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A Study on Working Women Perception towards Instant Food Products

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Abstract

During the recent decades, women's participation in the labour market has increased tremendously. This significant rise in employment of women outside the home has attracted the attention of consumer researchers to investigate the effect of women's labour force participation on convenience food consumption. The objective of this research paper is to identify the factors determining the attitudes of working women towards instant food products. For this purpose the present study has been conducted with a sample of 110 working women of various places and their responses were gauged through a structured questionnaire, administered personally. Data have been analyzed with help of weighted average scores, standard deviations and factor analysis. The results from the present study investigating factors influencing the attitudes of working women towards instant food products indicate that 'convenience' in meal preparation is the major factor which influences the attitudes of working women towards these food products. This is followed by another five factors such as 'sensory variables', 'mood', 'health issues', 'price influence' and 'familiarity'. The findings of the study can be useful for marketers of instant food products as they can use these factors as an effective promotional tool to target consumers and to escalate the sale of these food items in the coming time.

***Keywords**: - Instant food products, Women's perception, Marketing*

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing is defined as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. The term developed from the original meaning which referred literally to going to a market to buy or sell goods or services.

The management process through which goods and services move from concept to the customer. It includes the coordination of four elements called the 4 P's of marketing:

- Product.
- Price.
- Place.
- Promotional strategy.

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.

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. The change in food habits was evident from the growth of food processing industries.

The food processing industry in India is one of the largest in terms of production, consumption, export and growth prospects. Important sub sectors in food processing industries are fruit and vegetable processing, fish-processing, milk processing, meat and poultry processing, packaged/convenience foods, alcoholic beverages and soft drinks and grain processing.

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Processed products like _chapaties‘, _subzies‘ and portion packs of concentrated curries are fast becoming regular diets, especially for young couples. The product range includes foods like _puri-bhaji‘ and _dosa-vada‘.

Processed food products like pickles, chutneys, juices and curry powders had made their entry into the kitchens of most middleclass households a long time back. There are a whopping 15 crore middle class individuals, of which 60% are below 35 years — a segment that is increasingly depending on processed foods. This throws open an ideal opportunity for small entrepreneurs who are eyeing this segment for making a fortune.

Over the past five decades, India has taken giant steps in producing food grains, milk, fruits and vegetables. The production of raw food materials is estimated to worth over Rs 60,000 crore. After primary, secondary and tertiary processing, the total size of the industry is estimated to be as high as Rs 1, 10,000crore. This cost overrun reflects the opportunities that food-processing industry offers to the economy as a whole and entrepreneurs in individual.

Big opportunities lie in upgradation from commodities to packaged and branded products and convenient foods, which offer value for money. Products focused towards children and young adults and products catering to those who lead a fast modern-day life. Realizing the potential and in order to provide further boost, the government has exempted from excise duty for condensed milk, ice cream, preparations of meat, fish and poultry, pectins, pasta and yeast.

Further, excise duty on certain ready-to-eat packaged foods is reduced to 8% from 16%. The food processing industry will also be benefited from the reduction in excise duty on paper, a cut in customs duty on major bulk plastics and a reduction of customs duty on packaging machines, which would reduce packaging costs (Budget 2007).

Objectives of study

- To study the awareness towards instant food products.
- To analyze the factors influencing the buying behavior of instant food products.
- To know the brand loyalty for instant food products.

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- To know the customers product preference.

- To know the customer purchasing frequency of instant food products.

Scope of the Study

Instant food products play a vital role in every human in day–to-day life. The present study gives an insight into important factors influencing and purchasing frequency of the product and brand loyalty of the product. It is based on a questionnaire method confined to only the users of instant food products.

Statement of the Problem

Several firms had been engaging in production and marketing of instant food products. Hence, the consumers had greater options to choose from. A study on working women perception towards instant food product was deemed to be important to understand the buying behaviour and preferences of different working women consumers.

Understanding the consumer behaviour would help the firms in formulating strategies to cater to the needs of the consumer and thereby increase their market share. Consumer‘s preferences were found to change rapidly, especially in a dynamic environment keeping in view the importance of consumer behaviour and consumption pattern.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem along with the logic behind them. It may be understood as a science of studying how the research is done systematically. The various aspects of methodology adapted in the present study are discussed below.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted at Coimbatore city. According to the census of India, Coimbatore is the second biggest city in Tamil Nadu in the based on demography. The city is flourishing with many the sectors namely industry education, health and medical care and infrastructure with moderate climate. The city provides for growth in employment, improvement in standard of living and technology by the households has increased the market for home appliances.

Method of Sampling

Proportionate random sampling method was adopted by taking one hundred and ten per cent with the sample size resulting in 110 respondents.

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Sample Size

The study covered a sample size of 110 respondents belong to the study area, of working women consuming instant food products.

Period of the Study

The study covers the period of five months from November-March 2017.

Data Sources

Both primary data and secondary data were collected for the purpose of the Study.

Primary Data

Primary data are those, which are collected fresh and for the first time, and thus it happens to be original in character. The study was mainly based on primary data first hand information was collected and used in the study. Questionnaire was used for the collection of data. The gathered information was then transferred to master table to facilitate further analysis.

Secondary Data

Secondary Data means data that are already available they referred to the data which have already been collected and analyzed by someone else. Considerable data has also been tapped from secondary sources such as Journals, Newspapers, Magazines and Internet.

Framework of Analysis

This section deals with data collected from consumers through separate questionnaire, which were systematically processed and presented as tables in comprehensive manner.

- Percentage analysis
- Weighted Average
- Chi-square Test

Conducting research is an art, it is an art of finding and suggesting solutions to various problems special research is a systematic one, this research is done to analyze the perception of working women towards instant food in Coimbatore.

Sources of data

The data is directly collected from the respondents through questionnaire framed in a simple and understandable way. It is well structured to cover the objective of the study.

Sampling design

The sampling design followed for the study was simple random sampling.

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LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- This study was based on primary data collected from sample consumers by survey method.
- As any of the working women 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 Coimbatore city.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is designed to identify the related research so as to set the current research, is within a conceptual and theoretical context which includes an overview, evolution historical developments of credit cards. While reviewing, care has been taken to tap all possible sources such as books, journals, magazines, newspaper items.

1) Imran Khan et al. (2015)[1] Impact of brand related attributes on purchase intention of customers, undertook a study41 to know the impact of brand related attributes (brand knowledge, brand relationship, behavioral intention, brand advertisement and past experience about the brand) on the purchase intention of the consumers. The results identified that brand knowledge and brand advertisement has same impact on both male and female consumers. Behavioral intention, past experience and purchase intention are high in female consumers than male consumers. But male consumers have stronger brand relationship then female consumers. The impact of advertisement and knowledge about brand increases according to the age of the consumers. All the brand related factors shows positive relationship with purchase intention of consumers. Companies operating in Pakistan should improve their brand related attributes to increase purchase intention of their consumers, which is a key to their value generation.

2) Mevhibe Albayrak et al., (2014)[2] A comparative study of consumer preferences for manufacturer or private labelled food products, compared 29 the attitudes and preferences of consumers who purchase food products especially manufacturer‘s brands and private brands. In the study, 90 percent of the consumers are familiar with private brand food products. The quantity of purchase of private brand food products increases with household size.

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3) Renuka Hireken chanagoudar (2013)[3] Consumer behaviour towards ready- to - eat food products, made an attempt25 to analyze the buying behaviour of ready-to-eat food products by consumers of Hubli and Dharwad. Samples of 200 respondents were selected for the study.

Majority of the respondents were aware of Parle-G, Lays, Frooti and Amul brands in case of biscuits, chips, fruit juice and ice creams accordingly. Television was the major source for getting information about various brands in all the four products. Biscuits were consumed by all the respondents because of their convenience to use it as snacks. About 92 per cent, 93 per cent and 94 per cent of the respondents consumed chips, fruit juice and ice creams respectively.

Taste was the main driving force for purchasing of chips, fruit juice and ice creams. Health consciousness was the main factor for consumers not purchasing chips. Majority of the respondents were not purchasing fruit juice because they preferred home made products. Dislike towards the product was the main reason for not purchasing ice creams.

4) Usha (2012)[4] A study on buying behavior of consumers towards instant food products in Kolar District, has made an attempt21 to analyze the existing buying behaviour of Instant Food Products by individual households and to predict the demand for Instant Food Products in Kolar district. The study found that there is a general perception among the consumers that Instant Food Products are expensive than home made products. About 96.11 per cent consumers of Dosa/Idli mix and more than half of consumers of pickles and Sambar masala prepared their own home made products.

Low cost of home preparation and differences in tastes were the major reasons for non consumption, whereas ready availability and time saving 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.

5) Vincent (2011)[5] A study on brand consciousness among children and its effect on family buying behavior in Bangalore City, elicited18 that quality is an important factor that draws consumers towards branded products. Branded products are accepted as good quality products. People do not mind paying extra for branded products, as they get value for

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money. Media is a key constituent in promoting and influencing a brand.

A child's insistence affects family's buying behaviour. Children are highly aware and conscious of branded items. Although unbranded products sometimes give same satisfaction as branded products, customers would still prefer to purchase a branded product.

6) Ramasamyet al. (2010)[6] Consumer behavior towards instant food products, indicated that, the buying behavior is vastly influenced by awareness and attitude towards the product. Commercial advertisements over television was said to be the most important source of information, followed by displays in retail outlets. A large number of respondents laid emphasis on quality and felt that price is an important factor while the others attached importance to image of manufacturer

7) Nagaraja (2009) Consumer behavior in rural areas: A micro level study on consumer behavior in Kavimandal, opined that, buying behavior is very much influenced by experience of their own and of neighbor consumers and his own family. The involvements of his own family members were exerting maximum influence on his purchases. Above all, the quality of the product and its easy availability were the primary and the vital determinants of his buying behaviour. Consumers were influenced by touch and feel aspect of any promotional activity.

PREFERENCE OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS

Convenience food is available in the market for a variety of products in a variety of forms and packaging. In the last decade one has seen a manifold growth in this sector. Convenience food manufacturers are also investing in a lot of advertising for their products and targeting various audiences.

The preference of convenience food is determined with most commonly available and purchased convenience products. The following list would indicate the various categories of convenience food that a working woman generally would purchase from the store:-

- Frozen – Non vegetarian products (chicken, fish, etc)
- Frozen – Vegetarian products (paneer, vegetables, etc)

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- Frozen –Snack products (pizza, samosa, French fries, smily, etc)
- Ready to serve products – (dal makhni, paneer makni, palak paneer, etc)
- Fresh cut vegetables – (carrot, cauliflower, etc.)
- Pre-processed products – (soups, gravy mixes, rawa idli mix, etc)
- Ready to eat snacks – (chips, farsan, sev, biscuits, etc)
- Canned products – (coconut milk, fruits, milkmaid, etc)
- Bottled products – (jams, sauces, syrups, mayonnaise, spreads, etc)
- Refrigerated products – (tofu, paneer, etc)

The above mentioned list was utilized into the questionnaire to obtain the preferences of working woman on their choice of categories during their purchases.

Benefits of instant food products:

Time saving: instant food reduces the time required for preparation and to some extend even cooking time required. Hence, significant time can be saved where preparation from search for any meal can be avoided.

Variety: due to the various techniques used in the instant food manufacturing process one is able to get a lot of variety in the market. In fact the amount of variety available in the stores today does put a working woman in a fix on the choice that she needs to make. Another point to be noticed is that this variety remains constant in the market and does go off shelf citing seasonal reasons like the fresh fruits and vegetables do.

Healthy: One can read the contents and detailing on the packaging of the instant product and decide to whether health aspects are preferred or not.

Convenience: These products are convenient to carry, stack and store them since their packaging are well planned considering various factors like consistency, texture, size and fragility.

Storage: storage of instant food is easy as they can be stacked up anywhere and can also help better utilization of the space available. Regeneration is also faster and better.

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Labour saving: Instant food helps saving labour in the terms of going to market for purchase, pre- cleaning, pre- preparation and post preparation cleaning.

WEIGHTED AVERAGE ANALYSIS

Mean in which each item being averaged is multiplied by a number (weight) based on the item's relative importance. The result is summed and the total is divided by the sum of the weights. Weighted averages are used extensively in descriptive statistical analysis such as index numbers also called weighted mean.

Table: 1 Table Showing Weighted Average Analysis

Score / Product	OFTEN (4)	ONLY WHEN REQUIRED (3)	RARELY (2)	NOT AT ALL (1)	∑X	∑X/110	RANK
Cereals	27	18	9	1	181	1.645	5
Noodles	16	17	17	5	154	1.4	3
Snacks	25	15	13	2	173	1.57	4
Health Drinks	11	18	17	9	141	1.28	2
Instant (Chappathi, Parotta…,Etc)	14	8	16	17	129	1.17	1

Source: Primary Data

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INTERPRETATION

From the above table it is clear that instant food products (chappathi, parotta…,etc) ranks 1st among the following products with 1.17 percent, health drinks ranks 2nd among the following products with 1.28 percent, noodles ranks 3rd among the following products with 1.4 percent, snacks ranks 4th among the following products with1.57 percent and cereals ranks 5th among the following products with 1.64 percent.

Majority (1.17%) of respondents prefer purchasing instant (chappathi, parotta..., etc.)

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

This analysis is one of the simplest and most widely used non – parametric tests in Statistical work. It was first used by Karl Pearson in the year 1900. The quantity describes the magnitude of the discrepancy between theory and observation.

$$x^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequencies

H0 = there is significant relationship between age group and factors influencing brand

H1 = there is no significant relationship between age group and factors influencing brand

FINDINGS

Personal

- Majority (60%) of respondents are unmarried.
- Majority (50.9%) of the respondents are from IT sector.
- Majority (54.5%) of the respondents are of the age group of 20-30.
- Majority (38.2%) of respondents‘ monthly income is betweenRs.10000-30000.

Major Factors

- Majority (40%) of respondents‘ means of awareness is through friends and relatives.
- Majority (34.5%) of respondents reason for purchase of instant food products is it saves time.

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- Majority (36%) of respondents prefer buying small pack of instant food products.

- Majority (83.6%) of respondents are aware about the safety and quality of instant food products

- Majority (36.4%) of respondents look into packing of the product as the safety factor.

- Majority (29.2%) of respondents brand preference is influenced by all the three factors of instant food products.

- Majority (36.4%) of respondents search for the availability of their product online if the preferred brand is not available.

- Majority (32.7%) of respondents have chosen quality as a factor of building brand image.

- Majority (64%) of respondents do not prefer adding preservatives to the product they consume.

- Majority (63.6%) of respondents have thinks all the three problems can be caused by adding preservatives.

Weighted average analysis

Majority (1.17%) of respondents prefer purchasing instant (chappathi, parotta.., etc).

Chi-square analysis

―The degree of freedom is 9 and the level of significance is 5 percent, the table value is 16.919, the calculated value (x^2) is greater than the table value, so the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected‖. Hence there is a relationship between the age group and factors influencing brand preference.

―The degree of freedom is 3 and the level of significance is 5%, the table value is 7.815, the calculated value (x^2) is greater than the table value, so the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected‖. Hence there is a relationship between the marital status and reason for choosing instant food products.

SUGGESTIONS

- The study reveals that majority of unmarried working women are purchasing instant food products. So the promotion should target this group.

- Respondents feel that perceived health is below average when preservatives are added to the instant

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food. So manufacturer should focus more on the health part of the product.

- The manufacturer must be aware about the tasty and quality of the product is constantly maintained.

- The respondents have not chosen price as a significant factor influencing to buy the product. Thus efforts may be taken to reduce the price of the product to increase the sale.

CONCLUSION

Instant food consumption is increased due to increase in urbanization, breaking up of the traditional joint family system, time, and convenience, changing lifestyle and increasing level of income. The ready availability and saving of the time are the reasons for consuming instant food products. The satisfaction level of consumers in instant food product is average because people are health conscious.

In the study it is revealed that consumers are loyal to brands and they are satisfied with their brands. It is showing that there is a relationship between quality and time for selection of instant food products.

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