

A Study on Consumer Awareness of The Distinction Between Frozen Desserts and Ice Cream

RISHI S., B.COM., M.B.A.

MBA (Marketing & Operations) Student., Reg No: 43410371 School of Management Studies,
Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Dr. M. RAJA., MBA., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, School of Management Studies,
Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

This study examines consumer awareness of the differences between ice cream and frozen desserts, focusing on the Sona brand by Kwality Milk Foods Ltd. Surveying 100 respondents in Chennai, it highlights gaps in understanding despite regulatory definitions. The findings stress the need for clearer labeling, with statistical analysis revealing demographic links to awareness.

KEYWORDS

Frozen desserts, Ice cream, Consumer awareness, Branding, Health perceptions, Palm oil, Sustainability, Kwality Milk Foods, Sona, Ethical consumption

INTRODUCTION

The Indian frozen dessert and ice cream industry has undergone a dramatic transformation, driven by innovation, branding, and consumer demand. However, a significant number of consumers remain unaware of the critical differences between ice cream (made with dairy fat) and frozen desserts (made with vegetable oils like palm oil). This lack of awareness leads to confusion in purchasing decisions, compounded by aggressive marketing and ambiguous labeling. The study focuses on the Sona brand from KMFL to assess how consumers perceive and respond to these product distinctions.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- Assess consumer awareness and misconceptions about frozen desserts vs. ice cream.
- Analyze how health perceptions, taste, price, and branding influence purchase decisions.
- Investigate the impact of labeling, marketing, and demographic factors.
- Explore consumer concerns related to ethical sourcing and environmental sustainability.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- Consumer understanding of product distinctions.
- Impact of branding and advertisements.
- Demographic effects on preferences.
- Environmental and ethical considerations in purchasing.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Despite regulatory clarity, consumer misconceptions persist regarding frozen desserts and ice cream. There is an increasing demand for transparency, especially concerning health, environmental impact, and ethical sourcing. This study addresses:

- Gaps in consumer knowledge.
- Influence of marketing strategies.
- Importance of health and sustainability in decision-making.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumar, R. (2018)

"Consumer Perception of Ice Cream and Frozen Desserts in Urban Markets" This study explored consumer perceptions in urban India, particularly focusing on how packaging, labeling, and flavor preferences influenced purchasing decisions. Kumar found a notable lack of awareness regarding the use of vegetable oil in frozen desserts, which many mistook for dairy-based ice cream. The research emphasized the need for transparent labeling and consumer education campaigns.

Sharma, A. & Iyer, P. (2019)

"Taste vs. Health: The Tug of War in Frozen Dessert Choices" This study delved into the health implications associated with frozen desserts compared to traditional dairy ice creams. The authors highlighted how consumer decisions are driven by taste and price rather than nutritional value. However, a segment of health-conscious consumers showed preference for ice cream due to its perceived natural composition.

Banerjee, S. (2017)

"Role of Branding in Consumer Ice Cream Preferences" Banerjee's research examined how brand loyalty impacts consumer behavior in the frozen dessert sector. The study indicated that strong branding and consistent advertising could override consumers' health concerns or lack of clarity regarding product ingredients. Companies like Amul and Kwality Walls were identified as market leaders benefiting from this trend.

Rao, V. & Thomas, J. (2020)

"Consumer Awareness of Food Labeling in India" This paper focused on the extent to which Indian consumers read and understand food labels. It concluded that while awareness is improving, a large percentage of consumers still do not understand the difference between ingredients like milk fat and vegetable oil, which leads to misinformed purchasing.

Deshpande, R. (2016)

"Frozen Desserts: A Growing Trend in Indian Markets" Deshpande explored market trends showing a steady rise in the consumption of frozen desserts. The research found that affordability and wider flavor options contributed to their popularity, especially among younger consumers. However, concerns were raised about ethical ingredients and palm oil usage.

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design using a cross-sectional survey method. It seeks to capture the current state of consumer understanding and preferences related to frozen desserts and ice cream. It is both descriptive (capturing general behavior and trends) and analytical (testing relationships between variables like demographics and awareness).

Source of Data

Primary data:

Collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents (digital and in-person). Topics covered include ingredient awareness, branding impact, health perceptions, and ethical concerns.

Secondary data:

sourced from academic journals, market research reports, government publications (FSSAI), and company reports from KMFL.

HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis 1:

H₀ (Null): There is no significant difference in consumer awareness across different demographics.

H₁ (Alternative): There is a significant difference in consumer awareness across different demographics.

CHI-SQUARE TEST

Cell	Calculation	Value
Under 18/Yes	$(1-1.32)^2/1.32(1-1.32)^2/1.32$	0.078
Under 18/No	$(5-4.38)^2/4.38(5-4.38)^2/4.38$	0.089
18–25/Yes	$(18-13.64)^2/13.64(18-13.64)^2/13.64$	1.39
18–25/No	$(40-45.26)^2/45.26(40-45.26)^2/45.26$	0.61

INTERPRETATION

The Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 6.92$, $df = 8$, $\alpha = 0.05$) shows no significant association between age group and awareness, as $\chi^2 < \text{critical value (15.51)}$. Thus, we fail to reject H₀, indicating awareness is independent of age group.

Hypothesis 2:

H₀: Health and sustainability concerns do not impact purchase decisions.

H₁: Health and sustainability concerns do impact purchase decisions.

LOGISTIC REGRESSION

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Odds Ratio (e^{β})	p-value
Intercept (β_0)	-0.26	0.77	0.30
Income Group (β_1)	0.42	1.52	0.02

INTERPRETATION

Logistic regression shows a significant positive relationship ($\beta_1 = 0.42$, $p = 0.02$) between income and belief that ice cream is healthier. Thus, higher-income consumers are 1.5× more likely per income level to hold this belief, supporting H₁.

FINDINGS

- **Dominant Age Group:** 62% of respondents are aged 18–25, making them the primary survey audience.
- **Gender Split:** Males (58%) slightly outnumber females (42%), indicating moderate gender imbalance.
- **Location Preference:** 45% of respondents are from semi-urban areas, marking them as key markets.
- **Income Segment:** 55% earn ₹20,000–₹50,000 monthly, showing a middle-income target base.
- **Awareness Gap:** 74% are unaware of the ice cream vs. frozen dessert distinction.

- **Ingredient Knowledge:** 80% correctly identify dairy in ice cream; 12% mistakenly choose vegetable oil.
- **Label Checking:** 45% check ingredient lists occasionally; 28% never check.
- **Purchase Drivers:** Brand (29%) and price (22%) lead purchase decisions, followed by taste and health.
- **Health Perception:** 56% see ice cream as healthier, while 34% prefer frozen desserts for lower cholesterol.
- **Buying Frequency:** 36% purchase ice cream weekly, showing strong consumer loyalty.
- **Packaging Confusion:** 56% feel misled by frozen dessert packaging resembling ice cream.
- **Eco Hesitation:** 36% wouldn't switch to eco-friendly options, while 34% would consider it.
- **Transparency Demand:** 36% want clearer labeling; 28% favor awareness campaigns.

SUGGESTIONS

- **Youth Focused Marketing:** Engage the 18–25 audience through social media and influencer campaigns.
- **Clear Labeling:** Use bold labels to distinguish ice cream from frozen desserts and reduce confusion.
- **Ingredient Awareness:** Educate consumers on dairy content to correct ingredient misconceptions.
- **Health-Oriented Products:** Offer low-cholesterol and natural dairy options to appeal to health-conscious buyers.
- **Rural Market Expansion:** Strengthen distribution and campaigns in rural areas to reach untapped consumers.
- **Brand Loyalty Programs:** Introduce rewards and partnerships to retain brand-driven customers.
- **Sustainable Appeal:** Link eco-friendly products with health/taste benefits to persuade hesitant buyers.
- **Transparent Labels:** Add QR codes and simplified ingredients to boost consumer trust and engagement.
- **Limited-Time Offers:** Use seasonal deals to convert occasional buyers into regular customers.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights a substantial gap in consumer awareness regarding the differences between frozen desserts and ice cream. Despite regulatory clarity, branding and marketing strategies blur the lines for consumers. As health and ethical concerns rise, there is a growing need for transparent communication and responsible product positioning. The findings provide valuable insights for brands, marketers, and policymakers aiming to align with conscious consumerism.

REFERENCES

- Kumar, R. (2018). Consumer Perception of Ice Cream and Frozen Desserts in Urban Markets.
- Sharma, A., & Iyer, P. (2019). Taste vs. Health: The Tug of War in Frozen Dessert Choices.
- Banerjee, S. (2017). Role of Branding in Consumer Ice Cream Preferences.
- Rao, V., & Thomas, J. (2020). Consumer Awareness of Food Labeling in India.
- Deshpande, R. (2016). Frozen Desserts: A Growing Trend in Indian Markets.
- Mehta, K. (2021). Packaging Influence on Buyer Decisions in FMCG Sector.
- Srinivasan, T. (2015). The Health Factor in Food Product Choices.
- Joshi, A., & Gupta, N. (2022). Sustainability in Consumer Food Choices.
- Pillai, M. (2018). Branding and Consumer Loyalty in South India's Dairy Market.
- Chatterjee, D. (2020). Advertising Ethics and Food Marketing.