

A Comparative Study of Food Consumption Pattern in Urban and Rural Maharashtra: with Reference to Pune District

Dr. Vishal Bhaware¹, Dr. Anil Adsule²

¹Assistant Professor, St. Vincent College of Commerce, Pune-411037, Maharashtra, India.

²Principal, St. Vincent College of Commerce, Pune-411037, Maharashtra, India.

Abstract

The present study is an attempt to comparative analyzes the food consumption pattern in Urban and Rural Maharashtra. An inquiry has been made to find whether there is any change in the consumption of food and non-food items among different Income groups. Differences in the category, quantity, mode of purchase, place, and frequency of purchase are also analyzed. The changes that have taken place during 2013-2023 are highlighted. The study also analyses the nature of the rural-urban divide with regard to the consumption pattern of households.

Keywords: Food, Nutrition, Consumption Pattern.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human life is nourished and sustained by consumption. The abundance of consumption is the lifeblood of human development. The consumer is the king or sovereign in the economic empire. Consumption habits and patterns are determined by a complex set of socioeconomic, cultural, religious, psychological, ethical, and environmental factors. Typically, a country's consumption pattern reveals a clear picture of its standard of living, poverty level, human development, and the nature of its economic growth. Amidst several socioeconomic, demographic, and geographic characteristics that make the state distinct, consumption is a factor that stands out. Competitive spending and conspicuous consumption have become the order of the day. Demonstrative and luxurious consumption has resulted in heavy financial commitment for the people. Unable to pay back the loans taken from individuals and financial institutions, many are driven to suicide. During the last few decades, dramatic changes have taken place in habits, items, and the quantum of food consumption. There has also been a change in the lifestyle of the people. Household equipment like the mixer, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, fridges, etc, and facilities like lifts & elevators, automobiles, flats, mobile phones, etc. have contributed to the decreased activity levels in all age groups. The increased food intake coupled with a sedentary lifestyle, restricted play areas, unregulated TV watching, etc have resulted in an increased incidence of overweight and obesity.

Objectives:

1. To study the existing food consumption pattern of rural and urban households in the Pune district.
2. To trace the item-wise existing consumption pattern of food and non-food items in the Pune district and also to find out the specific reasons behind it.

4. To analyze the consumption pattern in rural and urban areas and also by the income of households.

Hypotheses:

There are wide rural-urban differences in the existing consumption pattern of households.

There is a significant association between the levels of income groups of the household with food consumption patterns.

Methodology and Data Sources

The study is both empirical and descriptive. Primary and secondary data are made use of in the analysis. Primary data has been collected with 980 samples from Pune districts and secondary data from books, research journals, periodicals, newspapers, various issues of RBI bulletin, Economic Reviews, Census Reports, Reports of NSSO and Central and State Statistical Organizations, different websites, etc. The prices of the commodities were collected from Economics and Statistics Department.

Limitations of the Study

The present study is limited to the Pune districts of central Maharashtra. The existing consumption pattern during the period 2013 to 2023 is analyzed. The data collected may have errors due to memory lapse and the reluctance of the respondents to give the correct information regarding the past 10 years and also the hesitation of a few to disclose their income, savings, asset holdings, etc. It was very difficult to collect the actual data on expenditures for previous years.

Sample Design & Data Collection

A multistage sampling procedure has been adopted for selecting sample households. In the first stage, Districts from central Maharashtra, Pune are selected - they exhibit the rural and urban trends in the consumption pattern of Maharashtra. Factors such as industrialization, urbanization, Gulf migration, mushrooming of shops, increasing sales of vehicles, consumer durables, etc. influence consumerism which is manifested in abundance in Pune. The sample size (980) is based on Income groups in the rural and urban areas of the districts. 980 households are selected from the district. These households are selected from the food supply department list using a systematic random sampling procedure. An interview schedule has been prepared and pretested for the collection of data from the sample households for 10 years. Out of the 10 sections of the interview schedule, 1 to 7 deal with the socio-economic and demographic profiles of the households.

Data Management and Analysis

Statistical package of social science (SPSS) is employed for the analysis of data and testing of hypothesis. Simple statistical tools like simple averages and percentages, and various tests like- The chi-square test, Paired t-test, and z-test have been used. Factor analysis has also been used.

Major Findings

The NSSO data reveal that in Maharashtra during the 70s the share of food in total expenditure was as high as 70.04% and 64.85% in rural land and urban areas respectively.

But it showed a declining trend from 1983 onwards. Different components in the food basket show almost similar trends in both Maharashtra and the whole of India. However, the monthly expenditure on non-food items has increased.

Item-wise Changes in Consumption Pattern

It is found that the total expenditure on food and non-food items has increased over the years. During a period of ten years, between 2013 -2023, a change in consumption took place in both food and non-food items. As regards food consumption meat, egg, fish, milk and milk products, tea, coffee, etc. have turned into preferred items as evidenced by their increased consumption in 2023. Non-food items such as petrol and diesel, recreational expenses, social obligations, etc. have increased substantially in 2023.

Area-wise Changes in Consumption Pattern

The percentage increase in food and non-food expenditure in rural areas remains more or less the same in both periods, but in an urban area, the increase is more in favor of non-food items. With the food basket, a change is visible in rural areas from cereals to non-cereal items such as fish, meat, egg, fruits, milk, and milk products which show consumers have shifted to healthy nutritious items of consumption. Similarly, among the non-food items, expenditure on petrol/ diesel/ LPG, education, and recreational expenses increased more than twofold in 2023. In the urban sector also substantial increase is noticed in all items. Thus a shift is visible in the consumption pattern of both rural and urban households from food to non-food items and the change is more pronounced among urban dwellers.

Changes by Economic Categories

Among the BPL category, the proportion of food expenditure to total expenditure has increased only marginally in 2023 whereas non-food expenditure remains more or less the same. In the case of APL categories, the share of food and non-food items in total expenditure has increased by 4% and 5% respectively in 2023.

Association between Profile of the Household and Changing Consumption Pattern:

The consumption pattern of any household is determined by factors like size, income, education, etc. It is seen that the consumption pattern of the households has changed as a result of the increase in income. The monthly income of households has increased in 2023 when compared to 2013 similarly expenditure on food and non-food items increased respectively in 2023. So it is found that there is an association between income and the consumption pattern. Similarly, the consumption pattern of the households has changed as a result of changes in the size of the household and age composition.

Changes and Reasons in the Category of Consumption:

There are mainly three categories of food- packaged, non-packaged, and home produced. When compared to 2020 increasing use of packaged goods is seen in 2023 in rice, other cereals, gram, pulses, sugar, salt, condiments and spices, edible oils, milk and milk products tea, coffee, etc. 5.3% of the households used packaged meat in 2012 which has increased to 8.5% in 2023. In the case of fish, none of the households used packaged one in 2020 but in 2023 4.4% of the households used the same. The same trend is visible in rural and urban

regions and also among the BPL and APL categories. No wide rural-urban difference is visible in the category of food items consumed. Change in the taste of the household members is the main reason behind the change in the category. Change in the level of income, seeking a better quality of product, lack of home production, convenience, and labor effectiveness of new products are the other reasons for changing the category of food items.

Quantity of Purchase

It is seen that a significant difference is visible in the number of purchases between 2013 and 2020. In the case of cereals, the average quantity of purchase increased by more than 36% in 2020, whereas cereal substitutes increased only by 26.3%. A notable increase is visible in the case of noncereal items such as meat, fish, egg, fruits, vegetables, etc. No rural-urban difference is noticed regarding the number of purchases. The quantity of purchase of tea and coffee declined in the APL category in 2020.

Changes and reasons in the Expenditure pattern of households: Food and Non-food items

a) Food items:

Expenditure on all food items has shown a substantial increase during the period 2020 in both rural and urban areas and among the BPL and APL categories. Paired t-test shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the expenditure on all food items between 2020. Change in the taste of the household members is the main reason behind the change in the consumption pattern of major food items. Changes in age composition, craving for better health, change in price, level of income, lifestyle, and a better standard of living are the other prominent reasons for the changing expenditure pattern of households between 2020 and 2023.

Place of purchase

The majority of the households shifted their purchase preference from local stores, Government owned shops, PDS, and the open market to the supermarket and cooperative stores in 2020. The same trend is visible in rural and in urban regions. Among the BPL category, purchases from PDS, Government shops, and cooperative stores have shown a declining tendency in 2020. Among the APL category, a shift is visible in favor of margin free market.

Frequency of purchase

With regard to the frequency of purchase majority of the households preferred to purchase major food items most frequently i.e. weekly, fortnightly, daily, and as per convenience. In the rural area weekly and fortnightly purchase has increased. The monthly purchase has been declined for certain items. In the urban area, no significant difference is observed in items such as gram, pulses, sugar, salt, spices, condiments, edible oil, fish, coconut, fruits, vegetables milk and milk products beverages, and other food items. Monthly purchases declined in cereals and cereal substitutes. The daily purchase has shown a decreasing trend in the purchase of meat, tea, and coffee in 2020. Only an increasing trend is visible in the weekly purchase of food from outside. Among the BPL and APL categories, the monthly purchase has shown a decreasing trend, while fortnightly, weekly, and daily purchases have shown an in 2023.

Mode of Purchase

Regarding the mode of purchase, no significant difference is visible regarding cash purchases, personal loans, exchanges, and others between 2020 and 2023. It is found that the credit purchase system which was more prominent in 2020 in certain commodities, showed a declining trend in 2023. No significant difference is visible in cash purchases, credit/debit cards, personal loans, and exchanges in both periods in the rural area. Similarly, in the urban area credit purchase showed a declining trend in 2023. There is no significant difference in the mode of purchase between the two periods. Among the BPL category, cash purchase is more dominant. Among the APL category, the credit purchase system was more prominent in 2020, but it showed a declining trend in 2023. Credit and debit card mode of purchase has shown an increasing trend in 2023.

Changes and Reasons in the Expenditure Pattern of Households

(b) Non-food items.

The paired t-test results show that expenditure on non-food items has shown a significant difference and it has more than doubled in 2020. Expenditure on petrol/ diesel/ LPG, education has increased in the rural region whereas expenditure on petrol/diesel/LPG has increased substantially in the urban region. Items like petrol/diesel, housing, and recreation expenditure have increased among the BPL category in 2020, while expenditure on education and petrol/diesel has increased among the APL category. Change in the price is the major reason for the change in the expenditure of the households. Changes in income and the lifestyle of the households, influence of advertisement, desire for upkeep status in the society, consideration for better health and better living standard, etc. are the other reasons for the changing consumption pattern of non-food items.

Place of Purchase

People shifted their place of purchase from a local store and supermarket to margin-free markets and cooperative stores in 2023. No significant difference is visible among the rural and urban and also among the BPL and APL categories in the place of purchase.

Frequency of Purchase

In the case of the frequency of purchase of non-food items, it is seen that the purchasing behavior of the households has shifted from yearly/half yearly, quarterly, monthly to fortnightly, weekly, daily, and as per convenience in 2023.

Suggestions

Efforts should be directed towards improving the income earning capacity of the households as current income is a major determinant of consumer expenditure. Particularly people belonging to the middle-income group need to be motivated to increase their level of savings rather than spending lavishly on luxurious items. Consumerism in its growing phases without a corresponding increase in income becomes a major drain on limited resources. Consumerism would continue to exert pressure on the precious but shrinking natural resources. Though consumption has increased our welfare, it is not sustainable as it entails a lot of adverse effects which need urgent attention in the Maharashtra context. Awareness regarding precious and depleting resources must be created. There is a need for state

intervention through the adoption of stringent measures to safeguard environmental and ecological balance. Unlimited consumption will lead to too much debt for the households which adversely affect the welfare of the people. Awareness among people for pursuing a balanced spending habit is the need of the hour. Eating culture has changed over the years. Fast food, restaurant meals, easy availability of all items, and lack of time tempt people to opt for readymade food. The increased food intake coupled with a sedentary lifestyle has resulted in the incidence of overweight, obesity, and lifestyle diseases. Hence guidelines for healthy eating habits are necessary so that people can consume better quality food items for a better life.

2. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that there has been a significant existing consumption pattern of households in 2023 in the Pune District of Maharashtra. A significant increase is visible in the quantity and expenditure on both food and non-food items among the rural and urban households and also among the BPL and APL categories. The composition of the consumption basket has been changed in favor of non-food items. A significant shift in the consumption of food baskets from cereals to non-cereal items has been observed both in rural and urban areas and among the BPL and APL households. Changes in price, the taste of the household members, income, size, and age composition of the households, etc. are the main reasons behind the changing consumption pattern of households. The study reveals that a shift has taken place in the category; place of the purchase; mode and frequency of purchase, majority of the households have changed their category from non-packaged to package one and shifted their purchase preference from local stores, open market, and door delivery to supermarket and margin free market. Yearly, half-yearly, monthly, and quarterly purchase has shown a declining tendency while fortnightly, weekly, and convenience purchase has increased. The use of credit/ debit cards increased in the period covered. Changes in lifestyle and standard of living, pressure from colleagues and neighbors, craving for recognition and acceptance from others, etc. are the major psycho-social factors that influence consumers in purchasing commodities.

3. REFERENCES

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