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M Anna Anandh
Professor and Head, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), Department of Livestock Products Technology, Veterinary College and Research Institute, Orathanadu, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu, India

G Gawdaman
Assistant Professor, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), Department of Livestock Products Technology, Veterinary College and Research Institute, Orathanadu, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu, India

M Prema
PG Scholar, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), Department of Livestock Products Technology, Veterinary College and Research Institute, Orathanadu, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu, India

R Karthick
PG Scholar, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), Department of Livestock Products Technology, Veterinary College and Research Institute, Orathanadu, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu, India

Corresponding Author:
M Anna Anandh
Professor and Head, Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS), Department of Livestock Products Technology, Veterinary College and Research Institute, Orathanadu, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu, India

Perception of consumers on acceptance of Desi Chicken meat consumption in the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu

M Anna Anandh, G Gawdaman, M Prema and R Karthick

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Abstract

The present study was made to evaluate consumer perceptions and utilization patterns of desi chicken meat among 605 rural households in the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu using structured interviews and descriptive statistical analysis. Universal prior consumption (100 per cent) indicated strong cultural acceptance of desi chicken meat among respondents. Awareness regarding its nutritional value was observed among 67.43% of consumers, while 89.58% preferred consumption throughout the year. Monthly consumption was the most common pattern (38.67%), followed by twice-weekly and once-weekly consumption. Most respondents (82.97%) preferred whole-carass utilization and curry preparation was identified as the predominant culinary practice (69.91%). Premium market price and irregular supply were recognized as the major constraints affecting consumption. Overall, the findings highlight the increasing demand for native chicken meat because of its superior sensory qualities and perceived organic value, emphasizing the need to strengthen production systems, marketing infrastructure and supply chain management to meet changing consumer preferences.

Keywords: Desi chicken, consumer perception, native chicken meat, consumption pattern, rural households, Tamil Nadu

Introduction

Poultry meat is one of the major sources of animal protein in India because of its high nutritional value, affordability and wide consumer acceptance. Among poultry products, desi (native) chicken has gained a premium market due to its distinct flavour, lean meat characteristics, perceived medicinal value and suitability for traditional culinary preparations. Native chickens are primarily reared under extensive backyard or free-range production systems with minimal external inputs, thereby contributing significantly to rural livelihoods and regional food security. In recent years, increasing health consciousness and consumer preference for organic and traditionally raised livestock products have contributed to a substantial rise in native poultry production across India. Previous studies have reported that consumer preference for poultry meat is influenced by factors such as price, availability, cultural preferences and sensory attributes. Balusamy and Rajendran (2017)^[2] identified taste and cooking convenience as important determinants influencing poultry consumption behaviour in South India, while Mahiuddin *et al.* (2008)^[4] observed greater consumer preference for desi chicken products over broiler meat because of perceived health benefits and superior meat quality. In the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu, desi chicken occupies an important place in the regional food culture. However, limited scientific information is available regarding consumer perception and acceptance of native chicken meat in this region. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to evaluate the perceptions, consumption habits and acceptance patterns of native chicken meat among rural households in the Cauvery Delta region.

Materials and Methods

Study area

The study was conducted in the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu, which predominantly consists of rural agricultural households where desi chicken meat forms an important component of traditional dietary practices.

Selection of respondents

A total of 605 rural households were selected randomly for the study. Respondents included household heads and family members actively involved in purchasing decisions and food preparation.

Data collection

Primary data were collected through direct personal interviews using a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule. Information regarding awareness of nutritive value, seasonal preference, frequency of consumption, meat portion preference, utilization pattern and constraints faced by consumers was obtained.

Statistical analysis

The collected data were analyzed and tabulated using descriptive statistical methods such as percentages, frequencies and ratios.

Results and Discussion

Awareness regarding nutritive value of desi chicken meat

The results of the present study indicated that 67.43% of respondents were aware of the nutritional value of desi chicken meat, whereas 32.57% lacked such awareness. The comparatively higher level of awareness among rural consumers may be attributed to increasing health consciousness and long-standing cultural beliefs regarding the therapeutic and nutritional benefits of native chicken meat. These findings are consistent with the observations of

Kathiravan and Chitrambigai (2024) ^[3], who reported that consumer preference for native chicken meat was largely influenced by its perceived nutritional superiority and organic low-input production system. Similar findings were reported by Monisha *et al.* (2021) ^[7], who observed an increasing consumer preference for free-range country chicken because of its perceived nutritional benefits and health-promoting properties. In addition, Anusha Bai *et al.* (2022) ^[1] reported that consumer acceptance of native chicken meat was strongly associated with its carcass characteristics, particularly leanness, distinct flavour, and lower intramuscular fat content.

Seasonal preference for consumption

The majority of respondents (89.58%) preferred consuming desi chicken meat throughout the year, whereas only a small proportion consumed it mainly during festivals and special occasions. This consistent consumption pattern reflects the strong cultural integration and regular dietary importance of native chicken meat among rural households. These findings are consistent with the observations of Scudiero *et al.* (2023) ^[8], who reported that poultry consumption in India has shown continuous growth due to changing lifestyles, improved market accessibility and increasing social acceptance. In addition, Balusamy and Rajendran (2017) ^[2] highlighted that poultry meat maintained strong consumer acceptance in South India because of the absence of major religious restrictions and its compatibility with regional culinary traditions.

Table 1: Perception of consumers on acceptance of desi chicken meat consumption

Particulars	Frequency (n=605)	Percentage (%)
Knowledge about nutritive value		
Aware	408	67.43
Not aware	197	32.56
Seasonal preference		
Throughout the year	542	89.58
Summer	36	5.95
Winter	18	2.97
Rainy season	9	1.48
Frequency of consumption		
Once in a month	234	38.67
Twice in a week	171	28.26
Once in a week	102	16.85
Preferred meat portion		
Entire carcass	502	82.97
Breast portion	71	11.73
Leg portion	32	5.28
Utilization pattern		
Curry preparation	423	69.91
Fried products	144	23.80
Biryani	38	6.28
Constraints faced		
High price	197	32.56
Non-availability	196	32.39
No constraints	212	35.04

Note: Total respondents: 605 rural households; Frequency values were calculated based on percentage distribution and rounded to the nearest whole number.

Frequency of consumption

Regarding frequency of consumption, monthly consumption was the most common pattern (38.67%), followed by

consumption twice a week (28.26%) and once a week (16.85%). This regular consumption pattern indicates strong consumer preference and sustained demand for desi chicken meat despite its comparatively higher market price. These findings are consistent with the observations of Manish *et al.* (2024) ^[5], who reported that households in North Bengaluru maintained regular consumption of backyard

poultry because of its superior taste and perceived nutritional value. Similar findings were reported by Mahiuddin *et al.* (2008) ^[4], who observed that desi chicken meat exhibited higher consumer preference and more frequent consumption than commercial broiler meat because of its perceived superior flavour and health benefits.

Preference for meat portions

The majority of respondents (82.97%) preferred purchasing or utilizing the whole carcass rather than specific cuts or portioned meat products. This preference reflects the traditional culinary practices commonly followed in rural households, where whole-bird preparation forms an important part of the local food culture. Such consumption behavior indicates the strong influence of traditional cooking practices on carcass utilization patterns and meat purchasing preferences at the retail level. These findings are consistent with the observations of Balusamy and Rajendran (2017) ^[2], who reported that South Indian consumers generally preferred poultry products that suited regional cooking methods and culinary traditions. The authors further noted that whole-carcass utilization was particularly common during family gatherings, communal dining, and festive occasions.

Utilization pattern of desi chicken meat

With respect to culinary utilization, curry preparation was the predominant method of consumption (69.91%), followed by fried products and biryani preparation. The higher preference for curry-based preparations reflects traditional rural dietary practices, cultural familiarity, and consumer preference for the flavour characteristics developed through slow-cooking methods. These findings are consistent with the observations of Balusamy and Rajendran (2017) ^[2], who reported that chicken curry and highly spiced meat preparations were the most preferred poultry dishes among South Indian consumers. The unique textural properties and flavour profile of native chicken meat may further contribute to its suitability for traditional simmering methods and regional spice-based culinary preparations, thereby enhancing overall consumer acceptance.

Constraints Faced by Consumers

Market premium and sporadic availability emerged as the primary structural constraints limiting the purchase and consumption of *desi* poultry. While consumer preference remains strongly anchored to the distinct flavor and premium perceived quality of native chicken, its regular dietary inclusion is restricted by retail affordability and a fractured supply chain. These economic barriers align closely with the data presented by Monisha *et al.* (2021) ^[7], who identified retail pricing as the primary hurdle restricting consumer acquisition of free-range country chicken across Tamil Nadu. Kathiravan and Chitrabigai (2024) ^[3] reported that, localized pricing disparities and volatile market volumes actively undermine consumer accessibility and long-term market sustainability for native breeds. In addition, our observations reflect the macroeconomic analysis of Scudiero *et al.* (2023) ^[8], which established that supply-side deficiencies specifically farm-gate price fluctuations, transport logistics and localized distribution barriers remain the definitive factors governing contemporary poultry consumption metrics throughout India.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates a strong positive consumer consensus and a high level of acceptance toward desi chicken meat among rural households in the Cauvery Delta region of Tamil Nadu. Respondents widely associated native poultry meat with superior taste, desirable texture, high nutritional value, cultural preservation, and wholesome rearing environments. Preference for desi chicken was also strongly influenced by its suitability for traditional culinary preparations and its perceived health benefits. The consistent year-round demand for native chicken meat further reflects its deep cultural and dietary significance within rural communities. These findings highlight the considerable potential for promoting sustainable backyard poultry farming systems, which can contribute to improved rural livelihoods, enhanced nutritional security, and expanded market opportunities for indigenous poultry production.

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