

A STUDY ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS PACKAGED FOODS IN SURAT CITY

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Abstract

This research paper explores consumer buying behavior towards packaged foods in Surat City, focusing on demographic influences, purchasing patterns, and product preferences. The study, based on responses from 145 individuals, reveals that most respondents are between 18-25 years old, with a significant portion earning less than ₹10,000 monthly. The survey indicates that packaged foods are primarily purchased occasionally and during long working hours, with snacks being the most popular category and pastes the least. Notably, awareness and consumption rates of specific brands like Balaji foods are high, while others like Gits Gulab Jamun and Swad Masalas are significantly lower. Statistical analyses show distinct consumer preferences based on age, occupation, income, and gender. These findings highlight evolving consumer habits and suggest areas for market development and brand awareness in Surat's packaged food sector.

Keywords: *Consumer Buying Behavior, Packaged Foods, Demographic influences, Purchasing patterns, Product Preferences, Brand Awareness.*

Introduction:

Since the early 1990s, economic liberalization has significantly transformed the lifestyle and food preferences of Indian consumers. Traditionally, Indian households prioritized fresh, home-cooked meals, reflecting deep-rooted family and cultural values. However, with socio-economic shifts such as increased urbanization and the rise of dual-income households, the demand for convenience foods has surged. This shift has led to the coexistence of traditional products like tooth powder with modern alternatives such as toothpaste, illustrating a broader transition in consumer behavior.

Indian cuisine has historically involved daily preparation of fresh meals, with packaged and ready-to-eat foods being less common. Household processing for storable items like pickles and chutneys was prevalent. However, modern lifestyles have driven a demand for packaged foods, including ready-to-eat meals, snacks, and beverages, particularly among working professionals and nuclear families. This trend underscores a significant move from traditional to convenience-oriented eating habits, reflecting broader changes in the Indian food industry.

Understanding consumer buying behavior is crucial for businesses aiming to meet consumer needs effectively. Various factors influence consumer behavior, including psychological, social, cultural, personal, and economic aspects. Motivation, perception, learning, attitudes and beliefs, family influence, reference groups, social roles, cultural values, age, income, occupation, lifestyle, and economic factors like personal and family income, consumer credit, liquid assets, and savings goals all play pivotal roles in shaping consumer decisions and preferences.

The rise in demand for packaged foods in India can be attributed to changing lifestyles and socio-economic factors. The need for convenience and time-saving solutions has made packaged foods an essential part of modern life, especially for working professionals and nuclear families. Packaged foods offer advantages such as safety, quality preservation, convenient storage, and improved hygiene, although they also come with disadvantages like the use of harmful preservatives and chemical-based ingredients. Despite these concerns, the industry continues to grow, reflecting the evolving food preferences of Indian consumers.

The packaged food industry in India is currently experiencing robust growth, with an annual rate of 10-15%, driven by increasing middle-class purchasing power, busy lifestyles, and changing eating habits. The market is attracting multinational companies and established domestic players, leading to healthy competition and innovation. Major segments include dairy, fruits and vegetables, grain processing, meat and poultry, fisheries and seafood, and beverages. Distribution channels range from supermarkets and hypermarkets to convenience stores, specialty stores, and online platforms, reflecting a diverse and dynamic industry landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Rupa Rathee, 2018) Due to the rise in working couples who are busy in their jobs and have limited time to spend in household activities there has been a rise in the ready-to-eat food industry. The study included 205 working women who were asked to give their preferences through a questionnaire. The data was analysed using SPSS version 23. The study showed that majority of the women were aware of ready to eat food products. The factors which influenced the negative aspects, usefulness, ease of use, sales promotion, familiarity, fondness, price influence and time taken.

(Ashish Kr. Isher, 2018) Consumer interest in ready-to-eat (RTE) and ready-to-serve (RTS) food is mounting due to their convenience, value, attractive appearance, taste and texture. This paper discusses the relationship between consumer buying behaviour and consumption pattern. Convenient Sampling method IS used in this survey. Number of respondents is 100. Percentages are used in making comparisons between two or more series of data The survey conducted through structured questionnaire/Schedule by face-to-face interview method.

(Nandrajog, 2018) The whole Ready to Eat (RTE) food segment is one of the speedily growing sectors in the Indian economy. So the present paper focused on Behavior of Adolescents towards Ready-to-Eat Products and survey was conducted at Malwa Region of Punjab. A total of 200 adolescents' consumers were recruited from schools and colleges of Malwa region in Punjab randomly selected during the month of July to September 2017.

The responses were analyzed through descriptive statistics, chi-square test and Garrett Ranking score. The result displayed insignificant difference regarding the awareness and demographic profile of the respondents. It was also found that taste, quantity & reasonable price were the main factors influence the buying behavior of adolescents' buyers in Malwa region of Punjab.

(Ratheesh Kumar 2017) conducted a study with consumer satisfaction towards organic food products with special reference to Coimbatore city. The study was based on primary data. The required primary data have been collected 100 sample respondents through questionnaire such collected 100 sample respondents through questionnaire such collected data have been square statistical tools like simple percentage, chi-square analysis and average ranking analysis he found that the major reasons are organic producer are low, adequate market facility is not there, few number of shops, lack of awareness and so on. Therefore it former as well as government gives interest to organic farming easily farming easily enhancing good marketing system in Tamil Nadu

(Harsha Vardhan G., 2017) The basic purpose of this study is to behind the success of packaging. The purchasing behaviour of a consumer is subjected to the packing elements like packaging shading, foundation image, material of the goods, package style, shape of wrapper, printed information and the time spent looking at a product and it's packaging in addition to consumers' tastes and habits influences the consumer purchase decision to buy a product or brand over another.

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(M.COM, 2017) 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 study was conducted at Coimbatore city. According to the census of India, Coimbatore is the second biggest city in Tamilnadu in the based on demography. The sample size that is chosen from the whole population is 75 respondents. The data that is used for the analysis is collected from the 75 respondents. The Sampling Method that is used in this study is Convenience Sampling. The Convenience sampling is that the survey is done is the way that is convenient for the Respondents and the Researcher. Consumption of increase of instant food products is due to increase in urbanization, breaking up of the traditional joint family system, time, convenience, changing lifestyles and increasing level of affluence in the middle income group.

(Mr. Rajiv Vyas, 2016) The study is an attempt to understand different aspects of consumer behavior on buying of packaged food products. This study aims to identify the factors which are important while purchasing

packaged food products. The study also examines the relationship between the factors brought out and factors like age, annual income, size of family, profession, education etc.

Gisha and Ramya (2016) also conducted similar studies to explore about the purchase decision making process of rural women consumers regarding ready to eat and convenience foods in Palakkad city. To conduct this study, a sample of 205 females across diverse groups was taken. The result showed that there was a complete awareness of instant food products among rural women consumers. The study also revealed that television was the most familiar source that provided information about instant food products to female consumers.

(Dr. V. Selvarani, 2016) Consumer behaviour is one of the stimulating and challenging areas in marketing studies being a human activity focused on the products and services. Understanding the behaviour of the consumers is a great challenge. Tiruchirappalli city were selected based on population as high, medium and low population. The sample size is 85 and the samples selected based on the simple random sampling method. One-way ANOVA is used in this research.

Research Objective:

- To study the extent of awareness towards packaged food products.
- To analyse factors influencing the buying behaviour of packaged food products.

Research Methodology:

The research aims to evaluate the impact of packaged food products in Surat city, focusing on consumer preferences based on demographic, psychographic, attitudinal, food perception, and consumer involvement factors. The primary objectives are to assess the awareness of packaged food products and to analyze the factors influencing consumer buying behavior. The study identifies variables, with age, gender, income, and occupation as independent variables and consumer buying behavior as the dependent variable.

The research design employed is descriptive, aimed at understanding the characteristics of certain groups, such as age, sex, education level, occupation, and income. Descriptive research answers the "Who, What, When, Where, and How" questions of the subject under investigation and can be divided into cross-sectional and longitudinal research. This study uses a cross-sectional design, examining the population sample at one point in time.

Data collection primarily involves surveys using structured questionnaires. The data collection period spans 20 days, targeting students and women in Surat who purchase packaged foods. The sampling design employs a non-probability sampling technique, specifically the convenience method, selecting easily accessible participants. The sample size ranges from 150 to 200 respondents, ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives on packaged food consumption.

Data analysis conducted using tabular formats, graphs (pie charts), and percentage calculations to interpret the collected information effectively. However, the study faces limitations, including a restricted sample size of

200 respondents and the geographical constraint of being limited to Surat city. Additionally, the reliance on primary data collected through questionnaires may introduce biases, as respondents might not provide accurate answers.

This research methodology offers a structured approach to understanding the impact of packaged food products in Surat, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior and preferences, despite the inherent limitations of the study.

Research Findings:

The survey conducted among 145 respondents in Surat city revealed insightful trends regarding the purchase and consumption of packaged foods. The respondents comprised an almost equal number of males (73) and females (72). A significant portion of the respondents (40%) fell within the 18-25 year age group, whereas only 24.8% were aged 41 or above. In terms of occupation, the majority were students (34.5%), followed by those in service, business, and housewives.

Income distribution among the respondents showed that 42.1% earned less than ₹10,000 monthly, 15.9% fell within the ₹10,001-₹20,000 range, 21.4% earned between ₹20,001-₹30,000, and 20.7% had incomes of ₹30,001 or above. Purchasing patterns varied, with 29.7% buying packaged foods as needed, 29% weekly, 28.3% monthly, and 19% daily. The primary reasons for consuming packaged foods included occasional indulgence (33.1%), long working hours (28.3%), lack of time (22.8%), and for school/college-going students (15.9%).

A closer look at specific products revealed that 64.8% of respondents did not purchase instant masalas, while 53.1% preferred Maggi noodles. Paste consumption was low, with 67.6% not purchasing any, but 32.4% bought them, primarily for non-vegetarian dishes. Snacks were consumed by 61.4% of respondents, and 57.9% regularly purchased namkeens. However, 64.1% did not use McCain foods, possibly due to its oiliness or lack of awareness, whereas 35.9% did. Haldiram's foods had an almost equal split in consumption, with 50.3% being aware and consuming them. For Nestlé products, 53.1% did not consume them, while 46.9% did, particularly Maggi noodles.

The study's statistical analysis revealed significant differences in levels of agreement across various demographic factors. The null hypothesis was rejected in terms of age, occupation, and income, indicating distinct opinions among these groups. Additionally, the Mann-Whitney test showed that gender differences influenced levels of agreement, with both males and females having their own distinct perspectives on packaged foods.

Conclusion:

The study on consumer buying behavior towards packaged foods in Surat City revealed several key insights. The respondent pool consisted of an almost equal number of individuals, primarily between the ages of 18-25,

who are either students or working professionals. A significant portion of respondents (42.1%) had an income of less than ₹10,000, while the least number fell within the ₹10,001-₹20,000 income bracket. Out of the 170 distributed questionnaires, 145 respondents were active purchasers of packaged foods, with 25 respondents either not purchasing or being unaware of packaged foods. The survey indicated that most respondents purchase packaged foods occasionally, particularly during long working hours, while the least purchases were made for school or college-going children. Among the 145 respondents, snacks emerged as the most purchased category, whereas pastes of all varieties were the least purchased, likely due to lack of awareness. Maggi noodles, however, were bought on an average scale. Additionally, 43.4% of respondents spent less than ₹500 on packaged foods monthly, whereas only 5.5% spent ₹1500 or more. Lastly, the survey found that a majority of respondents were aware of and purchased Balaji foods, while Gits Gulab Jamun and Swad Masalas had the lowest awareness and purchase rates at 13.8%, highlighting a significant awareness gap for certain brands within the packaged food sector in Surat City.

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