

A STUDY ON CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS INSTANT FOODS

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ABSTRACT

Food is an essential part of any living being. Food is the substance consumed to provide nutritional value and support to all the living organisms. In the present scenario, the consumer habits and buying behaviour has changed dramatically. With an increase in urbanization, moving from joint families to nuclear families, changing nature of jobs and businesses, paucity of time, convenience and change in lifestyle, have led consumer's preferences shift from fresh and healthy food to the food which is ready to use/instant food. Instant food requires less time and energy to cook. The instant food products are prepared and packed in such a way that there is a very little or no need for preparations before consumption. Therefore, it can be used any time by slight heating. This is also the reason why these instant food items are very popular among the young generation. This paper provides an insight about the perception of youngsters of India towards the instant food products. It also encompasses the factors which influence the buying decision of instant food products among the youngsters in India.

Keywords: Consumer preferences, instant food, convenience food, fast food.

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumers are the actors in the marketplace. Because of consumers market of food runs. If you talk about consumer, consumers are those who purchases goods and services for their personal consumption. Consumer behaves according to their taste and preferences and sometimes according to the occasions. Consumer behaviour is different for consumer to consumer. It depends of the status, standard of living, the price of product, and many more. Marketers knows the demand of customers by their behavior and the wants towards any of the product. You can say that the behaviour of a consumer is the action which is taken by the consumer before buying the product. Organizations have recognized the importance of consumer satisfaction is now a days. Every organization knows that if they satisfy the consumer then only, they can gain the market share and profit, which is the prime objective of the organizations. Food and nutrition are most important for all the living species. Food contains all the important elements for living organism. Some foods are mouth-watering, when it is of perfect shape, texture and also when it is mouth-watering fragrance. To keep the body healthy and active every living being consumed a chemical substance called 'food'. Instant food means the food which is ready to eat just in few minutes. Now a days, everyone is busy in their day-to-day life and if they get some time then they want to enjoy so, every nine out of ten people prefer ready to make food. Especially in metropolitan city, people don't have time to cook delightful food. Ready to cook food is a food which takes less time and efforts in preparation. Everyone wants to live a comfortable lifestyle. The demand of processed food is increased in this changing demography and lifestyle of people. The number of working women is increased this is one of the reasons which changed the demand of the processed food in societies and lifestyle. It also changed the mindset of consumers towards the habit of their eating. Packed frozen foods, pickles, juices, packet dosa, and many more are the examples of instant foods which people are buying in their day-to-day life. This study will investigate the multifaceted aspects that influence consumer preferences towards instant food. It will explore not only the role of taste and flavor in driving purchasing decisions but also delve into the significance of nutritional concerns and health considerations. The perception of convenience, a pivotal factor in the popularity of instant food, will be analyzed alongside the impact of branding and packaging on consumer choices. By examining these dimensions, the study aims to contribute valuable insights to the food industry, assisting manufacturers in tailoring their offerings to align with evolving consumer preferences.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Aaker (2000) opined that, brand awareness was remarkably durable and sustainable asset. It provides a sense of familiarity especially in low- involvement products such as soaps, a sense of presence or commitment and substance and it was very important to recall at the time of purchasing process. Apart from the conventional mass media, there were other effective means to create awareness viz., event promotions, publicity, sampling and other attention getting approaches. Brown et al. (2000) reported that the need for effective nutritional education for young consumers has become increasingly apparent, given their general food habits and behaviour, particularly during adolescence and analyzed that the interaction between young consumers' food preferences and their nutritional awareness behaviour, within three environments (home, school and social interaction appears to be somewhat overshadowed by the

young consumers, while developing an independence trait, particularly, during the adolescent years. The authors suggested that food preferences are often of a 'fast food' type and consequently the food habits of many young consumers may fuel the consumption of poorly nutritionally balanced meals. While young consumers were aware of healthy eating, their food preference behaviour did not always appear to reflect such knowledge, particularly within the school and social environments. Beverland (2001) studied the level of brand awareness within the New Zealand market for ZESPRI kiwi fruit. The effectiveness of this branding strategy employed by kiwi fruit, New Zealand was studied. The implications of the findings for agribusiness in general using the data collected from surveys of kiwi fruit consumers (n=106) outside three major super market chains in Auckland, New Zealand, suggested that the level of brand awareness for ZESPRI is low among consumers. It is indicated that brand awareness could be increased through a relationship- making programme involving targeted marketing and supply chain management Aaker (2000) opined that, brand awareness was remarkably durable and sustainable asset. It provides a sense of familiarity especially in low- involvement products such as soaps, a sense of presence or commitment and substance and it was very important to recall at the time of purchasing process. Apart from the conventional mass media, there were other effective means to create awareness viz., event promotions, publicity, sampling and other attention getting approaches. Ragavan (1994) reported that, quality, regular availability, price, accuracy in weighing and billing, range of vegetables and accessibility as the factors in the order of importance which had influenced purchase of vegetables by respondents from modern retail outlet. Shanmugsundaram (1990) studied about soft drink preference in Vellore town of North Arcot district in Tamil Nadu. The study revealed that, the most preferred soft drink among respondents as Gold spot (26.00%), followed by Limca (24.80%). It was found that the taste was the main factor for preference of particular brand and among the media; television played a vital role in influencing consumer to go for a particular brand. Singh (1981) found that consumers had single or multi-brand loyalty based on the nature of product, like necessities or luxuries. Brand choice and store loyalty were found to affect the brand loyalty of the consumer. The factors that influence and strengthen loyalty to brand were quality of product, habit of use and ready and regular availability. Rajarashmi and Sudarsana (2004) revealed that, almost all sample respondents preferred branded products and if their favourite brand is not available in the retail shop, they will go for another store and purchase their favourite brand. If it is not available in the market, the respondents were ready to postpone their purchase decision.

3. ANALYSIS

Percentage analysis

Table 1

How familiar are you with the concept of instant food?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very familiar	48	41.7	41.7	41.7
	Somewhat familiar	32	27.8	27.8	69.6
	Neutral	33	28.7	28.7	98.3
	Not very familiar	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Inference:

As the data shows nearly 41.7% of the respondents are familiar with the concept of instant food.

Table 2

Have you ever purchased or consumed instant food products?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes , frequently	23	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Yes , occasionally	50	43.5	43.5	63.5
	Yes , but rarely	39	33.9	33.9	97.4
	No , never	3	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Inference:

As the table shows that 33.91% of the respondents occasionally purchase or consume instant food products.

Table 3

Are you satisfied with the quality of instant food available in the market?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very satisfied	10	8.7	8.7	8.7
	Satisfied	42	36.5	36.5	45.2
	Neutral	57	49.6	49.6	94.8
	Dissatisfied	4	3.5	3.5	98.3
	Very Dissatisfied	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Inference:

As the table shows that 49.57% of the respondents are neutrally satisfied with the quality of instant food.

Table 4

Are you aware of the nutritional content and ingredients in instant food products?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very aware	21	18.3	18.3	18.3
	Somewhat aware	59	51.3	51.3	69.6
	No , I don't pay attention to it	35	30.4	30.4	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Inference:

As the table shows that 51.30% of the respondents are somewhat aware of the nutritional content and ingredients in instant food.

Table 5

Are you concerned about the health implications of consuming instant food?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes , very concerned	26	22.6	22.6	22.6
	Somewhat concerned	42	36.5	36.5	59.1
	Neutral	40	34.8	34.8	93.9
	Not very concerned	6	5.2	5.2	99.1
	Not concerned at all	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Inference:

As the table shows that 36.52% of the respondents are somewhat concerned of the health implications on consuming instant food.

Chi-square analysis

Chi-square is a statistical test used to examine the differences between categorical variables from a random sample in order to judge the goodness of fit between expected and observed results.

To find out the association between the gender and health implications of consuming instant food.

Ho: There is no significance difference between gender and health implications of consuming instant food.

H1: There is a significance difference between gender and health implications of consuming instant food.

Test Statistics		
	GENDER	Are you concerned about the health implications of consuming instant food?
Chi-Square	.217 ^a	62.261 ^b
df	1	4
Asymp. Sig.	.641	.000

Inference:

Hence H₀ is accepted and H₁ is rejected

There is no significance difference between the purchase decision and gender of the people.

Regression analysis:

- To find out the association between the respondent's familiarity of the instant food concept and if they have ever purchased or consumed instant food products.
- H₀:** There is no significance difference the respondent's familiarity of the instant food concept and if they have ever purchased or consumed instant food products.
- H₁:** There is a significance difference the respondent's familiarity of the instant food concept and if they have ever purchased or consumed instant food products.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.518	.161		9.417	.000
	How familiar are you with the concept of instant food?	.354	.077	.397	4.598	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Have you ever purchased or consumed instant food products?						

Inference:

H₀ is rejected, H₁ is accepted.

So there is a significance difference the respondent's familiarity of the instant food concept and if they have ever purchased or consumed instant food products.

Correlation analysis

Correlation is a statistical tool used to quantify the intensity and direction of a connection between two or more variables. It aids in comprehending how alterations in one variable correspond with changes in another. However, it's important to note that correlation does not establish a cause-and-effect relationship; it merely demonstrates the extent to which two variables tend to vary simultaneously or in opposite directions.

To find out the significance relation between age and the satisfaction in the current options in instant food.

H₀: There is no significance difference between age and the satisfaction in the current options in instant food.

H₁: There is a significance difference between age and the satisfaction in the current options in instant food.

Correlations			
		Are you satisfied with the current options available for instant food products in the market?	AGE
Are you satisfied with the current options available for instant food products in the market?	Pearson Correlation	1	.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.585
	N	115	115
AGE	Pearson Correlation	.051	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.585	
	N	115	115

Inference:

H0 is accepted, H1 is rejected.

So there is no significance difference between age and the satisfaction in the current options in instant food.

4. FINDINGS

Each and every research's base will be findings and the suggestions. Every researcher who does the research will have their own opinion and the suggestions likewise some of the findings form this study are

SIMPLE PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS:

- It is revealed that 81.74% of the respondent's age group belongs to 20-24years.
- It is revealed that 52.17% of the respondents belong to male.
- It is revealed that 62.61% % of the respondents are students.
- It is revealed that 41.7% of the respondents are familiar with the concept of instant food.
- It is revealed that 33.91% of the respondents occasionally purchase or consume instant food products.
- It is revealed that 51.30% of the respondents are somewhat aware of the nutritional content and ingredients in instant food.
- It is revealed that 36.52% of the respondents are somewhat concerned of the health implications on consuming instant food.

5. SUGGESTIONS

- The level of awareness of the instant food products are satisfied by the customers.
- Customers are came to know about instant food products through advertisement.
- Customer prefer branded food products only.
- Customer preferring instant food products by its quality
- It has demand among the customers.
- The taste and quality should be maintained.

6. CONCLUSION

The study among youngsters has been conducted and it is concluded that the preference of consumers related to food products has changed tremendously. The study revealed the positive perspective towards instant food products. It had seen through the study that instant food plays a vital role now a days. Food habits of consumers are now changed due to several reasons. The main reasons are ready availability, saves time, increase in number of working women, emergence of nuclear families. This comprehensive research report provides a deep understanding of consumer preferences towards instant food products, shedding light on the factors that shape these preferences. The findings highlight the significant role that taste, convenience, nutritional concerns, and brand perception play in consumers' decision-making processes. Manufacturers and marketers can leverage these insights to design and promote instant food offerings that align with consumer desires and expectations.

7. REFERENCE

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