

Consumers' Preference And Consumption Towards Instant Food Products**Dr. M. Vasan**

Assistant Professor of Commerce,
A.V.V.M. Sri Pushpam College (Autonomous), Poondi,
Thanjavur Dt. Tamilnadu, India.
E-mail: m.vasan@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study aims to identify the customer preference towards instant food products. The study identified that the majority of the consumers have purchased instant products regularly and they preferred for easy availability and lesser time for preparation. This study conducted based on qualitative data collected through questionnaire from the users of instant food products. The study results identified that majority of the respondents have purchased instant food products regularly. Lesser time taken for preparation is a main reason for purchasing instant food products. The consumers are more satisfied with availability of the instant food products. This study will be useful to the manufacturers of instant products for understanding the choices and preferences of consumers and to formulate suitable marketing strategies for improving sales.

Key Words: Consumer Preference, Instant Products, Ready-to-eat products.

INTRODUCTION

In India, the food habits of people have changed due to the western influence. Most of them preferred to prepare at homes or purchasing from hotels. There is variety of instant food products available in the market. Now, instant foods become a part of day-to-day life. The most sought after in the present age are the instant foods. It can be noted as food revolution. Instant food market is fueled by increase in the double-income nuclear families and changing life styles in urban India.

In the processed food segment, the instant food products have occupied a significant shelf space in the retail outlets in India. Food manufacturers through instant food products have offered high quality food choices which have been unimaginable to ancestors. Instant food mixes made a wide range of suitable food for households, being convenient to use without any further processing and women find it easy to use. It assisted them to save time and effort and also reduce the tiresome job of gathering various ingredients, cleaning and preparing food.

Indian instant food market was around Rs.150 crore during the year 2003 and at the end of 2019, it is around Rs.3000 crore. Generally, the modern homes also don't have the amenities required for traditional processing. So, instant products gained immediate acceptance from the people. This instant mix can be utilized for preparing various snacks, sweets and also preparations with rice. The sweet mixes include Payasam mix, Gulab jamoon mix, Badham mix, Purfi mix. The snack mixes comprise vada mix, bajji mix, bonda mix and the preparations with rice includes tomato rice mix, puliogare mix, lemon rice mix, Bisibele bath mix, coconut rice mix, etc.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Consumer behaviour towards food is much more needed to analyze because it occupies a major portion of the consumer purchases. Lifestyle and spending pattern of the people have tremendously changed their food habits. Consumers are moving from cost conscious to health conscious and also value conscious. One of the prime reasons for this change is the transformation in the women's role from homemakers to that of working women. Though the time availability, variety seeking quality preference and health consciousness are in the priority list while making food choices for both men and women. But, difference found in the purchase behaviour related to food products mainly instant food products and it has received less research attention to date. So, the present study aims to fill this gap by investigating customer preference towards instant food products.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

The study has been conducted based on qualitative data collected from the respondents under the survey method at Thanjavur city of Tamilnadu. The structured questionnaire was used for collecting the necessary data from the respondents. The sample size of 130 instant food users has been conveniently selected for the study. Descriptive statistics is used to present the data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Perception on using of Instant food can be understood by frequency of purchase, reasons for purchasing Instant Food products, influencers in the purchase decision, preferred brand, type of instant food products purchased, satisfaction and complaints with instant food products.

Table – 1: Frequency of Purchase

Frequency	Frequency	Percent
Regularly	66	50.7
Occasionally	54	41.5
Whenever needed	30	23.0
Total	130	100

Frequency of purchasing instant food products reveals that the majority (50.7 percent) of the respondents have purchased instant food products regularly, 41.5 percent of the respondents have purchased occasionally and 23 percent of the respondents have purchased instant food products whenever needed (Table 1).

Table – 2: Reasons for Preferring Instant Food Products

Reasons	Mean Rank
Readily available	3.51
Taste liked by family members	2.92
Convenient to use	2.88
Lesser time for preparation	3.27
Nutritive value	2.42

The mean ranks show that readily available and lesser time for preparation are the major reasons for purchasing instant food product. Further, taste liked by family members, convenient to use and nutritive value are other reasons for purchasing instant food products (Table 2).

Table – 3: Influencer in the Purchase Decision

Influencer	Frequency	Percent
Friends /Relatives	67	51.5
Self-Reliance	22	16.9
Retail shop display	11	8.4
Advertisements	30	23.0
Total	130	100

Influencer in the purchase decision of instant food products reveals that friends and relatives are the major influencers in the purchase decision followed by advertisements, self-reliance, and retail shop display are the other influencing sources in the purchase decision (Table 3).

Table – 4: Preferred Brand

Brand	Frequency	Percent
MTR	49	37.6
Knorr	24	18.4
ITC	40	30.7
Others	17	13.0
Total	130	100

The brand preference of instant food products indicates that 37.6 percent of the consumers' choice is MTR, 30.7 percent of the respondents have preferred ITC, 18.4 percent have preferred Knorr, 13 percent have used other brand of instant food products such as Nestle, Kellogg's. It clearly explored that MTR is the most preferred brand of instant food products among the consumers (Table 4).

Table – 5: Types of Instant Food Products Purchased

Products	Purchased	Not purchased	Total
Panner Butter Masala	64 (49.2)	66 (50.7)	130 (100)
Pulao Mixes	66 (50.7)	64 (49.2)	130 (100)
Sambhar Rice and Masala	79 (60.7)	51 (39.2)	130 (100)
Puliogare	89 (68.4)	51 (39.2)	130 (100)
Rasam	109 (83.8)	21 (16.1)	130 (100)
Brinjal Kulambu mix	88 (67.6)	42 (32.3)	130 (100)
Lemon Rice Mix	104 (80.0)	26 (20.0)	130 (100)
Pasta	85 (65.3)	45 (34.6)	130 (100)

Types of instant food products purchased indicated that 83.8 percent of respondents have purchased Rasam mix followed by Lemon rice mix, Brinjal Kulambu Mix, Pasta, Puliogare and Sambar Rice and Masala, Pulao Mixes and Panner Butter Masala mix (Table 5).

Table – 6: Satisfaction towards Instant food Products

Factors	Mean Rank
Product availability	8.10
Taste	7.25
Quality	6.17
Quantity	7.21
Brand Image	6.70
Advertisement	7.56
Price	7.41
Packaging and Labeling	7.31
Offers	5.86
Freshness	6.41
Long self-life of the products	6.56
Variety of products	7.57

The mean ranks depict that the consumers are more satisfied with availability of the instant food products followed by variety of products, advertisement, taste, quality, quantity and brand image (Table 6).

Table – 7: Complaints against Instant Food Products

Complaints	Frequency	Percent
High price	35	26.9
Low quantity	13	10.0
Unclean packing	20	15.3
Low quality	22	16.9
Injurious to health	30	23.0
Others	10	7.6
Total	130	100

It is concluded that 26.9 percent of the respondent are felt that price of instant food products are high followed by low quality, injurious to health, packaging and low quantity. Only 7.6 percent of the respondents have complaints like perishable, artificial, problems availability, etc. (Table 7).

CONCLUSION

Consumer choice for food is positively influenced by the product property and relationship with surroundings. But it is influenced by lifestyle and basic values to a greater extent. When the instant food products are considered, the most vital aspect expected by the consumers is quality with the reasonable price, and this should be the main focus to the manufacturers and marketers too. In this human centric era, where the consumers should treat as human beings who are active and creative and this needs a 360-degree innovation in the marketing strategies because the present-day consumers want to take in the entire purchase processes. So, the marketers need to delight them with wide range of customized value-added products which are satisfying the needs of consumers and India centric nutritional strategies. The study suggested that improve the marketability of the instant food products as a value-added product to capture lion share in the marketplace.

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