

A STUDY ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND SATISFACTION TOWARDS AASAI DAIRY PRODUCTS IN KARUR DISTRICT

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Abstract—*This research looks at what influences people's views and satisfaction with Aasai Dairy, aiming to provide useful strategic advice to help the company strengthen its position in a growing market. As Karur becomes more urbanized, the daily lives and buying habits of its people are changing. More people are focusing on health and wellness, actively looking for established brands that can guarantee safety and good nutritional value. These changes create both challenges and opportunities for Aasai Dairy. To take advantage, the company needs to move away from old ways of promoting its products and use more data-driven approaches to understand what customers really want. This study acts as an important tool for the leadership team at Aasai Dairy, giving them a clear and honest view of how the brand is performing from the customer's perspective. It covers key areas like taste, thickness, how easy it is to find the products, and how well the cold storage system keeps products fresh.*

Keywords: *Dairy Products, Milk, Perception, Satisfaction, Consumer.*

INTRODUCTION

The world's food system depends a lot on the dairy industry, which provides important nutrients like proteins, vitamins, and calcium to billions of people around the globe. In India, dairy is more than just a business—it is a vital source of income for rural communities, supporting over 80 million households. India is the largest producer of milk in the world, with a unique market made up of a mix of local independent sellers, well-organized cooperatives, and private companies. In this competitive space, how consumers view a brand is the most critical factor for its success. Consumer perception is the mental process where individuals choose, organize, and understand information to form a clear picture of a brand. For dairy products, this includes how fresh the milk feels, how rich the curd tastes, and how clean and safe the packaging looks.

Aasai Dairy, which operates in the Karur district, has built a strong presence by understanding and meeting the specific needs of the local market. Unlike big national companies, smaller local dairies must rely on a solid reputation for providing pure, farm-to-table products. Customer satisfaction in this area is an ongoing evaluation where the actual quality and performance of the dairy product are compared against what the customer expected. High satisfaction levels build strong customer loyalty, encourage positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and make customers less sensitive to small price changes. On the flip side, any drop in quality can cause customers to switch to a competitor immediately.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Contemporary research on how people buy dairy products often focuses on a few key areas. A study by Arumugam and Poongodi (2023) highlighted that cleanliness and quick availability are the main reasons people choose specific packaged milk in South Indian markets. Their findings show that city buyers are willing to pay a higher price for milk if they feel it has been processed cleanly without being touched by human hands. Looking at processed dairy items, Hasan and Aleshba (2023) found that background factors like a household's age group and income level directly influence how much they buy specialized products like ghee, paneer, and flavored milk. They also noted that younger shoppers are much more influenced by modern packaging designs and digital media advertisements.

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Looking at trust within regions, Koduru and Krishna (2021) looked at consumer confidence in the Guntur area. They found that local businesses often have an advantage because people trust them more than big national companies. This structural trust is built over time through a reliable track record of quality and local distribution channels. When studying larger brands, Ramya and Ali (2018) looked at how people buy Amul products and concluded that a working retail cold storage system is the backbone of the entire dairy industry. If the right temperature isn't maintained until the point of sale, customer opinion of the brand drops immediately, no matter how much is spent on marketing. McCarthy et al. (2017) studied why people choose liquid milk, finding that freshness and taste are the absolute minimum requirements for buyers, while things like convenient packaging and price act as secondary factors.

In rural and semi-urban areas, Shunekeyeva (2020) found that word of mouth from friends and family is the most powerful marketing tool. People often ask their social networks for advice when choosing a milk supplier because milk is a daily food with direct health consequences. Similarly, Moisescu (2015) looked at how demographics change brand loyalty in the dairy market. The study noted that older consumers show deeper brand loyalty, while younger buyers are much more likely to switch brands to try new products or take advantage of price discounts. Together, these previous studies provide a strong foundation for this research, showing the complex factors that shape consumer choices in the dairy sector.

The value of this study can be divided into three main pillars:

- **Strategic Positioning:** The findings help the company clearly identify its unique strengths, allowing it to stand out from major competitors like Aavin or Amul.
- **Service Improvement:** By looking at customer feedback on specific physical aspects, like the thickness of the product and how easy the packaging is to use, the study provides a practical plan for operational adjustments.
- **Customer Retention:** Understanding exactly why customers switch brands lets Aasai Dairy create focused loyalty programs to keep their current customer base.

From an academic point of view, this research adds useful real-world information to the existing knowledge about how consumers behave toward regional packaged goods in Tamil Nadu.

NEED FOR THE STUDY / STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The dairy industry in Karur is going through a big change. Even though there's growing interest in high-quality dairy products, consumers also have more choices than ever before. Despite Aasai Dairy's long-standing presence in the area, the company doesn't have detailed, organized data explaining why certain customer groups choose other brands. Additionally, while the company has regular success with its basic milk and curd lines, it isn't clear how well people know about or buy its other products, like butter, ghee, and paneer. There's a need to figure out if the company's old way of selling through local small shops can keep up with what modern customers expect. The main question is about finding out what makes customers happy and looking at the problems in the company's marketing and supply chain that might be slowing down its growth.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research project was structured around the following primary and secondary objectives:

- To evaluate the current state of consumer perception and determine overall satisfaction metrics for Aasai Dairy items within the Karur territory.
- To quantitatively audit the baseline levels of brand awareness across the entire product catalog of Aasai Dairy.
- To isolate the primary operational pillars (Pricing structures, Product Quality, Freshness factors, and Market Availability) that exert the greatest leverage on the target demographic's purchasing choices.
- To assess customer satisfaction regarding isolated physical attributes, including flavor consistency, fluid thickness, and outer packaging standards.
- To evaluate how core demographic variables, such as gender splits, age distributions, and formal educational attainment, shape a consumer's underlying view of dairy brands.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is limited to the boundaries of the Karur district, collecting data from both city centers and semi-urban areas. It covers the full product line of Aasai Dairy, including standard Milk, Curd, Ghee, Butter, and Paneer. The research group includes 150 participants chosen from various backgrounds to ensure a balanced set of data. The data collection spans from 2024 to 2026, capturing recent shifts in consumer opinions and market performance. The study focuses mainly on measuring consumer opinions and satisfaction trends.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Even though the research was done carefully, there are some things that limit its scope. First, the small group of 150 people might not fully represent the behavior of all the people in Karur. Second, the data relies on self-reported surveys, which means it can be affected by personal memory lapses or standard biases. Third, the study captures a specific moment in time; consumer opinions can change quickly due to market events like price changes or news updates. Finally, because the research focuses specifically on the local area of Karur, these findings cannot be automatically applied to large cities like Chennai or Bangalore.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive research design to understand and show the real experiences, opinions, and satisfaction levels of the local customer base.

Sampling Technique: To gather data, we used a convenience sampling method to select 150 active customers who buy dairy products within the Karur region.

Data Collection: We collected primary data through a structured questionnaire with questions that use Likert scales and multiple-choice options. We also gathered secondary information from academic papers, company records, and industry reports.

Statistical Tools: First, we used descriptive percentage analysis to find main trends. Then, we used inferential statistics, specifically independent sample T-Tests and One-Way ANOVA, to test our ideas and see how much demographic factors affect buyer choices.

HYPOTHESIS

• Hypothesis 1:

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant link between a respondent's gender and the main factors that influence their choice of dairy products.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): A person's gender has a significant impact on the main factors they consider when selecting a product.

• Hypothesis 2:

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There's no significant link between a consumer's formal education and their personal judgment of dairy quality.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): The level of education a consumer has significantly affects how they assess product quality. *(This was tested using a One-Way ANOVA; the quantitative results showed $p = 0.015$, leading to the rejection of the Null Hypothesis).*

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The statistical analysis of the primary data reveals several key trends in the Karur dairy market. The initial demographic breakdown shows a clear majority of female participants, making up 63.3% of the total sample. This distribution reflects long-standing cultural norms where women typically manage household tasks like grocery shopping and kitchen operations.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency / Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	95 (63.3%)
	Male	55 (36.7%)
Age Group	Below 30	58 (38.7%)
	31-45	62 (41.3%)
	Above 45	30 (20.0%)

Gender Distribution of Respondents

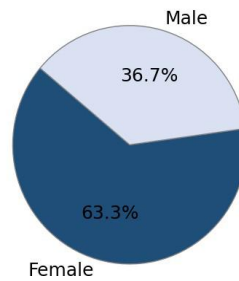


Figure 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents

Table 2: Factors Influencing Purchase (Ranking Analysis)

Factor	Top Rank Count	Percentage (%)
Availability	72	48.0%
Freshness	51	34.0%
Price	13	8.7%
Taste	8	5.3%
Brand Image	6	4.0%

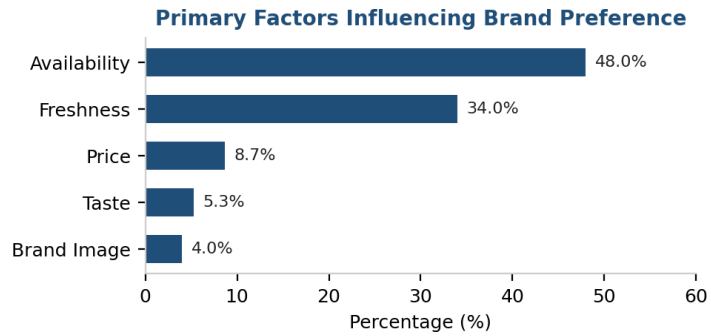


Figure 2: Primary Factors Influencing Brand Preference

Interpretation: The ranking data shows that Product Availability (48%) is the top factor influencing brand choice for Aasai Dairy customers. This indicates that dairy sourcing is primarily based on availability. If a preferred product isn't available in the local shop, customers are very likely to switch to another brand. Freshness is the second most important factor at 34%, matching Aasai Dairy's main business focus. Interestingly, price is a main factor for only 8.7% of shoppers, proving that for a daily staple like milk, local buyers prioritize reliable availability and quality over small price differences.

Table 3: Satisfaction Attributes Score (Mean Scale)

Product Performance Attribute	Mean Score (Scale: 1–5)	Standard Deviation
Freshness Standards	4.5	0.45
Taste & Flavor	4.2	0.62
Fluid Density / Thickness	3.9	0.78
Consistent Availability	4.1	0.55
Packaging Quality	3.5	1.12



Figure 3: Consumer Satisfaction Levels Across Product Attributes

Discussion of Results: The highest overall score was given to Freshness Standards (4.5), marking a significant success for the company's delivery and storage management. In contrast, Outer Packaging Quality (3.5) received the lowest score. Survey comments explain this gap: buyers find the standard soft plastic bags inconvenient to store safely after opening, showing a clear preference for modern, firm, and re-closable containers for things like curd and ghee. Furthermore, the ANOVA test results ($p = 0.015$) show that customers with higher levels of education check nutrition facts and ingredient labels with much more care, highlighting that Aasai Dairy should improve its packaging information to keep this modern group of buyers.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- **Consumer Awareness Channels:** 67.3% of the target market learned about Aasai Dairy through personal recommendations, while standard company advertising had very low impact. This shows strong community trust and limited public marketing.
- **Primary Purchasing Channels:** 42% of participants buy dairy products directly from neighborhood shops, confirming their role as a key part of the local supply chain in Karur.
- **Product Line Performance Gaps:** Core products like liquid milk and standard curd are the main revenue drivers, but awareness of other items like butter and paneer is very low, showing a missed opportunity to sell more to existing customers.
- **Cold-Chain Operational Feedback:** 54.7% of respondents are fully satisfied with the store's temperature control, but some expressed concerns about curd turning sour quickly during hot summer months.
- **Brand Loyalty Dynamics:** There is moderate to high brand loyalty, but it is fragile and depends on the immediate availability of products at the nearest local shop.

SUGGESTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

- **Modernization of Product Packaging:** Aasai Dairy should invest in more durable and modern packaging, especially for curd and ghee, to directly address the lower satisfaction scores in this category.
- **Expansion of Rural Distribution Networks:** The company needs to expand its retail presence to the outskirts of Karur to keep up with customer needs and prevent them from switching to other brands.
- **Formalized Referral Marketing Frameworks:** Use the brand's strong word-of-mouth reputation by offering referral discounts or digital loyalty cards for daily milk buyers.
- **Strategic Promotion of Value-Added Products:** Run targeted product sampling campaigns in regional supermarkets to increase interest and sales for paneer and ghee lines.
- **Retailer Infrastructure Support & Education:** Provide small shop owners with cooling infrastructure support and food-handling advice to keep the cold chain working perfectly right up to the final sale, avoiding quality issues.

CONCLUSION

This study on customer perception and satisfaction confirms that Aasai Dairy has a solid, resilient regional base built on product freshness and deep community trust. While the core customer base is generally satisfied with basic milk products, the broader market is shifting toward a more brand-conscious environment. To handle growth from larger national brands, Aasai Dairy needs to move from being a local business to a proactive, modern brand. This means keeping its great freshness standards while updating packaging choices and widening its marketing beyond word of mouth. By fixing retail distribution gaps and sharing clear nutrition facts, Aasai Dairy can protect its long-term financial health and secure its market position across the Karur area.

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