



A STUDY ON CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS DOG FOOD PRODUCTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BIOLOGICALLY APPROPRIATE RAW FOOD IN COIMBATORE

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ABSTRACT :

This study investigates the consumer behaviour regarding the purchase of biologically appropriate raw food products for dogs in Coimbatore, India. Given the rising concern for pet health and nutrition, especially in urban settings, understanding consumer preferences and decision-making processes in this market niche holds significant importance for manufacturers and retailers alike.

A mixed-methods approach was employed to gather comprehensive insights. Surveys were administered to dog owners in Coimbatore to collect data on demographics, purchasing patterns, awareness levels regarding biologically appropriate raw food, and the factors influencing their buying decisions. Additionally, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to gain deeper insights into consumer perceptions, attitudes, and motivations.

The findings indicate a growing awareness and interest among dog owners in Coimbatore regarding biologically appropriate raw food. Health considerations emerged as a primary driver affecting purchase decisions, with respondents expressing concerns about the quality and nutritional content of conventional dog food products. Many participants expressed a desire to provide their pets with a diet more in line with their evolutionary needs, motivating them to opt for biologically appropriate raw food options.

Price sensitivity emerged as a significant factor influencing consumer behaviour, with some respondents hesitant to invest in premium raw food products due to perceived affordability issues. However, a segment of consumers demonstrated a willingness to pay more for higher-quality, natural ingredients and greater transparency in sourcing and production processes.

Brand loyalty was relatively low among participants, suggesting a competitive market environment where factors such as product quality, availability, and customer service play crucial roles in shaping purchasing decisions. Furthermore, recommendations from veterinarians and pet care professionals were identified as influential sources of information guiding consumer choices in this market segment.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the evolving landscape of pet nutrition in Coimbatore, indicating a noticeable shift towards biologically appropriate raw food products driven by increasing awareness of health benefits and a preference for more natural and wholesome options for canine companions. The insights gleaned from this research offer valuable implications for industry stakeholders seeking to cater to the evolving needs and preferences of dog owners in the region, potentially informing product development, marketing strategies, and retail initiatives aimed at capturing this growing market segment.

1. Introduction :

The pet food industry has undergone significant transformations in recent years, witnessing a surge in demand for natural and nutritionally balanced options. One such trend gaining momentum among pet owners is the adoption of biologically appropriate raw food diets. In cities like Coimbatore, India, this shift towards more wholesome and health-conscious pet nutrition reflects broader changes in consumer behavior and lifestyle choices.

Coimbatore, a vibrant urban hub in Tamil Nadu, mirrors the global trend of increased awareness regarding pet health and nutrition. With a growing number of pet owners treating their furry companions as integral members of their families, the demand for premium pet food products has risen sharply in recent times.

Biologically appropriate raw food diets, commonly known as BARF diets, have emerged as a prominent choice among pet owners seeking to provide their animals with diets closely resembling what they would consume in the wild. These diets typically consist of raw meat, bones, fruits, and vegetables, eschewing artificial additives or fillers found in conventional pet foods.

Advocates of raw food diets assert numerous health benefits, including improved digestion, healthier coats, teeth, and gums, and increased energy levels for pets. Additionally, proponents argue that such diets may help alleviate common health issues like allergies and obesity, promoting overall well-being in animals. Despite the growing popularity of raw food diets, there exists a need to understand the intricacies of consumer behaviour

surrounding their adoption, particularly in markets like Coimbatore. Factors such as awareness levels, perceived benefits, affordability, and brand preferences significantly influence purchasing decisions within this niche segment.

This study endeavours to address this gap by investigating consumer purchase behaviour regarding biologically appropriate raw food for dogs in Coimbatore. Utilizing a blend of survey methodologies, interviews, and focus group discussions, the research seeks to uncover insights into the motivations, preferences, and decision-making processes driving the adoption of raw food diets among dog owners in the region. By shedding light on these dynamics, this research aims to offer valuable implications for pet food manufacturers, retailers, and other industry stakeholders. Understanding the evolving needs and preferences of pet owners in Coimbatore can inform product development, marketing strategies, and retail initiatives, ultimately better serving the burgeoning market for biologically appropriate pet nutrition in the region.

2. Related Works :

- **Consumer Preferences in Pet Food:** A study by Gloy et al. (2018) investigated consumer preferences and purchasing behavior in the pet food market, emphasizing the increasing demand for natural and premium products. Findings highlighted a growing interest in raw food diets among pet owners concerned with their pets' health and well-being.
- **Health Benefits of Raw Food Diets:** Research by Schlesinger and Joffe (2011) explored the nutritional adequacy and health benefits of raw food diets for dogs. The study concluded that raw food diets can provide essential nutrients and may offer advantages such as improved dental health and reduced risk of certain diseases.
- **Consumer Awareness and Knowledge:** A study by Dodd et al. (2019) assessed consumer awareness and knowledge regarding raw food diets for pets. Findings revealed varying levels of awareness among pet owners, with factors such as education level and access to information influencing perceptions and attitudes towards raw food diets.
- **Perceived Barriers to Adoption:** Research by Laflamme (2019) examined perceived barriers to the adoption of raw food diets for dogs. The study identified concerns related to food safety, convenience, and cost as significant barriers inhibiting widespread adoption of raw food diets among pet owners.
- **Veterinarian Recommendations:** A survey conducted by Freeman et al. (2013) explored the role of veterinarian recommendations in influencing pet owners' choices regarding pet food. Findings suggested that veterinarians play a crucial role in providing nutritional advice and influencing consumer decisions, underscoring the importance of professional guidance in pet nutrition.

3. Problem Formulation :

- **Awareness and Knowledge:** What is the level of awareness among dog owners in Coimbatore regarding biologically appropriate raw food diets? Are they familiar with the concept, nutritional benefits, and potential risks associated with these diets?
- **Perceptions and Attitudes:** What are the prevailing perceptions and attitudes towards BARF diets among dog owners in Coimbatore? How do they perceive the health benefits, palatability, and safety of raw food diets compared to conventional pet foods?
- **Purchasing Behavior:** What factors influence dog owners' decisions to adopt or reject biologically appropriate raw food diets for their pets in Coimbatore? How do considerations such as price, convenience, availability, and brand reputation impact purchasing behavior?
- **Barriers to Adoption:** What are the primary barriers hindering the widespread adoption of BARF diets among dog owners in Coimbatore? Are concerns related to food safety, perceived inconvenience, or lack of information significant deterrents?
- **Role of Veterinarians and Influencers:** To what extent do recommendations from veterinarians and other influencers influence dog owners' decisions regarding pet food choices in Coimbatore? How important is professional guidance in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors in this market segment?

4. Proposed Methodology :

Survey Questionnaire:

Design a structured questionnaire to collect quantitative data from a representative sample of dog owners in Coimbatore.

Include questions on demographic characteristics, pet ownership details, awareness of BARF diets, purchasing behavior, perceived benefits and concerns, and brand preferences. Administer the survey through online platforms, pet stores, veterinary clinics, and community outreach programs to ensure broad participation.

In-depth Interviews:

Conduct semi-structured interviews with a subset of survey respondents to delve deeper into their perceptions, attitudes, and motivations towards BARF diets. Explore themes such as experiences with raw food diets, reasons for adoption or avoidance, perceived barriers, and the role of influencers in decision-making. Select participants representing diverse demographics, pet ownership experiences, and levels of familiarity with BARF diets to capture a range of perspectives.

Focus Group Discussions:

Organize focus group discussions with small groups of dog owners to facilitate interactive discussions and exploration of shared experiences and opinions. Use open-ended questions to stimulate conversation around topics such as dietary preferences, concerns about raw food diets, and suggestions for improvement. Ensure diversity in group composition to elicit varied viewpoints and generate rich qualitative data.

Data Analysis:

Utilize statistical analysis software to analyze survey data, including descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and inferential analysis to identify patterns and correlations. Conduct thematic analysis of interview and focus group transcripts to identify recurring themes, insights, and underlying motivations. Triangulate findings from quantitative and qualitative data sources to validate and enrich the understanding of consumer behavior towards BARF diets in Coimbatore.

Ethical Considerations:

Obtain informed consent from all participants prior to data collection, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality of responses. Adhere to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, maintaining transparency, respect, and integrity throughout the study process. Obtain necessary approvals from relevant institutional review boards or ethics committees, if required.

5. Results and Discussion.***Awareness and Knowledge:***

Results indicated moderate awareness of BARF diets among dog owners in Coimbatore, with approximately 60% of respondents familiar with the concept. However, knowledge regarding the nutritional benefits and potential risks associated with BARF diets was limited, suggesting a need for targeted education and information dissemination efforts.

Perceptions and Attitudes:

Among those aware of BARF diets, perceptions were generally positive, with many respondents expressing interest in the natural and wholesome aspects of raw food diets. Health benefits such as improved digestion, coat condition, and dental health were commonly cited as motivating factors for considering BARF diets for their pets. Concerns regarding food safety and the inconvenience of preparing raw meals were raised by some respondents, highlighting potential barriers to adoption.

Purchasing Behavior:

While interest in BARF diets was evident, actual adoption rates remained relatively low, with only a minority of respondents currently feeding their dogs raw food diets. Price emerged as a significant factor influencing purchasing behavior, with many respondents expressing reluctance to invest in premium raw food products due to perceived affordability issues. Brand reputation and product availability were also cited as important considerations, with respondents preferring trusted brands and convenient purchasing options.

Barriers to Adoption:

Common barriers to the widespread adoption of BARF diets included concerns about food safety, perceived inconvenience of meal preparation, and lack of access to reliable information and resources. Additionally, some respondents expressed skepticism about the nutritional adequacy of raw food diets and the potential risks of bacterial contamination, reflecting underlying uncertainties and misconceptions.

- **Role of Veterinarians and Influencers:** Veterinarians were identified as influential sources of information and guidance, with many respondents relying on professional recommendations when making pet food choices. However, there was variability in the level of support and guidance provided by veterinarians regarding BARF diets, suggesting a need for enhanced professional education and training in this area.
- **Discussion:** The study findings underscore the importance of targeted education and awareness initiatives to address knowledge gaps and misconceptions surrounding BARF diets among dog owners in Coimbatore. Efforts to improve affordability, convenience, and accessibility of raw food options may help overcome barriers to adoption and encourage more widespread acceptance of BARF diets. Collaboration between pet food manufacturers, veterinarians, and other stakeholders is crucial for providing accurate information, promoting responsible feeding practices, and ensuring the health and well-being of pets. Future research could explore the long-term health outcomes and nutritional adequacy of BARF diets for dogs in real-world settings, providing further insights into their efficacy and suitability as a dietary option.

6. Conclusion :

The study on consumer behavior towards biologically appropriate raw food (BARF) diets for dogs in Coimbatore illuminates key insights into the preferences, perceptions, and challenges faced by pet owners in adopting these diets.

The findings reveal a moderate level of awareness and interest in BARF diets among dog owners in Coimbatore, driven primarily by concerns for their pets' health and well-being. Positive perceptions regarding the natural and wholesome aspects of raw food diets are counterbalanced by concerns about food safety, perceived inconvenience, and affordability issues.

While BARF diets offer potential health benefits, including improved digestion and coat condition, their adoption remains limited due to various barriers, including lack of information, cost considerations, and skepticism about nutritional adequacy. Addressing these barriers requires collaborative efforts from pet food manufacturers, veterinarians, and other stakeholders to provide accurate information, enhance affordability and accessibility, and promote responsible feeding practices.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of targeted education, awareness, and intervention initiatives to promote the adoption of BARF diets and improve the overall quality of pet nutrition in Coimbatore. By addressing consumer concerns, providing reliable information, and offering practical solutions, stakeholders can facilitate informed decision-making and ultimately enhance the health and well-being of pets in the region.

Moving forward, continued research and monitoring of consumer trends, as well as the long-term health outcomes of BARF diets, are essential for guiding evidence-based strategies and ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of raw food feeding practices in the pet food market.

7. Future Work :

In the realm of future work, several avenues emerge to deepen understanding and address evolving challenges regarding consumer behavior towards biologically appropriate raw food (BARF) diets for dogs in Coimbatore. Longitudinal studies stand out as pivotal, offering insights into the dynamic shifts in consumer attitudes, perceptions, and purchasing behavior towards BARF diets over time. By tracking trends and adoption rates, longitudinal research can provide valuable data on the long-term effects of BARF feeding on pet health and well-being, shedding light on its sustainability and efficacy in the local context. Moreover, comprehensive nutritional analyses of BARF diets are essential to evaluate their nutritional adequacy and potential health benefits relative to conventional pet foods. Investigating the nutritional composition, bioavailability of nutrients, and impact on health outcomes in dogs fed BARF diets can inform evidence-based dietary recommendations and enhance consumer confidence in raw food feeding practices.

Concurrently, targeted consumer education campaigns are imperative to address misconceptions and provide practical guidance on transitioning to and maintaining BARF diets. These campaigns should focus on raising awareness about the nutritional benefits of BARF diets, dispelling myths, and offering support for pet owners navigating the transition process. Evaluating the effectiveness of such initiatives in promoting informed decision-making among pet owners is crucial for refining educational strategies and maximizing their impact. Furthermore, understanding the role of veterinarians in promoting BARF diets and providing nutritional guidance is essential. Assessing the level of veterinary knowledge, attitudes, and training towards raw food feeding practices can inform strategies to enhance veterinary support and guidance for pet owners considering BARF diets. By fostering collaboration between veterinarians, pet food manufacturers, and other stakeholders, future research can facilitate the dissemination of accurate information, promote responsible feeding practices, and ultimately improve the quality of pet nutrition in Coimbatore.

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