffron establishes a foothold in Kashmir: Saffron from Kashmir, known as a heritage crop of Jammu and Kashmir, was once a thriving business. It generated millions of rupees for those involved. However, there is no market now because it cannot compete with international competitors. Iranian saffron is rapidly gaining market share in India under the brand name Kashmir Saffron. Because Iranian saffron is less expensive than Kashmir saffron, many unscrupulous traders sell it as Kashmir saffron. In the Indian market, one kilogramme of Iranian saffron costs Rs one lakh, while Kashmir saffron costs more than Rs 1.30 lakh. Numerous small-scale traders with established clientele throughout India import thousands of pounds of Iranian saffron in a variety of ways and blend it with Kashmir saffron. After earning 30,000 dollars per kilogramme, the mixed condiment is sold. According to Farooq Amin of Kanwal Spices, one of the state's largest spice manufacturers. "The practise has existed for years, and the spurious trade generates billions of rupees in revenue," The illegal trade continues unabated in the absence of quality control and branding. Competitors quickly adopted the same naming convention, rendering Kashmir saffron unprotectable. As a result of Iranian saffron entering Indian markets, we must safeguard our future. Additionally, as a result of saffron adulteration and competition from Irani saffron, some growers in the Kashmir saffron belt are converting their saffron fields to apple plantations, as growers are unable to earn a living from saffron cultivation.

There is currently no mechanism in place to enforce quality standards and price standards based on quality grades at the farm gate. There is no state-owned quality control laboratory to conduct routine inspections and certify the saffron. The government takes steps by establishing a Quality Control Lab with ISO certification at Pampore for Rs 8.90 crore to ensure the saffron's quality testing and marketing. Additionally, private players such as Kanwal Spices in Jammu and Kashmir are in the process of establishing a packaging unit in collaboration with the Spice Board of India. However, evaluating quality alone is insufficient. Saffron's branding should follow suit.

In the national saffron mission programme, there is no emphasis on branding Kashmir saffron: The Central Government's 371.18 crore rupees National Saffron Mission Program aims to revitalise saffron production in Jammu and Kashmir by increasing overall saffron production, establishing irrigation facilities through tube wells and sprinklers, thereby improving crop production in the area and lowering production costs. They are improving the quality of saffron, expanding their research and extension capabilities, and developing an organised marketing system for growers. Additionally, there is a proposal to establish a Spice Park. Its mission is to facilitate direct transactions between growers, traders, exporters, and industrial agencies through the development of organised marketing strategies that incorporate Saffron's quality-based pricing. The National Saffron Mission Program places a premium on productivity and quality. However, increased production does not guarantee protection from competitors, and flourishing saffron will remain a pipe dream unless the threats of spurious saffron and adulteration are aggressively combated. Farmers generally believe that until saffron is liberated from this threat, investment in the saffron project will be fruitless. Additionally, scientists at Sher-I-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Training (SKUAST) have proposed that the government establish a regulatory council akin to the one in Spain to allow the product to be sold under its brand name. According to experts, Kashmir saffron

should be promoted as a geographical brand. However, nothing has been done to date. Saffron branding is critical for establishing the Kashmir saffron brand.

People are developing an awareness of herbs: Nowadays, there is a worldwide trend toward the use of herbal products and the adoption of a more natural way of life. For a healthy life, people prefer natural foods, herbal medicines, and natural healing practises. The personal care system has multiplied the use of herbal cosmetics, and there is an enormous demand for herbal cosmetics. We require a more effective method of communicating with end users because saffron is increasingly playing a defining role in the Herbal Cosmetics Industry (fairness creams and soaps), the Food and Beverage Industry (Saffron Tea), the Dairy Industry (Kesar Milk), and the Dye Industry.

One would think that with the saffron industry confronted with these issues and their impact on the welfare of saffron farmers, the government or saffron associations would invest in increasing demand for their commodities in significant markets and saffron branding, but unfortunately, nothing has been done.

#### 4. Methodology

Research Objective: Is Kashmir saffron capable of becoming an ingredient brand?

Content analysis of cosmetic industry websites to enlighten ingredient branding as a strategy for Kashmir saffron branding: Content analysis was used to examine the website's components. In the social sciences, content analysis is a technique for examining the content of communication. Babbie (2008) defines it as "the examination of recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings, and legislation." Content analysis can provide a wealth of data for advertising standardization/specialization analysis. The "homepage" and specific product pages of the websites of the selected companies served as the unit of analysis. The study was conducted through a qualitative analysis of cosmetic industry websites. Cavinkare, Fair and Lovely, Shahnaz Hussain, Emami, and a few other Indian companies' websites were analysed. The use of saffron in these website samples was examined and discussed in terms of the potential for promoting Kashmir saffron as a cosmetic ingredient.

#### 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation of the data

The primary reason for using ingredient branding is to differentiate the host brand from its competitors by incorporating the ingredient brand's attributes. In this case, an ingredient brand can act as a point of differentiation for the brand, even if consumers are unaware of how the ingredient works (Aaker, 2003), while also enhancing the host brand's competitiveness.

The following hypotheses can be formulated in light of this.

Hypothesis 1: Ingredient branding enhanced the host brand's (Fairever) differentiation from the competition.

Hypothesis 2: Ingredient branding had no effect on the host brand's (Fairever) differentiation from competitors.

#### 6. Results

The following characteristics demonstrate how Kashmir saffron as an ingredient aided Fairever in becoming India's second largest fairness cream.

CavinKare began as a sole proprietorship. In 1998, the company that began as Chik India Ltd was renamed CavinKare Pvt. Ltd (CKPL). CavinKare grew into a successful business enterprise under the leadership of innovative entrepreneur C.K. Ranganathan. CavinKare's growth was facilitated by innovative marketing and precise product positioning, which enabled the company to expand its product portfolio. The company now sells ten well-known brands. CavinKare has developed a competitive edge over the years through a thorough understanding of mass marketing dynamics. Personal care (hair care, skin care, and home care) and food products are offered by the company as a result of a keen understanding of consumer needs. Keeping the company afloat requires a commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction.

#### Characteristics

Alignment: Does the ingredient add a relevant benefit to the product?

In 1975, Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) introduced Fair & Lovely fairness cream. The brand was a huge success due to its positioning as the first-ever fairness cream targeted at the average person. CavinKare, a Chennai-based FMCG, launched Fairever fairness cream in 1998, challenging UL's dominance. It was the first brand to challenge Fair & Lovely, the market leader. The company stayed true to the herbal platform that CavinKare's consumers had grown accustomed to. Initially launched in South India, this brand expanded to the rest of the country a year later. That was the era when Fair & Lovely (henceforth FAL) ruled the Indian market for fairness creams. FAL's phenomenal success and HUL's marketing clout scared away many potential rivals. It's worth noting that FAL had never faced competition from other players until CavinKare decided to take on the behemoth. Unlike many small-business challenger brands, Fairever was never a price fighter. Fairever was once more expensive than FAL.

Fairever is a unique brand due to its courage in standing up to a market leader with precise non-price positioning. Fairever was crystal clear about its positioning and differentiation from the start. The brand was established around two key ingredients: Kashmir saffron and Milk. Saffron from Kashmir has traditionally been regarded as an ingredient that promotes fairness. As a result, a product featuring a unique combination of Kashmir saffron and Milk appealed to the target segment. Fairever captured a tidy 6% of the fairness market within six months of its launch. The saffron-based position fit the brand perfectly. Fairever was a brand that fought tooth and nail to stay afloat in the market. This meticulous nurturing has resulted in this brand becoming the company's second largest.

According to C.K. Ranganathan, CEO and Managing Director of CavinKare Limited, "The combination of Kashmir saffron and milk in Fairever resonated with the public because they were already familiar with the products' goodness. Additionally, we altered the rules by incorporating saffron, which had never previously been used in fairness creams." As a result of CavinKare's extensive research, it was discovered that Kashmir saffron is an excellent melanin retarder. Additionally, it imparts a golden glow to the skin and introduces an all-new product blend to its 'Natural Fairever' fairness cream (combining the goodness of Kashmir saffron and milk). Thus, Kashmir saffron was used as a positioning attribute or ingredient in Fairever to achieve differentiation. To compete with



CavinKare Pvt. Ltd's Fairever, HUL launched Ayurvedic Fair and Lovely, positioning it as an Ayurvedic saffron formulation. However, it was unable to compete with Fairever, confirming that Fairever established itself as a market challenger by leveraging Kashmir saffron as a positioning attribute. Unfortunately, while Kashmir saffron was used to distinguish CavinKare Fairever fairness cream from competitor Fair and Lovely, Kashmir saffron was unable to establish a brand. The fact that Kashmir saffron is used as a differentiating ingredient suggests that Kashmir saffron may pursue ingredient branding. As a result, Kashmir saffron as an ingredient can help any host brand differentiate itself and gain a competitive edge. Additionally, other local companies, such as Lass cosmetics; Quality Soap industry, Nisha Herbal Pvt Ltd, and Forest Essentials, are positioning their products with Kashmir saffron as an ingredient ( see figure 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5).

Table 1 - Local companies are also positioning their products based on Kashmir saffron as an ingredient.

S.No	Company name	Name of the product	Positioning attribute
1	Lass cosmetics	Saffron almond with milk soap	Kashmir saffron
2	Quality Soap industry	Soap Kesar Snan	Kashmir saffron
3	Nisha Herbal Pvt Ltd	Fairness Herbal Gel	Kashmir saffron
4	Forest Essentials	Facial Cleanser	Kashmir saffron

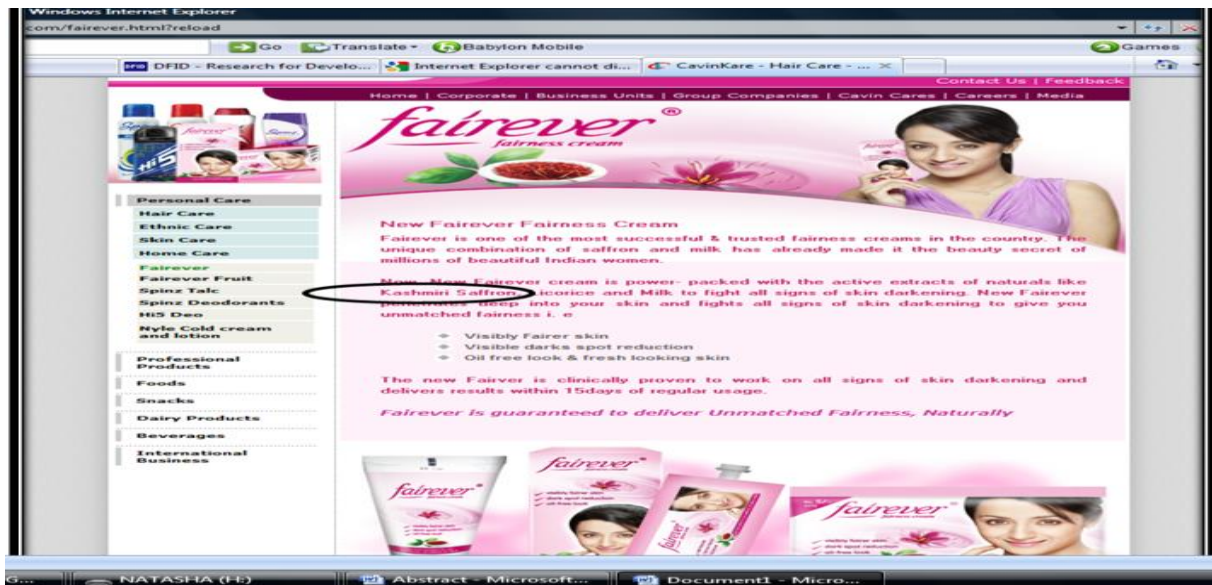


Figure 1

[www.cavinkare.com/Fairever](http://www.cavinkare.com/Fairever)



Figure 2

<http://www.lasscosmetics.com/natural-saffron-almond-milk-handmade-soap.php>

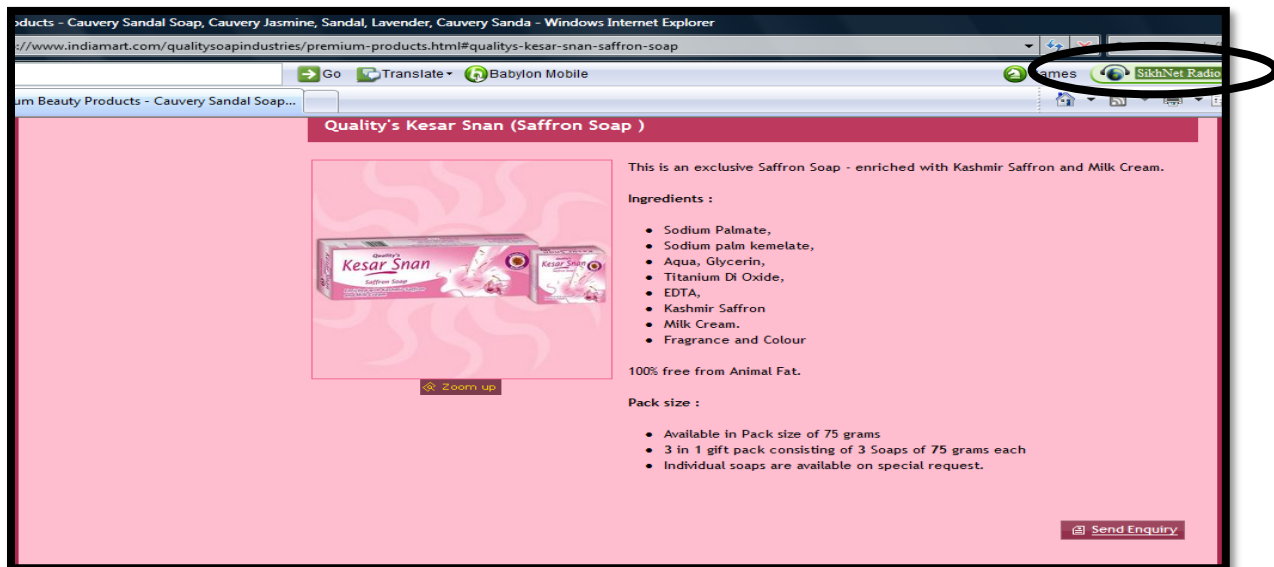


Figure 3

<http://www.indiamart.com/qualitysoapindustries/>

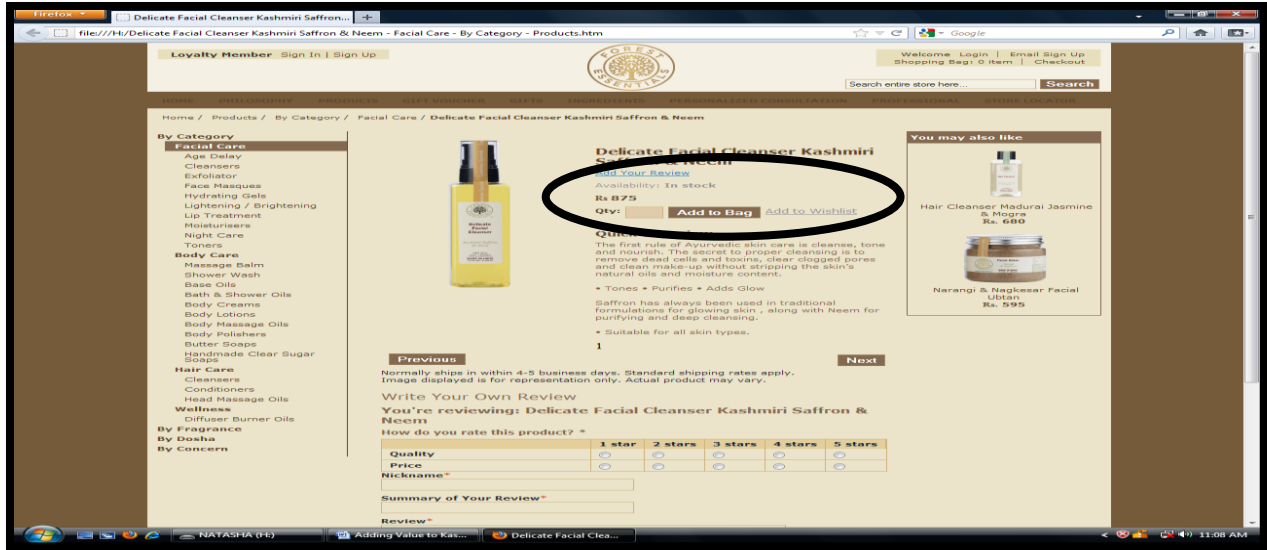


Figure 4

<http://www.forestessentialsindia.com>

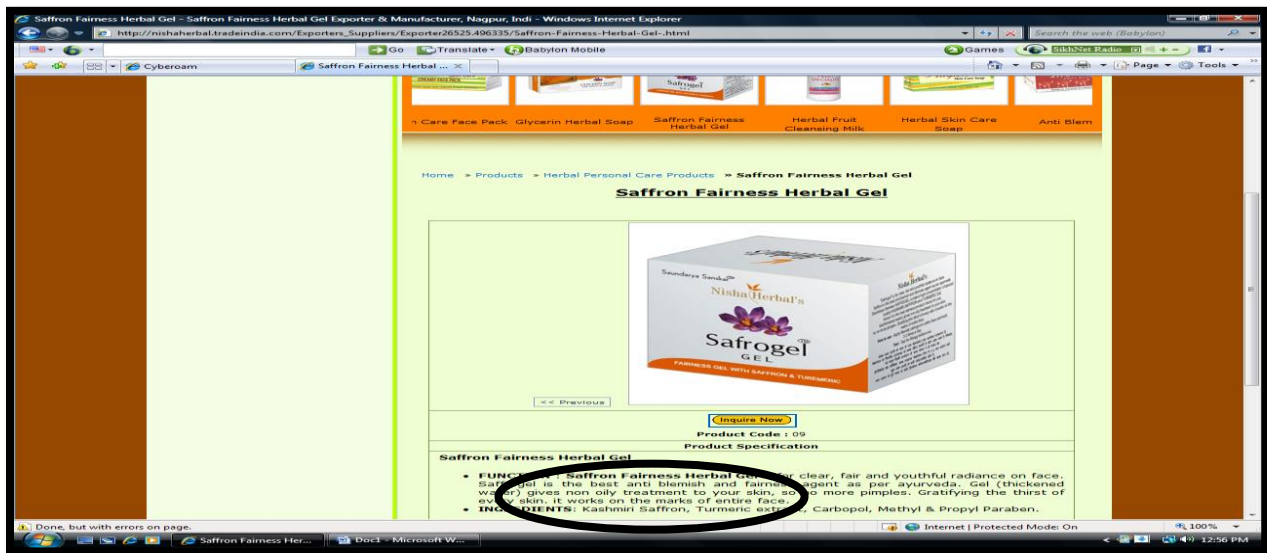


Figure 5

<http://nishaherbal.tradeindia.com/Saffron-Fairness-Herbal->

Exclusivity: Is the ingredient also used in competing products?

Saffron is also used in other herbal fairness products, including Ayurvedic Fair and Lovely, Shahnaz Hussain's Fairone, Emami Malai Kesar cream, and VI-JOHN Saffron skin fairness cream. However, it serves no purpose of differentiation for these brands because the word Kashmir is not associated with saffron in these brands. Consumer awareness and preference for Kashmir saffron based on its country of origin and other positive attributes demonstrates that customers prefer Kashmir saffron and are aware of its benefits over plain saffron. As

a result, ingredient branding is a viable option for these brands, and Kashmir saffron has the potential to become one.

Historic proof: Has the ingredient generated increased sales, market share, and/or brand awareness for the host brand (Fairever).

The fairness cream market is undergoing a fierce battle between the three major players - HLL, CavinKare, and Emami - who are all vying for the consumer's attention with their attractive schemes, prompting others such as Godrej and ITC to enter. CavinKare launched Fairever in 1998 with the USP 'a fairness cream with Kashmir saffron,' and in just two years, the cream gained an impressive 15% market share and surpassed F&L as the second-largest fairness cream, while F&L's share fell from 93 percent to 76 percent. The 7,000-tonne-per-year market for fairness creams (valued at Rs.500 crores) is growing at a healthy rate of 10-15 percent per year.

#### 7. Discussion

These characteristics indicate that saffron's ingredient branding will indeed add value to it. The fact that prior users recognised Kashmir saffron as an ingredient and the fact that consumers are willing to spend more when Kashmir saffron is used as an ingredient demonstrates the power of ingredient branding in the saffron industry. The content analysis demonstrates that saffron as an ingredient brand has the potential to differentiate itself and achieve a competitive edge. As a result, this B-to-B product may have a chance of success.

#### Recommendations/Developing a "Ingredient Branding Strategy" for Kashmir Saffron

##### Implementation of a strategy for ingredient branding

Product Identification: The first step in implementing the ingredient branding strategy is to ensure that saffron is identified as Kashmir-produced in order to differentiate it from other sellers,' which has already been accomplished. Geographical Indications, a broad method of regional branding, can be used by all qualified producers within a particular region (or country), granting them access to the brand and brand protection. Geographical indications are a type of intellectual property that are primarily used to identify products as being from a specific geographical region. Along with providing consumers with accurate information about the origin of a product, they grant producers within a geographical region the exclusive right to use distinctive signs to differentiate their products from competing goods on the market. These signs, such as "Basmati" or "Kashmir Pashmina," arouse consumers' expectations of quality or reputation based on the geographical origin of the goods. Additionally, GIs increase a product's marketability by assuring consumers that the product designated by the sign is authentic. Geographic indications have enormous potential for protecting traditional products that are unique to specific geographic locations in Kashmir, due to the region's diversity in terms of climate, natural resources, and cultural heritage. As a result, the GI for saffron will act as a signalling device, conveying information about the saffron's origin (Kashmir) and quality (high), assisting indigenous producers in regaining market recognition and goodwill, as well as protecting consumers from counterfeit goods (as Kashmir saffron is blended with saffron of different origins such as Iran to create their varieties of branded saffron or adulterer saffron). The introduction of a GI for saffron will result in the assurance of genuine quality and a premium price on the market, thereby increasing

the income of genuine producers in the society. Thus, the GI of saffron will serve as a marketing tool that can help increase the economic value of Kashmir saffron by conveying a cultural identity through the region of origin, recognising the importance of specific human skills and natural resources in the production process, and establishing a distinct identity for Kashmir Saffron. Additionally, it will provide legal safeguards that prevent commercial organisations that are not authorised users from profiting from the reputation that indigenous communities have worked so hard to build.

Brand name for Kashmir saffron: Allow the end-customer to visually experience the brand. The majority of successful Ingredient brands have incorporated a symbol, such as the NutraSweet swirl or the Dolby "double D." Create an implicit seal of approval for the brand, which can be done visually. The Intel logo is a circled checkmark that indicates that a critical component in the PC has been validated. Additionally, it can be accomplished through associations of reassurance and comfort. Geographic identifiers (GIs) are either geographical names (for example, the name of a town, a region, or a nation) or symbols that denote the origin of the commodities with which they are associated. If such symbols are capable of establishing the origin of the aforementioned items, or if images containing both text and a symbol/icon representing the brand image are used. A logo could be designed to represent "Kashmir's finest saffron." Additionally, we must encourage people to "search for the Kashmir saffron logo" as a means of ensuring the product's quality.

Branding Strategy: The second step is for saffron to commit to a comprehensive brand strategy. Given recent trends in the Indian market, where consumers are becoming increasingly picky about the quality and authenticity of the products they purchase and are looking for ingredient information, ingredient branding is gaining traction. Additionally, by meeting new consumer criteria through added value and unique qualities, Kashmir saffron can establish an ingredient brand and pursue ingredient branding opportunities with the cosmetic industry. Thus, we must invest in "ingredient branding," beginning with the cooperative (co-op) programme, in which we must persuade manufacturers to include the "Kashmir saffron " logo on their product, as well as in their advertising and other marketing materials. By partnering with the best in the category, the appropriate brand associations can be established. Dolby established the superiority of its product by licencing its B-type technology to manufacturers of high-end tape recorders such as Fisher and Harman-Kardon. Market leaders are also a good bet — as NutraSweet discovered with Pepsi and Coke. Another possibility is to collaborate with businesses that already have a strong relationship with the end customer. Cosmetics is a lucrative, innovative, and fast-paced industry that thrives on product innovation. Kashmir Saffron can brand their ingredients with CavinKare because they have differentiated their fairness cream. Whether it is on the ingredient positioning of Kashmir saffron or with CavinKare competitors such as HUL (fair and lovely), which is the market leader but is losing market share year after year, this threat of fair & lovely can become an opportunity for us to pursue ingredient branding with HUL so they can differentiate their Ayurvedic fair & lovely brand with Kashmir saffron as an ingredient or with Godrej, Dabur, etc. Additionally, the customer must comprehend the brand's functional benefits before developing more profound, emotional associations. The functional benefits should be obvious, credible, and easily identifiable,

utilising the ingredient to simplify a complicated purchase process. Dolby technology has a practical benefit: it minimises background noises that degrade the quality of recorded sound. This benefit served as the impetus for the company's "ingredient" launch in the market for high-end consumer audio equipment. The functional benefit has developed a marketing life of its own over time. Simply put, Dolby is synonymous with "excellent sound." Similarly, Kashmir saffron acts as a melanin retardant. This benefit will serve as the foundation for the company's "ingredient" launch in high-end consumer fairness cream marketing.

**Financial Incentives:** The manufacturer of finished products should offer a monetary incentive for adopting the Kashmir saffron logo. One incentive is to provide a subsidy for advertising. Intel, for example, offered PC manufacturers a 3% advertising subsidy based on the amount spent on Intel processors.

**Campaigns for Brands:** Additionally, the ingredient brand must persuade the consumer about the brand's promise and utility. At this stage, the ingredient brand must market itself to consumers via a variety of brand campaigns. For instance, Teflon is currently promoting its Teflon Fabric Protector product through a branding campaign. Similarly, advertising and promotion programmes for Kashmir saffron must be implemented, including a robust website targeted at consumers, producers and processors, retailers, and industries that utilise saffron, such as cosmetics, food and beverage, and pharmaceutical dye, among others, as well as media advertising (billboards, TV, radio, print). To become so strong that consumers will prefer products endorsed by Kashmir saffron over products endorsed by other endorsers. Thus, Kashmir saffron can become a brand if it successfully raises consumer awareness and builds trust in the highest quality while associating with numerous established brands at the manufacturer level.

Thus, if successfully implemented, the ingredient brand campaign has the potential to transform the commodity product Kashmir saffron into a valuable consumer brand with brand value, restoring the product's prestige and credibility.

## Conclusion

Historically, agricultural producers have sought to maintain profitability through cost reduction. Today, an increasing number of agricultural producers are examining product differentiation as a means of increasing profit. The Jammu and Kashmir State's economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, with nearly 80% of its population employed in agriculture and related occupations. Additionally, the Department of Agriculture, J&K, should focus on branding its superior saffron. It may be an effective method of avoiding adulteration, creating value and generating revenue for all links in the production chain. Additionally, in this new global realm of consumers seeking quality, origin certification, confidence attributes, and more organic production standards, there are enormous opportunities for developing saffron as an ingredient brand that meets this type of demand. Additionally, as the Jammu and Kashmir governments embark on the National Saffron Mission Program to increase productivity and develop saffron marketing in order to increase profitability and sustainability, they should consider labelling saffron and implementing branding strategies such as ingredient branding.

Improving saffron marketing should be a top priority for both the government and the sector, as it is the most significant factor affecting the saffron industry's financial performance: According to the study, management should be educated about the value of saffron branding and the associated benefits, which include consumer loyalty, distinctiveness and distinctness, legal protection, and increased profit margins. The study recommends that additional research be conducted to ascertain the feasibility of providing geographical indications and developing an ingredient branding strategy for saffron in order to achieve commercial status.

A programme of ingredient branding will increase consumer preference for Kashmir saffron: Initiatives should be taken to establish quality as a critical attribute of Kashmir saffron. Assume that Kashmir saffron is successfully positioned in terms of quality. In that case, it will eventually generate a significant increase in revenue by securing a premium price that will more than offset marketing investment costs and add value to Kashmir saffron farmers. Brands that use Kashmir saffron as an ingredient should commit to using only Kashmir saffron and adhering to the state government's quality standards, capitalising on consumers' inclination to believe that saffron-containing products are suitable for, safer, healthier, and of higher quality. When given the choice, the majority of consumers prefer products containing saffron from Kashmir. A successful branding campaign will increase the economic viability of Kashmir's saffron industry, thereby fostering growth and development. More precisely, a successful branding programme will increase margins by strengthening the price of Kashmir saffron and lowering distribution costs, expand markets for BC-produced goods, facilitate cooperation and coordination in marketing and development activities, strengthen marketing skills and serve as a rallying point for the industry, and improve the image of the Kashmir saffron industry. Additionally, the programme would have a sizable economic impact. Thus, an effective geographical indication and ingredient branding of saffron, combined with an effective marketing programme, will increase exports and benefit saffron producers economically.

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