



A Study on Consumer Buying behavior Towards Whey Protein: Special Reference to Coimbatore District

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores the consumer buying behaviour toward whey protein in Coimbatore, a rapidly growing city in Tamil Nadu, India, where fitness and health consciousness are rising, this study investigates consumer purchasing patterns regarding whey protein. A byproduct of making cheese, whey protein has become quite popular as a supplement for weight loss, muscular growth, and general health enhancement. The demand for whey protein has increased as a result of a significant portion of the population leading more active lives. The purpose of this study is to examine market trends, the main determinants of consumer purchase decisions, and the effects of different demographic parameters on Coimbatore's whey protein consumption. The study used a mixed-approaches approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. A wide range of consumers, including gym-goers, athletes, and health-conscious people, participated in surveys and structured interviews to learn more about their preferences, buying patterns, and driving forces. To give a thorough grasp of consumer behaviour, important factors like age, gender, income, fitness objectives, and brand preferences were taken into account. The study also highlighted a growing awareness of the importance of protein in diet, particularly among younger consumers who are actively involved in fitness and bodybuilding. In summary, this study offers important new information about the variables influencing Coimbatore consumers' attitudes regarding whey protein. Manufacturers, marketers, and fitness experts who want to customize their products and marketing tactics to the particular requirements of the regional market should take note of the findings. Future research could broaden the focus to include additional geographical areas and investigate how digital platforms affect customer decisions.

KEY WORDS: Health and Fitness, Brand Preference, Consumer Buying Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The market for fitness and health-related goods has grown significantly in recent years, especially in India's cities. One of Tamil Nadu's largest cities, Coimbatore, has witnessed an increase in the number of fitness lovers and health-conscious people. Consequently, nutritional supplements like whey protein have grown in popularity among different customer segments. Whey protein, which is obtained from milk during the cheese-making process, has a high biological value and is frequently used to improve general health, manage weight, and build muscle. The sports nutrition market in Coimbatore has grown as a result of rising fitness awareness, the expansion of gyms and health clubs, and the rise of fitness influencers. Whey protein consumption has increased as a result, especially among younger populations looking to increase muscle growth, manage weight, or enhance athletic performance. But even though whey protein is becoming more and more popular, not much study has been done to fully understand the precise purchasing habits of Coimbatore consumers. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that influence Coimbatore consumers' decisions to purchase whey protein. It investigates the ways in which purchase decisions are influenced by demographic variables like age, income, brand preference, and fitness orientation. The study aims to provide useful suggestions for marketers, fitness experts, and whey protein manufacturers by acquiring an understanding of these dynamics. By gaining a better understanding of Coimbatore consumers' perceptions of whey protein, this study will help create more focused and successful business plans for the expanding health and wellness industry.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rising demand for whey protein in Coimbatore, which is being fueled by increased fitness and health consciousness, is not well understood in terms of consumer purchasing patterns. Notwithstanding its widespread use, little is known about the precise variables—such as social influences, brand choice, price sensitivity, and demographics—that affect whey protein purchases. Customers frequently lack sufficient understanding about the product and its advantages, which influences their choice to buy. In order to help companies and marketers better tailor their tactics to the needs of their customers, this study attempts to uncover the major determinants driving whey protein purchasing behaviour in Coimbatore.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the key factors influencing consumer buying behaviour toward whey protein in Coimbatore.
2. To analyse the impact of demographic variables (age, income, fitness goals, etc.) on whey protein purchasing decisions.
3. To examine the role of brand preference, product quality, and price sensitivity in consumer choices.
4. To evaluate the influence of social factors such as recommendations from fitness trainers and influencers on whey protein purchases.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology describes the steps and strategy utilized to collect, examine, and evaluate information about Coimbatore consumers' purchasing habits with reference to whey protein. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used in the study to guarantee thorough data collecting and analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design used in this study is exploratory and descriptive. Understanding consumer behaviour traits, such as awareness, preferences, and decision-making patterns with relation to whey protein, is aided by descriptive research. Deeper understanding of the elements impacting purchasing decisions, particularly those that might not have been noted in the body of current literature, is achieved through exploratory research.

SAMPLING FRAME:

The sampling frame for this study includes consumers in Coimbatore who purchase or are potential buyers of whey protein, such as gym-goers, athletes, and health-conscious individuals. Data will be gathered from gyms, health stores, sports academies, online communities, and fitness events, targeting around 900-1000 potential participants to ensure diversity.

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

In the present study, primary data was collected through a questionnaire

Secondary data are already available i.e. they refer to the data which have already been collected and analysed by someone else. Secondary data may either be published or unpublished data. The researcher must be very careful in using secondary data, because the data available may be sometimes unsuitable. In the present study, the secondary data were collected from journals, books, newspapers, etc.

The questionnaire will be **structured** with a mix of **closed-ended** and **open-ended** questions. This will allow for both quantitative and qualitative insights. The questionnaire will be divided into key sections like Demographic Information, Awareness and Knowledge about Whey Protein, Purchasing Behaviour Purpose To understand where, how, and why consumers buy whey protein.

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS:

The statically tool used in this study is percentage analyses. This is the simplest way to analyses different types of data. In this method we found out the percentage rate of each data with respect to total. Using this percentage rate, we analyse data.

$$\text{Percentage of respondents} = \frac{\text{No of Respondents}}{\text{Total no of Respondents}} * 100$$

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study's small or biased sample may not fully represent Coimbatore's diverse population, limiting its applicability to all consumer sectors.
2. Consumers may not provide fully accurate or honest responses in surveys or interviews, leading to potential bias in the data.
3. Consumer preferences in health and fitness can change quickly, making findings from the study potentially outdated over time.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Health Awareness and Fitness Trends: According to Sharma et al. (2017), rising awareness about the importance of a balanced diet and protein intake has led to a surge in the consumption of protein supplements like whey. Research by Singh (2019) also suggests that growing fitness trends, including bodybuilding, weight loss, and general wellness, are major factors motivating consumers to choose whey protein as a supplement. In India,

especially in urban centres like Coimbatore, where there is a burgeoning fitness culture, the demand for such products is influenced by the increasing number of gyms, fitness influencers, and media coverage of health benefits. As physical fitness becomes a priority for many, consumers are more likely to turn to whey protein to meet their nutritional needs.

Brand Loyalty and Consumer Preferences: Studies by Jain & Sharma (2021) suggest that consumers who have positive experiences with specific brands tend to continue purchasing those products, even in the presence of competitors. In India, brands such as Muscle Blaze and Optimum Nutrition are well-established, often perceived as trustworthy due to their quality, availability, and marketing strategies.

A study by Rao (2020) found that consumers in Coimbatore are particularly influenced by brand reputation, with preference given to brands known for their authenticity and high-quality products. This brand loyalty often extends to aspects such as taste, packaging, and product efficacy. Moreover, consumer trust in brands is frequently reinforced by social media endorsements and influencer marketing, especially in the fitness community.

Price Sensitivity and Affordability: Research by Mehta & Agarwal (2018) indicates that while consumers value quality, they are also highly influenced by price comparisons. This is particularly relevant in markets where there are both premium and budget-friendly whey protein options.

In Coimbatore, many consumers are price-conscious, and therefore, affordability becomes an essential consideration. While premium products might attract more affluent consumers, budget options, often from local or lesser-known brands, are popular among middle-income groups (Ghosh & Rao, 2020). The rise of online marketplaces like Amazon and Flipkart has also made price comparisons easier, further influencing consumer choices based on value for money.

Product Knowledge: According to a study by Khanna and Garg (2020), many consumers are not fully aware of the benefits and different types of whey protein (e.g., whey protein concentrate, isolate, and hydrolysate). In their study, they noted that lack of awareness leads to reliance on external recommendations, such as those from friends, fitness trainers, or social media influencers, rather than informed decisions based on scientific knowledge. Additionally, an informed consumer is more likely to choose a product based on its nutritional content, including protein per serving, added vitamins, and absence of artificial ingredients.

Health Consciousness and Fitness Trends: According to Singh (2019), Indian consumers are increasingly concerned about their physical well-being, leading to a growing demand for health supplements such as whey protein. Studies indicate that fitness enthusiasts and athletes often prioritize protein supplements to meet their dietary needs (Srinivasan & Rajendran, 2022). The trend is not only limited to athletes but is expanding to the general public who are becoming more conscious of maintaining healthy lifestyles through fitness activities such as gym workouts and yoga.

Packaging and Product Features: According to a study by Agarwal and Rathi (2021), attractive and functional packaging can sway purchasing decisions, especially among first-time buyers who are unfamiliar with the product. Furthermore, consumers are becoming more discerning about added features such as flavour variety, ease of mixing, and the presence of additional nutrients like BCAAs (Branched-Chain Amino Acids). The appeal of "natural" or "organic" labels is also an important determinant for many health-conscious consumers.

Consumer Segmentation in India:

Research by Mehra et al. (2019) has shown that consumer segments for whey protein in India are diverse, with variations in purchase patterns according to demographic and psychographic factors. Age, income, education, and occupation significantly influence buying behaviour. Younger individuals (ages 18-35) are the primary consumers of whey protein, as they tend to be more health-conscious and fitness-oriented (Srinivasan & Rajendran, 2022). Income also plays a significant role, as premium products are often purchased by individuals in higher income groups, while mass-market products are preferred by lower-income consumers.

THEORIES OF JOB SATISFACTION

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Motivation-Hygiene Theory)

Motivators (satisfiers): These elements contribute to increased motivation and job satisfaction. They are linked to the position and encompass elements like accomplishment, acknowledgment, accountability, and chances for individual development. Employees are more likely to feel content and driven in their jobs when these elements are present.

Hygiene variables (Dissatisfiers): When present, these variables may not always contribute to job satisfaction, but when lacking or insufficient, they cause job unhappiness. Salary, working environment, corporate policies, connections with coworkers, and job security are examples of extrinsic hygiene variables. While enhancing these elements can help avoid discontent, satisfaction won't always rise as a result.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

- **Physiological Needs:** Basic needs such as salary, safe working conditions, and rest.
- **Safety Needs:** Job security, safe work environment, and stability.
- **Social Needs:** Relationships, teamwork, and a sense of belonging.
- **Esteem Needs:** Recognition, respect, achievement, and career advancement.

- Self-Actualization: Opportunities for personal growth, creativity, and fulfilling one's potential.

Job Characteristics Theory

- Skill Variety: The degree to which a job requires a variety of skills.
- Task Identity: The extent to which a job allows the employee to complete a whole and identifiable piece of work.
- Task Significance: The perceived importance of the job and its impact on others.
- Autonomy: The level of independence and freedom an employee has in performing their tasks.
- Feedback: The degree to which employees receive clear and direct information about their performance.

According to this theory, jobs that are high in these five characteristics lead to higher job satisfaction, motivation, and performance.

The Dispositional Theory of Job Satisfaction

Overview: According to the Dispositional Theory, personality traits and other individual differences have a big impact on job satisfaction. Individuals with proactive, upbeat, and positive dispositions are more likely to be content with their professions than those with passive or negative attributes. This hypothesis holds that a person's innate personality or perspective on life influences their level of job satisfaction.

Implications: When evaluating employee satisfaction, organizations should take personality traits into account. They may concentrate on creating a favourable work atmosphere or choosing candidates whose traits complement the company culture.

Analysis and Discussion

Demographic variables

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

TABLE 1

SOURCE	FACTORS	NO. OF RESPONDENDS	PERCENTAGE
When did you start consuming Whey protein	Less than a year	68	50
	1 year	44	32.4%
	2 years	20	14.7%
	More than 2 years	4	2.9%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

The data reveals that 50% of the respondents have been consuming whey protein for less than a year, while 32.4% have been using it for one year. Additionally, 14.7% of the respondents have been consuming whey protein for two years, and only 2.9% have been using it for more than two years, indicating that most consumers are relatively new users.

TABLE 2

How often do you consume	Daily	60	44.1%
	Several times a week	48	35.3%
	Once a week	14	10.3%
	Rarely	14	10.3%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

The data reveals that 44.1% of the respondents consume whey protein daily, while 35.3% consume it several times a week. Additionally, 10.3% of the respondents consume it once a week, and another 10.3% consume it rarely, indicating that the majority of users incorporate whey protein into their routine frequently.

TABLE 3

Preferred Flavour	Chocolate	93	68.4%
	Vanilla	39	28.7%
	Strawberry	50	36.8%
	Coffee	42	30.9%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

The data reveals that 68.4% of the respondents prefer chocolate flavour, making it the most popular choice. 36.8% prefer strawberry, while 30.9% flavour coffee, and 28.7% choose vanilla. This indicates that chocolate is the dominant preference, while other Flavour also have significant popularity among consumers.

TABLE 4

Exercise Hour Per Day/Week	1 Hour	68	50%
	1 To 2 Hours	45	33.1%
	2 To 3 Hours	23	16.9%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

The data reveals that 60% of the respondent's exercise for 1 hour per day or week, while 33.1% engage in physical activity for 1-2 hours. Additionally, 16.9% of the respondents exercise for 2-3 hours, indicating that the majority prefer shorter workout durations, with only a smaller percentage engaging in longer exercise sessions.

TABLE 5

Type of Exercise	Endurance	13	9.6%
	Power and Strength	75	55.1%
	Flexibility	48	35.3%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

The data reveals that 55.1% of the respondents engage in power and strength exercises, making it the most preferred type of workout. 35.3% focus on flexibility exercises, while 9.6% participate in endurance training. This indicates that the majority prioritize strength-based workouts, while flexibility and endurance exercises are also practiced by a significant portion of respondents.

TABLE 6

Primary reason for consuming	Muscle Building	50	36.8%
	Weight Management	36	26.5%
	Fitness goals	21	15.4%
	Overall, Health	29	21.3%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

The data reveals that 36.8% of the respondents consume whey protein primarily for muscle building, making it the most common reason. 26.5% use it for weight management, while 21.8% consume it for overall health. Additionally, 15.4% take whey protein to support their fitness goals, indicating that most users focus on muscle development and weight control as their main objectives.

TABLE 7

Preferred method of consuming	Shakes/smoothies'	100	73.5%
	Added to meals(baking)	29	21.3%
	Along with milk/water	7	5.1%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

Among 136 respondents, 73.5% prefer consuming shakes and smoothie 21.3% enjoy them along with Added to meals(baking), 5.1% of them prefer with milk and water.

TABLE 8

Where do you usually Purchase	Online	49	36%
	Local supplement store	20	14.7%
	Gym store	43	31.6%
	Supermarket	24	17.6%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

Among 136 respondents, 36% purchase shakes and smoothies online, 14.7% buy them from local supplement stores, 31.6% get them from gym stores, and 17.6% purchase them at supermarkets. In conclusion, the data indicates that while there is a strong preference for purchasing online and at gym stores, local supplement stores and supermarkets are less favoured options for most respondents.

TABLE 9

Recommendation	Yes	128	94.1%
	No	8	5.9%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

The data reveals that 94.1% of the respondents are recommend whey protein ,5.5% of the respondents are recommend whey protein brand.

TABLE 10

TABLE SHOWING HOW SATISFIED ARE WITH THE QUALITY OF THE WHEY PROTEIN PRODUCT'S YOU HAVE TRIED

Satisfied	94	69.1%
Unsatisfied	4	2.9%
Highly satisfied	38	27.9%

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION:

The data reveals that, 94% expressed satisfaction with their experience, while 9.1% were unsatisfied. Additionally, 27.9% (38 respondents) reported being highly satisfied.

FINDINGS

1. The Majority of the respondents started consuming whey protein 1 to 2 years.
2. The Majority of the respondents are consuming whey protein daily.
3. The Majority of the respondents are using the chocolate flavours.

4. The Majority of the respondents are exercises hour per week/day up to one hour.
5. The Majority of the respondents are doing power and strength exercise.
6. The Majority of the respondents are consuming whey protein for Muscle building.
7. The Majority of the respondents are preferred method of consuming shakes/smoothies.
8. The Majority of the respondents are purchasing whey from online
9. The Majority of the respondents are recommending the brand to others.
10. The Majority of the respondents are willing to pay for a high-quality whey protein product.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Expand marketing efforts to reach a more balanced gender audience
2. Develop target combines appealing to the interest of young adult aged 18 to 25 launch education
3. Launch educational initiative targeting undergraduate students about whey protein benefits.
4. Introducing budget friendly pricing option for those with income below 20000
5. Collaborate with private sector employees for employee wellness programs
6. Provide resource for optimising workout within shorter time frames
7. Develop specialized content for powder and strength exercise
8. Implement loyal programs for long term whey protein consumers
9. Strength and partnership with online retailers whose enhancement accessibility.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that whey protein consumption in Coimbatore is growing due to increasing health awareness and fitness trends. Key factors influencing purchase decisions include brand reputation, price, quality, and marketing. While online platforms and gym recommendations drive sales, misconceptions and price sensitivity remain challenges. To enhance market reach, brands should focus on education, affordability, and product transparency. Overall, the whey protein market in Coimbatore has significant growth potential with the right consumer engagement strategies.

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