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Comparative analysis of meat consumption patterns and consumer perceptions among rural and urban households in the Cauvery delta region of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The present study analyzed and compared meat consumption pattern among rural and urban consumers in the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu. A total of 500 respondents, comprising 250 rural and 250 urban consumers, were randomly selected. Data were collected using a pre-tested structured interview schedule. Broiler chicken was the most commonly consumed meat in both these groups. Among the rural consumers, 66.40% people preferred chevon, followed by chicken, mutton, pork and beef, whereas 47.20% of urban consumers preferred poultry meat, followed by chevon, mutton, beef and pork. Curry was the predominant meat preparation in rural households (88.80%), while urban consumers favored biryani and convenience meat products (86.80%). Rural consumers showed a stronger preference for fresh hot meat (72.40%), whereas urban consumers were more receptive to processed meat products (59.20%). Weekly meat consumption was the most common frequency in both these groups. Factors influencing meat purchases varied between rural and urban consumers. Price and availability were the primary determinants in rural areas, whereas nutritive value and quality were more important among urban consumers. The study concluded that meat consumption patterns varies significantly and are influenced by several factors such as social, religious, economic and lifestyle across both populations.

Keywords: Meat consumption, rural consumers, urban consumers, processed meat, consumer perception, Tamil Nadu

Introduction

Meat and meat products are important dietary components, providing high-quality protein, essential amino acids, vitamins and minerals required for growth and health maintenance (Stadnik *et al.*, 2025) [12]. Meat consumption patterns vary across the populations and are influenced by socio-economic, cultural, religious and lifestyle factors (Devi *et al.*, 2014) [4]. In developing countries such as India, rapid urbanization, increasing disposable incomes and changing dietary preferences have significantly altered meat consumption behaviour (Anna Anandh, 2026) [2]. Additionally, rising demand for convenience foods, hygienically processed meat and ready-to-cook products has driven substantial growth in the livestock and meat processing sector (Peltner *et al.*, 2018) [8].

Despite the continued influence of traditional factors such as taste, tenderness, freshness, price and cultural preferences, increasing awareness of food safety and nutritional quality is reshaping consumer purchasing decisions (Priscila *et al.*, 2022) [9]. This shift is particularly evident in the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu, where rural and urban populations exhibit distinct dietary habits and meat purchasing behaviors. Understanding these differences is crucial for improving meat marketing systems, strengthening food safety measures and developing targeted meat processing and value-addition strategies. Therefore, the present study was aimed to compare meat consumption patterns, purchasing preferences and consumer perceptions among rural and urban households in the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

The present investigation was carried out in the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu, which

includes predominantly agricultural and semi-urban areas characterized by diverse socio-economic and food consumption patterns.

Selection of Respondents

A total of 500 respondents were selected randomly for the study, comprising 250 respondents from rural areas and 250 respondents from urban areas. Respondents were selected based on their involvement in household food purchasing and meat consumption decisions.

Collection of Data

Primary data were collected using a pre-tested and structured interview schedule administered directly to the respondents. The face-to-face interview method ensured accurate collection of information regarding local meat consumption habits and purchasing behaviour. The questionnaire covered key variables, including preferred meat types, frequency of meat consumption, preference for fresh or processed meat products, cooking practices and place of purchase. In addition, the survey assessed consumer awareness regarding processed meat products, major factors influencing purchasing decisions and perceptions related to meat quality and nutritional value. To ensure clarity, consistency and reliability of the data, the interview schedule was validated through pilot testing prior to the final data collection process.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were compiled, coded, tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as percentage analysis, frequency distribution and comparative analysis. The results obtained from rural and urban consumers were compared to identify significant differences in meat consumption patterns and consumer perception.

Results and Discussion

Meat Preference among Rural and Urban consumers

The comparative perceptions of rural and urban meat consumption patterns are presented in Table 1. Broiler chicken was the most commonly consumed meat among both rural and urban consumers, primarily due to its affordability, easy availability and broad social acceptance. Among rural consumers, 66.40% preferred chevon, followed by chicken, mutton, pork and beef. This preference may be attributed to traditional dietary practices, taste preferences and cultural acceptance within rural communities.

In contrast, urban consumers showed a greater preference for poultry meat (47.20%), followed by chevon, mutton, beef and pork. The higher preference for poultry among urban consumers may be associated with changing dietary habits, increased health awareness, lower fat content and ease of preparation. These findings are consistent with those reported by Kiran *et al.* (2018)^[6] and Chandirasekaran *et al.* (2021)^[3]. Similarly, Gowtham *et al.* (2026)^[5] identified poultry meat as the most preferred choice due to its affordability, accessibility, and perceived safety, while Anna Anandh (2026)^[2] highlighted socio-economic status, cultural traditions and consumer awareness of meat quality as key determinants of meat purchasing behaviour.

Frequency of Meat Consumption

Weekly meat consumption was the predominant pattern among both rural and urban consumers, reported by 56.40% and 63.60% of respondents, respectively. Urban consumers exhibited a higher frequency of meat consumption than their rural counterparts, likely due to greater purchasing power, higher disposable incomes and evolving dietary preferences. In contrast, lower consumption frequency among rural consumers may be attributed to financial constraints and adherence to traditional dietary practices. These findings are consistent with those of Ramakrishnan *et al.* (2025)^[10], who also identified weekly meat consumption as the predominant pattern among consumers.

Preference towards Fresh and Processed Meat

A marked difference was observed between rural and urban consumers in their preference for fresh and processed meat products. Most rural consumers (72.40%) preferred fresh hot meat, citing its superior taste, freshness and perceived nutritional value. In contrast, urban consumers showed greater acceptance of processed meat products (59.20%), likely due to their convenience, hygienic packaging, longer shelf life and ease of storage. Additionally, fast-paced lifestyles and greater exposure to organized retail outlets have encouraged the adoption of ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat meat products among urban consumers. These findings are consistent with those of Suresh (2016)^[13] and Abraham and Kumar (2021)^[1], who reported increasing consumer preference for processed meat products due to convenience and greater awareness of hygienic handling practices. Their studies further highlighted that awareness of hygienic processing, cold-chain storage and safe preparation methods significantly influences consumer acceptance of value-added meat products.

Table 1: Comparative Perception of Rural and Urban Meat Consumption Pattern

Particulars	Rural Consumers (n=250) Frequency	Rural Consumers (%)	Urban Consumers (n=250) Frequency	Urban Consumers (%)
Preferred chevon consumption	166	66.40	82	32.80
Preferred poultry meat consumption	146	58.40	118	47.20
Preference for fresh hot meat	182	72.40	102	40.80
Preference for processed meat products	72	28.60	148	59.20
Meat consumed once weekly	142	56.40	160	63.60
Curry preparation preference	222	88.80	106	42.40
Biryani and convenient meat products	92	36.40	218	86.80
Purchase from registered meat shops	86	34.48	198	78.80

Total respondents: 500 consumers (250 rural and 250 urban consumers).

Frequency values were calculated based on the corresponding percentage distribution.

Meat Preparation Preferences

The majority of rural consumers (88.80%) used meat primarily for curry preparation, reflecting traditional culinary practices and household food culture. In contrast, urban

consumers (86.80%) preferred meat for biryani preparation and favored conveniently portioned meat cuts. Urban consumers also showed increasing interest in value-added meat products, including sausages, nuggets, cutlets and marinated meat products, due to their convenience and time-saving benefits. These findings are consistent with those of Singh *et al.* (2019)^[11], Talukder *et al.* (2020)^[14] and Abraham and Kumar (2021)^[1], who reported a growing preference for ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat meat products driven by modernization, lifestyle changes and increased exposure to commercial food products.

Place of Meat Purchase

The proportion of consumers purchasing meat from registered retail outlets was considerably lower in rural areas (34.48%) than in urban areas (78.80%). Rural consumers primarily relied on local butcher shops and informal wet markets due to their accessibility, familiarity and lower cost. In contrast, urban consumers preferred registered meat outlets because of better hygiene, superior meat quality, standardized weighing practices and the availability of packaged meat products. The growing urban demand for hygienically handled and quality-assured meat products underscores the need to modernize meat retail infrastructure and strengthen food safety measures. These findings are consistent with those of Suresh (2016)^[13], Waghamare *et al.* (2021)^[15] and Kurugala (2022)^[7], who identified outlet cleanliness, hygienic handling practices and adequate cold-storage facilities as key factors influencing consumer preference for meat retail outlets.

Factors Influencing Meat Purchasing Behavior

Urban consumers identified nutritive value as the primary factor influencing meat purchases, followed by taste, freshness, tenderness, source of meat, price and availability. In contrast, rural consumers considered price and availability as the key determinants, followed by taste, freshness, source and tenderness. The greater price sensitivity among rural consumers may be attributed to economic constraints. These findings are consistent with those of Kiran *et al.* (2018)^[6], who reported that consumers assess meat quality based on sensory attributes such as colour, texture, odour, freshness and hygienic conditions at the point of sale. The study further revealed that urban consumers were more quality-conscious and health-oriented than rural consumers. Growing awareness of hygienic meat processing, food safety and nutritional value has significantly influenced consumer purchasing behaviour. Meat consumption and purchasing patterns differed between rural and urban consumers due to variations in socio-economic status, education, food safety awareness, culture and lifestyle. Urban consumers preferred hygienically processed and packaged meat products, whereas rural consumers favored fresh hot meat and traditional preparations. These findings are consistent with previous reports (Kiran *et al.*, 2018; Chandrasekaran *et al.*, 2021; Waghamare *et al.*, 2021)^[3, 6, 15]. The study emphasizes the need to improve consumer awareness of hygienic meat handling, storage and cooking practices to enhance food safety and support meat sector development.

Conclusion

The study revealed significant differences in meat consumption and purchasing patterns between rural and urban consumers in the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu. While broiler chicken was the most preferred meat among both groups, rural consumers favored fresh hot meat and traditional

curry preparations, whereas urban consumers preferred hygienically processed and ready-to-cook meat products. These patterns were influenced by socio-economic factors, food safety awareness, and lifestyle changes. The findings highlight the need to modernize meat retail infrastructure, enhance hygienic handling practices and strengthen quality assurance measures to address evolving consumer demands.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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