

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS IN COIMBATORE CITY- AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Instant foods are convenience foods which require minimal preparation, typically just adding water or milk. Some authors define "instant" food as requiring less than five minutes of preparation and "ultra-instant food" as requiring less than one minute. Instant foods are often dehydrated, freeze-dried, or condensed. The word food refers to any substance which is taken into the body to keep it in a healthy condition. A food is a chemical substance which is being consumed to provide nutritional support to the body. It contains essential nutrients that are usually obtained from plants and animals' origin, such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins and minerals. Consumer behaviour refers to the behavior that consumers display in searching for, purchasing using, evaluating and disposing the products and services. Consumer behavior is important in helping to forecast and understand for products as well as brand preference. The present paper highlights the study of consumer behavior regarding instant food products among the consumers. Hence, an attempt has been made to analyse the consumer purchasing frequency for the instant food products. Further efforts have also been made to know the consumer awareness towards products and to analyse factors affecting the moment food items.

Keywords: Instant Food Products, Consumer, Buying Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Food is the first basic need of mankind. It is an essential tool for survival of human race. Food promotes health and is the first basic need for all living creatures. Only when need of the food gets satisfied man moves in search of other needs. The discovery of fire marked a turning point in the process of civilization and man has learned to cook food. During the course of time, the man changed his food habits according to his taste, experience and availability of food materials and changing seasons of the year. So food is considered to be a symbol of hospitality, social status and ritualistic importance. In the changing socio-domestic scenario, both men and women necessarily have to go for employment to augment the household income. Hence cooking food in conventional method is really an ordeal for women. The modern men and women were hard pressed for time. They have to yield themselves for the fast-changing life style which regards cooking and food habits. The advancement of science and technology offered the people to speed up the cooking process in order to cope up with the mechanical life. This makes Instant packed food to hold the substantial position in the market. Instant food can be termed as “foods that have undergone major processing by the manufacturer, such that they require little or no secondary processing and cooking before consumption. The consumer has certain expectation from Instant packed foods in terms of its quality, price, taste, flavor, package and reputation. Instant packed foods do not contain any chemical preservation and it remains shelf-stable without refrigeration for at least one year, for vegetarian Instant food items. Instant foods have become one more option in the home-meal replaced segment along with the conventional options like restaurants, mess/canteen and catering service. The increasing money spent on advertisement make the consumer to be aware of the latest brands in the market. Instant packed foods are in almost all retail outlets, departmental stores and super markets. People can purchase their brands from such shops. Thus, Instant foods offered with several benefits plays a vital role in the lives of many Indian consumers.

At present the catering industries and the manufacturers of these products are on the increase to cope with the demand of the products which are gaining the acceptance and popularity among the modern consumers of India. The first international conference in India on ‘Ready to Eat Food’ reported that the demand for the ready to eat products was increasing in the global market. The exports as well as the domestic market offer a vast scope for the Indian products to excel in the sector. To-day instant food products occupy a legitimate shelf

space in stores and supermarkets in India. By dominating the domestic market, Indian companies enter the market with varieties of instant food products to suit the traditional dishes like 'sambar', 'rasam', 'payasam' and routine foods like 'idly', 'dosai', 'sappathy' and with all types of mixes and masalas. Though the kitchen is the forte of womenfolk, is being now ruled by instant food products.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

“Nothing is permanent except change” a saying goes like this. The kitchen, hitherto a domain of Indian housewives and withstood the storms of change for centuries, is no more an exception to change. The incessant efforts of the marketers of instant food products shaken the country old and traditional bound Indian cooking food products. Indian housewives now are gradually moving towards these products due to socio-economic and cultural changes that are pervading the present-day Indian society. Initially there was a hesitation in accepting these products by Indians. But, to-day the companies have not only changed the lifestyle of urban population but also make deep inroads into rural markets of India. Consumer behavior study in any field being a potential research area, the present one is one such attempt prompt the researcher to analyses the preference and other related issues of research interest in buying the instant cooking food products by consumers residing in the Coimbatore City, Tamil Nadu.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the extent of awareness among consumers towards instant food products.
- To identify the most familiar source that provides information regarding instant products.
- To study the brand preference of instant food products among consumers.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was undertaken with the objective of analyzing the brand awareness and brand preference of women towards instant food products in Coimbatore City. Coimbatore is one of the major Citys in Kerala. The major consumers in the study area are highly influenced by the ever-changing environment of the City. Due to the convenience factor and changes in the lifestyle in this area, women are more positively inclined towards instant food products. Though there were so many instant food products available in the market, most

commonly available and used instant food products in Coimbatore are idli/dosa mix, puttu podi, idiyappom podi, appam mix, pathiri mix, curry powders, curry masalas, payasam mix, etc. So these were selected for the study after discussion with the local women consumers of the study area. For the convenience these Instant Food Products are classified into three categories namely Instant rice products, Curry powders/ masalas and Instant payasam mix.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Author	Year	Focus	Conclusion
Dr. Anu Nagpal Chopra	2014	“Factors affecting purchase behavior of women grocery consumer- An Insight” concluded that the selling process of women take longer than men primarily due to backward spiral during purchase decisions, but the post purchase behaviour of women on a brand/product/service can have huge implication.	Hence it is important for a marketer to provide as much information to a woman buyer as he can because communication plays an integral part in buying decisions. Men rely on their personal assessment while women rely more on personal trust when it comes to buying and are open for inputs at various stages.
M. Bala Swamy et al.	2012	“Buying behaviour of consumers towards instant food products”, a study done at hyderabad city of andhra pradesh state, concluded that all the respondents were aware of pickles and Sambar masala but only 56.67 per cent of respondents were aware of Dosa/Idli mix. About 96.11 per cent consumers of Dosa/Idli mix and more than half of consumers of pickles and Sambar masalas prepared their own.	Low cost of home preparation and differences in tastes were the major reasons for non consumption, whereas ready availability and save time of preparation were the reasons for consuming Instant Food Products.
Dr.Palaneeswari T et al	2013	The fast-moving world, the human beings do not take nutritious food. The study is relevant to present day market condition which is flooded with wide varieties of products, which are open to the consumers. An attempt has been made to identify the important factors that influence the purchase of instant cooking food products.	To analyse the data collected, statistical tools like percentage and factor analysis were employed. The study reveals that influence of global trade cheap and economical price of fast food and emergency of nuclear family are the main reasons that make the respondents to prefer instant food.
K.Srinivasan and R.Nirmala	2014	‘Instant’ is the word which is widely spelt by the modern man	The emergence of metropolitan cities, reduced domestic

		to indicate the completion of any work quickly and thereby saving time and energy. The ever-changing life style of modern man compels him to search for such commodities which can give him better satisfaction in the changing circumstances of his life style. Among the products, "Instant cooking products" (ICFPS) offered by modern business units have revolutionized the day-to-day life modern men by eliminating conventional method of preparing food.	sevensome-folk talking to jobs, increase in the nuclear families, heavy laborious work like grinding manually and other grudging works involved in conventional method of cooking etc, are the factors responsible for the popularity of these products. These articles studies about consumer behaviour towards instant cooking food products in Madurai district, Tamilnadu.
M.Balaswamy et al	2020	Food Products by individual households and to predict the demand for Instant Food Products of Hyderabad city in Andhra Pradesh. The average monthly expenditure on Instant Food Products was found to be highest in higher income groups. The average per capita purchase and per capita expenditure on Instant food Products had a positive relationship with income of households	High price and poor taste were the reasons for not purchasing particular brand whereas best quality, retailers influence and ready availability were considered for preferring particular brand of products by the consumers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- ✓ The Study is limited to only 120 consumers.
- ✓ The survey is conducted only in Coimbatore city.
- ✓ The study has also the limitation of time, place and resources.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION: The present study is based on primary data which was collected using questionnaire method.

SAMPLE SIZE: 120 consumers were selected from Coimbatore city.

STATISTICAL TOOLS: Simple Percentage and Chi Square.

AREA OF THE STUDY: Coimbatore city is selected as the study area.

SAMPLING METHOD: Random sampling method is used for data collection.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

S.No.	Particulars	Factors	Respondents	%	Total
1	Gender	Male	72	60	120
		Female	48	40	
2	Age	Below 25	6	5	120
		26-35	66	55	
		36-45	31	26	
		Above 45	17	14	
3	Education	12th Std	7	6	120
		Arts College	90	75	
		Technical & Professionals	23	19	
4	Income	Up to Rs.20000	18	15	120
		B/W 20001 to 40000	60	50	
		B/W 40001 to 60000	30	25	
		Above 60000	12	10	
5	Occupational Status	Home maker	30	25	120
		Employed	54	45	
		Business	24	20	
		Students	12	10	
6	Awareness about Instant Products	Yes	78	65	120
		No	42	35	
7	Awareness Media	Friends / Brokers	30	25	120
		Newspaper / Television	36	30	
		Magazine / Journal	28	23	
		Others	26	22	
8	Factors Influencing to Buying Instant Food Products	Quality	24	20	120
		Packaging	30	25	
		Advertisement	18	15	
		Convenience	48	40	
9	Instant Food Products Used	Noodles	18	15	120
		Masalas	36	30	
		Soup	24	20	
		Badami Mix	12	10	
		Idli/ Dosa Mix	30	25	
10	Buying Source	Local Shops	18	15	120
		Town Retail Shops	15	13	
		Wholesale Shops	25	21	
		Department Stores	38	32	
		Others	24	20	

- ✓ Majority 60% of the respondents are Male.
- ✓ Majority 55% of the respondents are in the Age category of 26 yrs. To 35 Yrs.
- ✓ Majority 75% of the respondents are Educated from arts college.
- ✓ Majority 50% of the respondents have their Income between 20001 to 40000.
- ✓ Majority 45% of the respondent's occupational status is employed.
- ✓ Majority 65% of the respondents say Yes for Awareness about Investment.
- ✓ Majority 30% of the respondents select Awareness Media as Newspaper/ Television.
- ✓ Majority 40% of the respondents prefer Convenience in Factor Influencing factor.
- ✓ Majority 30% of the respondents prefer Masalas Products.
- ✓ Majority 32% of the respondents prefer Departmental Stores as their buying sources.

CHI-SQUARE TESTS

H₀ - There is no significant difference between gender and factor influencing towards Instant Food Products.

H₁ - There is significant difference between gender and factor influencing towards Instant Food Products.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.000 ^a	3	.002
Likelihood Ratio	21.329	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.219	1	.022
N of Valid Cases	120		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.20.			

Since the p-value is less than our chosen significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), we reject the null hypothesis. Hence, we conclude that there is evidence to suggest an association between gender and factor influencing towards Instant Food Products.

SUGGESTIONS

- Indian consumers are being peculiar in their food habits, that too region to region, the manufacturers may ensure instant food products available for vegetarians and non-vegetarians separately. Region –specific products may also be introduced.
- Advertisements focusing the themes around the ‘comfort and convenience’, ‘taste and quality’, ‘cost’ and ‘health and hygiene’ may be undertaken extensively as they are being the main reasons for the preference of these products.
- As the consumers mostly preferred ‘Departmental Stores’ for buying these products, the manufactures are advised to exploit this outlet as much they could.
- Now a days consumers are much more efficient in saving time and money, they are more authentic towards the hygiene food. The average monthly expenditure of instant food products is highest in most of the cities; sources of information about these products have made the consumers attracted towards it.
- By enabling creative innovations and advertising methods have raised the demand and supply of the instant foods. Thus, concluding the need for instant food products will increase to its high in the coming years.
- Quality, taste and easy availability of the Instant Cooking Food Products should be improved consistently. These things should be ensured by the manufacturers in all areas.
- The manufacturers of Instant cooking Food products should concentrate on research and development in their lines of business to further improve the present products and introduce new products catering to the need of modern consumer.
- Food exhibition may be conducted from time to time to demonstrate the preparation of Instant cooking food products. To ensure hygienic product, quality should be the ensured by manufacturers. Moreover, the manufactures should go for the use of sophisticated machinery and new technology in the production of Instant cooking food products.
- The business organization can issue the product in small lots and also sample product. If so, the consumers can go for testing the product through usage. When more samples are given and made available to the consumer, the consumers will react on it which will give a positive impact on sales.

CONCLUSION

Instant food plays an important role in everyone's day to day life. The food habits in India have changed due to western influence and usage of instant foods also rise. These foods are widely used in catering industries as well as at home. The instant food is famous among the working people and the persons who are living alone because of their working circumstances. From the study I finally concluded that in maximum occasions buying decision of instant foods was made by their own and they not yet depend on others for choosing the product. As a sales promotion activity the importance and awareness towards these products should be created through various media or literatures to target all group of people.

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