

# A Study on Shift in Consumer Preference from Rice and Wheat to Millets in Coimbatore

Assistant Professor Ms.G. Revathi, Mr. Gowtham MR

Department of Commerce, Rathinam College of Arts and Science

**Abstract—** The transformation of food consumption patterns has become a significant subject of study in the field of marketing and consumer behavior. This research investigates the shift in consumer preference from traditional staple grains such as rice and wheat to nutrient-rich millets in Coimbatore city. The study aims to analyze awareness levels, key influencing factors, and consumer purchasing behavior towards millet-based products. A descriptive research design has been adopted, with primary data collected from 100 respondents through structured questionnaires. The findings indicate that increasing health consciousness, rising incidence of lifestyle diseases, medical recommendations, and media influence are the primary drivers behind this shift. Consumers perceive millets as a healthier alternative due to their high fiber, mineral content, and low glycemic index. Despite growing acceptance, challenges such as pricing, limited accessibility, and lack of awareness in certain segments still persist. The study concludes that millets possess strong market potential and represent an emerging segment in the food industry. Strategic marketing, awareness campaigns, and supply chain improvements can further accelerate this transition

**Keywords—** Millets, Consumer Behavior, Health Awareness, Food Marketing, Coimbatore, Dietary Shift

## I. INTRODUCTION

Food consumption patterns in urban India have undergone significant changes in recent decades, with traditional staples like rice and wheat gradually being reconsidered due to evolving lifestyles and health concerns. Increased urbanization and sedentary habits have led to a rise in lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disorders, prompting consumers to seek healthier dietary alternatives. In this context, millets, often referred to as “nutri-cereals,” are gaining renewed attention for their rich nutritional profile, including high fiber, protein, minerals, and antioxidants. Varieties such as ragi, bajra, foxtail millet, and little millet were once integral to Indian diets but declined due to the growing preference for polished rice and refined wheat. However, their health benefits are driving a resurgence in demand. In Coimbatore, a rapidly developing urban center, increased availability of millet-based products through supermarkets, organic stores, and e-commerce platforms is supporting this dietary shift among consumers.

### Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the level of consumer awareness regarding millets
- To analyze the factors influencing the shift from rice and wheat to millets
- To examine consumer buying behavior towards millet-based products

- To identify the benefits and challenges associated with millet consumption
- To assess the future market potential of millets

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Existing literature highlights a growing interest in millet consumption due to increasing health awareness. Studies have consistently emphasized the nutritional superiority of millets compared to conventional cereals.

Research by Kumar (2022) indicates that millets play a crucial role in managing chronic diseases, particularly diabetes, due to their low glycemic index. Lakshmi (2023) observed that urban consumers are more inclined towards health-oriented food choices, leading to increased demand for organic and traditional grains.

Reports from global health organizations also emphasize the importance of diversified diets. Millets are recognized for their ability to improve digestion, reduce cholesterol levels, and enhance overall health. Furthermore, government initiatives promoting millets have contributed significantly to their rising popularity.

However, several studies also point out challenges such as higher costs, lack of awareness among rural populations, and limited product variety. Marketing strategies and supply chain improvements are essential to overcome these barriers.

### III, RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 1, Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze consumer behavior and preferences.

#### 2. Data Collection

- **Primary Data:** Collected through structured questionnaires distributed among consumers in Coimbatore
- **Secondary Data:** Collected from academic journals, books, government reports, and credible online sources

#### 3. Sample Size

The study is based on a sample of 100 respondents.

#### 4. Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling method is used due to time and accessibility constraints.

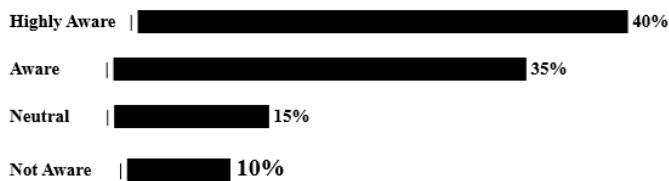
#### 5. Tools for Analysis

- Percentage analysis
- Tabular representation
- Interpretative analysis

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 1. Awareness of Millets

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Highly Aware	40	40%
Aware	35	35%
Neutral	15	15%
Not Aware	10	10%
Total	100	100%

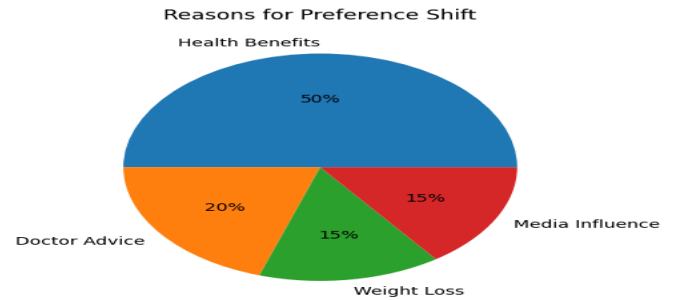


#### Interpretation

A significant majority (75%) of respondents are aware of millets, indicating effective dissemination of information through media, healthcare professionals, and social platforms.

#### 2. Reasons for Preference Shift

Reason	Respondents	Percentage
Health Benefits	50	50%
Doctor Advice	20	20%
Weight Loss	15	15%
Media Influence	15	15%
Total	100	100%

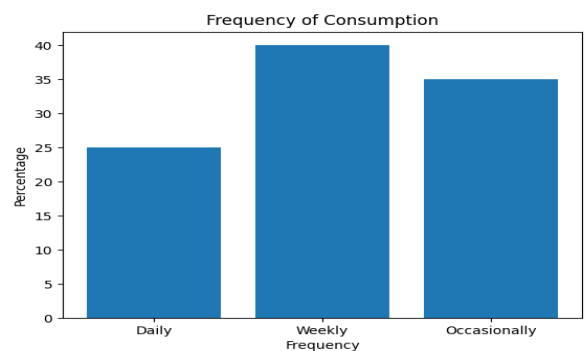


#### Interpretation

Health benefits are the primary driver influencing consumer preference, followed by medical advice and lifestyle motivations such as weight management.

#### 3 Frequency of Consumption

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Daily	25	25%
Weekly	40	40%
Occasionally	35	35%
Total	100	100%



#### Interpretation:

The majority of consumers (40%) consume millets weekly, indicating a gradual but consistent shift rather than complete replacement of traditional grains.

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study clearly indicate a transition phase in consumer dietary habits. While rice and wheat continue to dominate daily consumption, millets are increasingly being incorporated into diets due to their perceived health benefits. Consumers in Coimbatore demonstrate higher awareness and acceptance levels. This can be attributed to better access to information, higher income levels, and exposure to modern retail formats. The role of digital media, health influencers, and medical practitioners is also significant in shaping consumer attitudes. From a marketing perspective, millets represent a growing niche market. Companies are introducing innovative products such as millet-based snacks, ready-to-cook items, and beverages to attract consumers. Branding, packaging, and positioning strategies play a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions.

### Findings

- A large proportion of consumers are aware of millets and their benefits
- Health consciousness is the primary factor driving the shift
- Consumers are gradually incorporating millets into their diet
- Urban consumers show higher adoption rates
- Availability of millet products is increasing in organized retail sectors

### Suggestions

- Conduct large-scale awareness campaigns emphasizing health benefits
- Reduce production and distribution costs to make millets more affordable
- Expand availability across all retail formats including rural markets
- Encourage farmers through subsidies and government support
- Introduce millet-based meals in educational institutions
- Develop innovative and convenient millet products

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals a noticeable shift in consumer preferences in Coimbatore, with many individuals gradually moving from traditional staples like rice and wheat toward millets. This change is largely influenced by growing health awareness, evolving lifestyles, and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes and obesity. While millets have not entirely replaced conventional grains, their inclusion in regular diets is steadily rising as consumers recognize their nutritional

benefits. The availability of millet-based products and increased exposure through media and healthcare advice have further supported this transition. With effective marketing strategies, stronger government initiatives, and better consumer education, millets can gain wider acceptance among the population. Overall, the future of millets looks highly promising, not only as a nutritious food choice but also as an environmentally sustainable crop that supports agricultural diversity and long-term food security in both urban and rural areas.

## REFERENCES

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