

Consumer Behaviour towards Instant Cooking Food Products in Madurai District, – An Empirical Study

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Abstract:- 'Instant' is the word which is widely spelt by the modern man 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, the "Instant Cooking Food Products"(ICFPs) offered by modern business units have revolutionized the day to day life of modern men by eliminating conventional method of preparing food. The emergence of metropolitan cities, reduced domestic servants, women-folk talking to jobs, increase in the nuclear families, heavy laborious work like grinding manually and other drudging works involved in conventional method of cooking etc., are the factors responsible for the popularity of these products. This article studies about consumer behavior towards Instant Cooking Food Products in Madurai district, Tamil Nadu.

Keywords:- Instant Cooking Food Products, Consumer Behaviour.

I. INTRODUCTION

'Instant' is the word which is widely spelt by the modern man 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, the "Instant Cooking Food Products"(ICFPs) offered by modern business units have revolutionized the day to day life of modern men by eliminating conventional method of preparing food. The emergence of metropolitan cities, reduced domestic servants, women-folk taking to jobs, increase in the nuclear families, heavy laborious work like grinding manually and other drudging works involved in conventional method of cooking etc., are the factors responsible for the popularity of these products. 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' (2005) 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. The present paper is an attempt to investigate its preference and other relevant areas of research interest among the consumers of Madurai district, Tamil Nadu.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Wells (2000) found that the desire to purchase new instant cooking products was greater among consumers in their desire than for conventional products. Nawave (2015) stated that the ready – to – eat concept was not new in India. Pickles and rice mixes had long been part of our tradition. Vaitheeswaran (2015) found that the modern Indian family's eating habits clearly showed a gradual move towards convenience foods, though it was still largely restricted to A+ households' section in Metros and some "B" class cities. Smitha Samuel (2016) opined that the ready to eat foods was so convenient even the 12 year olds had started making meals for their families. Kumud Divwan (2016) stated that MNCs entered India by targeting a 250 million middle class and 10 million super rich class consumers. But, she cautioned that the Indian consumers had "Swadeshi" conscience and the factors like family played a crucial role in influencing the purchase decision. Jain .R. and Jain P.J (2013) were of the view that good quality and availability were the factors influenced the buying of products.

III. 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 Madurai district, Tamil Nadu.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the major objectives of the study:

- To find the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their buying pattern towards ICFPs in the study area.
- To study the factors influencing the buying decision of ICFPs in the study area.
- To identify the most preferred brands by the respondents in each category of ICFPs.
- To identify the problems faced by the consumers while buying the ICFPs.
- To offer suggestions based on the findings of the study.

V. METHODOLOGY

A sample of 150 households had been selected for the study from the Madurai district of Tamil Nadu, the study area. Convenient sampling method was adopted for the selection of respondents. The study is based on both primary and secondary data, for collecting primary data, a well structured interview schedule was used. Secondary data was collected through books, research journals and web-site sources. Statistical tools like percentage analysis, Chi-square test, Factor Analysis and Garretts' Ranking Techniques were used for analyzing the data.

VI. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The profile of respondents and their buying pattern of instant cooking food products is given in Table 1.

	S.No	Catogery	No	%
Age	1	Less than 20	37	24.70
	2	Between 20 & 40	86	57.30
	3	Above 40	27	18.00
Educational Status	1	Primary School	27	18.00
	2	High School	83	55.30
	3	College Level	40	26.70
Family Income (Monthly)	1	Upto Rs 50,000	43	28.70
	2	Between Rs 50,000 & 1,00,000	72	48.00
	3	Above Rs.1,00,000	35	23.30
Employment Status	1	Employed (Govt.& Private)	70	46.70
	2	Self Employed & Others	80	53.30
Family size	1	Below 3	78	52.00
	2	Above 3	72	48.00
Residential Status	1	Rural	66	44.00
	2	Urban	84	56.00
Influencers	1	Adults	96	64.00
	2	Children	54	36.00
Users' type	1	Regular	102	68.00
	2	Occasional	48	32.00
Products used*	1	Noodles	141	94.00
	2	Masalas	143	95.30
	3	Soup	7	4.70
	4	Badam Mix	3	2.00
Monthly Budget	1	Upto Rs 1,000	76	50.67
	2	Between Rs 1,000 & 2,000	38	25.33
	3	Above Rs 2,000	36	24.00
Buying Source	1	Local Shops	48	32.00
	2	Town Retail Shops	86	57.30
	3	Department Stores	9	6.00
	4	Others	7	4.70
Purchase Pattern	1	Daily	12	8.00
	2	Weekly once	14	9.33
	3	Monthly once	58	38.67
	4	Whenever need arises	66	44.00
Mode of payment	1	Cash	102	68.00
	2	Credit	48	32.00

Table 1:- Profile and Buying Pattern of Respondents (Source : Primary data)

Table 1 shows the socio-economic background of respondents and their select purchasing pattern behavior towards ICFPs in the study area.

The results of Chi-Square test used to find the factors influencing the buying decision of ICFPs are given in Table 2. NH : the socio-economic factor(s) do not influence the buying decision of ICFPs.

A. Factors Influencing the Buying Decision of ICFPs

Socio - Economic Factor	Calculated Value	Degrees of Freedom	Table Value	Result
Age	18.623	4	9.49	Rejected
Educational status	18.040	4	9.49	Rejected
Monthly Income	6.393	4	9.49	Accepted
Employment status	4.804	2	5.99	Accepted
Family Size	0.907	2	5.99	Accepted
Influencers	0.621	2	5.99	Accepted

Table 2 Results of Chi-Square Test

➤ *Level of Significance : 5 Percent*

Table 2 indicates that the age and educational status of respondents only influence the buying decision of ICFPs and all other profile variables did not influence such decision.

B. Reasons for Preferring ICFPs

The results of Factor Analysis is given in Table 3

S.no	Variables	Rotated Component						
		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	h2
1	Easy to Cook	0.806	0.049	0.891	0.119	-0.153	-0.139	0.856
2	Reasonably priced	0.765	0.020	0.793	-0.040	0.281	0.212	0.769
3	Branded products are easily available in nearby shops	0.759	0.034	0.820	0.107	0.366	-0.020	0.836
4	Relief from cumbersome cooking processes	0.758	0.085	0.469	0.142	0.726	0.187	0.814
5	Usable any time	0.754	0.287	0.125	0.096	0.813	-0.102	0.798
6	Highly economical while going on long tour programme along with family	0.753	0.751	-0.033	0.295	0.301	-0.020	0.799
7	More useful for working men or women who stay along with friends away from home and cook themselves	0.547	0.788	0.126	-0.164	0.015	0.326	0.810
8	Tastier and quick preparation is possible	0.701	0.803	-0.060	0.062	-0.064	0.209	0.664
9	Liked by all	0.252	0.756	0.215	0.813	-0.101	0.152	0.807
10	Quality products	0.719	0.669	0.062	0.240	-0.125	0.180	0.677
11	Do not require any experience to cook a particular food item	0.768	0.135	0.894	-0.127	0.309	0.211	0.777
12	Highly helpful to prepare variety of foods when ever needed	0.766	0.101	0.809	0.282	0.044	-0.053	0.693
13	Highly helpful to meet an emergency/ guests visit the home unexpectedly	0.292	0.298	0.784	0.646	0.407	0.084	0.765
14	Save time and labour	0.023	0.508	0.055	0.802	0.241	0.125	0.812
15	Save fuel cost	0.305	0.730	0.034	0.732	0.189	0.105	0.732
16	Economical	0.287	0.330	0.072	0.731	-0.080	0.763	0.810
17	Highly hygienic	0.284	0.107	-0.021	0.215	0.817	0.830	0.836
18	Unadulterated	0.414	-0.210	-0.048	0.599	0.738	0.408	0.762
19	Uniformity in tastes of the items ensure repeated purchase	0.753	0.040	0.085	0.218	0.158	0.806	0.718
20	Repeated advertisements are very helpful to choose the products	0.828	0.146	0.097	0.122	0.016	0.774	0.745
	Percentage of variance	22.091	12.797	12.336	12.274	10.007	9.508	
	Cumulative percentage of variance	22.091	34.888	47.224	59.498	69.505	79.012	

Table 3:- Rotated Factor Matrix for Buying Instant Cooking Food Products

- *Note* :- the principal component method with varimax rotation is used to extract factors.

Table 3 reveals that the six factors namely, comfort and convenience, taste and quality, necessity, cost and time,

health and hygienic and promotion are most influencing factors in preferring ICFPs.

C. Preference of Brands in Each Category of ICFPs

Among the ICFPs of Masalas, Noodles, Soup and Badam, the brands preferred by respondents in each category is given in Table 4.

Brand	S.No	Brands	Number	Percentage
Masalas	1	MTR	49	34.30
	2	Sakthi	38	26.60
	3	Aachi	32	22.40
	4	Everest	21	14.70
	5	ITC	3	2.10
	TOTAL			143
Noodles	1	Top Romen	42	29.79
	2	Maggie	51	36.17
	3	Yippee	48	34.04
	TOTAL			141
Soup	1	Maggie	6	85.70
	2	Knorr	1	14.30
	TOTAL			7
Badam Mix	1	Mass Badam	2	66.67
	2	MTR	1	33.33
	TOTAL			3

Table 4:- Brand Preference and Respondents (Source: Primary data)

Table 4, shows that in case of masalas, MTR is most preferred brand, in case of noodles, it is Yippee, for soup the brand Maggie and for badam mix – the brand Mass badam are the most preferred.

D. Problems Faced by Respondents

The respondents while buying ICFPs face certain problems which analysed and ranked based on their mean scores. It is given in Table 5.

S.NO	PROBLEMS	MEAN SCORE	RANK
1	Too many brands	64.03	I
2	Variation in quality	57.73	II
3	Preferred brands not always available	50.60	III
4	Not available in sachets	40.93	IV
5	Not available in nearby shops	36.70	V

Table 5:- Problems Faced by Respondents (Source : Primary data)

Table 5 exhibits that the most three problems felt by respondents while buying ICFPs are too many brands, variation in quality and preferred brands not always available.

VII. CONCLUSION

India is almost sitting on a golden mine of 'Processed' and 'Instant' cooking food, which can become a top foreign exchange earner and employment provider if appropriate measures are undertaken by the stakeholders of the industry.

Strict compliance with GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices), HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Central Point) and ISO quality certification should be insisted so as to further the development and promotion of this sector. It is also of the view and opinion of the industry watchers that the companies can survive and thrive if they are able to drive home a point that the ICFPs give greater utility in terms of hygiene, quality, convenience and cost.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

'Masala' and 'Noodles' are most preferred among ICFPs and hence more sales efforts are needed to boost the sales of 'Soup' and 'Badam Mix'.

As the consumers mostly preferred 'retail shops' for buying these products, the manufactures are advised to exploit this outlets as much they could.

MTR, Yippee, Maggie and Mass Badam are the leading brands in "Masalas", "Noodles", "Soup" and "Badam Mix" respectively. Hence, the companies like Sakthi, Aachi, Everest, ITC and Knorr have to step up their sales by undertaking aggressive sales campaign besides opening their exclusive outlets.

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.

The manufacturers, by educating the consumers that the taste and quality of instant products are equal to the taste of foods prepared under the conventional method of cooking, can convert non-users into users and occasional users into regular users.

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.

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