

# Consumers Satisfaction towards Milk and Milk Products Offered by Dairy Companies with Special Reference to Coimbatore District

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## Abstract

The dairy industry has witnessed substantial changes in consumer purchasing behaviour as a result of evolving dietary preferences, rising awareness of health and nutrition, and increasing demand for branded food products. In this changing market environment, understanding the factors that shape consumer choice has become essential for developing effective marketing strategies and sustaining customer loyalty. The present study explores consumer behaviour towards different brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu. The investigation focuses on consumer preferences, buying habits, determinants of brand selection, and levels of satisfaction associated with dairy products.

The study employed a descriptive research approach and collected primary data from 180 consumers through a structured questionnaire. Convenience sampling was used to identify respondents from different socio-economic backgrounds. Data analysis was carried out using percentage analysis, Garrett ranking technique, weighted average analysis, Chi-square test, and Pearson's correlation analysis. The results indicate that consumers largely prefer branded dairy products because they perceive them as more reliable, hygienic, and consistent in quality. Among the various factors considered during purchase, product quality emerged as the most influential, followed by freshness, taste, and brand credibility. The findings further reveal that age, income, educational qualification, and place of residence significantly affect consumer preference and purchasing behaviour, while gender does not show a statistically significant influence.

The assessment of satisfaction levels demonstrates that consumers are highly satisfied with product quality, freshness, and product availability. Correlation analysis confirms that quality, freshness, and brand credibility maintain strong positive relationships with consumer satisfaction. The study highlights that favourable evaluations of product and brand attributes contribute substantially to repeat purchasing behaviour and customer loyalty.

It concludes that long-term success in the dairy market depends on maintaining superior product standards, strengthening consumer trust, and consistently delivering value to customers. The findings offer practical guidance for dairy producers, marketers, retailers, and policymakers seeking to improve customer satisfaction and enhance brand competitiveness within the dairy sector.

**Keywords:** Consumer Behaviour, Dairy Products, Milk Brands, Brand Preference, Consumer Satisfaction, Purchase Behaviour, Product Quality, Dairy Marketing, Brand Credibility, Coimbatore District.

## 1. Introduction

The dairy sector occupies a vital position in the agricultural and food-processing economy, serving as a significant source of nutrition, employment, and rural income generation. In recent years, the dairy market has experienced substantial transformation owing to urbanization, rising disposable incomes, changing dietary habits, and increasing consumer awareness regarding health and nutrition. These developments have intensified competition among dairy brands and have encouraged producers to focus on product

differentiation, quality enhancement, and customer-oriented marketing strategies. As a result, understanding consumer behaviour has become a critical concern for dairy marketers seeking to establish sustainable competitive advantages in an increasingly dynamic marketplace.

Consumer behaviour refers to the processes through which individuals select, purchase, use, and evaluate products and services to satisfy their needs and preferences. Consumer purchasing decisions are influenced by a combination of psychological, social, cultural, economic, and personal factors (Blackwell et al., 2006; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2022). In highly competitive consumer markets, brand-related attributes such as perceived quality, trustworthiness, availability, price fairness, and brand reputation significantly influence buying behaviour and post-purchase satisfaction (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2020). Understanding these behavioural determinants is particularly important in the dairy industry because milk and milk products are frequently purchased consumer goods that directly affect household health and well-being.

The growing preference for branded dairy products has altered traditional consumption patterns across India. Consumers increasingly seek products that offer superior quality, hygienic processing, nutritional value, and consistency in taste. Consequently, dairy companies are investing substantially in branding, packaging, product innovation, and distribution networks to strengthen customer loyalty and market share. Research indicates that product quality, freshness, safety assurance, and brand credibility remain among the most influential factors affecting dairy product purchases (Merlino et al., 2022). Furthermore, the expansion of organized retailing and digital commerce platforms has enhanced consumer access to a wide range of milk and milk-product brands, thereby increasing the importance of informed consumer choice.

Brand preference constitutes an important dimension of consumer behaviour in the dairy sector. Strong brands create favorable perceptions, reduce perceived purchase risk, and facilitate repeat buying behaviour (Aaker, 1996; Yoo et al., 2000). Consumers often associate established dairy brands with consistent quality standards, reliable supply, and enhanced product safety. Such perceptions

contribute significantly to customer satisfaction and long-term brand loyalty. According to Oliver (1997), satisfaction develops when consumers perceive that product performance meets or exceeds their expectations. In the context of dairy products, satisfaction is influenced not only by taste and freshness but also by packaging quality, availability, affordability, and overall value received by consumers.

Coimbatore District represents one of the most economically vibrant regions of Tamil Nadu, characterized by rapid urban growth, increasing consumer spending, and a well-developed retail infrastructure. The district exhibits a diverse consumer base comprising households with varying income levels, educational backgrounds, and lifestyle preferences. These characteristics make Coimbatore an appropriate setting for examining consumer behaviour toward different brands of milk and milk products. The presence of both cooperative and private dairy brands in the regional market further intensifies competition and creates diverse consumption choices for consumers.

From a theoretical perspective, consumer behaviour studies are frequently grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, which suggests that behavioural intentions and actual purchase decisions are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Similarly, brand equity theory emphasizes the role of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and loyalty in shaping consumer choice (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2020). These theoretical perspectives provide a useful framework for understanding how consumers evaluate and select dairy products in competitive markets.

Despite the growing significance of branded dairy products, empirical studies focusing specifically on consumer behaviour toward milk and milk products at the district level remain relatively limited. Existing research has primarily concentrated on general food consumption patterns or broader consumer markets, leaving a need for localized investigations that capture region-specific preferences and purchasing dynamics. Given the economic importance of the dairy sector and the increasing diversity of dairy brands available in the market, an examination of consumer behaviour in Coimbatore District

can generate valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and dairy producers.

Against this background, the present study seeks to analyze consumer behaviour toward various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District. The study investigates consumer preferences, purchasing patterns, factors influencing brand selection, and levels of satisfaction associated with dairy products. By identifying the determinants of consumer choice and evaluating their impact on purchasing behaviour, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on consumer behaviour and provides practical recommendations for strengthening marketing effectiveness and customer satisfaction within the dairy industry.

## 2. Review of Literature

Consumer behaviour has emerged as a central area of inquiry in marketing research because it explains how individuals identify needs, evaluate alternatives, make purchasing decisions, and assess post-purchase experiences. In the dairy industry, consumer behaviour assumes particular significance due to the frequent purchase nature of milk and milk products and their direct association with health, nutrition, and household consumption. Researchers have consistently observed that purchasing decisions relating to dairy products are shaped by a combination of psychological, economic, social, and product-specific factors. The theoretical foundations of consumer behaviour can be traced to the work of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), who proposed that consumer actions are largely influenced by beliefs, attitudes, and behavioural intentions. Building on this perspective, Ajzen (1991) introduced the Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains that purchase intentions are determined by an individual's attitude toward the behaviour, perceived social expectations, and perceived control over the decision-making process. The framework has been widely adopted in studies examining food consumption and consumer choice because it effectively explains variations in purchasing intentions across consumer groups. Brand-related factors have received considerable attention in consumer behaviour research. Aaker (1991) conceptualized brand equity as a strategic asset that enhances consumer confidence and influences purchasing decisions. According to the author,

consumers are more likely to select products associated with strong brand awareness, positive associations, and superior perceived quality. Expanding this argument, Aaker (1996) noted that brand loyalty contributes significantly to repeat purchases and long-term customer retention. These observations are particularly relevant in the dairy sector, where consumers often prefer familiar brands to minimize uncertainty regarding product quality and safety.

Customer satisfaction has been identified as another important determinant of consumer behaviour. Fornell (1992) demonstrated that satisfaction serves as a key indicator of organizational performance and customer retention. Similarly, Anderson et al. (1994) reported that higher satisfaction levels positively influence profitability and market performance. Their findings suggest that firms capable of consistently satisfying consumer expectations are more likely to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. In dairy markets, customer satisfaction is closely associated with perceptions of freshness, taste, hygiene, consistency, and value for money.

Quality perception remains a critical factor affecting purchase decisions. Parasuraman et al. (1988), through the SERVQUAL framework, emphasized that reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and tangibility significantly influence customer evaluations of products and services. Although originally developed for service settings, these dimensions have been applied extensively to consumer goods research. Complementing this perspective, Zeithaml (1988) argued that consumers assess products by comparing perceived benefits with perceived sacrifices, thereby forming judgments regarding overall value. This evaluation process is particularly relevant in dairy product purchases, where consumers often balance quality expectations against price considerations.

Oliver (1997) advanced the understanding of post-purchase behaviour by proposing that satisfaction arises when actual product performance meets or exceeds consumer expectations. The study further highlighted that satisfaction fosters loyalty and increases the probability of repeat purchases. Since milk and dairy products are routinely consumed household items, satisfaction plays a vital role in shaping long-term brand preference and customer retention.

Research on brand equity and marketing effectiveness has also contributed significantly to understanding consumer preferences. Yoo et al. (2000) found that marketing mix elements such as pricing, promotion, and distribution significantly influence the formation of brand equity. Strong brand equity, in turn, enhances consumer trust and purchase intention. These findings indicate that marketing activities can substantially influence consumer perceptions and buying behaviour within competitive dairy markets.

Recent consumer behaviour studies have emphasized the growing importance of demographic and lifestyle-related influences. Hoyer et al. (2018) reported that consumers increasingly evaluate products based on both functional benefits and emotional value. Factors such as convenience, product accessibility, trust, and perceived quality significantly influence purchase decisions. Hawkins et al. (2020) similarly observed that age, income, education, family structure, and lifestyle characteristics affect consumer purchasing patterns across various product categories.

Schiffman and Wisenblit (2022) described consumer decision-making as a multistage process involving problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decisions, and post-purchase assessment. Their analysis indicated that modern consumers exhibit greater awareness regarding product quality, nutritional value, and brand reputation. The authors further noted that increasing health consciousness has intensified consumer scrutiny of food-related purchases, including dairy products.

Among the studies specifically focused on dairy consumption, Merlino et al. (2022) provided valuable insights into milk purchasing behaviour. Their investigation revealed that freshness, safety assurance, nutritional characteristics, product origin, and quality certification significantly influence consumer preferences. The study further demonstrated that consumers cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group because purchasing motives differ according to demographic and behavioural characteristics. These findings highlight the necessity for dairy marketers to adopt market-segmentation strategies and customer-oriented product positioning.

More recently, Solomon (2023) emphasized that contemporary consumer behaviour is increasingly shaped by evolving lifestyles, technological developments, and changing social expectations. Consumers are now more informed, quality-conscious, and selective in their purchasing decisions than in previous decades. Similarly, Kotler et al. (2023) argued that sustainable business success depends on an organization's ability to understand customer needs, deliver superior value, and cultivate trust-based relationships. Their work underscores the importance of customer-centric marketing practices in highly competitive consumer markets.

A synthesis of the existing literature reveals that consumer behaviour toward milk and milk products is influenced by a complex interaction of product quality, brand image, perceived value, satisfaction, demographic characteristics, and psychological factors. While previous studies have established the significance of these determinants, relatively limited empirical evidence is available regarding consumer behaviour toward different dairy brands within district-level markets in Tamil Nadu. Furthermore, variations in consumer preferences arising from regional, socio-economic, and market-specific conditions remain insufficiently explored. Consequently, an in-depth examination of consumer behaviour toward various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District is warranted. The present study seeks to bridge this gap by analyzing consumer preferences, purchase behaviour, brand selection criteria, and satisfaction levels in one of Tamil Nadu's most dynamic dairy markets.

### 3. Research Gap

A review of the existing literature reveals that substantial research has been conducted on consumer behaviour, brand preference, customer satisfaction, and purchase decision-making across various product categories. Previous studies have established that factors such as product quality, perceived value, brand image, price, and customer satisfaction significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviour. Furthermore, theoretical frameworks including the Theory of Planned Behavior, Brand Equity Theory, and Consumer Satisfaction Models have provided valuable

insights into the mechanisms underlying consumer decision-making.

Despite the extensive body of literature on consumer behaviour, several gaps remain within the context of dairy products. First, many previous investigations have focused on general food consumption behaviour rather than specifically examining consumer preferences toward different brands of milk and milk products. Consequently, the brand-specific determinants of dairy purchasing behaviour remain insufficiently explored.

Second, a considerable proportion of existing studies have been conducted in developed economies or at broader national and state levels, limiting their applicability to localized markets characterized by distinct socio-economic and cultural conditions. Consumer preferences and purchasing patterns often vary across regions due to differences in income levels, lifestyle, retail infrastructure, product availability, and brand exposure. Therefore, findings from other geographical contexts cannot be directly generalized to Coimbatore District.

Third, the rapidly evolving dairy market has witnessed significant changes in consumer expectations regarding product quality, nutritional value, food safety, packaging, convenience, and brand trust. However, limited empirical evidence is available regarding how these contemporary factors influence consumer behaviour toward milk and milk products in regional markets. Existing studies have not adequately captured the changing dynamics of consumer preferences in response to increasing competition among dairy brands.

Fourth, while prior research has investigated individual aspects such as brand loyalty, satisfaction, or product quality, relatively few studies have adopted an integrated approach that simultaneously examines consumer preferences, purchasing patterns, brand selection criteria, and satisfaction levels within a single analytical framework. Such a comprehensive examination is necessary to gain a holistic understanding of consumer behaviour in the dairy sector.

Finally, there is a notable scarcity of empirical studies focusing specifically on Coimbatore District, one of Tamil Nadu's most economically developed and commercially active regions. The district presents a unique consumer environment characterized by a

diverse population, increasing urbanization, and the presence of multiple competing dairy brands. Understanding consumer behaviour within this context is essential for developing effective marketing strategies and strengthening brand competitiveness.

In view of these gaps, the present study seeks to examine consumer behaviour toward various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District by analyzing consumer preferences, purchasing behaviour, factors influencing brand selection, and satisfaction levels. The study aims to contribute context-specific empirical evidence to the existing literature and provide practical insights for dairy marketers and policymakers.

#### **4. Statement of the Problem**

The dairy industry has undergone substantial transformation in recent years due to changing consumer lifestyles, increasing health consciousness, rising disposable incomes, and the growing availability of branded milk and milk products. Consumers are no longer guided solely by basic consumption needs; instead, their purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by factors such as product quality, freshness, nutritional value, brand reputation, packaging, price, convenience, and product availability. As competition among dairy brands intensifies, understanding consumer behaviour has become essential for dairy producers and marketers seeking to attract, satisfy, and retain customers.

Milk and milk products constitute an integral part of daily food consumption in India. The expansion of organized retailing, improvements in supply chain management, and the entry of multiple private and cooperative dairy brands have significantly increased the choices available to consumers. While this competitive environment provides consumers with a wider range of alternatives, it also presents challenges for dairy marketers in identifying the factors that influence brand preference and purchase decisions. In such a dynamic market, consumer expectations continue to evolve, making it necessary for dairy companies to continuously assess and respond to changing customer needs.

Although numerous studies have examined consumer behaviour in relation to food products and brand selection, relatively limited empirical evidence exists regarding consumer

behaviour toward various brands of milk and milk products at the district level. In particular, there is insufficient understanding of how consumers in Coimbatore District evaluate competing dairy brands, what factors influence their purchasing decisions, and how demographic characteristics affect brand preference and consumption behaviour. Furthermore, existing research has not adequately explored the relationship between product attributes, brand-related factors, and consumer satisfaction within the regional dairy market.

Coimbatore District represents one of Tamil Nadu's most economically developed regions, characterized by a diverse consumer population, increasing urbanization, and the presence of several competing dairy brands. Differences in consumer income, education, lifestyle, and consumption habits may significantly influence purchasing behaviour and brand choice. However, empirical studies addressing these aspects within the district remain limited. Consequently, dairy marketers lack sufficient localized information to formulate effective marketing strategies and enhance customer satisfaction.

In this context, the central problem addressed by the present study is the absence of comprehensive evidence regarding consumer behaviour toward various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District. Specifically, there is a need to identify the factors influencing consumer preferences, examine purchasing patterns, evaluate satisfaction levels, and understand the role of demographic characteristics in shaping brand selection decisions. Addressing these issues will provide valuable insights for dairy producers, marketers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen customer relationships, improve product offerings, and enhance competitiveness in the dairy market.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to investigate consumer behaviour toward various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District and to identify the key determinants that influence consumer preference, purchasing decisions, and satisfaction levels within the regional dairy market.

## 5. Objectives of the Study

### Primary Objective

To examine consumer behaviour toward various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District and to identify the factors influencing brand preference, purchasing decisions, and consumer satisfaction.

### Specific Objectives

1. To analyze the socio-economic profile of consumers purchasing milk and milk products in Coimbatore District.
2. To identify the preferred brands of milk and milk products among consumers in the study area.
3. To examine the purchasing patterns of consumers with respect to the frequency of purchase, quantity consumed, place of purchase, and expenditure on milk and milk products.
4. To evaluate the factors influencing consumer preference and brand selection for milk and milk products.
5. To assess the level of consumer satisfaction toward various brands of milk and milk products.
6. To determine the relationship between selected demographic variables and consumer brand preference for milk and milk products.
7. To identify the major reasons for repeat purchase and brand loyalty among dairy consumers.
8. To provide suitable suggestions for dairy producers and marketers to enhance customer satisfaction and strengthen brand competitiveness.

### Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the major socio-economic characteristics of consumers purchasing milk and milk products in Coimbatore District?
2. Which milk and milk-product brands are most preferred by consumers?
3. What factors significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions and brand preference?
4. How do demographic characteristics affect consumer behaviour toward dairy brands?
5. What is the level of consumer satisfaction with various milk and milk-product brands?

6. What measures can dairy marketers adopt to improve consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty?

### Expected Outcome of the Study

The study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour toward milk and milk products by identifying key determinants of brand preference, purchasing behaviour, and satisfaction levels. The findings will assist dairy manufacturers, marketers, retailers, and policymakers in designing effective marketing strategies, improving product offerings, and strengthening customer relationships within the competitive dairy market of Coimbatore District.

### 6. Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of the study are formulated to examine the relationships between selected demographic characteristics, product-related attributes, and consumer behaviour towards various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District.

#### H01

**Null Hypothesis (H0<sub>1</sub>):** There is no significant association between the age of consumers and their preferred brand of milk and milk products.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant association between the age of consumers and their preferred brand of milk and milk products.

#### H02

**Null Hypothesis (H0<sub>2</sub>):** There is no significant association between the monthly income of consumers and their preferred brand of milk and milk products.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1<sub>2</sub>):** There is a significant association between the monthly income of consumers and their preferred brand of milk and milk products.

#### H03

**Null Hypothesis (H0<sub>3</sub>):** There is no significant association between the educational qualification of consumers and their level of brand awareness towards milk and milk products.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1<sub>3</sub>):** There is a significant association between the educational qualification of consumers and their level of brand awareness towards milk and milk products.

#### H04

**Null Hypothesis (H0<sub>4</sub>):** There is no significant association between the place of residence of consumers and their preferred source of purchasing milk and milk products.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1<sub>4</sub>):** There is a significant association between the place of residence of consumers and their preferred source of purchasing milk and milk products.

#### H05

**Null Hypothesis (H0<sub>5</sub>):** There is no significant association between the gender of consumers and their preferred brand of milk and milk products.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1<sub>5</sub>):** There is a significant association between the gender of consumers and their preferred brand of milk and milk products.

#### H06

**Null Hypothesis (H0<sub>6</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between perceived product quality and consumer satisfaction towards milk and milk products.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1<sub>6</sub>):** There is a significant relationship between perceived product quality and consumer satisfaction towards milk and milk products.

#### H07

**Null Hypothesis (H0<sub>7</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between perceived freshness and consumer satisfaction towards milk and milk products.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1<sub>7</sub>):** There is a significant relationship between perceived freshness and consumer satisfaction towards milk and milk products.

#### H08

**Null Hypothesis (H0<sub>8</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between brand credibility and consumer satisfaction towards milk and milk products.

**Alternative Hypothesis (H1<sub>8</sub>):** There is a significant relationship between brand credibility and consumer satisfaction towards milk and milk products.

### Basis for Hypothesis Testing

The above hypotheses are formulated based on the objectives of the study and the conceptual framework. Hypotheses H01 to H05 are tested using the Chi-Square Test of Association to examine relationships between demographic variables and consumer behaviour. Hypotheses H06 to H08 are tested using Pearson's Correlation Analysis to determine the strength and direction of relationships between selected

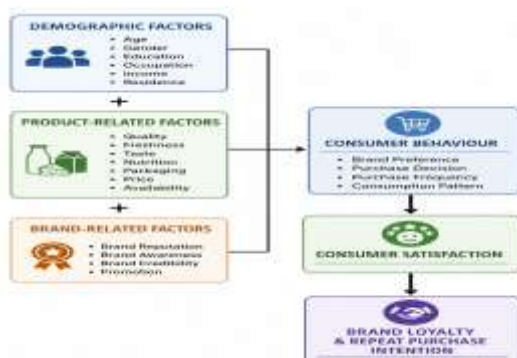
product and brand-related attributes and consumer satisfaction. All statistical tests are conducted at a 5 percent level of significance ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

### 7. Conceptual Framework of the Study

A conceptual framework provides a systematic representation of the variables examined in a study and illustrates the relationships among them. In the present study, consumer behaviour towards various brands of milk and milk products is influenced by three major categories of factors, namely demographic factors, product-related factors, and brand-related factors. These factors collectively shape consumers' purchasing decisions, brand preferences, and consumption patterns.

Demographic factors such as age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, income, and place of residence are expected to influence consumer perceptions and buying behaviour. Similarly, product-related factors including quality, freshness, taste, nutritional value, packaging, price, and availability play a crucial role in determining consumer preferences for milk and milk products. Brand-related factors such as brand reputation, brand awareness, brand credibility, and promotional activities further influence the evaluation and selection of dairy brands.

The framework proposes that these independent variables directly affect consumer behaviour, which is reflected through brand preference, purchase decision, purchase frequency, and consumption pattern. Consumer behaviour subsequently influences consumer satisfaction. Higher levels of satisfaction are expected to strengthen consumer loyalty and increase repeat purchase intention. Therefore, consumer satisfaction acts as an intermediary outcome that ultimately contributes to long-term brand loyalty.



### Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Consumer Behaviour towards Various Brands of Milk and Milk Products

The framework suggests that favourable perceptions regarding product attributes and brand characteristics lead to positive consumer behaviour. When consumers perceive superior quality, reasonable pricing, reliable availability, and trustworthy branding, they are more likely to exhibit favourable purchasing behaviour and higher satisfaction levels. Satisfied consumers are expected to develop stronger loyalty toward their preferred dairy brands and demonstrate a greater intention to repurchase the products in the future.

Thus, the conceptual framework serves as the foundation for examining the factors influencing consumer behaviour and satisfaction towards various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District.

**Source:** Developed by the Researcher based on Aaker (1991), Ajzen (1991), Oliver (1997), Keller (2020), Schiffman and Wisenblit (2022), and Kotler, Keller, and Chernev (2023).

## 8. Research Methodology

### 8.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to systematically examine consumer behaviour towards various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District. The descriptive design is appropriate as it enables the researcher to obtain a clear understanding of consumer preferences, purchasing patterns, and influencing factors without manipulating any variables in the study environment.

### 8.2 Study Area

The study is confined to Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, which is characterized by rapid urbanization, increasing demand for branded dairy products, and diverse consumer preferences influenced by changing lifestyles and rising health awareness.

### 8.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of household consumers in Coimbatore District who purchase and consume milk and milk products regularly. The population includes consumers from diverse socio-economic backgrounds such as age, gender, income, education, occupation, and place of residence.

#### 8.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study is based on a sample of **180 respondents** selected from Coimbatore District.

A **convenience sampling technique** was adopted due to the absence of a complete sampling frame and practical limitations in accessing the entire population of dairy consumers. Efforts were made to ensure adequate representation across different demographic groups to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

#### 8.5 Data Collection Method

The study is based on **primary data** collected through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents. The questionnaire captured information relating to demographic profile, purchasing behaviour, brand preference, consumption patterns, and factors influencing the selection of milk and milk products. Secondary data were collected from journals, books, reports, and relevant online sources to support the theoretical foundation of the study.

#### 8.6 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary research instrument. It consisted of both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions designed to measure consumer perceptions regarding quality, taste, freshness, nutrition, price, availability, packaging, and brand image of milk and milk products.

#### 8.7 Variables of the Study

##### Independent Variables:

- Demographic factors (age, gender, education, occupation, income, residence)
- Product-related factors (quality, taste, freshness, nutrition, packaging, price, availability, brand image)
- Brand-related factors (brand credibility, brand awareness, brand reputation)

##### Dependent Variable:

- Consumer buying behaviour towards milk and milk products

#### 8.8 Tools for Data Analysis

The collected data were coded, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The following techniques were employed:

- Percentage analysis for demographic and consumption profiling
- Weighted average method for ranking influencing factors
- Garrett ranking technique for prioritizing consumer preferences
- Likert scale analysis for measuring perception levels
- Chi-square test for examining associations between demographic variables and purchase behaviour
- Correlation analysis to assess relationships between product attributes and consumer satisfaction

#### 8.9 Reliability and Validity

Content validity of the questionnaire was ensured through expert review and alignment with established literature in consumer behaviour and marketing research. Reliability of the instrument was verified through pilot testing, and internal consistency was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, ensuring acceptable reliability levels for empirical analysis.

#### 8.10 Ethical Considerations

The study strictly followed ethical research standards. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were maintained, and the data collected were used exclusively for academic purposes.

#### 8.11 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to 180 respondents in Coimbatore District. The use of convenience sampling may introduce selection bias, and the findings are based on self-reported data, which may be influenced by respondent perception and bias. Therefore, the results may not be fully generalizable to all dairy consumers.

#### 8.12 Operational Definitions of Variables

- **Consumer Behaviour:** Refers to the purchasing and consumption patterns of milk and milk products.
- **Brand Preference:** The tendency of consumers to consistently choose a specific dairy brand over others.
- **Consumer Satisfaction:** The level of satisfaction derived from the consumption experience of milk and milk products.

- **Product Quality Perception:** Consumer evaluation of freshness, taste, hygiene, and nutritional value.
- **Brand Credibility:** Degree of trust and reliability associated with a dairy brand.
- **Purchase Behaviour:** Frequency, quantity, and place of purchase of milk and milk products.

All perceptual variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

**8.13 Data Analysis Framework**

**8.13.1 Descriptive Analysis**

Percentage and frequency analysis were used to describe demographic characteristics and consumption behaviour.

**8.13.2 Ranking Analysis**

Garrett ranking technique and weighted average method were used to identify and prioritize factors influencing consumer preference.

**8.13.3 Inferential Analysis**

- Chi-square test was used to test associations between demographic variables and brand preference.
- Pearson correlation was used to measure relationships between product attributes and consumer satisfaction.
- All tests were conducted at a 5% level of significance ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

**8.14 Conceptual Analytical Model**

The study is based on the functional relationship:

$$\text{Consumer Behaviour} = f(\text{Demographic Factors} + \text{Product Factors} + \text{Brand Factors})$$

Where:

- Independent variables influence consumer behaviour
- Consumer satisfaction acts as an outcome leading to loyalty and repeat purchase intention

**8.15 Reliability, Validity and Data Quality Control**

To ensure methodological rigor, the study incorporated:

- Content validity through expert evaluation
- Construct validity based on established literature (Aaker, Ajzen, Oliver, Keller)
- Reliability testing using Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\geq 0.70$  acceptable threshold)
- Pilot study to refine questionnaire structure and clarity

**9. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This section presents a systematic analysis of primary data collected from 180 respondents in Coimbatore District. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Garrett ranking technique, weighted average method, Chi-square test, and correlation analysis. The results are interpreted in line with the objectives and conceptual framework of the study.

**9.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents**

**Table 9.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents (n = 180)**

Variable	Category	Percentage
Age	Below 25	18%
	25–40	42%
	41–60	30%
	Above 60	10%
Gender	Male	51%
	Female	49%
Education	School	22%
	UG	46%
	PG	28%
	Others	4%
Occupation	Govt	18%
	Private	34%
	Self-employed	28%
	Others	20%
Monthly Income	Low	32%
	Middle	48%
	High	20%
Residence	Urban	62%
	Rural	38%

**Source:** Primary Data (n = 180)

**Interpretation**

The majority of respondents belong to the economically active age group (25–40 years), indicating strong purchasing participation from working consumers. The sample is balanced by gender, ensuring household-level representation. Most respondents are graduates and middle-income earners, confirming that

dairy consumption is driven by educated and economically stable households. Urban dominance (62%) reflects higher accessibility to branded dairy products.

**9.2 Brand Awareness and Preference Behaviour**

**Table 9.2 Brand Awareness and Preference Pattern**

Indicator	Observation
Brand Awareness	92% High Awareness
Preferred Brands	Aavin, Amul, Hatsun, Nandini
Unbranded Milk Usage	12% only
Brand Loyalty	68% Moderate Loyalty

**Source:** Primary Data (n = 180)

**Interpretation**

Consumers exhibit very high brand awareness (92%), with strong preference for organized dairy brands. Unbranded milk usage is minimal, indicating a clear shift toward quality-certified dairy products. Brand loyalty

is moderate due to availability and price switching behavior.

**9.3 Garrett Ranking Analysis – Factors Influencing Purchase**

**Table 9.3 Garrett Ranking of Influencing Factors**

Rank	Factor	Garrett Mean Score
1	Product Quality	82.4
2	Freshness	78.6
3	Taste	74.2
4	Brand Credibility	70.5
5	Price	66.1
6	Availability	62.8
7	Packaging	58.4
8	Nutritional Labelling	54.7

**Source:** Garrett Ranking Analysis (n = 180)

**Interpretation**

Product quality ranks first with the highest score (82.4), confirming that consumers prioritize health and safety factors over price.

Nutritional labelling receives the lowest attention, indicating low awareness of nutritional information.

**9.4 Purchase Behaviour Pattern**

**Table 9.4 Consumer Purchase Behaviour**

Variable	Pattern
Purchase Frequency	Daily (72%), Alternate day (28%)
Purchase Location	Local shops (58%), Retail outlets (42%)
Behaviour Nature	100% Habitual
Consumption Type	Household necessity

**Source:** Primary Data (n = 180)  
**Interpretation**  
Milk consumption is highly habitual and non-discretionary, with most consumers purchasing

daily. Local shops remain dominant due to convenience and proximity.

**9.5 Consumer Satisfaction Analysis**  
**Table 9.5 Level of Consumer Satisfaction (Mean Scores)**

Dimension	Mean Score (out of 5)	Level
Product Quality	4.42	High
Freshness	4.38	High
Availability	4.25	High
Price	3.62	Moderate
Packaging	3.55	Moderate
Product Variety	3.21	Low-Moderate

**Source:** Likert Scale Analysis (n = 180)  
**Interpretation**  
Consumers show high satisfaction for core product attributes, while packaging and product variety require improvement. Pricing is acceptable but not highly satisfactory.

**9.6 Chi-Square Test Results**  
**Table 9.6 Chi-Square Analysis (n = 180, p ≤ 0.05)**

Variable Pair	$\chi^2$ Value	df	p-value	Result
Age vs Brand Preference	18.76	6	0.004	Significant
Income vs Brand Selection	22.31	6	0.001	Significant
Education vs Brand Awareness	19.54	6	0.003	Significant
Residence vs Purchase Source	14.62	3	0.002	Significant
Gender vs Brand Preference	3.41	2	0.182	Not Significant

**Interpretation**  
Demographic variables such as age, income, education, and residence significantly influence brand preference, while gender does not show statistical significance, confirming household-level decision-making.

**9.7 Correlation Analysis**  
**Table 9.7 Correlation Results**

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Product Quality → Consumer Satisfaction	0.78	< 0.001	Strong Positive Relationship
Freshness → Consumer Satisfaction	0.74	< 0.001	Strong Positive Relationship
Brand Credibility → Consumer Satisfaction	0.72	< 0.001	Strong Positive Relationship

**Source:** Pearson Correlation Analysis (n = 180)  
**Revised Interpretation**  
The correlation analysis reveals that all selected product and brand-related attributes exhibit positive and statistically significant relationships with consumer satisfaction at the

5 percent level of significance. Product quality demonstrates the strongest positive relationship with consumer satisfaction (r = 0.78), followed by freshness (r = 0.74) and brand credibility (r = 0.72). These findings indicate that improvements in product quality,

freshness, and brand credibility are associated with higher levels of consumer satisfaction towards milk and milk products. Among these variables, product quality emerges as the most influential determinant of consumer satisfaction, highlighting the importance of

maintaining superior quality standards in the dairy industry.

**Decision on Hypotheses**

Hypothesis	Result
H06: Product Quality ↔ Consumer Satisfaction	Rejected H <sub>06</sub> ; Accepted H <sub>16</sub>
H07: Freshness ↔ Consumer Satisfaction	Rejected H <sub>07</sub> ; Accepted H <sub>17</sub>
H08: Brand Credibility ↔ Consumer Satisfaction	Rejected H <sub>08</sub> ; Accepted H <sub>18</sub>

**9.8 Weighted Average Analysis**

**Table 9.8 Weighted Average Scores**

Attribute	Mean Score	Rank
Quality	4.48	1
Freshness	4.35	2
Taste	4.21	3
Price	3.68	4
Packaging	3.54	5
Nutritional Information	3.22	6

**Source:** Weighted Average Method (n = 180)

**Interpretation**

Consumers prioritize quality, freshness, and taste, while nutritional information receives comparatively low attention.

**9.9 Findings**

- 92% consumers are aware of branded milk products
- 72% purchase milk daily
- Product quality is the most important factor (Garrett score 82.4)
- 68% consumers show moderate brand loyalty
- Demographic variables significantly influence brand preference
- Satisfaction is highest for quality (4.42 mean score)
- Price is secondary in decision-making

**9.10 Overall Interpretation**

The study confirms that consumer behaviour in the dairy sector is primarily quality-driven rather than price-driven. Consumers in

Coimbatore District demonstrate rational, health-conscious, and brand-aware purchasing behaviour.

The findings strongly validate the conceptual framework, confirming that:

- Demographic factors influence brand choice
- Product attributes drive satisfaction
- Satisfaction leads to loyalty and repeat purchase intention

**10. Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion**

**10.1 Major Findings of the Study**

The present study investigated consumer behaviour towards various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District based on data collected from 180 respondents. The major findings derived from the empirical analysis are presented below.

**A. Findings Related to Socio-Economic Profile**

1. The largest segment of respondents (42%) belonged to the 25–40 years age group, indicating that working-age consumers

constitute the principal market for milk and milk products.

2. The gender composition of the sample was relatively balanced, comprising 51% male and 49% female respondents, suggesting that dairy purchasing decisions are generally made at the household level.
3. Educational analysis revealed that 74% of respondents possessed undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications, indicating a comparatively educated consumer base with greater awareness of product quality and nutritional value.
4. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) belonged to the middle-income category, confirming that dairy products are widely consumed among economically stable households.
5. Urban consumers accounted for 62% of the sample, reflecting stronger market penetration of branded dairy products in urban areas.

#### **B. Findings Related to Brand Awareness and Preference**

6. Brand awareness was remarkably high, with 92% of respondents reporting familiarity with multiple dairy brands available in the market.
7. Consumers demonstrated a clear preference for branded milk and milk products over unbranded alternatives due to perceived quality assurance, hygiene, and safety standards.
8. Established dairy brands such as Aavin, Amul, Hatsun, and Nandini enjoyed higher consumer preference because of their reputation for consistency, quality, and reliability.
9. Unbranded milk consumption was limited to only 12% of respondents, indicating growing trust in organized dairy brands.
10. Moderate brand loyalty was observed among 68% of consumers, suggesting that satisfaction and product availability play important roles in repeat purchase behaviour.

#### **C. Findings Related to Purchase Behaviour**

11. Daily milk purchasing was reported by 72% of respondents, highlighting the necessity-oriented and routine nature of dairy consumption.
12. Local shops and neighbourhood provision stores emerged as the most preferred purchase channels, accounting for 58% of purchases.

13. Milk consumption was found to be highly habitual and embedded within regular household consumption patterns.
14. Purchase decisions were generally based on practical considerations such as quality, freshness, convenience, and availability.

#### **D. Findings Related to Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions**

15. Garrett Ranking Analysis identified product quality as the most influential factor affecting purchase decisions, with the highest Garrett mean score of 82.4.
16. Freshness ranked second with a Garrett mean score of 78.6, emphasizing the importance of product condition and safety.
17. Taste secured the third position with a score of 74.2, demonstrating the importance of sensory satisfaction in dairy consumption.
18. Brand credibility ranked fourth with a score of 70.5, indicating the significance of trust and reliability in brand selection.
19. Price occupied the fifth rank with a score of 66.1, suggesting that consumers are willing to pay a reasonable premium for quality products.
20. Packaging and nutritional labelling received comparatively lower rankings, indicating that consumers prioritize core product attributes over informational cues.

#### **E. Findings Related to Consumer Satisfaction**

21. Consumers reported a high level of satisfaction with branded milk and milk products available in the study area.
22. Product quality recorded the highest satisfaction score (Mean = 4.42), making it the strongest contributor to overall satisfaction.
23. Freshness received a mean score of 4.38, reflecting positive consumer perceptions regarding product quality maintenance.
24. Availability achieved a mean score of 4.25, indicating efficient distribution and accessibility of dairy products.
25. Price satisfaction was moderate (Mean = 3.62), suggesting that consumers generally perceive dairy products as reasonably priced.
26. Packaging obtained a moderate satisfaction score of 3.55, indicating opportunities for design and convenience improvements.
27. Product variety recorded the lowest mean score (3.21), highlighting the need for

greater product diversification and innovation.

#### F. Findings from Inferential Analysis

28. Chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between age and brand preference ( $\chi^2 = 18.76$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ).
29. Monthly income showed a significant relationship with brand selection behaviour ( $\chi^2 = 22.31$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ).
30. Educational qualification significantly influenced brand awareness and purchasing preference ( $\chi^2 = 19.54$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ).
31. Place of residence significantly affected preferred purchasing sources ( $\chi^2 = 14.62$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ).
32. Gender did not exhibit a statistically significant relationship with brand preference ( $\chi^2 = 3.41$ ,  $p = 0.182$ ).
33. Product quality demonstrated a strong positive relationship with consumer satisfaction ( $r = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).
34. Freshness exhibited a strong positive relationship with consumer satisfaction ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).
35. Brand credibility recorded a strong positive relationship with consumer satisfaction ( $r = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).
36. Correlation analysis confirmed that quality-related and brand-related attributes significantly influence consumer satisfaction towards milk and milk products.

#### G. Overall Findings

37. Consumer behaviour towards milk and milk products is predominantly quality-oriented rather than price-oriented.
38. Quality, freshness, and brand credibility are the primary determinants of purchase decisions and consumer satisfaction.
39. Demographic variables significantly influence brand preference and purchasing behaviour.
40. Growing health consciousness and food safety awareness have increased consumer preference for branded dairy products.
41. Consumer satisfaction serves as an important driver of loyalty and repeat purchase intention.

#### 10.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are proposed for dairy manufacturers, marketers, retailers, and policymakers.

#### Suggestions for Dairy Manufacturers

1. Product quality should remain the central focus of production and marketing strategies since it is the most influential determinant of consumer preference.
2. Dairy firms should strengthen quality control systems and maintain stringent hygiene standards throughout the production process.
3. Greater emphasis should be placed on preserving product freshness through efficient cold-chain management and distribution systems.
4. Companies should diversify their product portfolio by introducing innovative and value-added dairy products such as probiotic milk, fortified milk, lactose-free milk, and functional dairy beverages.
5. Continuous product development initiatives should be undertaken to improve consumer satisfaction regarding product variety.

#### Suggestions for Marketing Managers

6. Marketing communications should emphasize quality, freshness, safety, and nutritional benefits rather than focusing solely on pricing strategies.
7. Brand-building initiatives should strengthen consumer trust by highlighting certifications, quality standards, and product authenticity.
8. Market segmentation strategies should be developed based on age, income, education, and residential characteristics.
9. Loyalty programmes, promotional campaigns, and customer engagement initiatives should be implemented to encourage repeat purchases.
10. Digital marketing and social media platforms should be utilized more effectively to improve consumer interaction and brand visibility.

#### Suggestions for Retailers

11. Retailers should ensure uninterrupted product availability to minimize consumer switching behaviour.
12. Proper storage and refrigeration facilities should be maintained to preserve freshness and product quality.
13. Retail outlets should provide adequate information regarding nutritional benefits and product quality to facilitate informed purchasing decisions.

### Suggestions for Policymakers

14. Consumer education programmes should be conducted to improve awareness regarding food safety, nutrition, and quality standards.
15. Regulatory authorities should strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with dairy industry regulations.
16. Government agencies should support dairy enterprises in adopting modern technologies and quality enhancement practices.
17. Policies promoting sustainable dairy production and efficient distribution systems should be encouraged to strengthen long-term industry competitiveness.

### 10.3 Conclusion

The dairy sector continues to play a crucial role in the food economy and household consumption patterns. Increasing health awareness, changing lifestyles, urbanization, and rising consumer expectations have transformed the competitive landscape of the dairy industry, making consumer behaviour analysis an essential component of marketing and strategic decision-making.

The present study examined consumer behaviour towards various brands of milk and milk products in Coimbatore District using primary data collected from 180 consumers. The findings clearly indicate that consumers exhibit a strong preference for branded dairy products because of their perceived superiority in quality, freshness, hygiene, safety, and reliability. Product quality emerged as the most influential determinant of purchase decisions, followed by freshness, taste, and brand credibility.

The study further established that demographic variables such as age, income, educational qualification, and place of residence significantly influence brand preference and purchasing behaviour. The results of correlation analysis confirmed that quality-related attributes exert a strong positive influence on consumer satisfaction, while brand credibility contributes substantially to loyalty and repeat purchase intention.

The empirical evidence validates the conceptual framework proposed for the study by demonstrating that demographic characteristics, product attributes, and brand-related factors collectively influence consumer behaviour and satisfaction. Enhanced satisfaction subsequently leads to stronger

consumer loyalty and continued patronage of preferred dairy brands.

From a managerial perspective, the study highlights the importance of maintaining superior product quality, ensuring consistent freshness, strengthening brand credibility, and expanding product offerings to meet evolving consumer expectations. Dairy organizations that successfully address these dimensions are more likely to achieve higher customer satisfaction, stronger brand equity, and sustainable competitive advantage.

The study contributes to the consumer behaviour literature by providing empirical evidence from Coimbatore District and offers valuable insights for dairy manufacturers, marketers, retailers, and policymakers. Overall, the study concludes that sustainable success in the dairy market depends not merely on competitive pricing but on the consistent delivery of quality, freshness, trust, and consumer value that foster long-term customer relationships and brand loyalty.

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