

Ready to Eat Food Perception, Food Preferences and Food Choice

Mrs. Ushas Mathew^{1*}, Dr. Priyanka Sharma²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Science, Lords School of Science, Lords University, Alwar, Rajasthan - 301028

² Professor, Dept. Of Zoology, Lords School of Science, Lords University, Alwar, Rajasthan - 301028

Abstract - One of a person's essential necessities is nutrition. It is necessary for both a healthy development and the regular operation of the body's organs. Food that has been packed on the premises where it is being sold and is ready to eat is referred to as ready-to-eat food. It is food that has been exposed or offered for sale without further cooking or preparation. Increasingly more consumers are becoming interested in RTE snacks because of its practicality, worth, attractiveness, flavor, and texture. The link between food perception, preferences, and food choice is discussed in this essay. Our first goal is to identify and highlight the variables that influence how we perceive and choose foods. The researcher provides examples of the many variables influencing our choices for ready-to-eat foods.

Keywords - Ready-to-eat, Ready-to-serve, Food preference and Food Choice

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

When we talk about "food," we're referring to the nutrients we take in to sustain our bodies' optimal functioning. Food is essential for the maintenance, healing, and replacement of damaged bodily tissues. For this reason, food must not only fulfill the caloric needs of carbs, proteins, fats, etc., but also offer the necessary raw material, energy, and other regulating factors like minerals and vitamins for the normal functioning of the body. Because of this, we know that people need clean, nutritious meals in order to maintain or improve their physical and mental well-being. This has led many to look for easily accessible consumer items that are both high in quality and safe for human use.[1]

Ready To-Eat Foods

You can trace the history of the Ready To Eat Foods and Instant food items seen on supermarket shelves today all the way back to India in the 1980s, when the trend began with Instant noodles in Japan. Due to the advancement of technology, the people have new foods processor vessels, equipment and tools but nevertheless people are in quest of new approaches to speed up the cooking in order to cope up with mechanical life, since they do not have adequate time to prepare food in the traditional methods.[2]

Cooking meals the traditional way is a tremendous burden for women in today's society, when both men and women are expected to contribute financially to the home. Companies of all sizes are taking

advantage of this trend by developing and marketing "Ready To-Eat Foods," such as instant varieties of staples like noodles, vermicelli, gulab jamun, instant idli, vada, dosa mix, etc. Not only are quick foods convenient, but they also play an important part in many cultures' religious and social celebrations.[3]

Opportunity in the Ready-to-Eat Foods Market

As a result of contact with the West, both eating habits and daily routines in India have undergone significant transformations. As a result, these items find widespread use in both commercial and domestic kitchens. Prepackaged, ready-to-eat meals are widely accessible and have become ingrained in modern culture. In order to save time and money, more and more individuals are opting to buy RTE foods, and this trend is expected to continue.[4-6]

The RTE food market in India has changed dramatically during the last 15 years. Some of the most influential elements contributing to this shift include the liberalization of policies, the rise of two-income households, the trend toward divorce and single-parent households, the rise of technological advancements in the kitchen, the expansion of media, etc. In different areas of India, people tend to cook and eat in quite different ways. Due to the constraints imposed by modern living, most individuals nowadays would rather eat something quick and simple to prepare than something that requires a lot of effort but yields little reward. [7]

The inaccessibility of masala's key ingredients and the complexity of making the spice blend on one's own are two factors that drive consumers toward ready-made alternatives. These items have the potential to be successful in a certain market segment. It all comes down to the range of goods on offer. Noodles, spaghetti, chips, dairy, seafood, meat, ready to cook dosa and parota items, ready to cook masala meals and pre prepared dishes, etc. are all part of the product lineup. People who move to cities from the countryside in search of work and education are said to prefer ready-to-eat foods over dining out.[8]

The rising demand for RET Foods is mostly attributable to the fact that it is prepared according to the preferences and whims of the people living in a given area. Modern society's top priority is convenience, therefore fast and ready-to-eat meals are all the rage in the West. These RTE foods are now having an impact on India.[9]

Motives Behind the Surging Interest in RET Foods

The most important drivers of RTE Foods' popularity are:

- The necessity for RTE Foods was spurred by the growth of major cities as a result of factors such as rising populations, the proliferation of new businesses, the creation of new goods, and the pressures of time.
- A scarcity of domestic help has arisen as a consequence of industrialisation, which has drawn workers in search of higher wages. So, households began utilizing RTE foods to save time in the kitchen.
- Since more women nowadays are able to read and write, more of them are entering the workforce, elevating their own position in society and expanding the scope of women's roles generally. As a result of this predicament, the demand for ready-to-eat meals has increased.
- The breakdown of the traditional nuclear family has led to an increase in lawsuits against RET food manufacturers in our area. Reduces the need for manual labor.
- In light of the ever-increasing cost of primary ingredients, the widespread adoption of RTE meals is largely attributable to their comparative affordability.
- RTE foods are gaining in popularity because of the abundance of newly introduced, low-priced and simple-to-use goods on the market.

- Most people prefer to buy RTE foods since they don't have to perform any arduous preparation work, such as grinding by hand or dredging for ingredients.
- RTE foods are both time- and money-efficient due to their pre-prepared nature. Because of the time, effort, and money it saves its users, its popularity has grown. That's why RET Foods are so popular.
- The new economic policy in India has ushered in a wave of fresh job openings. The rise of multinational corporations has allowed women to enter the workforce, leaving them with less time to care for their families and prepare meals. Because of this, many have been forced to turn to RTE foods.
- People's preference for RTE Dishes over older, more traditionally cooked foods is rising as their quality of life improves as a result of factors such as increased money, exposure to Western culture, more international commerce and travel, etc.
- The media, especially television and newspapers, play a crucial function in contemporary society in informing consumers about newly produced and released goods.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The process of designing research include settling on a broad strategy and outlining how the many components of the study will interact to produce the intended outcomes. Descriptive research methods are favored here. Many different research methods and processes, such as surveys and in-person interviews, are rolled into one category here. With regards to ready-to-eat food goods in particular, this study aims to examine customers' purchasing habits, perspectives, and preferences. The research is meant to be exploratory, thus both secondary sources of information will be used. The study topic and questionnaire are well defined and constructed. The study's recommendations are derived on this preliminary data.[10]

This research made advantage of a convenient sampling technique. Convenience Sampling method is a non sampling method used to generate samples in accordance with criteria such as accessibility, willingness to participate in the sample, availability at a certain time, or other useful characteristics of the element being sampled. The study's sample is selected at random without regard to how well it represents the population at large. Through this

method, they may easily monitor routines, attitudes, and beliefs.[11]

RESULT

The purpose of this section is to examine the collected information about the demographic characteristics of the consumers of ready-to-eat food products in urban and semi-urban rural areas.[12]

The respondents' gender distribution

According to the demographic breakdown of this study's respondents, men have outnumbered females. The inclusion of a gender perspective is crucial to the results of any social science investigation. The majority of the respondents in this study are men, however the study does include some women for the sake of comparison, since the study focuses on the opinions and choices of consumers in urban & semi-urban regions.[13]

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	ValidPercent	Cumulative Percent
Male	553	66.2	66.2	66.2
Female	282	33.8	33.8	100.0
Total	835	100.0	100.0	

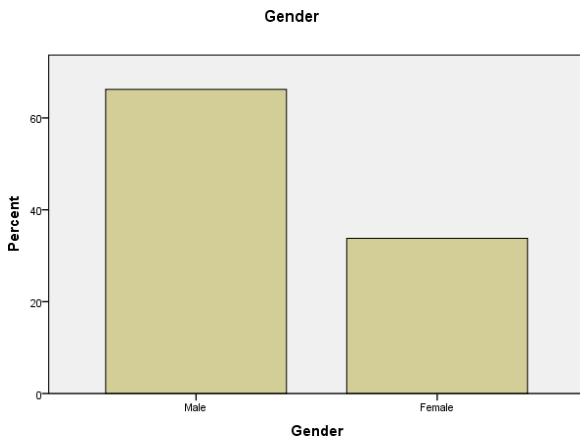


Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Interpretation:

The distribution of respondents according to gender is shown in Table. It demonstrates that men made up the majority of responders (66.20%), while women made up 33.80%.[14]

Consumption Pattern

Rising incomes and increased spending have had a major effect on India's dietary habits as the country's economy has expanded. The fundamental make-up of how people eat changes as a result. The rise of the nuclear family and urbanization have altered the traditional Indian consumption pattern.[15]

For any study to be successful, it is crucial that researchers understand why respondents chose to purchase the things they did. Information on whether consumers' purchasing choices are made in secret or if they are swayed by pressure or coercion is required. [16] Therefore, the researcher has gathered the following data to aid the respondent's purchasing decision:

Table 2: Customers' Final Purchase Decisions

Buying Decision	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
ByOwn	382	46.8	46.8	46.8
YourSpouse	26	3.2	3.2	49.9
Parents	145	17.7	17.7	67.7
Children	29	3.5	3.5	71.2
Collectively	235	28.8	28.8	100.0
Total	817	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation:

As can be shown in Table over half of all respondents (46.80%) make their own mind up when it comes to purchasing ready-to-eat foods. Collective decision making is used by around 28.80% of respondents while buying Ready-To-Eat foods. Although just 17.70% of all purchases included a parent, parents played a crucial influence in the decision-making process. There was a decline in the purchase of ready-to-eat (RTE) foods by both children and their parents.[18]

The number of times a product was purchased by the customer was represented by its frequency of purchase. Table provides analysis of the respondents' purchases of ready-to-eat food items and the frequency of such purchases.[19]

Table 3: Consumption of Ready-to-Eat Meals

Frequency of purchase	Soup		Snacks		Noodles		Tiffin_items		Rice	
	Fre	Per(%)	Fre	Per(%)	Fre	Per(%)	Fre	Per(%)	Fre	Per(%)
Never	118	14.4	18	2.2	51	6.2	88	10.8	76	9.3
Rarely	270	33.0	117	14.3	202	24.7	220	26.9	151	18.5
Sometimes	285	34.9	353	43.2	334	40.9	294	36.0	321	39.3
Often	128	15.7	242	29.6	117	14.3	118	14.4	178	21.8
VeryOften	16	2.0	87	10.6	113	13.8	97	11.9	91	11.1
Total	817	100.0	817	100.0	817	100.0	817	100.0	817	100.0

Opinions and preferences of buyers

In multidimensional scaling, researchers create axes that measure the distances between different variables (Euclidean distance). In this case, the variables were chosen from the standpoint of customers across several brand categories.[20] The study's MDS-based categorization of regional and demographic influences on RTE product preferences yields the following results:

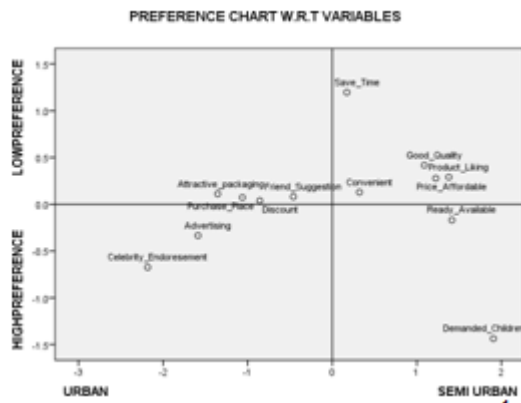


Figure 2: Favored RTE items may be ranked on a multidimensional scale.

Interpretation:

The rise in popularity of ready-to-eat products, especially among younger consumers in semi-urban regions, is shown in the graph. Even in less densely populated places, where price and accessibility have been improved by factoring in quality and ease of preparation, ready-to-eat products remain popular. A similar strategy may be used to increase the market share of ready-to-eat items in the urban market: having a well-known celebrity promote the product. As far as penetrating the urban market is concerned, better advertising, superior packaging, and a buddy as opinion leader can prove to be more effective than targeting the semi-urban market.[21]

shows that the most influential reason for buying RTE products is because kids ask for them, followed by celebrity endorsement, appealing packaging and advertising, product likeability, and ease of use, with price, availability in the market, friend recommendations, ease of preparation, time savings, and quality all ranking lower.[22]

CONCLUSION

This research emphasizes the ever-present nature of RTE food consumption in urban and semi-urban settings, focusing on the nut cell. Due to increased convenience, lower cost, and wider distribution, the ready-to-eat food market is appealing. An increasingly effective strategy for marketing ready-to-eat (RTE) food in the future will include the use of eye-catching displays in a variety of retail settings, such as supermarkets and megastores. However, celebrity endorsement and advertising are necessary for future product penetration in the urban RTE food industry. Semi-urban ready-to-eat food markets are less competitive than their metropolitan counterparts. With so many ready-to-eat (RTE) food options on the market, it's crucial to maintain high standards of quality in order to win the loyalty of consumers in the long run.

REFERENCES

1. He K, Hu FB, Colditz G, Manson J, Willett W,

Liu S (2014). Changes in intake of fruits and vegetables in relation to risk of obesity and weight gain among middle-aged women. *International Journal of Obesity Related Metabolic Disorders*; 28: 1569-1574.

2. Hertenstein, Julie H., Marjorie B. Platt, and Robert W. Veryzer (2015), "The Impact of Industrial Design Effectiveness on Corporate Financial Performance," *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 2 (1), 3– 21.

3. Hu D, Reardon T, Rozelle S, Timmer P, Wang H (2014). The emergence of supermarkets with Chinese characteristics: challenges and opportunities for China's agricultural development. *Dev. Policy Rev.*; 22: 557– 586.

4. Kant A, Graubard B (2016), "Secular trends in patterns of self-reported food consumption of adult Americans: NHANES 1971-1975 to NHANES 1999-2002. *Am J Clin. Nutr.*; 84(5), 1215- 1223.

5. 26. Kazmi SQ. Consumer Perception and Buying Decisions (The Pasta Study). *International Journal of Advancements in Research & Technology* 2012; 1(6).

6. Kumar, M. (2011). The Impact of 'Brand equity' determinants on consumers' purchase decisions. A case study of the processed food sector in the national capital region of India. *Journal of Business and Retail Management research*.

7. Kumar H. et al. A Study on Consumer Awareness, Safety Perceptions & Practices About Food Preservatives and Flavouring Agents used in Packed /Canned Foods From South India, *National Journal of Community Medicine* 2013; 4(3): 402. Accessed from: www.njcmindia.org.

8. Kumar, R. S., Dash, S., & Purwar, P. C. (2013). The nature and antecedents of brand equity and its dimensions. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02634501311312044>

9. Kinra, N. (2016). The effect of country-of-origin on foreign brand names in the Indian market. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02634500610641534>

10. Lavanya MS. et al. Consumer Awareness and Preference towards Quality Certified Products. *International Journal of Research in IT & Management* 2012; 2(5). accessed from: <http://www.mairec.org>.

11. Lytle L, Seifert S, Greenstein J, McGovern P

(2017). How children do's eating patterns and food choices change over time? *Am J Health Promot*; 14: 222-228.

Evaluation," *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 18 (2-3), 271-87.

12. Margetts, B.M. et al. (2019), "Factors which influence 'healthy' eating patterns: results from the 1993 Health education authority health and lifestyle survey in England", *Public Health Nutrition*, Vol.1, No.3, pp.193-198.
13. Morland K, Diez-Roux A, Wing S (2016). Supermarkets, other food stores, and obesity the atherosclerosis risk in communities study. *Am J Prev Med*; 30: 333-339.
14. Nielsen S, Siega-Riz A, Popkin B (2012). Trends in energy intake in U.S. between 1977 and 1996: similar shifts seen across age groups. *Obesity Research*; 10(5): 370-378.
15. Nirmalraj RJT. A Study on "Ready to eat" Food Industry *International Journal in Multidisciplinary and Academic Research (SSIJMAR)* 2012; 3(3).
16. Pelsmacker, P. D., Janssens, W., Sterckx, E., & Mielants, C. (2015). Consumer preferences for the marketing of ethically labeled coffee. *International Marketing Review*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02651330510624363>
17. Pitta, D. A., & Katsanis, L. P. (2017). Understanding brand equity for successful brand extension. *Journal of consumer marketing*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/07363769510095306>
18. Pryor, K., & Brodie, R. J. (2019). How advertising slogans can prime evaluations of brand extensions: Further empirical Results. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10610429810244666>
19. Rettie, Ruth and Carol Bruwer (2018), "The Verbal and Visual Components of Package Design," *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 9 (1), 56-70.
20. Ribas-Barba L, Serra-Majem L, Salvador G, Castell C, Cabezas C, Salleras L, Plasencia A (2017). Trends in dietary habits and food consumption in Catalonia, Spain (1992-2003). *Public Health Nutrition*; 10(11A):1340-1353.
21. Schluter G, Lee C (2020). Changing food consumption patterns: their effects on the US food system, 1972- 92. *Food Reviews*; 22: 35-47.
22. Schoormans, Jan P.L. and Henry S.J. Robben (2016), "The Effect of New Package Design on Product Attention, Categorization and

Corresponding Author

Mrs. Ushas Mathew*

Research Scholar, Department of Science, Lords School of Science, Lords University, Alwar, Rajasthan - 301028