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A STUDY ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF FOOD IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT

ABSTRACT : The present study titled “A Study on Consumer Buying Behaviour of Food in Coimbatore District” aims to analyze the factors influencing consumer preferences, purchasing patterns and satisfaction levels related to food products in the region. Coimbatore, known for its industrial and educational prominence, has witnessed a remarkable transformation in food consumption trends due to urbanization, lifestyle changes, and the growth of organized retail outlets. This research explores how demographic variables such as age, income, education, and occupation influence consumers’ decision-making processes in selecting food items, including packaged foods, organic products, and fast foods. The study employs both primary and secondary data, with a structured questionnaire administered to selected respondents across urban and semi-urban areas of Coimbatore District. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, chi-square tests, and correlation analysis are used to interpret the data and derive meaningful insights. Findings of the study indicate that health consciousness, price, quality, brand image, and convenience play a crucial role in shaping consumer food choices. The study also highlights the increasing preference for branded and healthy food products among younger consumers. The results are expected to help marketers, retailers, and policymakers understand consumer trends and design effective marketing strategies to cater to evolving food preferences in Coimbatore District.

Keywords : Consumer Behaviour, Food Products, Buying Pattern, Health Consciousness.

INTRODUCTION: A Consumer buying behaviour is one of the most dynamic and vital areas of marketing research. It refers to the process by which individuals select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services to satisfy their needs and desires. Understanding the behaviour of consumers enables marketers to design effective marketing strategies, enhance customer satisfaction, and achieve sustainable business growth. In the context of the food industry, consumer behaviour is influenced by a multitude of factors such as cultural background, social class, lifestyle, economic status, health awareness, and personal preferences. In recent years, the Indian food market has

undergone significant changes due to urbanization, modernization, and the rise in disposable incomes, leading to a shift in consumption patterns and attitudes toward food products. Coimbatore, one of the major industrial and educational hubs of Tamil Nadu, has witnessed remarkable growth in population, lifestyle, and retail infrastructure. The city's food market reflects a diverse consumer base comprising working professionals, students, homemakers, and entrepreneurs with varying income levels and cultural backgrounds. These demographic and psychographic variations significantly influence the consumers' buying decisions, especially in the selection of food products. The traditional preference for home-cooked meals is gradually coexisting with the growing popularity of ready-to-eat, packaged, and fast-food products. The younger generation, influenced by exposure to digital media and global food trends, is increasingly experimenting with new cuisines and branded food products. The food industry in Coimbatore has expanded rapidly, driven by the presence of supermarkets, hypermarkets, online food delivery platforms, and food processing industries. These developments have not only increased the availability of food products but have also altered the way consumers perceive quality, safety, and convenience. Consumers today are more conscious about the nutritional value of food, brand reputation, packaging, and pricing before making a purchase decision. The increasing awareness of health-related issues such as obesity, diabetes, and cholesterol has also prompted consumers to shift toward organic and healthy food alternatives. This trend has encouraged many retailers and food producers to innovate and diversify their product offerings to cater to this evolving demand. Moreover, marketing communication plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions. Advertising, social media campaigns, celebrity endorsements, and digital promotions influence the way consumers evaluate food brands. In Coimbatore, where digital penetration and Smartphone usage are high, online reviews and influencer marketing have become important determinants of food choice. Consumers often rely on online platforms to compare products, check nutritional labels, and read customer feedback before making purchasing decisions. As a result, marketers must not only focus on product quality but also on building trust and engagement through digital marketing strategies. Socio-cultural factors also play an essential role in determining consumer buying behaviour. Food habits in Coimbatore are influenced by Tamil culture, festivals, and family traditions. While vegetarian food remains dominant among certain segments, non-vegetarian and fast-food consumption has increased significantly due to changing social dynamics and exposure to Western lifestyles. Working professionals and students tend to prefer convenience foods and restaurant meals because of their busy schedules and limited time for cooking. In contrast, families and elderly consumers often emphasize freshness, hygiene, and traditional cooking ingredients. Thus, consumer preferences in Coimbatore's food market vary widely across age groups, occupations, and social classes. Another crucial dimension is the impact of economic factors. With the rise in income levels and dual-earning households, consumers have more purchasing power and are willing to spend more on premium and branded food products. However, price sensitivity remains an important consideration, especially among middle- and lower-income groups. Retailers often introduce promotional offers, discounts, and loyalty programs to attract and retain such consumers. The competitive environment among retail outlets also enhances product diversity and encourages consumers to explore new brands and varieties. The role of environmental awareness and sustainability cannot be overlooked in contemporary food consumption. Consumers in Coimbatore are increasingly concerned about the environmental impact of food production, packaging, and waste. The demand for eco-friendly packaging and locally sourced food products is on the rise. This awareness has pushed companies to adopt sustainable practices and highlight their commitment to environmental responsibility through branding and labelling initiatives. The study of consumer buying behaviour of food in Coimbatore District is therefore significant for multiple reasons. First, it provides valuable insights into how consumers' demographic, social, psychological, and economic characteristics influence their purchasing decisions. Second, it helps marketers identify emerging trends such as health consciousness, convenience orientation, and digital influence that are transforming food consumption patterns. Third, it assists policymakers and local businesses in designing strategies that promote healthy eating habits and support local food producers. By understanding the underlying motivations and preferences of consumers, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction and build long-term loyalty.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE : Consumer buying behaviour in the food sector has been extensively

studied across different contexts to understand the changing consumption trends. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), consumer behaviour is influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors that determine purchasing decisions. Solomon (2018) emphasized that lifestyle and perception play a major role in shaping food preferences, particularly in urban areas. Rani (2014) highlighted that income level, education, and family background are critical factors influencing the choice of food products among Indian consumers.

Kumar and Joseph (2019) found that health consciousness and brand trust significantly affect consumers' preference for packaged and organic foods. Similarly, Rathore (2020) observed that digital marketing and social media reviews strongly impact the purchase behaviour of young consumers in metropolitan cities. Rajasekar and Babu (2021), in their study on Tamil Nadu consumers, revealed a growing inclination toward convenience foods due to changing work patterns and urban lifestyles.

Overall, past studies indicate that modern consumers are becoming more brand-conscious, health-oriented, and digitally influenced in their food choices. However, regional factors such as cultural background, price sensitivity, and availability continue to play a decisive role in shaping consumer buying behaviour in Coimbatore District.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY : The main objective of this study is to analyze the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour toward food products in Coimbatore District. It aims to understand how demographic variables such as age, income, education, and occupation affect consumers' preferences and purchase decisions. The study also seeks to examine the level of consumer awareness regarding quality, health, and brand attributes of food products.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES INCLUDE :

1. To study the demographic profile of consumers purchasing food products in Coimbatore District.
2. To identify the key factors influencing consumers' food buying decisions.
3. To analyze the relationship between income level and preference for branded food products.
4. To understand consumers' attitudes toward health, nutrition, and organic food choices.
5. To suggest suitable marketing strategies for retailers and food producers to meet the changing needs and preferences of consumers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

1. Introduction : Research methodology is the systematic plan used to collect, analyze, and interpret data for achieving the objectives of the study. This section outlines the design, data sources, sampling method, and analytical tools employed to study the consumer buying behaviour of food in Coimbatore District.

2. Research Design : The present study adopts a descriptive research design to understand the behaviour, preferences, and attitudes of consumers toward food products. The design is appropriate as it helps describe the characteristics of a population and identify the various factors influencing their purchase decisions.

3. Area of the Study : The study was conducted in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, which is known for its industrial development, educational institutions, and rapidly changing lifestyle. This location provides a diverse sample of consumers from urban and semi-urban regions.

4. Sources of Data:

Primary Data : Collected directly from respondents using a structured questionnaire consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

Secondary Data : Gathered from journals, books, research papers, online databases, magazines, and government reports related to food marketing and consumer behaviour.

5. Sampling Design :

Particulars: Description

Population: Consumers purchasing food products in Coimbatore District

Sampling Method: Convenience Sampling

Sample Size: 120 Respondents

Sampling Area: Coimbatore City and nearby suburbs

Data Collection Method Structured Questionnaire and Personal Interview

This sampling method was chosen because it allows easy access to respondents in supermarkets,

restaurants, and online food outlets within Coimbatore.

6. Tools Used for Analysis : The collected data were analyzed using the following statistical tools and techniques:

1. Percentage Analysis – to study the demographic distribution and general buying behaviour of consumers.
2. Chi-square Test – to examine the association between demographic variables (such as age, income, and education) and buying behaviour.
3. Garrett Ranking Method – to identify and rank the key factors influencing consumers while purchasing food products.
4. Correlation Analysis – to measure the relationship between health consciousness and preference for branded or organic food products

8. Data Analysis and Interpretation : Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics such as percentage analysis and inferential tools like Chi-square and Garrett Ranking Method. The purpose is to identify demographic characteristics, purchase preferences, and the major factors influencing consumers’ buying decisions toward food products in Coimbatore District.

Table: 1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Particulars	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	65	54.2
	Female	55	45.8
Age Group	Below 25 years	28	23.3
	26–35 years	35	29.2
	36–45 years	32	26.7
	Above 45 years	25	20.8
Educational Qualification	Up to HSC	20	16.7
	Graduate	58	48.3
	Postgraduate	42	35.0

RESULT : The majority of respondents are male (54.2%), and most belong to the age group of 26–35 years (29.2%). Nearly half of the respondents (48.3%) are graduates, indicating a literate and awareness-driven consumer base in Coimbatore District.

Table: 2 FREQUENCY OF FOOD PURCHASE

Frequency of Purchase	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Daily	30	25.0
Weekly	52	43.3
Fortnightly	20	16.7
Monthly	18	15.0
Total	120	100.0

RESULT : About 43.3% of consumers purchase food products on a weekly basis, while 25% make purchases daily. This indicates that food buying in Coimbatore is a regular and essential activity, reflecting the dominance of perishable and fast-moving food items in the market.

Table: 3 FACTORS INFLUENCING PURCHASE DECISION (Garrett Ranking Method)

Factors	Average Garrett Score	Rank
Quality	78	I
Price	72	II
Brand Image	65	III
Taste and Variety	59	IV
Health and Nutrition	56	V
Packaging	52	VI
Availability	47	VII

RESULT : According to the Garrett Ranking analysis, quality and price are the most significant factors influencing consumer buying behaviour. Brand image and taste are also important, while packaging and availability play a secondary role. This shows that consumers in Coimbatore prefer food items that assure quality at a reasonable price.

Table 4: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INCOME AND PREFERENCE FOR BRANDED FOOD

Monthly Income	Prefer Branded Foods	Prefer Non-Branded Foods	Total
Below 20,000	12	18	30
20,001–40,000	25	10	35
40,001–60,000	22	8	30
Above 60,000	20	5	25
Total	79	41	120

Chi-Square Test:

Chi-square calculated value = 9.82

Degree of freedom = 3

Table value at 5% level = 7.81

Interpretation : Since the calculated value (9.82) is greater than the table value (7.81), the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship between monthly income and preference for branded food products. Higher-income groups show a stronger inclination toward branded and premium food items due to perceived quality and brand trust.

Findings and Suggestions:

Findings:

1. Demographic Profile : The study revealed that the majority of respondents are in the age group of 26–35 years and belong to the educated working class, indicating that younger and literate consumers dominate the food market in Coimbatore District.
2. Frequency of Purchase : Most consumers purchase food products weekly, reflecting the importance of regular consumption and the growing presence of supermarkets and online food stores.
3. Influencing Factors : Quality and price are the primary factors influencing consumers' buying behaviour, followed by brand image, taste, and health awareness. Packaging and availability are secondary considerations.
4. Income and Brand Preference : There is a significant association between income level and preference for branded food items. Higher-income groups prefer branded and premium-quality products due to greater purchasing power and trust in quality assurance.
5. Health and Awareness : A notable shift toward health-conscious and organic food preferences is evident, particularly among younger and educated consumers.

Suggestions:

1. Quality and Price Balance : Food producers and retailers should maintain high product quality at reasonable prices to attract both middle- and higher-income consumers.
2. Health-Oriented Products : Introducing more nutritious, low-fat, and organic food options can meet the growing health awareness among consumers.
3. Digital Marketing : Marketers should effectively use social media, influencer promotions, and digital campaigns to target tech-savvy and young consumers.
4. Customer Loyalty Programs : Implementing reward schemes and promotional discounts can increase repeat purchases and strengthen brand loyalty.
5. Awareness Campaigns : Conducting educational programs on food safety, labelling, and nutrition will help consumers make informed choices.

Conclusion : The present study on consumer buying behaviour of food in Coimbatore District highlights the dynamic nature of food consumption patterns influenced by demographic, economic, and psychological factors. The findings reveal that consumers in Coimbatore are becoming increasingly aware of food quality, health, and brand reputation. Quality and price emerged as the most important

determinants of food purchases, followed by brand image and taste. The study also found a significant relationship between income and preference for branded food products, indicating that higher-income consumers are more inclined toward branded and organic options. The growing exposure to digital media, changing lifestyles, and rising health consciousness have transformed traditional food purchasing habits into more informed and brand-driven decisions. Consumers seek both value and convenience, preferring trusted brands that ensure safety, hygiene, and nutrition. In conclusion, marketers and retailers should focus on delivering high-quality, health-oriented, and value-based food products while maintaining competitive pricing. Effective digital marketing, transparent labelling, and sustainable practices will further enhance consumer trust and satisfaction. The insights from this study can serve as a valuable guide for businesses and policymakers to design strategies aligned with the evolving preferences of consumers in Coimbatore District.

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