

Analysis of Urban Consumer Behavior for Fish in Tripura

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The consumer behavior towards fish consumption in Tripura is studied to analyze income and expenditure patterns of fish consumers' in urban area of Tripura and to examine consumers' purchase and usage habits for fish. For the collection of data on households' income and expenditure, consumption of animal proteins and consumers' attitude towards fish consumption, 80 respondents were randomly selected from Agartala city, using cluster sampling technique. The information on income and expenditure of households, consumption pattern of fish and other non-vegetarian items and attitude towards fish consumption were collected through personal interview. The per capita fish consumption of fish in study area is higher than the consumption of chicken and mutton. The fish consumers prefer small sized, live/fresh and locally produced fish. The market prices of locally produced fishes are almost double than the fishes arrived from other states.

Key words : Consumer behaviour, expenditure pattern, fish consumption, perceptual chart

The study of the consumer behavior for fish is essentially important from its production, processing and marketing point. Under the modern marketing concept, consumer is the fulcrum around which the entire marketing activities revolve (Santhakumar and Sanjeevraj, 2000). The knowledge of consumers' preference, food habits, family income and the nature of the produce are necessary to develop food chain in any area. Fish is the favourite food item of majority of the families in Tripura (Anon, 2005). Hence the study was conducted to analyze income and expenditure patterns of fish consumers' in urban area of Tripura and to examine urban consumers' purchase and usage habits for fish.

Materials and Methods

Agartala city has an area of 16.012 km² and population of 1,89,329 in 2001. The proportion of scheduled tribe, other backward classes, scheduled caste and others castes are in the ratio 0.7: 10.3: 29.0: 60.0. The majority of the families belong to Bengali community. In order to take the representative sample of fish consumers from the city, total 8 clusters, viz from Krishnanagar, Radhanagar, College Tilla, Dhaleshwer, Mathchawmini, Banarjeepara, Ramnagar and Sivnagar were formed on the basis of consumers' food habit, socio-cultural status and income level. From each cluster, 10 families were randomly selected for the interview. Semi structured interview schedule including open ended type questions

were used for collection of data on family profile, income and expenditure pattern, consumption patterns of different animal protein items and consumers perception on fish and related food items. During the interview different stimuli related to fish attributes were used for better interaction with fish consumers. The data was pertained to February 2007. The data were analysed statistically.

Results and discussion

The average monthly income of fish consuming families was Rs. 11,888. The skewed income distribution across the families is given in Fig.1. The income distribution curve shows that less than 60 percent income were distributed among 80 percent people and the remaining 40 percent income shared by 20 percent families.

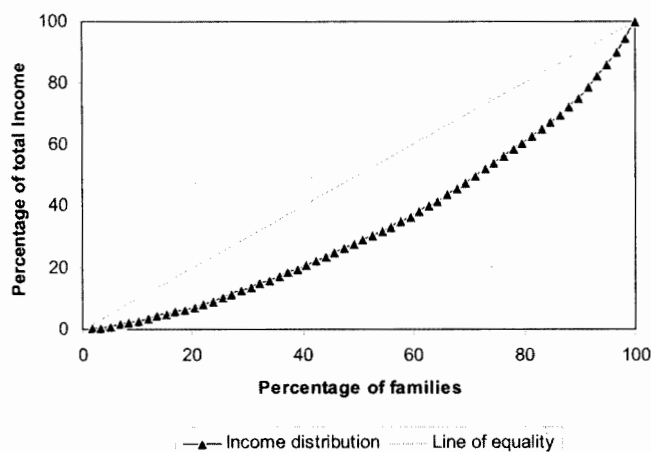


Fig. 1. Income distribution across the fish consumers

A fish consumer spent Rs.10015 on basic needs like food, education and health (Table 1). The maximum expenditure was for food items (43.5% percent) such as food and grocery items, fish/meat, vegetables and milks, followed by 28% for education, clothing and medicine. They spent 19% for

telephone, transportation, electricity and cable connection. Relatively higher expenditure (71.5%) on food, education, telephone and health indicate better standard of living of people in Agartala city.

Table 1. Households' expenditure patterns in Agartala

Items	Monthly expenditure (Rs)	Percent
Food and grocery	2224.00	22.21
Education	1746.15	17.44
Fish/meat	998.94	9.97
Telephone	871.74	8.70
Vegetable	751.04	7.50
Cloth	602.56	6.02
Transport	553.66	5.53
Health	452.08	4.51
Milk	382.33	3.82
Festival	385.58	3.85
Electricity	282.95	2.83
Cable	176.71	1.76
Others	587.10	5.86
Total expenditure	10014.84	100

All families consume fish and majority of the families consume egg and chicken (Table 2). On an average in a week, fish is consumed 4 times and egg is consumed two times. The chicken is reported to be close substitute for fish. The higher consumption of fish is mainly attributed to the food habit.

It is found that majority of fish consumers agreed that fish is good for health, relatively cheap, tasty, easy to cook and nutritious. About 42% of the consumers disagreed that quality fish is easily available

Table 2. Consumption pattern of different non vegetarian food items

Animal food items	% of Families Consume Animal proteins	Frequency of consumption in a week	Monthly consumption (kg/no.)	Per capita Consumption (g/day)
Fresh Fish	100	3.76	10.51	110.43
Egg (Number)	76	2.29	42.16	0.39
Mutton*	38	1.17	4.810	15.54
Chicken*	75	1.65	5.033	57.60

* Families belong to these categories either eat mutton or chicken but not both at a time.

in local market. It is also noticed that small, live/fresh and local fishes have high demand from middle and high income community. A good proportion (11 to 32%) of fish eating families are not aware of nutritional qualities of fish. Rohu (*Labeo rohita*) and Catla (*Catla catla*) are most commonly consumed by all income groups. A variety of other fish species like magur (*Clarius batrachus*), tengra (*Mystus tengra*), koi (*Anabus testudineus*), chingri (*Macrobrachium rosenbergii*), boyal (*Wallago attu*), hilsa (*Hilsha ilisa*), mrigal (*Cirrhinus mrigala*), chana (*Chana panctatus*), singhi (*Heteropnestis fossilis*), pabda (*Ompac bimaculatus*), pangus (*Pangusius pangasius*), thilapia (*Oseochromis mosambica*) are also consumed. The highly priced fish like hilsa, pabda, magur, singhi, and chingri (prawn) were occasionally consumed by higher income families.

The market price for local fishes is almost double than those coming from other states. Consumers unequivocally hold that freshness is extremely important and influences the fish purchase. Based on consumers rating, fishes are classified and plotted in different quadrants of the perceptual charts (Fig. 2). It is found that the major carps (rohu, mrigal, catla, silver carp and grass

carp) are easily available, less expensive, and comparatively less tasty but they are very popular among the fish consumers. On the other hand pabda, koi and chingri (prawn) are considered very tasty but expensive and low availability in the market. Majority of the fish consumers reported poor hygiene conditions at the market.

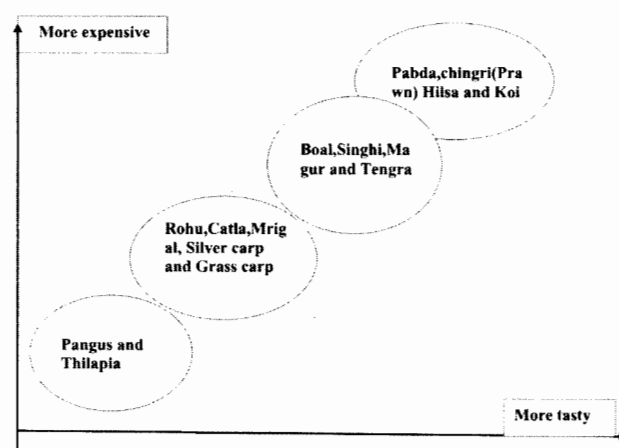


Fig. 2. Perceptual charts for fish

It is concluded that the per capita fish consumption in study area is higher than chicken and mutton. The fish consumers prefer small sized, live/fresh and locally produced fish. The market prices of locally produced fishes are almost double than the fishes arrived from other states.