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A cross-sectional survey on consumer preference for traditional and commercial dairy products in Guntur District Andhra Pradesh, India

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to assess consumer preferences, purchase behaviour and awareness on traditional and commercial dairy products in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, India. Dairy products are integral to the Indian diet with traditional products such as curd, ghee, butter, and paneer continuing to hold cultural and nutritional importance. A cross-sectional survey was carried out with 115 respondents by use of structured questionnaire. The results revealed that 47.8% of consumers preferred traditional dairy products, primarily due to health benefits, taste and trust in traditional methods. Commercial products offered by branded dairies were preferred by 20.9% of consumers, often for convenience and brand assurance. Education and income levels showed a significant influence on purchasing patterns with higher educational status associated with greater awareness about product quality and adulteration issues. A notable portion of respondents (77.4%) were aware of dairy adulteration, yet misconceptions about purity in traditional products persisted. In conclusion, within the surveyed group of respondents, there was a notable preference for traditional dairy products, while urbanization appeared to encourage a gradual shift toward commercial options for their convenience and brand appeal. The present findings also indicate high awareness of adulteration and a willingness to pay for quality which further highlights the importance of trust, hygiene and brand reputation in purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Guntur City, traditional dairy products, commercial dairy products, consumer preference, dairy adulteration and consumer awareness

Introduction

Indian dairy industry is divided into two categories: milk and value-added milk products (Singh SR, Datta KK, 2010) [8]. Milk products come from a variety of sources. Traditional dairy products includes traditionally prepared, unbranded, often handmade or minimally processed dairy products, mostly sold in local markets or made at home such as curd, ghee, butter and paneer which are widely consumed in rural and urban households. Commercial dairy products are manufactured and distributed by branded dairies which are usually branded, processed and sold *via* organized retail chains or brands like those mentioned earlier like pasteurized milk, skimmed milk, toned milk, cheese, ice-creams, frozen desserts, flavoured milk and milk beverages *etc.* Consumer purchasing behaviour of dairy products is becoming an interesting topic for researchers (Samoggia, 2016 [6]; Haas *et al.*, 2016 [3]; Rahnama and Rajabpour, 2017 [5]). With rising health awareness and concerns over food adulteration, there is a noticeable shift in consumer preferences. However, in some studies, demographic characteristics are shown to affect consumer preference for dairy products (Shokrvash *et al.*, 2015) [7]. Consumer's primary food purchasing choices are variable and are also influenced by income, education, age and gender. Consumers with a greater level of education and money are more concerned with food safety issues, while the aged and women are more likely to pick safe foods. Among the dairy products, curd was preferred by all the sample households. Ice-cream was the second most preferred dairy product, followed by ghee, butter, paneer and cheese. Dairy industries are advancing for higher quality goods with acquired technology and some remarkable inventions for their products and greater market expansion.

The above background highlights the growing importance of understanding consumer choices in the dairy sector. Having said that, the present study assesses consumer preferences, purchasing behaviour and awareness regarding traditional and commercial dairy products in and around Guntur city and identifies the factors that influence the choices and their implications for the dairy sector.

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Guntur city, one of the largest city in the state of Andhra Pradesh and the third largest by population. The city was selected as it contains more number of branded dairy units. A total of 115 respondents, comprised of both men and women from different age groups and diverse demographic backgrounds were selected to study consumer preferences in buying dairy products. The objective was to assess their purchasing behaviour and awareness regarding product quality and adulteration.

The study was conducted from May 2025 to June 2025. Respondents who regularly purchased dairy products were chosen purposively using simple random or convenience sampling methods, based on feasibility and availability. Data was collected through a structured interview schedule that covered demographic details (age, gender, income, education), frequency of dairy product consumption, preference for traditional or commercial products, factors influencing choice (taste, cost, health benefits, trust, availability) and awareness about adulteration and quality issues. Information on sources of purchase (local vendors, supermarkets, *etc.*) was also recorded. The collected data was analyzed using percentage analysis along with standard error to interpret the results.

Results

The survey revealed that male respondents (57.4%) were more in number than female respondents. Most respondents (38.3%) belonged to the age group of 26-35 years, followed by 46-55 years (22.6%) and 36-45 years (21.7%). All participants were from urban or semi-urban areas of Guntur city. Nearly half of the consumers (48.7%) were graduates. In terms of monthly income, the largest group (49.6%) earned between ₹20,000 and ₹40,000, followed by those earning ₹40,000-₹60,000 (26.1%). About 15.6% of respondents earned less than ₹20,000 (Table 1).

In terms of consumption, 57.4% of respondents reported daily use of dairy products, while 33.9% consumed them 3-4 times per week. Occasional and rare consumption was reported by 6.1% and 2.6% respectively. Nearly half of the respondents (47.8%) preferred traditional dairy products for reasons such as health benefits, traditional value, and trust, whereas 20.9% preferred commercial dairy products for convenience and brand assurance. About 23.5% consumed both types and 7.8% had no specific preference. Regarding purchase sources, 31.3% bought from local vendors, 28.7% from supermarkets, 27.8% from both and 12.2% from nearby dairy farms. The main factors influencing purchases were trust/tradition (20.8%), price (20.02%), taste (18.3%), availability (15.7%), hygiene and quality (14.8%) and brand reputation (10.4%). A majority (53.9%) believed traditional products were healthier, while 27.0% were unsure and 19.1% disagreed (Table 2).

The study also found that 77.4% of participants were aware of adulteration in dairy products, and many believed that commercial products were more prone to it. Regarding label-checking habits, 40.0% of respondents always checked labels before purchase, 38.3% sometimes checked and 21.7% never

checked. This showed that about four in ten consumers actively checked for quality, ingredients or certifications. When asked about willingness to pay more for better quality, 48.7% of respondents agreed they would pay a higher price (Table 3, 4 and 5; Figure 1).

Table 1: Demographic characters of sample respondents

S. No	Characteristics	No of Respondents (115)	Percentage
Gender			
1	Male	66	57.4
2	Female	49	42.6
Age (Years)			
1	18-25	8	7.0
2	26-35	44	38.3
3	36-45	25	21.7
4	46-55	26	22.6
5	55 < (above)	12	10.4
Area distribution			
1	Urban	66	57.4
2	Semi-urban	49	42.6
Average Monthly Income (INR)			
1	< 20,000	18	15.6
2	20,000-40,000	57	49.6
3	40,000-60,000	30	26.1
4	>60,000	10	8.7
Educational status			
1	Illiterate	2	1.7
2	School level	40	34.8
3	Graduation	56	48.7
4	Post-graduation	17	14.8

Table 2: Consumer preference on dairy product consumption

S. No	Characters	No of Respondents N=(115)	Percentage \pm S.E
Consumption frequency of dairy products			
1	Daily	66	57.4 \pm 4.6
2	3-4 times per week	39	33.9 \pm 4.4
3	Occasionally	7	6.1 \pm 2.2
4	Rarely	3	2.6 \pm 1.5
Dairy Product preference			
1	Traditional products	55	47.8 \pm 4.6
2	Commercial products	24	20.9 \pm 3.8
3	Both traditional and commercial	27	23.5 \pm 4.0
4	No Preference	9	7.8 \pm 2.6
Source of purchase			
1	Local vendors	36	31.3 \pm 4.4
2	Supermarket	33	28.7 \pm 4.2
3	Both	32	27.8 \pm 4.2
4	Nearby dairy farm	14	12.2 \pm 3.0
Reason for purchase			
1	Trust /Tradition	24	20.9 \pm 3.8
2	Price	23	20.0 \pm 3.7
3	Taste	21	18.3 \pm 3.6
4	Availability	18	15.7 \pm 3.4
5	Hygiene and quality	17	14.8 \pm 3.3
6	Brand reputation	12	10.4 \pm 2.9
Traditional products perceived as healthier			
1	Yes	62	53.9 \pm 4.7
2	Not Sure	31	27.0 \pm 4.2
3	No	22	19.1 \pm 3.7

Table 3: Awareness on adulteration of dairy products

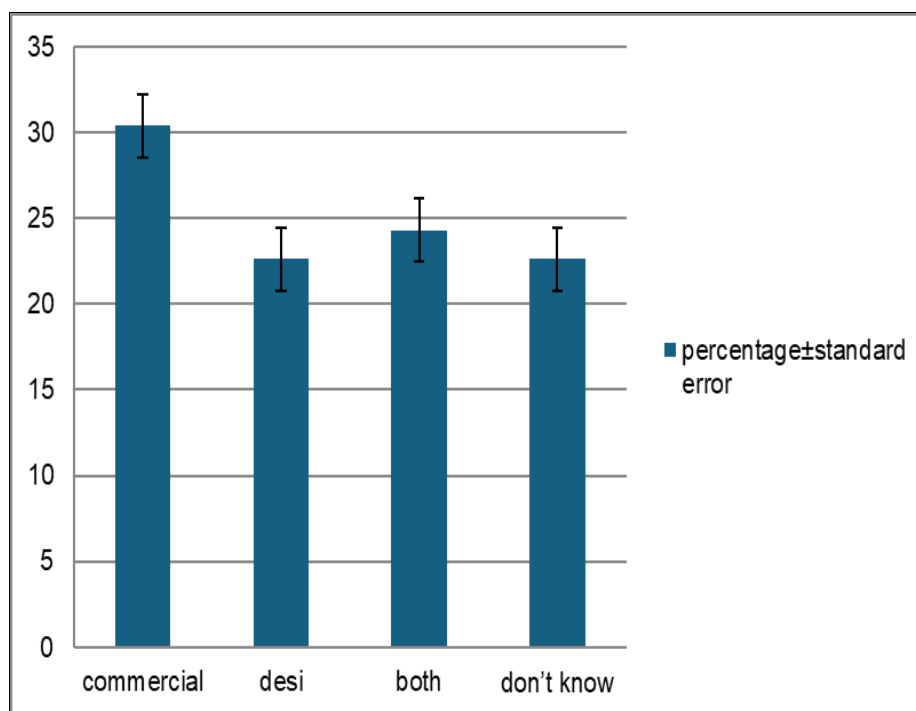
S. No.	Response	No of respondents, N=(115)	Percentage \pm S.E
1	Yes	89	77.4 \pm 3.9
2	No	26	22.6 \pm 3.9

Table 4: Frequency of label checking before purchasing the dairy products

Frequency	No of respondents, N=(115)	Percentage \pm S.E
Always	46	40.0 \pm 4.6
Sometimes	44	38.3 \pm 4.5
Never	25	21.7 \pm 3.8

Table 5: Representing the consumer behaviour towards willingness to pay more for quality

Response	No of respondents, N=(115)	Percentage \pm S.E
Yes	56	48.7 \pm 4.7
May be	35	30.4 \pm 4.4
No	24	20.9 \pm 3.8

**Fig 1:** Consumer awareness regarding the products that are likely to be adulterated

Discussion

The study includes consumers from different age groups and educational backgrounds, with varied choices and beliefs towards dairy product consumption. Jaswanth *et al.*, (2022) ^[9] observed that people's choices towards milk and milk products are shaped not only by socioeconomic and demographic factors but also by habits, beliefs, attribute knowledge and marketing variables. The strong preference for traditional dairy products (47.8%) in this study reflects the influence of tradition, culture and perceived health benefits. Similar findings by Jayakumar and Loganathan (2015) ^[4] show that milk consumption patterns differ across regions and that urbanization can alter consumption patterns even among rural consumers. Many respondents associate traditional products with natural quality, better taste and a sense of trust from homemade or locally sourced items, which is in line with previous research in other Indian urban and semi-urban areas.

The notable preference for commercial products (20.9%) and the 23.5% who consume both types indicate a gradual shift among modern consumers, particularly in urban areas. This shift appears to be driven by convenience, standardization, attractive packaging and brand reputation. Such products are often seen as safer due to FSSAI regulations and labeling requirements. The majority of consumers prefer products from branded showing strong local industry trust. Similar findings are reported by Ahmadi Kaliji *et al.*, (2019) ^[1] in Sari, Iran, where brand names significantly influence willingness to consume certain dairy products.

Consumer awareness about adulteration is relatively high with 77.4% acknowledging such issues. Despite this, over 53% of respondents still believe traditional products are healthier,

indicating a sustained trust in traditional sources. A considerable portion of consumers (40%) always check labels before purchase and 48.7% are willing to pay more for higher quality products. Samoggia (2016) ^[6] noted that while awareness of healthy food prices is higher than for conventional food, it remains low and consumers tend to underestimate the prices they pay. Factors such as taste, price, hygiene, brand image and accessibility continue to play a major role in purchase decisions. Bousbia *et al.*, (2017) ^[2] also found that taste is the most important criterion for milk product perception, followed by trust, health benefits, packaging and origin of the product.

Conclusion

The study shows that consumer preferences for dairy products in Guntur are influenced by tradition, trust, taste and health perceptions with a strong inclination towards traditional dairy products. Urbanization and modern lifestyles are gradually increasing the demand for commercial products due to convenience and brand assurance. Awareness about adulteration is high and many consumers actively check labels and are willing to pay more for quality. Factors such as price, hygiene, availability and brand reputation remain key determinants in purchasing decisions.

Conflict of Interest: Not available

Financial Support: Not available

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