

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS MARKETING IN INDIA: HAAT TO ONLINE

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Abstract

Livestock product marketing has evolved alongside socio-economic development, shifting from localized, trust-based exchanges to technologically advanced, consumer-centric systems. Traditionally, milk, meat, eggs and poultry were marketed as undifferentiated commodities through informal village markets, relying on personal trust and freshness. Industrialization, urbanization and retail expansion transformed marketing toward organized supply chains, standardized products, branding and packaging. Subsequent emphasis on food safety, certification and traceability strengthened quality-driven marketing approaches. In recent years, digitalization, ethical concerns and the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online platforms, direct-to-consumer models and transparency-oriented strategies. Understanding this evolutionary trajectory is crucial for developing resilient, inclusive and sustainable livestock value chains.

Keywords: Livestock products, Marketing, India, Haat, Online

Introduction

The livestock sector plays a vital role in agricultural economies providing nutritional security, income generation and supporting livelihood. Livestock products such as milk, meat, eggs and poultry are key sources of high-quality animal protein and essential nutrients, making their efficient marketing crucial for food systems. Traditionally, livestock product marketing was characterized by localized, informal and trust-based supply chains with minimal product differentiation. Surplus fresh meat was converted to meat products using the preservation technologies such as curing, smoking, drying and marketed in a new product form with an extended shelf life and surplus milk was converted as desi milk products such as curd, butter, ghee and indigenous sweets like khoa, gulab jamun. Over time, urbanization, technological advancements and changing consumer preferences have transformed livestock marketing into organized, value-oriented and consumer-centric systems. Understanding the evolution of marketing strategies from traditional to modern systems is essential for developing efficient livestock value chains (Reardon *et al.*, 2003).

Evolution phase (Before 1950): The Era of Local Trust and Commodity Trade

“Before brands existed, trust itself was the strongest marketing strategy.”

In the early period, marketing of livestock products such as milk, meat, eggs and poultry was predominantly localized and informal, with producers selling directly to consumers through village markets, wet markets and door-to-door distribution systems. Livestock products were marketed as undifferentiated commodities and consumer choice was largely influenced by availability, freshness and price rather than branding or quality differentiation (Phillips *et al.*, 2011). Milk marketing relied heavily on immediate consumption due to the absence of

refrigeration, while meat and poultry were sold fresh through local butchers and slaughter slabs located near consumption areas (Wilkins *et al.*, 2002). Eggs and poultry were often sold live, allowing consumers to visually assess quality and health, which substituted for formal quality assurance mechanisms. Trust played a central role in marketing, as repeated interactions between farmers, traders and consumers established reputation-based assurance systems.

Advertising channels used: Word-of-mouth communication, personal relationships, community reputation and visual inspection at point of sale.

Transition Phase (1950-1970): Industrialization and Market Expansion

“Industrialization transformed livestock products from village goods into urban necessities.”

Post-independence and post-war periods marked the beginning of industrialization in livestock production and marketing systems, particularly in dairy and poultry sectors. Technological advancements such as pasteurization, chilling, refrigerated transport, and centralized slaughterhouses enabled livestock products to be marketed beyond local boundaries (Lawrence *et al.*, 2001). Milk marketing started shifting trend from household supply to organized procurement through dairy cooperatives and collection centers, improving market access for small producers which paved the way for white revolution (Kurien *et al.*, 2007). Meat and poultry marketing adopted standardized weights and cuts, facilitating wholesale trade and institutional consumption. Marketing strategies during this period emphasized volume, affordability and uniformity rather than consumer segmentation or differentiation (Phillips *et al.*, 2011).

Advertising channels used: Print media, government extension bulletins, cooperative notice boards and public procurement announcement.

Commercialization Phase (1970-1990): Rise of Supermarkets and Packaged Products

“Packaging turned livestock products from raw foods into retail experiences.”

Commercialization made the fresh market and wholesale market more popular through supermarkets and the expansion of supermarkets and modern retail outlets significantly altered livestock product marketing by introducing packaged and processed formats (Reardon *et al.*, 2003). Milk marketing diversified into pasteurized, toned and standardized milk, while value-added products such as butter, cheese and yoghurt gained prominence (Grunert *et al.*, 1996). Meat and poultry marketing shifted toward standardized cuts, frozen products and ready-to-cook formats to suit urban lifestyles (Verbeke *et al.*, 2005). Packaging emerged as a critical marketing tool, conveying information on hygiene, shelf life and handling practices (Robertson *et al.*, 1993). Brand names began influencing purchasing decisions, reducing dependence on personal trust and increasing reliance on perceived brand quality (Kotler *et al.*, 2009).

Advertising channels used: Television advertisements, newspapers, in-store displays, posters, and point-of-purchase promotions.

Quality-Driven Phase (1990-2010): Certification, Safety and Brand Positioning

“Quality assurance became the language through which trust was marketed.”

Growing concerns over food safety, zoonoses and product adulteration reshaped livestock marketing strategies toward quality assurance and risk communication (Henson *et al.*, 2001). Certification systems such as HACCP, ISO standards and veterinary inspection marks became integral components of marketing claims for milk, meat and poultry products (Unnevehr *et al.*, 2005). Traceability and origin labeling allowed marketers to differentiate products based on production systems, geographical identity and processing standards (Verbeke *et al.*, 2005). Egg marketing increasingly emphasized

cleanliness, shell integrity and grading systems, reflecting rising consumer quality awareness. Brand positioning strategies focused on safety, reliability, and consistency to build long-term consumer loyalty (Kotler *et al.*, 2009).

Advertising channels used: Television commercials, food magazines, retail branding, certification logos, and institutional advertising.

Consumer-Centric Phase (2010-Present): Digital, Ethical and Experience-Based Marketing

“Today’s livestock marketing sells values, not just products.”

Recent marketing strategies prioritize consumer preferences related to health, convenience, sustainability and animal welfare (Tonsor *et al.*, 2016). Transfer of scientific information through digitalization and smart phones increased the awareness and health / fitness consciousness among the common public. Milk marketing increasingly highlights attributes such as organic production, A2 milk, low-fat content and functional benefits (Grunert *et al.*, 2014). Meat and poultry marketing focuses on freshness, antibiotic-free claims, humane handling and protein content to appeal to health-conscious consumers (Verbeke *et al.*, 2010). Digital platforms such as e-commerce portals, mobile apps and social media have enabled direct producer-to-consumer communication and storytelling (Kaplan *et*

al., 2010). Technologies such as QR codes, blockchain and smart labels enhance transparency by providing real-time information on origin, safety and handling. Online marketing initially functioned as a complementary channel, supporting home delivery of dairy products, branded meat and packaged eggs in urban markets.

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point, as lockdowns, mobility restrictions and closure of wet markets, disrupted traditional supply chains and rapidly increased reliance on online platforms for livestock product procurement. During the pandemic peak, consumers shifted toward app-based ordering, subscription milk delivery services and e-commerce platforms offering hygienically processed meat, poultry and eggs, reflecting heightened concerns about food safety and physical contact (OECD *et al.*, 2021). Online marketing strategies emphasized contactless delivery, digital payments, traceability and assurances related to hygiene, cold-chain integrity and veterinary inspection (Unnevehr *et al.*, 2005). Digital branding, social media advertising and mobile notifications became key tools for maintaining consumer trust and market continuity during supply chain disruptions (Kaplan *et al.*, 2010). Post-pandemic, many of these online marketing practices have become permanent, positioning digital platforms as an integral component of modern livestock product marketing systems rather than a temporary crisis response.

Advertising channels used: Social media marketing, influencer campaigns, mobile applications, websites, QR-based information access and digital storytelling.

Period	Marketing Focus	Key Characteristics of Livestock Products	Main Promotion Channel
1900–1950	Trust & locality	Loose sale, no branding, fresh/live products, local markets	Word-of-mouth
1950–1970	Scale & uniformity	Cooperatives, chilling, standard weights, bulk supply	Print & extension
1970–1990	Retail & branding	Packaging, supermarkets, processed forms	TV & in-store
1990–2010	Quality & safety	Certification, traceability, branded assurance	Labels & mass media
2010–till date	Consumer & digital	Ethical claims, e-commerce, QR codes, online marketing	Social & digital

Future	Tech & sustainability	D2C, smart labels, climate-smart branding	AI & data platforms
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Future Trends and Challenges in Livestock Product Marketing

“The future of livestock marketing lies at the intersection of technology, trust and inclusivity.”

Future marketing strategies are expected to integrate digital traceability, sustainability metrics and personalized nutrition solutions (OECD *et al.*, 2020). Direct-to-consumer models and platform-based marketplaces are likely to reduce intermediaries and improve producer margins. However, challenges such as cold-chain gaps, digital exclusion of smallholders, high certification costs and regulatory compliance remain significant (Birtal *et al.*, 2015). Balancing transparency, affordability and inclusiveness will determine the success of future livestock marketing systems. AI-driven marketing, block chain-enabled labeling, personalized digital promotions and

sustainability certifications (OECD *et al.*, 2020) are the future expected advertising channels to promote transparent marketing of livestock products to all categories of consumers.

Conclusion

“Modern livestock marketing stands at the intersection of tradition and innovation.”

Marketing strategies for livestock products have evolved from localized, trust-based exchanges to sophisticated, technology-enabled and consumer-centric systems. Each phase of transformation reflects broader changes in production systems, consumer awareness and technological capability. Understanding this evolution provides valuable insights for designing resilient, ethical and efficient marketing strategies for milk, meat, eggs and poultry in the future.

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