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An Analytical Study on Customer Buying Behaviour of Fruits with Special Reference to Then District

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Abstract – Fruits are an essential component of a healthy diet, and their consumption has increased due to rising health awareness among consumers. This study analyses customer buying behaviour towards fruits with special reference to Theni District, a prominent agricultural region in Tamil Nadu. The research focuses on factors influencing purchase decisions such as price, quality, freshness, seasonal availability, hygiene, and health awareness. The study is based on primary data collected from 120 respondents using a structured questionnaire and analyses using descriptive statistical tools such as percentage analysis and simple tables. The findings indicate that freshness and quality are the most important factors influencing customer buying decisions, followed by price and seasonal availability. Customers prefer purchasing fruits from local markets and roadside vendors due to convenience and perceived freshness. The study concludes that understanding customer preferences can help farmers and vendors improve marketing strategies, reduce wastage, and enhance customer satisfaction. Increasing awareness about health benefits and improving hygiene practices in markets can further boost fruit consumption.

Keywords - Customer Buying Behaviour, Fruits Market, Freshness, Price, Seasonal Availability, Health Awareness

I. INTRODUCTION

Fruits play a vital role in maintaining human health as they provide essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and dietary fibre. In recent years, the demand for fresh fruits has increased significantly due to growing awareness about healthy lifestyles. Theni District is one of the major fruit-producing regions in Tamil Nadu, known for crops like bananas, mangoes, grapes, and guava. Customer buying behaviour refers to the decision-making process of consumers while purchasing goods and services. In the case of fruits, buying behaviour is more sensitive because fruits are perishable in nature. Consumers consider various factors such as price, quality, freshness, taste, and hygiene before making a purchase decision. With changing lifestyles, urbanization, and increased health consciousness, consumer preferences have evolved. Therefore, it is important to study customer buying behaviour to understand their needs and improve market efficiency.

Objectives

- To identify factors influencing customer purchase decisions such as price, quality, and freshness.
- To analyse customer preferences for different types of fruits.
- To examine the impact of seasonal variation on fruit purchasing behaviour.
- To study the role of hygiene and display in influencing buying decisions.
- To assess the level of health awareness among consumers.
- To provide suggestions to improve fruit marketing strategies.

Statement of Problem

Despite the availability of fruits in Theni District, customer buying behaviour varies widely due to differences in price, quality, freshness, and seasonal availability. Fruit sellers often face difficulties in understanding customer preferences, leading to problems such as unsold stock and wastage. Additionally, increasing health awareness and changing lifestyles have raised customer expectations regarding quality and hygiene. Many sellers lack proper knowledge about these changing preferences, which affects their sales and customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse customer buying behaviour to identify influencing factors and improve marketing practices.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kotler and Keller (2016) explained that consumer behaviour involves the processes through which individuals identify their needs, evaluate alternatives, make purchasing decisions and assess their satisfaction after buying a product. Their discussion of consumer behaviour highlights the influence of several factors, including price, product quality, availability, personal preferences and purchasing power. In the context of fruit purchases, consumers generally consider freshness, taste,

nutritional value, appearance and affordability before selecting fruits. For example, consumers may prefer seasonal fruits because they are readily available and comparatively economical. Similarly, the perceived quality of fruits, including their colour, texture, size and freshness, can influence purchasing decisions. Consumers may also change their purchasing patterns according to family size, income, health requirements and personal preferences. This theoretical perspective provides a foundation for examining the factors influencing consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour in fruit markets.

Singh and Kaur (2018) reported that consumers tend to prefer fresh and locally available fruits because of their perceived quality, accessibility and affordability. Freshness is an important consideration in fruit purchasing because it affects taste, appearance, nutritional expectations and the perceived shelf life of the product. Locally available fruits may also be preferred because consumers can purchase them conveniently from nearby markets and vendors. In addition, local sourcing may reduce transportation time and handling, which can help preserve freshness under appropriate storage conditions. Price is another important factor, as consumers often compare the prices of different fruits and vendors before making a purchase. Seasonal and locally produced fruits may offer more economical choices when supply is abundant. These considerations suggest that freshness, price and accessibility should be examined when analysing consumer preferences towards fruits. However, the specific findings attributed to this study should be verified against the original publication before being used as established empirical evidence.

Raju and Baskaran (2019) identified income level and educational attainment as important factors influencing fruit consumption patterns in Tamil Nadu. Income can affect both the quantity and variety of fruits purchased by consumers. Households with higher disposable income may be more willing to purchase premium fruits, imported varieties or organically marketed products, whereas budget-conscious households may prioritise seasonal fruits that provide value for money. Educational attainment may influence consumers' awareness of nutritional requirements, balanced diets and the health benefits associated with regular fruit consumption. Consumers with greater nutritional awareness may consider the vitamin content, dietary fibre and perceived health benefits of different fruits when making purchasing decisions. Nevertheless, education does not necessarily translate directly into higher fruit consumption, as affordability, availability and household preferences also play important roles. This perspective indicates that demographic variables, particularly income and education, should be considered when studying fruit consumption patterns among different consumer groups in Tamil Nadu.

Priya and Devi (2020) highlighted the importance of hygiene, cleanliness and proper product display in influencing consumer purchasing behaviour towards fruits. Since fruits are often consumed directly or with minimal processing, consumers may pay close attention to the cleanliness of the selling environment, the handling practices of vendors and the visible condition of the products. Fruits displayed in clean containers, arranged systematically and protected from dust, insects and contamination may create a positive impression among customers. Similarly, attractive displays that separate ripe fruits from damaged or overripe fruits can help consumers evaluate product quality and make purchasing decisions more easily.

The physical environment of a fruit shop or market may also influence consumer confidence. Clean floors, proper waste disposal, hygienic weighing equipment and careful handling can improve perceptions of vendor reliability. In contrast, poorly maintained stalls, damaged fruits and unhygienic handling may discourage purchases even when prices are competitive. Product presentation is therefore not merely an aesthetic factor; it may also communicate quality, freshness and trustworthiness. Fruit vendors can potentially improve customer satisfaction and encourage repeat purchases by maintaining hygiene standards and organising their products effectively. These factors are relevant when examining the relationship between retail-store conditions and consumer preferences. The specific findings attributed to Priya and Devi should be checked against the original publication before being cited as verified evidence.

Murugan and Subramanian (2021) observed that proximity to agricultural production areas may increase consumer preference for locally sourced fruits. The geographical relationship between production centres and retail markets can influence the availability, freshness, price and variety of fruits offered to customers. When fruits are sourced from nearby farms, the time required for transportation may be reduced, potentially allowing them to reach markets sooner after harvesting. Shorter supply chains can also reduce certain transportation and handling costs, although the final retail price depends on factors such as seasonal demand, storage expenses, market intermediaries and the scale of production.

Consumers may associate locally sourced fruits with freshness, regional identity and support for local farmers. In agricultural regions, the availability of seasonal fruits may encourage customers to purchase products that are familiar and readily accessible. Local sourcing may also strengthen relationships between farmers, traders and consumers, potentially improving awareness of the origin of agricultural produce. However, proximity alone does not guarantee superior quality, food safety or lower prices;

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appropriate harvesting, storage, transport and handling practices remain important. This perspective suggests that geographical accessibility and sourcing patterns are useful variables for investigating consumer preferences towards fruits in local markets.

Ramya and Nandagopal (2022) found that growing health awareness has contributed to increased consumer interest in organic and chemical-free fruits. Consumers are becoming more conscious of dietary choices and the possible relationship between food consumption and long-term health. Fruits are commonly associated with vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and other nutrients, making them an important component of a balanced diet. As a result, health-conscious consumers may pay greater attention to the cultivation methods, perceived safety, freshness and origin of the fruits they purchase.Interest in organic fruits may also be influenced by environmental awareness, concern about pesticide residues and preferences for sustainable agricultural practices. Some consumers may be willing to pay a premium for products they perceive as healthier or more environmentally responsible. Nevertheless, purchasing decisions are also shaped by affordability, availability, trust in certification and the credibility of product labels. A consumer may express a preference for organic fruits but ultimately purchase conventionally grown fruits because of budget constraints or limited local supply. In addition, the terms organic and chemical-free should not be treated as interchangeable scientific or regulatory categories. Organic claims should be assessed in relation to the applicable certification and labelling standards. This perspective provides a basis for examining the influence of health awareness, environmental concern and perceived product safety on fruit-purchasing decisions.

Research Hypotheses

- H1: Price of fruits significantly influences customer buying behaviour.
- H2: Quality and freshness significantly affect purchase decisions.
- H3: Seasonal availability influences fruit buying behaviour.
- H4: Hygiene and display significantly impact customer decisions.
- H5: Health awareness influences fruit consumption behaviour.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the buying behaviour, preferences, and awareness of the respondents towards the selected research topic. Descriptive research is suitable for identifying the characteristics, opinions, preferences, and purchasing patterns of a specific group of respondents. The study aims to collect relevant information from respondents and analyse their responses systematically to understand their buying behaviour and level of awareness.

The research design enables the researcher to present the collected data in a structured manner and identify significant patterns in respondents' preferences and purchasing decisions.

Sample Size

The sample size for the present study consists of 120 respondents. The respondents are selected to collect information regarding their demographic characteristics, buying behaviour, preferences, and awareness of the subject under investigation.

The sample provides the basis for conducting the statistical analysis and drawing conclusions about the responses obtained from the participants. The extent to which the findings can be generalized depends on the sampling method, respondent selection, and representativeness of the sample.

Questionnaire Structure

A structured questionnaire is used as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire is divided into three sections to obtain information relevant to the objectives of the study.

Section A: Demographic Profile

This section collects the basic demographic details of the respondents, which may include:

- Age
- Gender
- Educational qualification
- Occupation
- Monthly income

These details help the researcher understand the background characteristics of the respondents and examine differences in responses across demographic groups, where appropriate.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Characteristic	Frequency	%
Male	68	56.7
Female	52	43.3
Age 18–25	32	26.7
Age 26–35	40	33.3
Age 36–45	28	23.3
Age 45+	20	16.7

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Interpretation

The majority of respondents (33.3%) belong to the 26–35 age group, indicating active consumers. Younger consumers (18–25) also form a significant portion, showing increased awareness of healthy eating habits.

Table 2 Factors Influencing Buying Behaviour

Factor	Percentage
Freshness	85%
Price	72%
Quality	80%
Seasonal Availability	65%
Hygiene	60%

Interpretation

Freshness and quality are the most important factors influencing customer buying behaviour, followed by price and seasonal availability.

Chi-Square Test

Table 3: Relationship between Freshness Preference and Purchase Frequency

Freshness Preference	High Purchase	Low Purchase	Total
High Preference	46	14	60
Low Preference	22	38	60
Total	68	52	120

Interpretation

The above table shows the relationship between freshness preference and customer purchase frequency. Among respondents with high preference for freshness, 46 purchase fruits frequently, while only 14 purchase less frequently. On the other hand, among respondents with low freshness preference, only 22 purchase frequently, while 38 purchase less often.Since the p-value (0.001) is less than 0.05, the result is statistically significant.

One-Way Anova

Table 4: Income Level and Buying Behaviour (Mean Score)

Income Group	Mean Buying Behaviour Score
Low Income	3.2
Middle Income	3.8
High Income	4.4

Table 5: ANOVA Table

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	18.72	2	9.36	11.24	0.000
Within Groups	97.20	117	0.83		
Total	115.92	119			

Interpretation

The one-way ANOVA test was conducted to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the mean values of the three groups. The calculated F-value is reported as 11.24, with a significance value of 0.000. In statistical reporting, this significance value should be expressed as $p < 0.001$, rather than $p = 0.000$.Since the significance value is less than the 5% level of significance (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean values of at least two of the three groups.The reported values should be verified before publication. Using the supplied sums of squares and degrees of freedom, the F-statistic is approximately \(9.36/ (97.20/117) =11.26\), rather than 11.24. The exact significance value should also be obtained from the statistical software output. ANOVA alone does not identify which specific groups differ; a suitable post-hoc test is required for that purpose.

V. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that customer buying behaviour towards fruits in Theni District is influenced by multiple factors such as freshness, quality, price, and seasonal availability. Among these, freshness and quality play a dominant role in purchase decisions. Customers show a strong preference for local markets due to convenience and trust in vendors. Increasing health awareness has also positively influenced fruit consumption. However, issues such as price fluctuations and lack of proper hygiene in markets still affect buying decisions.The study suggests that improving hygiene, maintaining quality, and understanding customer preferences can help sellers increase sales and reduce wastage.

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