

# Consumer Perception Towards Ready-To-Eat Food Products

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**Abstract - Due to pressure from their way of life, Indians have started favoring quick and simple methods of cooking rather than taking their time. Most often, individuals, especially young ones, choose quick foods like Nestle cup noodles, Bhel, etc. Ready-To-Eat Food Stuffs have recently gained popularity in India for a number of reasons, including convenience, flavor and texture, packaging, and marketing tactics. Dal & Curries, Instant Poha, Rapid Upma, Instant Idly & Dosa Mix, Sandwiches, Ready Masals & Curry Powders, Indian Snacks, etc. are a few examples of ready-to-eat food items. The elements that affect customers' decisions to purchase and consume ready-to-eat food products are covered in this essay.**

**Keywords - Ready-To-Eat Food Products, Consumer Perception, Consumer satisfaction**

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## INTRODUCTION

As a result of the hectic pace of contemporary life, everyone values their free time immensely. Meanwhile, "Ready-To-Eat" (RTE) foods play a crucial part in everyone's day-to-day life due to the time and money they save. Foods that are simple, quick, and handy to prepare, as well as sanitary, free of microbial contamination, and ready to eat, are referred to as "Ready-To-Eat" foods. In the past, people ate slowly and in large quantities, but now they choose simple, easily digestible meals. Therefore, the availability of these meals met every need of the contemporary human.[1]

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.

## 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.

## 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]

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. 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.

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.[5]

### 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.

### INDIAN FOOD PRODUCTION EXPANDS

One of the greatest in terms of both consumption, export, and future development is India's food processing sector. Fruit and vegetable process, fish processing, milk processing, poultry and meat processing units, packaged & convenience foods, alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverage and soft drink processing, and grain processing are all vital components of the food processing industry.

The food processing sector was estimated to be worth Rs.315,000 crores in 2016, with value-added

goods contributing another Rs.99,000.00 crore. A total of around 300 million upper- and middle-class individuals eat processed food, with an additional 200 million predicted to make the switch by 2010. One-fifth of the country's total industrial production comes from the food processing sector. It contributes 18% of GDP and employs around 19% of the industrial workforce nationally. Papad, pickles, and spice blends have all seen explosive growth in popularity in the last several years. We calculate that this submarket is worth about Rs 100 Crores by itself. According to a report by Rabo India Finance, the food processing sector in India is expected to grow to Rs 11,500 billion by 2014–15. Foods that have been processed, such as 'chapatias,' 'subzies,' or portion packs of concentrated curries, are quickly becoming regular staples in the diets of many people, particularly young couples. Dishes like "puri-bhaji" and "dosa-vada" are part of the product line.

Most middle-class homes have long since adopted the usage of processed food items including pickles, chutneys, juices, and curry powders. Sixty percent of the middle class is under the age of 35, and this is a group that is becoming more and more reliant on processed goods. There are 15 crore middle class folks.[6]

India is the world's second-largest food producer, behind only China, and the food and agriculture sector accounts for 26% of India's gross domestic product. Over 600 million tons of food items may be produced annually, and that number is expected to rise in the next decade. At 53% of the total value of private consumption, food products have a disproportionately big impact. In industrialized countries, food and food items make up roughly 20% of consumer expenditure, therefore this percentage is much larger in developing countries. In rural India, the MPCE was 511 rupees a month on average, broken down as follows: 305 rupees on food and 206 rupees on other goods and services. The total for city dwellers is Rs. 1060, or \$441 for food & Rs. 619 for everything else. The percentage of income spent on food fell from 64% in rural regions to 54% in 1987-88, and from 56% in urban areas to 42%. [7]

The bulk of meals are still eaten at home in India. However, the rise in urbanization, the dissolution of the traditional joint family system, the preference for quality over quantity, the rise in the number of working women, the increase in per capita income, the shift toward more active leisure pursuits, and the rising standard of living among the middle class have all contributed to a rise in the proportion of meals consumed away from home. The percentage of the population living in cities rose from 23.3% in 1981 to 27.8% in 2001, a gain of 5.4 million people. The percentage of working women also rose over this time, from 19.7 - 25.7 percent. The average income per person rose from Rs.7,328 in 1980–81 to Rs.10,306 in 2000–01. The expansion of food processing

companies is indicative of the shift in eating patterns.[8]

Companies of all sizes are cashing in on this trend by developing and marketing "simple to prepare food products" like instant noodles, instant vermicelli, instant gulab jamun, instant idli, instant vada, instant dosa mix, etc. Not only are quick foods convenient, but they also play an important part in many cultures' religious and social celebrations. "Instant food items are ready-to-eat meals that are pre-packaged, frequently in powder form, and may be produced by just adding a liquid, such as water or milk." The current trend has shifted away from the more elaborate and time-consuming eating styles of the past and toward dishes that are quick to prepare and easy on the digestive system. Therefore, the availability of these meals satisfied every need of the average contemporary person. Instant foods, often known as ready-to-eat foods, include items like canned goods, convenience foods, quick meals, frozen foods, instant products, dry foods, preserved foods, etc. Indians now more often consume Western-style fast food and other processed meals because of the widespread availability of these products imported from the West.[9]

The greatest way to succeed in today's liberal, privatized, globalized, and technologically advanced business environment is to anticipate and cater to the needs of the customer. Every business aims to expand its market share and profitability in light of the fact that the customer is king. Similar tactics are being used by the competition. It includes the mental processes customers go through in deciding what they want, deciding what to buy, deciding how to shop for it, deciding what to compare prices on, and finally deciding to buy something. As a human activity centered on the items and services being marketed, consumer behavior is one of the most interesting and difficult fields to study. It's really difficult to decode customer behavior.[10]

Instant meal items have become mainstream in India, where they may be found on the shelves of regular grocery shops and even some upscale supermarkets. Many Indian enterprises have entered the instant food industry in recent years, responding to the growing demand for their goods and the increasing popularity of this category. Products that may be prepared in a matter of minutes are convenient since they cut down on preparation and cooking time. They can get their kids off to school on time, go to work on time, and have extra time for other pursuits. Since the demands of contemporary urban society are always growing, it seems to reason that these women would want to enhance their own influence in it. Instant foods allow people to save time, effort, and convenience by allowing them to cook whenever they choose.[11]

**CUSTOMERS' OPINIONS ON READY-TO-EAT FOODS**

In today's busy world, it's common knowledge that most couples prefer to spend far less time in the kitchen. They'd rather spend their time with their families and going on adventures on the weekends, but they have to work long hours during the week. The availability of a wide variety of flavors and preparation methods also plays a role in driving RTE Foods' market potential. In today's market, consumers who want to try new foods and flavors rely on these items.

When India attracts the attention of major corporations, the country's population and way of life will undergo dramatic transformations. Potential sales will be affected by factors such as the rate of modernization, the age distribution of the population, and the level of consumer education.

Consumers are making informed decisions about the foods they eat as a result of an increase in literacy and the availability of communication technologies. There is a lot of emphasis put on people's lifestyles and diets, and there is evidence showing that India is becoming a capital for heart patients & diabetics.[12]

Consumers that care about their health tend to be highly informed and have access to a variety of resources, including the internet, periodicals, television, and word of mouth. Women shoppers are more likely to look at nutrition facts labels, ingredient lists, and certifications while making purchases than men. This bodes well for the health of India's younger population, particularly those in their twenties and thirties. And it's not only men who worry about their waistlines; women use that concern to guide their purchasing decisions.

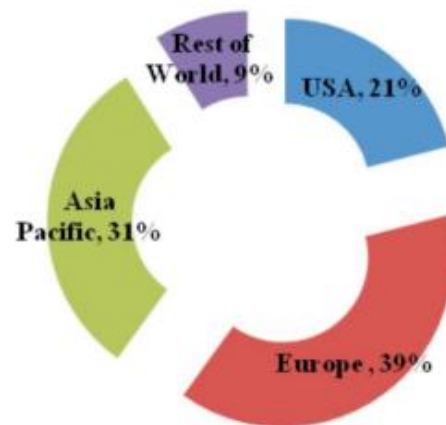
Housewives often have a crucial role in determining what groceries the family buys. In order to provide for their families, people are increasingly opting for items that are high in fiber, low in calories, and nutritionally dense. These items' advertising also plays a significant role in the consumer's final decision. There are two opposing factors contributing to the rising prevalence of obesity in India: increased consumer knowledge of the food they eat and the persuasive power of marketing messages and product packaging.[13]

**THE INTERNATIONAL FOOD PROCESSING SECTOR**

FAO defines food processing as "the process that comprises all the phases that food goes through from the moment it is harvested to the time it reaches on consumer's plate." In terms of dollar value, the worldwide processed food business is estimated to be worth over US\$3.6 trillion. This sector is responsible for around 75% of the world's food sales. When compared to the 16% of produce that is handled in bulk as agricultural commodities, the little percentage of processed food that crosses borders is surprising.

When it comes to sales of processed foods, USA accounts for 31% of the worldwide market. [14]

That's because when nations advance economically, people start to value convenience foods more than staples, which are more common in developing nations. As may be seen in Figure 1.1 below, the United States, Europe, and Japan together account for over 60% of global retail sales of processed foods. It is true that Japan has the biggest food processing industry in Asia, but India and China are quickly closing the gap and are projected to develop even faster. Australia's food processing industry is highly technologically sophisticated, resulting in competitively priced, high-quality exports. India now accounts for around 1.6% of the global food processing market. In its Vision 2015, India's Ministry of Food Processing Industries outlined plans to boost the country's participation of the global processed food trade from its present level to 3 percent by the year 2015."[15]



**Figure 1: Distribution Hubs for Manufactured Goods**

**India's Food Processing Sector**

With 161 million hectares of farmland and the most irrigated area in the world, India has the potential to overtake China as the world's top food producer. By the end of 2015, India's food business would be worth US\$210 billion, while the processed food sector will be worth roughly US\$105 billion. The food processing sector ranks fifth in India in terms of output, consumption, exports, and projected expansion. Over 14% of manufacturing GDP, approximately 13% of India's exports, 6% of total industrial investment, and about 13 million people are employed directly and another 35 million are indirectly by the food processing sector in India. 2 Table 1.1 displays the main subsectors of the food processing sector.[16]

**Table 1: Main Food Processing Industries,**



Sectors	Products
Diary	Whole Milk Powder, Skimmed milk powder, Condensed milk, Ice cream, Butter, Ghee & Cheese.
Fruits & Vegetables	Beverages, Juices, Concentrates, Pulps, Slices, Frozen & Dehydrated products, Potato Wafers/ Chips etc.
Grains & Cereals	Flour, Bakeries, Starch Glucose, Cornflakes, Malted foods, Beer and Malt extracts, Vermicelli, Grain based alcohol.
Fisheries	Frozen & Canned products mainly in fresh form
Meat & Poultry	Frozen and packed – mainly in fresh form, Egg powder.
Consumer Foods	Snacks, Namkeens, Biscuits, Alcoholic and Non alcoholic beverages

### Segmentation of Packaged Foods and Their Definition

Foods that are packaged are ones that can be wrapped or kept in a container and then sent to another location without spoiling. They are ready to consume either as-is or after being reconstituted with water or another product, heated, or thawed. Depending on the situation, they may be somewhat or fully ready. The name "convenience foods" is often used to packaged meals because of how quickly and easily they may be eaten. Food packaging is a broad category that includes many different types of processed foods. We may roughly divide the packaged/convenience food market into two groups: - Different types of shelf-stable convenience foods include:-

Foods that don't need to be prepared from scratch include quick mixes such as cake mixes, gulab-jamun mixes, falooda mixes, ice cream mixes, etc., and pasta products such as noodles, macroni, vermicelli, etc. Items that don't need any cooking before consumption, such as cookies, ice cream, chips, namkeens, and many types of bread.

In addition to the aforementioned, common examples of shelf-stable convenience foods include milk, Atta, corn flakes, vegetable & edible oils. Frozen fruits and veggies, yogurt, and other similar items are examples of frozen convenience foods. By the end of 2016, the global market for packaged food is projected to be worth 91,000,000,000. The ready-to-eat food market accounts for 90% of the packaged food market's revenue. The ready-to-eat food sector of the packaged

food business is expanding at a rate of over 30% per year, outpacing all other subsectors.[17]

### CONCLUSION

The prognosis for ready-to-eat food products is favorable. According to the report, taste and nutrition, convenience, and availability are the three main draws for ready-to-eat food products. Choice of brand is influenced by a number of variables, including preferences, advertising, marketing strategies, and accessibility. The majority of consumers regularly use RTE goods and express indifferent satisfaction. When buying ready-to-eat food products, respondents give great consideration to taste, nutrition, and availability.

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