



EXPLORING THE DETERMINANTS OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCT PURCHASE AMONG CONSUMERS IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT

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Abstract: The study examines the factors influencing the buying behaviour of instant food products among consumers in Tiruchirappalli district. This study's data collection is based on a convenient sampling method. Percentage analysis, Mean and standard deviation are the statistical tools applied for the data analysis. It is concluded that products that are easy to prepare and store, have no harmful effects, are available at any time, require few additional ingredients, and have no artificial preservation are the key factors that influence a consumer's buying behaviour towards instant food products. However, longer shelf life and space efficiency are less emphasized in terms of satisfaction. **Keywords:** Buying Behavior, Instant Food, Consumer Satisfaction, Tiruchirappalli, Brand Preference.

I. INTRODUCTION

A vital component of human life is food. Humans receive nutrients from the food they eat. By definition, food is any chemical that is ingested into the body and promotes the growth of new tissue, (Inbalakshmi, 2014). Instant meals are gaining popularity because everyone in the busy modern society values time, (Tamlurkar 2006). People have started gravitating toward packaged foods that offer certain convenience qualities due to their busy lifestyles, (Vijayeta P. 2015). Tasty instant products meet the needs of the family in the modern lifestyle change. According to Mubarak Ali and Syed Ibrahim, most people prefer less or minimum preparation time before eating. As highlighted by Chiruthoti, people love to have savoury food but they are under time constraints for the preparation of that food traditionally and thus, instant food products satisfy their wants. Given the fact that both men and women are employed today, instant meal products are important. (Inbalakshmi, 2020). Nowadays, every home has ready-to-eat meals because it is so convenient. Thus, The main cause for choosing ready-to-eat food include changing lifestyles, hectic job schedules, the desire for family time, and travelling. South India has a high level of acceptability for ready-to-eat cuisine, which handily is a traditional food. (Palaniammal, 2017).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Liew, J. Y (2021) Nowadays, every home has ready-to-eat meals because it is so convenient. Food that is ready to eat has already been cooked and is ready to eat, albeit it may require heat and water to prepare. With young and working people as their main audience, the RTE food category is booming. The main causes for choosing ready-to-eat food include changing lifestyles, hectic job schedules, the desire for family time, and travelling. South India has a high level of acceptability for ready-to-eat cuisine, which is a traditional food in a handy manner. Information on the purchasing habits of consumers in Kota Bharu, Kelantan with regard to instant meal products is, however, scarce. In this regard, a survey study is presented to examine the major variables influencing Kota Bharu consumers' purchasing decisions for quick food products. 384 respondents in Kota Bharu were chosen at random to participate in the convenience sampling and received the questionnaire, which was validated by the Cronbach's Alpha test. The descriptive analysis provides a summary of the respondents' demographic information. Eight fundamental characteristics that influence customer purchases of fast meal products were revealed via exploratory factor analysis. A little over three-fifths of the total variance described was explained by these eight variables.

Saxena, B. (2021). The purpose of this study was to comprehend the choice of consumers in purchasing rapid food items. The penetration of Globalization and modernization in India has given consumers multiple choices to purchase a variety of the finest products and services from the competitive market. In India, supermarkets and hypermarkets have dedicated shelves for instant food goods. A great number of companies have entered into the instant food market sectors with different flavours and high quality with hygienic preparation, thereby altering people's lifestyles. This research has highlighted the customer's behaviour with regard to instant meal products. The frequency of purchase of instant food products by consumers has been analyzed in this research. Consumer product awareness and the aspects that affect the quality of instant food products have also been additionally analyzed.

Shubhendu ShekherShukla et al., (2020) discovered the level of familiarity and preference in Uttar Pradesh with regard to branded instant noodles and noodle brands. This study's main objective is to ascertain how customers in rural areas near the district of

Lucknow perceive instant noodles, their consumption habits, and their brand preferences. 200 customers were surveyed by mail for the main data using the convenience sample approach in the districts of Uttar Pradesh. Finally, they discovered that consumers who are devoted to a brand tend to prefer that brand and need more information about new brands. Although the instant noodle add up to display share is large, they still need to use various promotion tactics to raise awareness among rural residents in order to reach every rural area. The primary factor in choosing a certain brand is taste. The most popular brands of noodles are MAGGI and YIPEE. prefer to buy medium-sized packs to fit the size of their family

Kalidas, K., & Mahendran, K. (2017). When it came to consumer spending, one of the primary areas was food. In comparison to Indian consumers who spend more than half of their income on food, Consumers worldwide spend one-third of their income on food. A typical rural Indian household spent 55% of their income on food in the years 2002–2003, compared to a similar percentage of roughly 43% for urban households. The middle-class category was anticipated to spend Rs. 37800 crores annually on food and consumables. In India, the processed food industry and instant food products have taken up a sizable amount of shelf space. In 2003, the Indian instant mix industry was expected to be valued at about Rs. 350 crore, and by the end of 2004, it was worth about Rs. 700 crore. Production and marketing of quick millet-based food products have been undertaken by several businesses. Understanding consumer behaviour will assist businesses in developing strategies to meet customer wants and consequently grow their market share. The study's specific goals were to examine Pollachi city consumers' purchasing patterns for a sample of instant millet-based food items, identify the variables affecting consumers' purchasing patterns for a sample of instant millet-based food items, and propose methods for boosting Milleto's sales of instant millet-based food items.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the factors influencing the buying decision towards instant food products
2. To know the brand preference and awareness towards instant food products

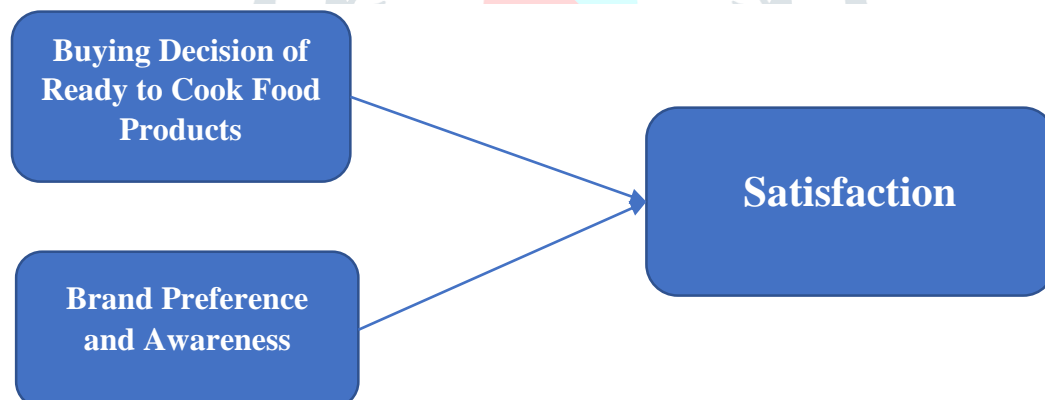
IV. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H0: There is no relationship between the Buying Decision of Instant food products, Brand Preference and Awareness and Satisfaction.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To examine the factors influencing the buying behaviour of instant food products among consumers in Tiruchirappalli district the descriptive research method is applied. Convenient sampling method is used to collect the data from the respondents. The researcher has used statistical tools such as Percentage analysis, Mean and standard deviation. The researcher developed scales of buying behaviour, brand preference & awareness, and satisfaction based on the literature review.

VI. FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY



VII. ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Profile of the Respondents		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	268	62.8
	Female	159	37.2
Age	Less than 35	227	53.2
	35-45	139	32.6
	Above 55	61	14.3
Occupational status	Student	84	19.7
	Employee	191	44.7
	Business people	40	9.4
	Housewife	112	26.2
Educational Qualification	School level	105	24.6
	Diploma	63	14.8
	Graduate	114	26.7
	Post graduate	86	20.1
	Others	59	13.8
Monthly income	Rs. Below 20,000	163	38.2
	Rs. 20000 – 25000	112	26.2
	Rs. Above 25,000	152	35.6
Marital Status	Married	311	72.8
	Unmarried	116	27.2
Nature of Family	Nuclear	229	53.6
	Joint	198	46.4
Members of your family	Below 3	146	34.2
	4-5	165	38.6
	Above 5	116	27.2

Table 1 shows the profile of the sample respondents in the selected study area. In the case of gender, it is noted that 62.8 per cent are male, 37.2 per cent are female. With regard to the age of the respondents, it is noted that 53.2 per cent are less than 35 years, 32.6 per cent of them are in the age group of 35 to 45 and 14.3 per cent of them are in the age group above 45. In the case of occupational status of the respondents, 44.7 per cent are employed, 26.2 per cent are housewives, 19.7 per cent are students and 9.4 per cent are business people. With regard to educational qualification, 26.7 per cent are graduates, 24.6 per cent have school-level education, 20.1 per cent are post-graduates, 14.8 per cent are diploma holders and 13.8 per cent have other educational qualifications. In the case of household income, it is observed that 38.2 per cent of the respondents have an income level of Rs. 20,000 per month, 35.6 per cent of them have an income of above Rs. 25,000. 26.2 per cent in the income group of Rs. 20,000 to 25,000 per month. In the case of the marital status of the sample respondent, 72.8 per cent are married and 27.2 per cent are unmarried. With regard to the nature of family, it is noted that 53.6 per cent of the respondents are in the nuclear family system and 46.4 per cent of them are in the joint family system.

Table 2: Factors Influencing Buying Decision of Instant Food Products

Buying Decision of Ready to Cook	Mean	Std. deviation
Takes less time to cook	4.24	1.11
Taste is equivalent to homemade food	4.11	1.19
It is easy to cook and helps reach the workplace on time	3.86	1.36
Purchasing based on Friends & Relatives suggestion	3.97	1.04
Helps create more family time	4.29	1.08
Takes less time to cook	3.85	1.31

Table 2 represents factors influencing the buying decision of Instant Food Products, along with their corresponding mean values and standard deviations. Takes Less Time to Cook (Mean: 4.24, Std. Deviation: 1.11): This factor has a relatively high mean score, indicating that consumers place importance on the convenience of quick cooking. The relatively low standard deviation suggests that opinions are not widely varied, and most respondents agree that shorter cooking times are a significant consideration. Taste is Equivalent to Homemade Food (Mean: 4.11, Std. Deviation: 1.19): The mean score is relatively high, indicating that consumers value the taste quality of Instant food products being on par with homemade food. The standard deviation suggests a wider range of opinions, indicating that while many agree, there is some variability in how strongly people feel about this factor. It is Easy to Cook and Helps Reach the Workplace on Time (Mean: 3.86, Std. Deviation: 1.36): The mean score is moderately high, indicating that ease of cooking and time-saving benefits for work are considered important. The higher standard deviation suggests greater variability in how respondents perceive the relationship between cooking ease and reaching their workplace on time. Purchasing Based on Friends & Relatives Suggestion (Mean: 3.97, Std. Deviation: 1.04): The mean score is moderately high, suggesting that recommendations from friends and relatives play a noticeable role in purchasing decisions. The low standard deviation indicates that there is a relatively consistent agreement among respondents on this factor. Helps Create More Family Time (Mean: 4.29, Std. Deviation: 1.08): This factor has a high mean score, indicating that consumers highly

value the potential for instant food products to contribute to more family time. The relatively low standard deviation suggests a consensus among respondents regarding this factor's importance. It is found that consumers appear to prioritize factors such as quick cooking time, taste comparable to homemade food, and the potential for creating more family time while making buying decisions for instant food products. Factors like ease of cooking, workplace time savings, and recommendations from friends and relatives also play a role, but opinions on these factors may vary more among respondents.

Table 3 Brand Preference and Awareness Towards Instant Food Products

Brand Preference	Mean	Std. deviation
Brand Image	3.95	1.29
Convenience	3.90	1.35
Quality	4.02	1.32
Quick consumption	3.71	1.42
Price	3.96	1.26
Offers	4.14	1.07
Different varieties	4.11	1.02

Table 3 represents brand preference and the mean scores for different factors influencing brand choice. Brand Image (Mean: 3.95): The mean scores for brand image are relatively high, indicating that respondents consider brand image an important factor in their brand preference. A higher mean suggests that consumers value a positive perception and reputation associated with a brand. Convenience (Mean: 3.90): This suggests that convenience is an important consideration for respondents, with a stronger emphasis placed on it in the second instance. Quality (Mean: 4.02): The mean score for quality is quite high, indicating that respondents place significant importance on the perceived quality of the product. A higher mean suggests that consumers prioritize products that meet their quality expectations. Quick Consumption (Mean: 3.71): The mean score for quick consumption is moderate, indicating that respondents consider it a factor but not as highly important as others. This could suggest that while the speed of cooking time matters, it may not be a primary consideration. Price (Mean: 3.96): The mean score for price is moderate to high, suggesting that respondents consider price as a significant factor in their brand preference. A higher mean indicates that consumers are conscious of the cost of the product. Offers (Mean: 4.14): The mean score for offers is relatively high, indicating that respondents highly value promotional offers and discounts. A higher mean suggests that consumers are motivated by the potential for cost savings. Different Varieties (Mean: 4.11): The mean score for different varieties is quite high, indicating that respondents place importance on having a range of options to choose from. It is found that the brand image, quality, different varieties, offers, and price are key factors influencing brand preference for the respondents. Convenience and quick consumption are also considered, but their importance may vary. The table provides insights into the varying degrees of importance that consumers attach to these factors when making brand choices.

Table 4: Level of Satisfaction

Satisfaction	Mean	Std. deviation
Easy preparation & storage	4.01	1.08
No harmful effect	4.15	1.06
Products are available at any time	4.26	0.90
Longer shelf life	3.78	1.21
Occupies less space in the kitchen	3.86	1.29
Requires very few additional ingredients	4.18	1.06
No artificial preservation	3.75	1.59

Table 4 presents the satisfaction with a product. Easy Preparation & Storage (Mean: 4.01): The mean score for easy preparation and storage is relatively high. No Harmful Effect (Mean: 4.15): The mean score for no harmful effects is high, indicating that respondents prioritize products that are perceived as safe and free from negative health consequences. Products Are Available at Any Time (Mean: 4.26): The mean score for product availability at any time is quite high. Longer Shelf Life (Mean: 3.78): The mean score for longer shelf life is moderate, suggesting that while some respondents value products with extended shelf life, it may not be as critical a factor as others. Occupies Less Space in Kitchen (Mean: 3.86): The mean score for occupying less space in the kitchen is moderate, suggesting that while space efficiency is considered, it may not be a top priority for all respondents. Requires Very Few Additional Ingredients (Mean: 4.18): The mean score for requiring very few additional ingredients is high, indicating that respondents appreciate products that don't demand a lot of additional items to prepare. No Artificial Preservation (Mean: 3.75): The mean score for no artificial preservation is moderate, suggesting that respondents have some concern about artificial additives or preservatives, but it might not be their primary consideration. It is finding satisfaction in products that are easy to prepare and store, have no harmful effects, are available at any time, require few additional ingredients, and have no artificial preservation. Longer shelf life and space efficiency are relatively less emphasized in terms of satisfaction.

Table 5: Relationship between the Buying Decision of instant food products, Brand Preference and Awareness and Satisfaction

Statement	Satisfaction	Buying Decision of Ready to Cook	Brand Preference and Awareness
Satisfaction	1		
Buying Decision of Ready to Cook	0.223**	1	
Brand Preference and Awareness	0.486**	0.402**	1

Ho: There is no relationship between the Buying Decision of instant food products, Brand Preference and Awareness and Satisfaction

Table 5 discusses the relationship between Buying Decision of Ready to Cook, Brand Preference & Awareness and Satisfaction. Pearson correlation is computed. The correlation values Buying Decision of Ready to Cook (0.223) and Buying Decision of Ready to Cook (0.402) are related to Satisfaction. P-values are significant so the hypothesis is rejected. It is found that the Buying Decision of Ready to Cook and Buying Decision of Ready to Cook are positively related to Satisfaction

VIII. CONCLUSION

The purchasing behaviour of instant food products is shaped by a dynamic interplay of convenience, taste, quality, health considerations, brand loyalty, marketing strategies, cultural influences, and the growing impact of online shopping. Consumers today seek not only quick meal solutions but also crave flavorful, nutritious options that align with their dietary preferences. Established brands benefit from consumer trust, while newer entrants can gain ground by emphasizing authenticity and value. As the industry evolves, understanding these multifaceted factors and adapting strategies accordingly will be paramount for companies aiming to capture and sustain a loyal consumer base in the competitive market of instant food products.

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