

Research Article**FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN VEGETABLE PURCHASES: A STUDY IN KARIMNAGAR MARKET****Dr. Lt. Aayesha Shaik**

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Corresponding Author: Dr. Lt. Aayesha Shaik**Abstract**

Vegetables are a crucial part of household food consumption and are frequently purchased by consumers from local vegetable markets, supermarkets, roadside vendors, and various retail outlets. Several factors such as price, freshness, quality, variety, availability, hygiene, convenience, vendor behaviour, income, and location of purchase influence consumer behaviour in buying vegetables. Recently, shifts in lifestyle, heightened awareness of food quality, the rise of digital payments, and the diversity of retail channels have all impacted consumer purchasing patterns. This study explores the factors affecting consumer behaviour in vegetable purchases at the Karimnagar Market. It examines the socio-economic characteristics of consumers, the frequency of their vegetable purchases, preferred purchasing locations, spending patterns, decision-making factors, favoured types of vegetables, price sensitivity, preferences for quality and freshness, payment methods, satisfaction levels, and any issues consumers face. Data was gathered from 100 consumers through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. Employing a descriptive and analytical research design, the collected data was analysed using frequency, percentage, cross-tabulation, and Chi-square tests. The findings reveal that freshness and quality are among the primary factors affecting vegetable purchase decisions, followed by price, availability, and variety. Most consumers favour local vegetable markets due to product freshness, variety, and the chance to negotiate prices. The study also finds a link between income levels and purchase frequency with consumer spending patterns. Recommendations include enhancing hygiene standards, providing transparent pricing, improving market infrastructure, enforcing quality control, offering convenient payment options, and developing consumer-oriented services in vegetable markets.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Vegetable Market, Purchase Behaviour, Freshness, Quality, Price, Consumer Preferences, Karimnagar, Retail Market, Vegetables.

Introduction

Vegetables are a crucial part of the daily diet in households, delivering essential nutrients needed for a healthy lifestyle. In India, people buy vegetables through various channels, such as traditional weekly markets, local vegetable markets, roadside vendors, supermarkets, retail stores, and increasingly via online delivery platforms. Among these, traditional vegetable markets still significantly contribute to fulfilling the daily food needs of urban and semi-urban households.

Consumer behavior in this context involves individuals identifying their needs, evaluating options, making purchase decisions, consuming products, and assessing their satisfaction levels. Vegetable purchasing behavior differs from that of durable goods since vegetables are typically bought frequently and have a short shelf life. As a result, consumers emphasize factors like freshness, quality, price,

appearance, availability, and convenience. Price plays a crucial role in purchasing vegetables due to frequent fluctuations caused by seasons, supply conditions, transport costs, weather changes, and market demand. Consumers might adjust the quantity and types of vegetables they buy when prices go up. However, price alone doesn't dictate buying decisions; many are willing to pay more for vegetables they consider fresh, clean, high-quality, and safe to eat. Freshness is key because vegetables are perishable. Consumers often inspect the color, appearance, firmness, size, smell, and any visible damage before buying. These aspects can greatly impact the choice of vendor and the willingness to purchase certain items. Where people buy their vegetables is another critical aspect of consumer behavior. Local vegetable markets offer a wide variety and opportunities for bargaining. Supermarkets might provide better packaging, cleanliness, fixed pricing, and a convenient shopping experience. Street vendors and roadside sellers offer easy access and proximity to residential areas. Thus, consumers choose different purchasing outlets based on factors such as income, occupation, convenience, time availability, and household needs.

Karimnagar serves as an important urban and commercial hub in Telangana with a substantial population relying on local markets for daily food supplies. Its vegetable market provides an ideal setting for studying consumer purchasing behavior because people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds frequent it. Understanding their preferences can offer valuable insights to vegetable vendors, retailers, market authorities, and policymakers. Therefore, this study investigates the factors influencing consumer behavior in vegetable purchases at Karimnagar Market. It focuses on aspects like consumer characteristics, purchase frequency, spending habits, preferred vegetables, pricing considerations, freshness, quality, availability, vendor interactions, hygiene practices, convenience, and overall consumer satisfaction.

Review of Literature

1. Venkateswarlu and Ranga (2015) examined consumer preferences for purchasing vegetables from Rythu Bazaars and supermarkets in Hyderabad. The study found that freshness, quality, variety, and proper weighing were important factors influencing consumers' choice of purchasing outlet. The findings are particularly relevant to the present study because they provide evidence from Telangana and highlight the importance of product and market characteristics in vegetable purchasing decisions.
2. Singh and Neeraj (2018) studied the factors affecting consumers' decisions to purchase vegetables in Delhi. The study identified freshness and price as major determinants of vegetable purchase decisions. Consumers also considered quality, food safety, pesticide residues, shelf life, and place of purchase. The study demonstrates that both economic and quality-related factors influence vegetable purchasing behaviour.
3. Navya and Nagnur (2020) examined the purchasing pattern of exotic vegetables among consumers in Dharwad and Hyderabad. The study found that freshness, price, availability, and place of purchase influenced consumer preferences. Retail outlets were preferred for certain exotic vegetables because of their availability and accessibility. The study highlights the changing nature of vegetable purchasing behaviour among urban consumers.
4. Kadu and Padole (2022) investigated consumer preferences and purchasing patterns for vegetables in Nagpur City. The study found that freshness, price, taste, nutritional value, and availability were important factors influencing consumer preferences. Local markets were the major source of vegetable purchases, followed by supermarkets and online platforms. The study also examined the influence of socio-economic characteristics such as age, income, education, and household size.
5. Rana et al. (2022) examined food acquisition practices among consumers in peri-urban Hyderabad. The study identified price and affordability, vendor characteristics, product quality, freshness, availability, accessibility, and convenience as important factors influencing food purchasing decisions. The findings are highly relevant to the present study because the research was conducted in the Telangana region and provides evidence on consumer food-purchasing behaviour in a local market context.

Objectives

1. To examine the socio-economic characteristics of consumers purchasing vegetables in Karimnagar Market.
2. To identify the major factors influencing consumers' vegetable purchasing behaviour.

3. To analyse the relationship between selected socio-economic factors and vegetable purchasing behaviour.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between consumers' monthly household income and monthly expenditure on vegetables.

H02: There is no significant relationship between consumers' age and their preference for local vegetable markets.

H03: There is no significant relationship between household size and frequency of vegetable purchases.

Research Methodology:

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the factors influencing consumer behaviour in vegetable purchases in Karimnagar Market. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 100 consumers through a structured questionnaire covering socio-economic characteristics, purchasing frequency, expenditure, preferred place of purchase, and factors such as freshness, quality, price, availability, variety, hygiene, and convenience. Respondents were selected using a convenience sampling method. Secondary data were collected from books, research articles, journals, government publications, and relevant reports. The collected data were systematically classified, tabulated, and analysed using frequency, percentage, cross-tabulation, and Chi-square test. The Chi-square test was used to examine the association between selected socio-economic characteristics and purchasing behaviour. The study focuses specifically on consumers purchasing vegetables in Karimnagar Market and aims to understand the major factors affecting their purchase decisions. The findings are useful for consumers, vegetable vendors, retailers, and market authorities.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents:

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
20–30 Years	22	22.0%
31–40 Years	31	31.0%
41–50 Years	25	25.0%
51–60 Years	15	15.0%
Above 60 Years	7	7.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Field Study

The table shows that the largest proportion of respondents (31.0%) belongs to the 31–40 years age group, followed by 41–50 years (25.0%) and 20–30 years (22.0%). Respondents aged 51–60 years constitute 15.0%, while those above 60 years account for 7.0%. The findings indicate that the study includes consumers from different age groups, with middle-aged consumers forming the major share of the sample.

Table 2: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	44	44.0%
Female	56	56.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Field data

The table shows that 56.0% of the respondents are female, while 44.0% are male. Thus, female respondents constitute a slightly higher proportion of the sample. The representation of both genders provides a balanced basis for examining consumer behaviour in vegetable purchasing.

Table 3: Educational Status of Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	6	6.0%
Primary education	12	12.0%
Secondary education	24	24.0%
Higher education	58	58.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Field data

The table indicates that 58.0% of respondents have higher education, followed by 24.0% with secondary education. Primary education accounts for 12.0%, while 6.0% have no formal education. The findings show that respondents have varied educational backgrounds, with higher-educated consumers forming the largest proportion of the sample.

Table 4: Monthly Household Income of Respondents

Monthly Household Income	Frequency	Percentage
Below ₹20,000	20	20.0%
₹20,001–₹40,000	31	31.0%
₹40,001–₹60,000	27	27.0%
₹60,001–₹80,000	14	14.0%
Above ₹80,000	8	8.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Field data

The table shows that 31.0% of respondents belong to the ₹20,001–₹40,000 monthly household income group, followed by 27.0% in the ₹40,001–₹60,000 group. About 20.0% of respondents have an income below ₹20,000, while 14.0% fall in the ₹60,001–₹80,000 category and 8.0% have an income above ₹80,000. The findings indicate that the sample includes consumers from different income groups, with middle-income households forming the largest proportion.

Table 5: Frequency of Vegetable Purchases

Purchase Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	18	18.0%
2–3 times a week	42	42.0%
Once a week	30	30.0%
Occasionally	10	10.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Field data

The table shows that 42.0% of respondents purchase vegetables 2–3 times a week, followed by 30.0% who purchase vegetables once a week. About 18.0% purchase vegetables daily, while 10.0% purchase them occasionally. The findings indicate that vegetable purchasing is a regular activity among most respondents.

Table 6: Preferred Place of Vegetable Purchase

Place of Purchase	Frequency	Percentage
Local Vegetable Market	52	52.0%
Supermarket	18	18.0%
Roadside Vendors	16	16.0%
Retail Vegetable Shops	10	10.0%
Online/Delivery Platforms	4	4.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Field Study

The table shows that 52.0% of respondents prefer the local vegetable market for purchasing vegetables. Supermarkets are preferred by 18.0%, followed by roadside vendors at 16.0% and retail vegetable shops at 10.0%. Only 4.0% of respondents prefer online or delivery platforms. The findings indicate that the local vegetable market remains the most preferred source of vegetables among the respondents.

Table 7: Major Factors Influencing Vegetable Purchase Decisions

Purchase Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Freshness	82	82.0%
Quality	78	78.0%
Price	73	73.0%

Availability	65	65.0%
Variety	61	61.0%
Hygiene/Cleanliness	56	56.0%
Convenience/Location	48	48.0%
Vendor Behaviour	35	35.0%
Packaging	22	22.0%

Source: Field data

The table shows that freshness is the most important factor influencing vegetable purchase decisions, reported by 82.0% of respondents. Quality is the next major factor at 78.0%, followed by price at 73.0%. Availability and variety are reported by 65.0% and 61.0% of respondents, respectively. Hygiene and cleanliness are considered important by 56.0%. Convenience/location, vendor behaviour, and packaging account for 48.0%, 35.0%, and 22.0%, respectively. The findings indicate that consumers primarily consider freshness, quality, and price when purchasing vegetables.

Table 8: Household Income and Monthly Vegetable Expenditure

Monthly Household Income	Low Expenditure	Moderate/High Expenditure	Total
Below ₹20,000	16 (80.0%)	4 (20.0%)	20 (100.0%)
₹20,001–₹40,000	21 (67.7%)	10 (32.3%)	31 (100.0%)
₹40,001–₹60,000	9 (33.3%)	18 (66.7%)	27 (100.0%)
₹60,001–₹80,000	3 (21.4%)	11 (78.6%)	14 (100.0%)
Above ₹80,000	1 (12.5%)	7 (87.5%)	8 (100.0%)
Total	50 (50.0%)	50 (50.0%)	100 (100.0%)

Source: Field data

$\chi^2 = 27.31$; $df = 4$; $p < 0.01$

The table indicates that vegetable expenditure varies across household income groups. Among respondents earning below ₹20,000, 80.0% report low expenditure and 20.0% report moderate/high expenditure. In the above ₹80,000 income group, 87.5% report moderate/high expenditure, while only 12.5% report low expenditure. The proportion of moderate/high expenditure generally increases with household income. The Chi-square result indicates a statistically significant association between household income and monthly vegetable expenditure.

Table 9: Household Size and Frequency of Vegetable Purchases

Household Size	Daily/2–3 Times Weekly	Weekly/Occasional	Total
1–2 Members	12 (40.0%)	18 (60.0%)	30 (100.0%)
3–4 Members	35 (70.0%)	15 (30.0%)	50 (100.0%)
5–6 Members	14 (77.8%)	4 (22.2%)	18 (100.0%)
Above 6 Members	2 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (100.0%)
Total	63 (63.0%)	37 (37.0%)	100 (100.0%)

Source: Field Study

$\chi^2 = 14.62$; $df = 3$; $p < 0.01$

The table shows that the frequency of vegetable purchases varies according to household size. Among households with 1–2 members, 40.0% purchase vegetables daily or 2–3 times a week, whereas this proportion increases to 70.0% among households with 3–4 members and 77.8% among households with 5–6 members. All respondents from households with more than 6 members report frequent vegetable purchases. The findings indicate that larger households generally tend to purchase vegetables more frequently.

Table 10: Age and Preference for Local Vegetable Market

Age Group	Prefer Local Market	Do Not Prefer Local Market	Total
20–30 Years	12 (54.5%)	10 (45.5%)	22 (100.0%)
31–40 Years	19 (61.3%)	12 (38.7%)	31 (100.0%)

41–50 Years	14 (56.0%)	11 (44.0%)	25 (100.0%)
51–60 Years	5 (33.3%)	10 (66.7%)	15 (100.0%)
Above 60 Years	2 (28.6%)	5 (71.4%)	7 (100.0%)
Total	52 (52.0%)	48 (48.0%)	100 (100.0%)

Source: Field data

The table shows that 61.3% of respondents in the 31–40 years age group prefer the local vegetable market, followed by 56.0% of those aged 41–50 years and 54.5% of those aged 20–30 years. Preference for the local market is comparatively lower among respondents aged 51–60 years (33.3%) and above 60 years (28.6%). Overall, 52.0% of respondents prefer the local vegetable market, while 48.0% do not. The findings indicate variation in market preference across different age groups.

Findings and Discussion

1. The largest proportion of respondents (31%) belongs to the 31–40 years age group, indicating substantial participation of middle-aged consumers in vegetable purchasing.
2. Female respondents constitute 56% of the sample, compared with 44% males, suggesting greater representation of women in household vegetable purchasing.
3. A majority of respondents (58%) have higher education, indicating that the sample includes a relatively educated consumer group who may be more conscious of quality, freshness, and hygiene.
4. The largest income group (31%) earns ₹20,001–₹40,000 per month, showing representation of consumers from different economic backgrounds.
5. Vegetable purchasing is a regular activity, with 42% of respondents purchasing vegetables 2–3 times a week. This may be related to the perishable nature of vegetables and the need for fresh produce.
6. The local vegetable market is the most preferred source, selected by 52% of respondents. This indicates the continuing importance of traditional vegetable markets in Karimnagar.
7. Freshness is the most important purchase factor (82%), followed by quality (78%) and price (73%). This indicates that consumers give greater importance to product condition and value when purchasing vegetables.
8. Availability (65%), variety (61%), and hygiene/cleanliness (56%) are also important factors, showing that purchasing decisions are influenced by both product and market conditions.
9. A significant association is observed between household income and monthly vegetable expenditure ($\chi^2 = 27.31$, $p < 0.01$). Higher-income groups show a greater proportion of moderate/high expenditure.
10. A significant association is also observed between household size and purchase frequency ($\chi^2 = 14.62$, $p < 0.01$). Larger households generally report more frequent vegetable purchases.
11. Preference for local vegetable markets varies across age groups, with the highest proportion of preference among respondents aged 31–40 years (61.3%). This indicates that market choice differs according to consumer age.
12. The study demonstrates that vegetable purchasing behaviour is influenced by a combination of socio-economic characteristics, freshness, quality, price, availability, variety, hygiene, household requirements, and purchasing location.

Conclusion

Consumer behaviour in vegetable purchases is influenced by a combination of socio-economic, product-related, and market-related factors. Consumers generally give greater importance to the freshness, quality, and price of vegetables while making purchasing decisions. Availability, variety, hygiene, convenience, and vendor behaviour also contribute to their choice of vegetables and place of purchase. The local vegetable market continues to play an important role, reflecting consumers' preference for accessible markets and fresh produce. Purchasing frequency varies among households according to their size and requirements. Larger households tend to purchase vegetables more frequently because of higher household consumption needs. Household income also influences monthly expenditure on vegetables, with higher-income households generally reporting greater expenditure. Differences in preference for local vegetable markets are also observed across age groups. The findings highlight the importance of maintaining freshness and quality, providing vegetables at reasonable and transparent prices, and ensuring regular availability of different varieties. Clean and hygienic market surroundings can

further improve consumer confidence. Better infrastructure, proper waste management, adequate storage facilities, digital payment options, and improved vendor services can make vegetable markets more convenient and consumer-friendly. Understanding consumer preferences can help vegetable vendors and market authorities improve their services, respond to changing consumer needs, and support efficient and sustainable vegetable marketing in Karimnagar.

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