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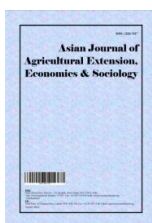
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Consumer Preference towards Milk Products in Tamil Nadu

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJAEES/2020/v38i1130470

Editor(s):

(1) Dr. Zhao Chen, University of Maryland, USA.

Reviewers:

(1) Milena Soares dos Santos, Federal University of Bahia, Brazil.

(2) Aialys Hernández Nariño, Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de Matanzas, Cuba.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/64190>

Original Research Article

Received 24 October 2020

Accepted 27 December 2020

Published 31 December 2020

ABSTRACT

Dairy industry is one among the important sector in India. India is the largest milk producer, accounting for more than 18.50 per cent of the world's total milk production. In India 80 per cent of milk is marketed through the highly fragmented unorganized sector, which includes local milk vendors, wholesalers, retailers, and producers themselves. On the other hand, the organized dairy industry, accounted for about 20 per cent of total milk production, comprised of two sectors: government and co-operatives. Even though co-operatives provide a remunerative price to the producer, the unorganized sector plays a major role in milk marketing. The present study identifies the major factors influencing the consumers to prefer milk products and also to analyse the awareness level of the consumers in Tamil Nadu. Totally 120 sample respondents were selected. Garrett's rank analysis was done to analyze the factors influencing the consumers buying behaviour of milk and its products. The results showed that quality, price and taste were the most influencing factors to buy the milk products and the least influencing factors were flavour/colour and packaging of the products. Ghee was the major product preferred by the consumers. Quantity of milk showed significant relationship between age, monthly income and family size.

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Keywords: Customers; health conscious; dairy industry; buying behavior; milk products.

1. INTRODUCTION

Companies all over the world are focused on sustaining and excelling. While service provision and profit maximization are the main concern of any company, the global competition of the business has forced the companies to frame their strategies to retain the market and later to succeed in the field in which they operate. Once the competition is efficiently dealt by the company, it can be sustained on the market. Competition is not a one-time process for each corporation, it can occur throughout the whole company's life cycle. For any company, the outcomes of business are primarily consumer focused (i.e. product or service). So companies should organize their plans with specific emphasis to retain themselves in the competitive environment. The company cannot be overpowered in the market without the help of its customers.

Current customers are health conscious and not ready for any compromise. Sensing this transformation of customers, more companies are also getting succeeded with their innovative ideas. The customers are free to choose and change their brand accordingly. Hence, each company must strive hard to pool their own loyal customers. To create an own consumer base, first the company should understand the customers of their business. If marketers understand the consumer behavior, they can predict how consumers are likely to react on various informational and environmental cues [1].

To plan the business strategies, the organization must study consumer buying behavior to understand consumers and to increase the market size. Consumer behavior can shift from time to time on the basis of their socio-economic factors. In the past, taking into account the dairy industry in India, there were only cooperatives involved in the packaged milk market but sensing the demand for milk among the rising population, more private players were involved. With the increase of competition in the milk sector and with the increasing number of milk brands, the researcher had conducted an in-depth analysis to understand the preference of consumers towards milk products.

1.1 Dairy Industry

Global milk production in 2019 reached 852 million tonnes, an increase of 1.4 per cent from

2018, mainly resulting from production increases in India, Pakistan, Brazil, the European Union, the Russian Federation and the USA (source: FAOSTAT, 2018). Across the global regions, Asia registered the largest expansion. In Asia, milk output increased from 10 million tonnes (or increased by 2.9 per cent) in 2018 to nearly 360 million tonnes in 2019, with over 90 per cent of coming from India and Pakistan (source: FAOSTAT, 2018).

India's milk production continued to increase by rising demand. In 2018-19, India produced 279.30 million tonnes of milk which is 18.5 per cent of world production. Production growth is facilitated by rising milk collection and processing, especially by co-operatives, along with rising output of relatively more organized sector. The largest contributor is Uttar Pradesh with 17.22 per cent of which Tamil Nadu in the 9th position by 5.31 per cent. Tamil Nadu is one of the leading states with total production of 206 lakh litres milk of which 25 lakh litres milk is retained for domestic consumption per day. There are 12,585 milk producers' cooperative societies having 20.30 lakh milk farmers as members (source: Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Production Federation Limited, 2018).

Milk processing and milk products were introduced by the dairy to harmonize a biased supply [2]. In addition to milk dairy industries, various value-added products such as butter, curd, ghee, aromatic milk, paneer, and yogurt are produced. During the period 2016-2020, butter is increased by 14.5 per cent and ghee by 14.1 per cent. These products are marketed and distributed throughout the nation to meet the consumer demands. Table 1 showed the production and consumption of milk products in India.

1.2 Consumer

Consumer is the key to success of any organization because it is a consumer who makes decision whether to buy or not the products offered. This ultimately influences the existence and prosperity of an organization in the future. The organization has to know its consumers and understand their consumer behavior to efficiently succeed in business. Bhatt (1985), explained that consumer is an individual who consumes goods, whether manufactured by business unit or created by nature such as air,

water etc and utilities offered by the government, business organizations and other voluntary organizations. According to Kotler (2004), consumers include all the individuals and households who buy or acquire goods and services for personal consumption.

1.3 Consumer Buying Behavior and Factors Influencing the Buying Behavior

Milk represents one of the irreplaceable and most fundamental food ingredients for all mammals. From the beginning of life of every single mammal kind, milk becomes essential and the only component of food income. Milk has good reputation among the consumers, so the product supply can be extended according to consumers demand and also regular availability in markets must be maintained for the consumers to stay in the same brand [3], and [4]. Majority of milk consumers prefer fresh milk. The marketing concept starts with consumer needs and behavior in meeting the needs, every consumer have their own preference towards the brand [5]. The real problem is to learn what a consumer takes into consideration when he chooses a particular brand. Such a study is concerned with consumer behavior. Consumer oriented thinking helps the marketer to define consumer needs from the consumer's point of view. The present study attempts to bring out the factors leading to the buying behavior of consumers in milk sector.

Consumer buying behavior is one of the important parts of human behavior [6]. On daily basis, every single person performs the role of consumer who has to purchase goods and services for the purpose of satisfying existing and emerging needs. The main driving motive of consumers visiting the market place is satisfaction derived from the consumption of

purchased products [7]. Consumer buying behavior does not only relate to the act of purchasing product. According to Hoyer et al., [8], "consumer behavior reflects the totality of consumer's decisions with respect to acquisition, consumption and disposition of goods services, activities, experiences, people and ideas by human decision-making units". According to Schmitz [9], the consumer buying behavior was classified into four factors namely, namely cultural factors (culture, sub-culture and social class), social factors (member groups, family, role and status), personal factors (age, family life cycle, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality) and psychological factors (motivation, perception, learning and beliefs). According to Deepa et al. [10], the change in purchase decisions was due to marketing related factors such as availability, advertisement, product quality and price of the products.

In each business, it is mandatory for the organization to study about their consumers preferences to identify the factors and make suggestion for the company to acquire the right market [11,12]. The factors influencing the buying behavior of consumers were price, taste, quality, quantity, product range, creaminess, freshness, aroma, availability etc., [13]. Now-a-days people are becoming more health conscious, hence quality, richness and packaging of milk influences most of the consumers [14,15].

1.4 Objectives

The main contributions of the study are:

- i. to analyze the consumers buying behavior towards milk products and
- ii. to identify the factors influencing the consumers preference for milk products.

Table 1. India's production and consumption of milk products per annum

S. No	Year	Production (million tonnes)	Consumption (million tonnes)
1	2010	203.82	82.05
2	2011	215.30	87.55
3	2012	222.31	89.92
4	2013	226.63	90.95
5	2014	237.96	96.25
6	2015	246.23	100.32
7	2016	257.49	105.47
8	2017	268.32	110.38
9	2018	276.41	115.42
10	2019	279.30	119.23

(Source: Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries)

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sample and Data Collection

Primary data was collected from the respondents. The information was collected directly from the respondents at the point of purchase and also from nearby locality with the help of well-structured questionnaire. Totally 120 respondents were selected for the study. The reference year for the study was 2019-2020 and the collection of data was taken during the month of August to October 2020.

2.2 Measuring Instrument

For this research, the questionnaire comprised of three sections which included demographics, consumers buying behavior and the factors influencing the buying behavior of consumers.

2.3 Data Analysis

Percentage analysis, chi-square and Garrett's rank analysis were used for analyzing and interpreting the data.

Percentage analysis was used to study the characteristics of the sample consumer regarding socio-economic characteristics for assessing the awareness level and buying behavior. Chi-square test determines whether there is an association between categorical variables (i.e., whether the variables are independent or related). Garrett's ranking technique was used find out the most significant factor which influences the buying behavior of respondents. The respondents were asked to assign the rank for all factors and the outcome of ranking was converted into score value with the help of the following formula:

$$\text{Percent position} = 100 (R_{ij} - 0.5) / N_j$$

Where,

$$R_{ij} = \text{Rank given for the } i^{\text{th}} \text{ variable by } j^{\text{th}} \text{ respondents}$$

$$N_j = \text{Number of variable ranked by } j^{\text{th}} \text{ respondents}$$

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The descriptive statistics is given in Table 2. Among the respondents 53.33 per cent were

female and 46.66 per cent were male. Majority of the respondents belonged to 31-40 age group (47.50 per cent). Among the respondents 60.83 per cent were married. 60.83 per cent of respondents belonged to medium family size, 21.66 per cent of respondents belonged to large family size, only 17.50 per cent of respondents belonged to small family size. 43.33 per cent of respondents were graduates, 20 per cent were HSC, 13.33 per cent were SSLC, 13.33 per cent were masters background and 10 per cent of them were illiterate. Regarding occupation, majority of them were house wives (35 per cent), 30 per cent were private employees, 14.16 per cent were students, 10.83 per cent were business professionals and only 10 per cent were government employees. 24.16 per cent of respondents earned less than Rs.20000 per month and 31.67 per cent earned Rs.20000-30000 per month and only 9.61 per cent earned more than Rs.50000 per month. 68.33 per cent of respondents were aware of milk products, 42.68 per cent of the respondents got awareness through media. 60.83 per cent of respondents purchased 500-1000 ml quantity of milk. 56.66 per cent of respondents purchased from the retail outlet and majority of 48.33 per cent of the respondents consumed product for less than one year. 47.30 per cent of the respondents spend less than 300 rupees on weekly basis whereas 7.5 per cent of them consumed more than 400 rupees on weekly basis. (HSC- Higher Secondary Certificate; SSLC- Secondary Level School Certificate).

The respondents profile were analyzed in terms of age, gender, marital status, family income, educational qualification and occupation. The general information about the milk products are also collected from the respondents.

3.2 Consumers Preference towards Various Milk Products

From Table 3, majority of the consumers preferred ghee (25.83 per cent) followed by paneer (18.33 per cent) and ice cream was the least preferred product (11.66 per cent).

3.3 Buying Behavior of the Respondents

3.3.1 Hypothesis 1

H_0 : There exists no relationship between age and quantity of milk bought per day

H_1 : There exists significant relationship between age and quantity of milk bought per day.

Table 2. Demographic profile of the respondents

S. No	Variable	Indices of profile	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	Less than 30	35	29.16
		31-40	57	47.50
		Above 40	28	23.33
		Total	120	100.00
2	Gender	Male	56	46.66
		Female	64	53.33
		Total	120	100.00
3	Marital status	Married	73	60.83
		Unmarried	47	39.16
		Total	120	100.00
4	Family size	Small (<3)	21	17.50
		Medium (3-5)	73	60.83
		Large(>5)	26	21.66
		Total	120	100.00
5	Educational qualification	SSLC	16	13.33
		HSC	24	20.00
		Graduate	52	43.33
		Post graduate	16	13.33
		Illiterate	12	10.00
		Total	120	100.00
6	Occupation	Student	17	14.16
		Government employee	12	10.00
		Private employee	36	30.00
		Business	13	10.83
		House wife	42	35.00
		Total	120	100.00
7	Monthly income	<20000	29	24.16
		20000-30000	38	31.67
		30000-40000	25	20.83
		40000-50000	17	14.16
		>50000	11	9.16
		Total	120	100.00
8	Awareness of the product	Aware	103	85.83
		Unaware	17	14.16
		Total	120	100.00
9	Source of awareness	Friends & Relatives	48	40.00
		Media	45	36.50
		Retail store	29	23.50
		Total	120	100.00
10	Quantity of milk	500 ml	34	28.33
		500-1000 ml	73	60.83
		>1000 ml	13	10.84
		Total	120	100.00
11	Brand	Government brand	82	68.33
		Private brand	38	31.66
		Total	120	100.00
12	Purchase of products	Retail outlet	68	56.66
		Local shops	30	25.00
		Super market	22	18.33
		Total	120	100.00
13	Period of usage	< 1 year	58	48.33
		1-2 years	38	31.66
		>2 years	24	20.00
		Total	120	100.00

S. No	Variable	Indices of profile	Frequency	Percentage
14	Average expenditure on weekly basis	<300 rupees	57	47.50
		300-350 rupees	35	29.16
		350-400 rupees	19	15.83
		>400 rupees	9	7.5
		Total	120	100.00

Figures indicated in parentheses represent percentage

From Table 4, it is concluded that 500 ml quantity of milk was mostly purchased by the age group of less than 30 years (60.00 per cent). It is observed that 71.90 per cent and 12.28 per cent of the age group between 31-40 years purchases 500-1000 ml and more than 1000 ml quantity of milk. It could be inferred from the results that χ^2 64.25, $P<0.05$ indicated that there exists significant relationship between quantity of milk and age group, supporting H_1 .

3.3.2 Hypothesis 2

H_0 : There exists no relationship between monthly income and quantity of milk bought per day

H_1 : There exists significant relationship between monthly income and quantity of milk bought per day

Figures indicated in parentheses represent percentage

From the Table 5, it is observed that all income groups mostly prefer 500-1000 ml quantity of milk, followed by 500 ml quantity of milk. It could be inferred from the results that χ^2 66.18, $P<0.05$ indicated that there exists significant relationship between quantity of milk and monthly income, supporting H_1 .

3.3.3 Hypothesis 3

H_0 : There exists no relationship between family size and quantity of milk bought per day

H_1 : There exists significant relationship between family size and quantity of milk bought per day

Figures indicated in parentheses represent percentage

From the Table 6, it could be inferred that 57.14 per cent of respondents belonged to small size family (< 3 members) purchases 500 ml quantity of milk. 65.75 percent and 65.38 percent prefer 500-1000 ml of milk from medium and large-sized families. It could be noted that χ^2 72.39, $P<0.05$ indicated that null hypothesis was rejected. It shows that there exists significant relationship between quantity of milk and family size, supporting H_1 .

3.3.4 Hypothesis 4

H_0 : There exists no relationship between milk products and frequency of purchase

H_1 : There exists significant relationship between milk products and frequency of purchase

Figures indicated in parentheses represent percentage

From Table 7, it could be noted that paneer was the most purchased milk product by the respondents on weekly (44.44 per cent) and fortnight (25.00 per cent) basis. 31.70 per cent of respondents purchased ghee milk product on monthly basis. Occasionally, 32.35 per cent of respondents purchased curd. It could be observed that χ^2 62.91, $P<0.05$ indicated that there exists significant relationship between quantity of milk products and frequency of purchase, supporting H_1 .

Table 3. Consumers preference towards various milk products

S. No	Factors	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Ice-cream	14	11.66
2	Paneer	22	18.33
3	Curd	17	14.16
4	Ghee	31	25.83
5	Butter	20	16.67
6	Khova	16	13.33
	Total	120	100

Table 4. Quantity and age cross tabulation

Quantity*	Age			Total
	< 30 years	31-40 years	>40 years	
500 ml	21 (60.00)	9 (15.78)	4 (14.28)	34
500-1000 ml	9 (25.72)	41 (71.90)	23 (82.14)	73
Above 1000 ml	5 (14.28)	7 (12.28)	1 (3.58)	13
Total	35	57	28	120

*significant at 1% level; Note: N=120; χ^2 64.25; Sig (2-tailed) 0.001**Table 5. Quantity and monthly income cross tabulation**

Quantity*	Monthly income					Total
	<Rs.20000	Rs.20000- Rs.30000	Rs.30000- Rs.40000	Rs.40000- Rs.50000	>Rs.50000	
500 ml	11 (37.93)	15 (39.47)	5 (20.00)	3 (17.64)	-	34
500-1000 ml	14 (48.27)	20 (52.63)	17 (68.00)	12 (70.58)	10 (90.90)	73
Above 1000 ml	4 (13.79)	3 (7.89)	3 (12.00)	2 (11.76)	1 (9.09)	13
Total	29	38	25	17	11	120

*significant at 1% level; Note: N=120; χ^2 66.18; Sig (2-tailed) 0.016**Table 6. Quantity and family size cross tabulation**

Quantity*	Family size			Total
	Small (<3 members)	Medium (3-5 members)	Large (> 5 members)	
500 ml	12 (57.14)	21 (28.76)	1 (3.84)	34
500-1000 ml	8 (38.09)	48 (65.75)	17 (65.38)	73
Above 1000 ml	1 (4.76)	4 (5.47)	8 (30.76)	13
Total	21	73	26	120

*significant at 1% level; Note: N=120; χ^2 72.39; Sig (2-tailed) 0.001**3.3.5 Hypothesis 5**

H₀: There exists no relationship between age and milk products

H₁: There exists significant relationship between age and milk products

per cent of respondents belonged to more than 40 years of age group purchased ghee. It could be observed that χ^2 74.06, $P < 0.05$ indicated that there exists significant relationship between quantity of milk products and age of respondents, supporting H₁.

Figures indicated in parentheses represent percentage

From Table 8, it could be observed that ice cream and Khova milk products were equally purchased by the respondents (22.85 per cent) belonged to the age group of less than 30 years. 26.31 per cent of respondents belonged to 31-40 years of age group purchased ghee and 32.14

3.4 Factors Influencing Buying Behavior of the Consumers

From the Table 9, it is concluded that most influencing factor for consumer buying behavior were price of the milk products followed by taste and aroma. The least influencing factors were packing of milk products and labeling. The result was in line with Ramya et al. [16].

Table 7. Milk products and frequency of purchase cross tabulation

Milk products*	Frequency of purchase				Total
	Weekly	Fortnight	Monthly	Occasionally	
Ice cream	-	4(11.11)	3(7.31)	7(20.58)	14
Paneer	4(44.44)	9(25.00)	7(17.07)	2(5.88)	22
Curd	-	4(11.11)	2(4.87)	11(32.35)	17
Ghee	3(33.32)	8(22.21)	13(31.70)	7(20.58)	31
Butter	2(22.21)	6(16.67)	7(17.07)	5(14.70)	20
Khova	-	5(13.88)	9(21.95)	2(5.88)	16
Total	9	36	41	34	120

*significant at 1% level; Note: N=120; χ^2 62.91; Sig (2-tailed) 0.003

Table 8. Milk products and age cross tabulation

Milk products*	Age			Total
	< 30 years	31-40 years	> 40 years	
Ice cream	8(22.85)	4(7.01)	2(7.14)	14
Paneer	3(17.14)	12(21.05)	7(25.00)	22
Curd	4(11.43)	11(19.29)	2(7.14)	17
Ghee	7(5.00)	15(26.31)	9(32.14)	31
Butter	5(14.28)	9(15.78)	6(21.42)	20
Khova	8(22.85)	6(10.52)	2(7.14)	16
Total	35	57	28	120

*significant at 1% level; Note: N=120; χ^2 74.06; Sig (2-tailed) 0.019

Table 9. Rank analysis of factors influencing the purchase of milk products

Factors	Rank
Taste	II
Price	I
Protein	VI
Aroma	III
Packing	VII
Availability	V
Labeling	VIII
Flavor/Color	IV

4. CONCLUSION

Each industry works hard to provide high quality products and services to satisfy their customers. Hence, satisfied customer would revisit the industry and become loyal customer in the long run. It is necessary to evaluate the consumer regularly and frequently so as to strategize suitable marketing practices according to the changing consumer behavior to tap, retain and to survive in the market. The study has been carried out with 120 respondents of milk products from the point of purchase. The analyses of these data have been done with appropriate statistical tools and certain findings on the buying behavior of consumers towards milk and milk products were derived. Majority of the respondents purchased 500-1000 ml quantity of

milk. Ghee was the major milk product preferred by the consumers. Quantity of milk showed significant relationship between age, monthly income and family size. Price was the major influencing factor for the purchase of milk products. In Tamil Nadu, Government co-operatives play a major role than private brand. The researcher conclude that, understanding consumers behavior is essential to sustain and excel in this competitive and growing dairy market.

The study can be further expanded to dealers of milk and milk products. The study area can be expanded to other states of India because of diverse culture and behavior existing within the country.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has been concluded that the consumer preference towards milk and milk products was mainly depends on age, family type, income and frequency of purchase. The main factors that influence the consumer to prefer milk products was price, taste and aroma. Evaluation was based on the primary data gathered through questionnaire and accuracy of the findings entirely depends on the accuracy of the responses given by the customers.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, participant's written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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