

**A Study on Behavior of Consumers towards Instant Cooking Food Products**

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**ABSTRACT**

The post liberalization phase in India has gone through plenty of changes in the market place. The transition phase has created the concept of “Holistic Marketing” in the contemporary times. Quality advancements, media revolution, technological advancements service culture, and healthy competition among firms to satisfy the consumers have educated the customers like never before. The main objective of this study is to identify factors (demographic factors and behavioral factors) influencing on consumer attitudes towards these products. For this purpose, 100 respondents were selected by using Area Probability Sampling method with an association of Judgment Sampling and data gathered from them through questionnaire and personal interviewing. The findings showed the majority of the consumers for these products were young generation people especially students and working people below 40 years who belongs to nuclear family with moderate monthly income level. It was also found that television was the major source of medium for consumer awareness, and the interest of consumer towards these products was instant consumption, timesaving, taste and convenience to use them as snacks. Therefore it is recommend that these food manufacturers should pay much attention on attractive packaging, health and nutrients and quality and intermediaries should stress on effective sales promotion activities to increase the consumption of these products and sustainability. Instant Cooking food products play a key role among the people in today’s busy lifestyle. It is observed that there is a huge flow of products into the consumer market in Chennai city. The present study made an attempt to analyze the consumer behaviour towards taste and preference of Instant Food Products by individual households and to predict the demand for Instant Food Products. All the respondents were aware of pickles and Sambar masala but only 56.67 per cent of respondents were aware of Dosa/Idli mix.

**Keywords:** Consumer Attitudes, Impulsive buying, Instant cooking

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In the modern days, where the life is at fast pace with the time very valuable to every person, “Instant Cooking Food products” plays an important role in everyone’s day-to-day life. The very term ‘instant cooking food’ means simple, fast and convenient food, which is easy and fast to prepare besides being hygienic. Free from microbial contamination and also convenient to eat. Unlike olden days, where man used to have his food lavishly and slowly, the present trend changed the habit of food, which is simple and easy to digest. Hence, the existence of these foods fulfilled all the needs of modern human being. Preparing food with instant mixes has become a way of life and no doubt they are going to be an integral part if food habit in future. Canned foods, convenience foods, fast foods, frozen food, instant products, fired foods, preserved foods and the like all come under instant foods or ready- to-eat food. The food

habits in India have changed due to the Western influence and the usage of this food is also on the rise. These foods are widely used in catering industries as well as at homes. There are varieties of instant or read-to-eat foods available in the market to choose from and they have become a part of everyday life. It is a food revolution that's been a long time coming. As double income nuclear families become the norm in urban India, everyone who is anyone in the food business has been eyeing the ready-to-eat food sector with considerable hunger. Among food products instant cooking food products occupied a considerable shelf space in stores and super markets in India. Food companies through instant cooking food products have provided the high quality of choices, which would have been inconceivable to ancestors. Instant cooking food mixes formed a range of convenience food for households, being easy to use without terminal processing and women found it very convenient to use.

Health consciousness was the major factor indicated by the non buyers of these products. Moreover planned purchase was common among majority of the elders while impulse buying behavior is shown among many consumers preferred milk based products. 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. Retail shops are the major source of information and source of purchase of Instant Food Products. The word 'food' refers to the chemical substances taken into the body in order to keep the body in a healthy and active condition. The body requires food for growth, repair and replacement of its worn-out tissues. Hence, food has to provide the required raw material, energy and other regulating substances, like vitamins and minerals, for the smooth functioning of the body, besides meeting the calorific requirements like carbohydrates, proteins, fats, etc., India is the world's second largest producer of food next to China and has the potential of being biggest industry with food and agricultural sector contributing 26 per cent to Indian GDP. It has the capacity of producing over 600 million tons of food products every year; it is likely to be doubled in next ten years. Food accounts for the largest share of consumer spending. Food and food products account for about 53 per cent of the value of final private consumption. This share is significantly higher than in developed economies, where food and food products account for about 20 percent of consumer spending ([www.tata.com](http://www.tata.com)). The average monthly per-capita consumer expenditure (MPCE) was Rs. 511 for rural India, which comprised of Rs.305 for food and Rs. 206 for non-food commodities. For urban population, it is Rs. 1060, which comprised of Rs.441for food and Rs. 619 for non-food items. There was a decline in the share of food in total expenditure that is 54 per cent in rural areas compared to 64 per cent in 1987-88 and 42 per cent in urban areas compared to 56 percent during 1987-88 (National Sample Survey Organization, GOI). In India, majority of food consumption is still at home. Nevertheless, out-of-home food consumption is increasing due to increase in urbanization, breaking up of the traditional joint family system, desire for quality, time which translates into an increased need for convenience, increasing number of working women, rise in per capita income, changing lifestyles and increasing level of affluence in the middle income group had brought about changes in food habits.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Several firms had been engaging in production and marketing of instant cooking food products. Hence, the consumers had greater options to choose from. In this context, a study on consumer behaviour was deemed to be important to understand the buying behavior and preferences of

different consumers. Understanding the consumer behavior would help the firms in formulating strategies to cater to the needs of the consumer and thereby increase their market share. Consumer's taste and preference were found to change rapidly, especially in a dynamic environment. Keeping in view the importance of consumer behavior and consumption pattern, the present study will be under taken.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

#### **PRIMARY OBJECTIVE**

To study the consumer behaviour with regard to instant cooking food products.

#### **The secondary objectives of the study are**

- i. To study the extent of awareness of consumers towards Instant Cooking Food Products.
- ii. To estimate demand potential for Instant Cooking Food Products
- iii. To analyze factors influencing the buying behaviour of Instant Cooking Food Products,
- iv. To analyze brand loyalty for Instant Cooking Food Products,
- v. To analyses urban consumer behaviour relating to Instant Cooking food products.
- vi. To offer valuable suggestions on the basis of findings.

### **4. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study was based on primary data collected from sample consumers by survey method. As many of the consumers furnished the required information from their memory and experience, the collected data would be subjected to recall bias. The study area was limited to only in Chennai city and the findings may not be applicable to other markets, as vast differences exist among the consumers with regard to demographic and psychographics characteristics. Hence, the findings of the study may be considered appropriate for the situations similar to study area and extra care should be taken while generalizing the results.

### **5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**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 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.

**Aaker (2000)** regarded brand awareness as a remarkably durable and sustainable asset. It provided 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.

**Yee and Young (2001)**, aimed to create awareness of high fat content of pies, studied consumer and producer awareness about nutrition labeling on packaging. For this, seven leading pie brands were analyzed for fat content and are ranged from 7.1 to 19.2% fat. Potato topped or cottage pies had the lowest fat content (7.19.2% fat). Most pies did not display nutritional labeling on packaging. Over half of the consumers (52%) who responded to the survey (42% response rate) were aware of the campaign.

**Chen (2001)** expressed a different thought on brand awareness that it was a necessary asset but not sufficient for building strong brand equity. In his view, a brand could be well known because it had bad quality. Consumer purchases are likely to be influenced by physiological, psychological and sociological factors (**Solomon, 2009**).

## **SAMPLING DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION**

### **SELECTION OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS**

Based on less cost and frequent use of instant food products, the products such as dosa/idli mix, pickles and sambar masala were selected after discussion with the local consumers of the study area about the consumption of instant food products, which are either homemade or purchased from the market and the marketers as well as about the brands available and preferred in the study area. The particular products were selected in such a way as to represent one product from each group like cereals, fruits and vegetable and spice based categories. The respondents were post classified into four income groups based on their income. Respondents with monthly income of less than Rs. 2,500 were considered to belong to Income Group 1 (IG1), those with income group between Rs. 2,501 and Rs. 5,000 were classified into Income Group 2 (IG2), those with income of Rs. 5,001 to Rs.10, 000 were grouped as Income Group 3 (IG3) and finally those with income of more than Rs. 10,000 were categorized as Income Group (IG4).

### **COLLECTION OF DATA**

To evaluate the objectives of the study, required data were collected from primary as well as secondary sources.

#### **PRIMARY DATA**

The data required for the study were collected from the selected respondents by personal interview method using well-structured schedule. Information on the following aspects was collected from 100 households.

- General information from the individual respondents on their social, economic and demographic characteristics like age, educational status, occupation, annual income, family size and family type.
- Monthly family expenditure on food and non-food items in general and instant food products in particular.
- Information regarding the consumption pattern of instant food products and also regarding decision making relating to Instant Food Products.

- The type of instant food products consumed and their source viz., branded, unbranded and homemade; Satisfaction level of the respondents regarding their present brand and awareness about various brands of instant food products, etc...
- Purchase pattern of instant food products and factors influencing the purchase.

## **SECONDARY DATA**

The secondary data on location, demography and other details about the study area were collected from Chennai Statistical office. The survey was undertaken during the month of SEP-OCT 2013.

## **TOOLS OF ANALYSIS**

### **SAMPLE SIZE**

100 respondents were selected by using Area Probability Sampling method with an association of Judgment Sampling and data gathered from them through questionnaire and personal interviewing. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed. The tools used for analysis are as follows.

**Tabular analysis and Percentage analyses** were used to study the socio-economic Characteristics of the sample respondents like age, educational status, occupation and, family size and type, Consumer awareness towards instant food products and brands. The buying behaviour of consumers for Instant food products, purchase decision, place of purchase, frequency of purchase and quantity per purchase were also analyzed using percentage analysis.

**Scaling technique** Scaling technique was used to measure the brand loyalty of consumers towards instant food products. The statements such as confirm to use the brand, recommend the brand to others, purchase the brand even if price increases and purchase the same brand even in absence of sales promotion were used in the study. The responses to the above statements were measured in a three-point scale namely; definitely, probably, definitely not and the scores of 3, 2, and 1 were given to the above scales and the respondents were classified into three categories based on the total scores obtained by them. The respondents with a score of 9 to 12 was considered as highly brand loyal, the respondents with a score of 5 to 8 were considered as medium loyal and the respondents with a score of up to 4 were considered as low brand loyal.

**Regression Analysis** To study the factors influencing on demand for instant food products in Kolar district, multiple linear Regression Analysis was used. In the analysis, monthly quantity consumed is used as a dependent variable and the other independent variables used were price of the product, monthly family income and number of family members.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

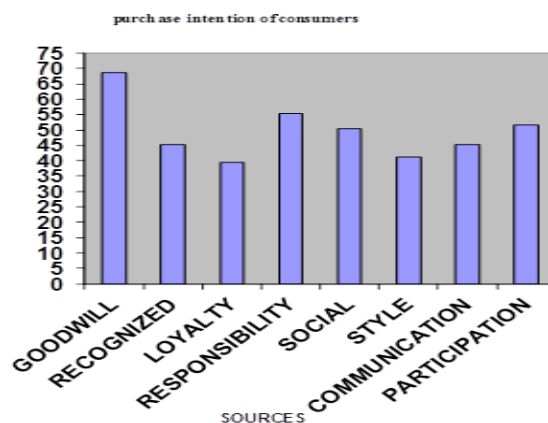
## **FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS**

The study has been analyzed through tables, percentage, Garrett ranking techniques and factor analysis. There are some important aspects which makes the consumer behavior towards instant food products on Consumers' Purchase Intentions and Overall Brand.

### CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS

| S.NO | SOURCES        | GARRETT MEAN SCORE | RANK |
|------|----------------|--------------------|------|
| 1    | GOODWILL       | 68.54              | I    |
| 2    | RECOGNISED     | 45.24              | V    |
| 3    | LOYALTY        | 39.58              | VIII |
| 4    | RESPONSIBILITY | 55.3               | II   |
| 5    | SOCIAL         | 50.32              | IV   |
| 6    | STYLE          | 41.32              | VII  |
| 7    | COMMUNICATION  | 45.12              | VI   |
| 8    | PARTICIPATION  | 51.7               | III  |

**TABLE NO 1**



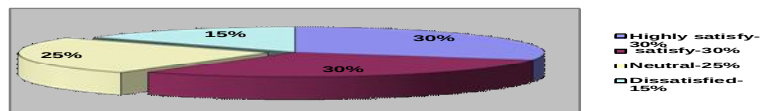
Source: Primary Data

**FIGURE NO 1**

### CONSUMERS' BEHAVIORS TOWARDS INSTANT PRODUCTS AND OVERALL BRAND

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>TOTAL RESPONDENT</b> | <b>100</b> |
| Highly Satisfy          | 30%        |
| Satisfy                 | 30%        |
| Neutr al                | 25%        |
| Dissatisfied            | 15%        |

**TABLE NO 2**



Source: Primary Data

**FIGURE NO 2**

## FACTOR ANALYSIS

One of the main objectives of the research was to identify the underlying factors which motivate customers to instant cooking food products. The statements considered for studying the brand preferences of consumers were best quality of the product, good brand image, retailers influence, reasonable price, readily available, good packaging, advertisements, attractive packaging design and convenience. In contrast, poor quality, poor taste, high price, poor brand image, poor flavour, not good colour, less keeping quality were the statements used in asking the reasons for not using a particular brand of instant food products. The responses to the above statements were measured in a five-point scale namely; Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree and the scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 were given to the above scales. Later scores were added and the mean score was calculated. Based on the mean score inference was drawn for factors influencing brand preferences and reasons for not using the particular brand of instant food products.

## PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES PREFERRED FOR INSTANT COOKING FOOD PRODUCTS

|                        | RESPONSES |         | PERCENT OF CASES |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|------------------|
|                        | N         | Percent | N                |
| Price of the product   | 20        | 20%     | 22%              |
| Good packaging         | 25        | 25%     | 23%              |
| Quality of the product | 20        | 20%     | 22%              |
| Value for the money    | 20        | 20%     | 22%              |
| Brand Name             | 15        | 15%     | 18%              |
|                        | 100%      | 100.0%  | 107%             |

**TABLE NO 3**

**FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS****FINDINGS**

- More than 45% of respondent indicates due to development of the metropolitan cities due to increase in population, emergence of industries, evolution of various new factors, time factor, etc., created the need for instant foods in the market.
- 50% of respondent feels through industrialization, the labour category is getting attracted to it because of better emoluments and hence there is a shortage of home maids-servants. Due to this, the housewives in order to save time started using instant foods.
- 35% of respondents indicate literacy rate is increasing among women, a large number of them in our country are taking up jobs to setup their own status in the society and to use the extra income generated. These are creating the need for ready-to-eat foods.
- 66% of respondent have an emergence of nuclear families- Earlier times, a single family consisted of many people i.e., a group of several nuclear families were living in a single place. Hence larger quantities of the food were used to be prepared. But as these joint families started disappearing due to various reasons, each single family started using these instant foods in order to save time and energy.
- 25% of respondent feels that the major factors for the use of instant foods in the present world. As the prices of some of the raw materials are continuously increasing, the purchases of these foods formed more economical.
- 32% of respondent indicates that the different new products coming up in the markets daily that are very cheap and easy for using and preparing, the popularity of instant foods is increasing.
- 29% of respondent indicates that in order to award the heavy laborious work like grinding manually and other drudging works, people opt for instant foods, which are easy to prepare and eat.
- 95% of respondent indicates that Instant foods are convenient to prepare and are economical. This increased its usage by the people as it saves the time, energy and money.
- 49% of respondent indicates that due to establishments of multi-national companies in India, the lady of the house also started working, because of which there is no time to prepare food at home. Hence this created the need to opt for instant foods.
- 55% where indicates that the standard of living is also changing due to raise in income level, influence of western countries, more global trade, traveling etc., Hence, people are changing their taste to instant foods more compared to the old traditionally prepared foods.
- 29% of respondent indicates that due to Media- In the modern era, the media, particularly electronic and print media, are playing an important role in creating awareness of the products manufactured and released in the market

## **SUGGESTIONS**

It was observed from that majority of the consumers of pickles and sambar masala preferred retail shop as the major source of information as the sellers themselves influence and motivate the consumers to opt for these products while making purchase followed by TV/radio advertisements as these are the common mass medias existing in almost all the households in all the selected areas.

- Most of the respondents in the study area are not purchasing the Dosa/ Idli mix, Pickles and Sambar masala even though they are readily available in the market, instead like to prepare their own. Hence, importance and awareness towards these products should be created through various media or literatures especially in rural areas.
- The study revealed that in majority of the household's women made the buying decisions of instant food products. Sales promotion should target this group.
- High price was an important reason for non-consumption of Dosa/Idli mix by significant proportion of households. Thus, efforts may be made to reduce the price of this product so as to increase its sale
- The retailers influence plays very important role in the purchasing of instant food products and retail shops are the important source for purchase of these products by consumers, retailers should be given training and incentives to promote sales
- There is a general perception among the consumers that Instant Food Products are expensive than home made products, efforts must be made to overcome this perception by propaganda and publicity.

## **CONCLUSION**

To study the Consumers behaviness and factors influencing the consumption of Instant Food Products, simple averages and percentages were calculated. To measure the brand loyalty of consumers towards instant food products scaling was used. Likert Scaling technique was employed to study the factors influencing the brand preferences and reasons for not preferring the particular brand by the consumers of instant food products. The potential demand for the Instant Food Products was estimated using the total population in the study area and per capita consumption of instant food products. The advancement of science and technology offered the people new foods processing vessels, equipment and tools but still people were in search of new techniques to speed up the cooking process in order to cope up with mechanical life, as they do not have sufficient time to cook food in the conventional methods. Capitalizing this situation, business houses ranging from small time manufactures to multinational corporations have started innovating and commercializing "easy to cook food items" like noodles, vermicelli, gulab jamun, instant idli, vada, dosa mix etc... that are otherwise called instant. The instant food products are not only easy to cook but also have a significant role and place in the celebration of the family functions and religious functions of the people. Therefore it is recommend that these food manufacturers should pay much attention on attractive packaging, health and nutrients and quality and intermediaries should stress on effective sales promotion activities to increase the consumption of these products and sustainability.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

As suggestions for future research, replication and expansion of the same study should be made by doing a comparative analysis study of the consumer behavior towards instant cooking food products. This would serve to bring clarity to this research conducted by the author. Furthermore as this study has focused its research only on consumers within the age bracket 21-40 years, future research can be undertaken targeting different age groups in India which would probably bring to light different perceptions regarding the topic in hand. The research undertaken on consumer behavior of instant food products in this paper will be useful on both academic and professional platform, as it looks into the perception of Indian consumers on food products, providing theory for scholarly and directives for managers and professionals.

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