

CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS - A STUDY OF YOUNGSTERS IN INDIA

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Abstract

Food is an essential part of any living being. Food is the substance consumed to provide nutritional value and support to all the living organisms. In the present scenario, the consumer habits and buying behaviour has changed dramatically. With an increase in urbanization, moving from joint families to nuclear families, changing nature of jobs and businesses, paucity of time, convenience and change in lifestyle, have led consumer's preferences shift from fresh and healthy food to the food which is ready to use/instant food. Instant food requires less time and energy to cook. The instant food products are prepared and packed in such a way that there is a very little or no need for preparations before consumption. Therefore, it can be used any time by slight heating. This is also the reason why these instant food items are very popular among the young generation. This paper provides an insight about the perception of youngsters of India towards the instant food products. It also encompasses the factors which influence the buying decision of instant food products among the youngsters in India.

Keywords:

Consumer Perception, Instant food, Buying Decision, Demographics

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumers are the actors in the marketplace. Because of consumers market of food runs. If you talk about consumer, consumers are those who purchases goods and services for their personal consumption. Consumer behaves according to their taste and preferences and sometimes according to the occasions. Consumer behaviour is different for consumer to consumer. It depends of the status, standard of living, the price of product, and many more.

Marketers knows the demand of customers by their behavior and the wants towards any of the product. You can say that the behaviour of a consumer is the action which is taken by the consumer before buying the product. Organizations have recognized the importance of consumer satisfaction is now a days. Every organization knows that if they satisfy the consumer then only, they can gain the market share and profit, which is the prime objective of the organizations.[8]

Food and nutrition are most important for all the living species. Food contains all the important elements for living organism. Some foods are mouth-watering, when it is of perfect shape, texture and also when it is mouth-watering fragrance. To keep the body healthy and active every living being consumed a chemical substance called 'food' [2]-[3].

Instant food means the food which is ready to eat just in few minutes. Now a days, everyone is busy in their day-to-day life and if they get some time then they want to enjoy so, every nine out of ten people prefer ready to make food. specially in metropolitan city, people don't have time to cook delightful food. Ready to

cook food is a food which takes less time and efforts in preparation.

Everyone wants to live a comfortable lifestyle. The demand of processed food is increased in this changing demography and lifestyle of people. The number of working women is increased this is one of the reasons which changed the demand of the processed food in societies and lifestyle. It also changed the mindset of consumers towards the habit of their eating.

Packed frozen foods, pickles, juices, packet dosa, and many more are the examples of instant foods which people are buying in their day-to-day life. At the time of family gathering or some small occasion at home, instant food plays very important role, as it saves time, and reduces the efforts [12].

In present scenario, people give priority to the tasty food. Items, such as, noodles, chapati mix, parotta mix, idli/dosa mix, rava dosa mix, bhaji mix, biryani mix, puliyodara mix, Gulab jamun mix, and chatni mix comes under ready-to-eat items, which require simple boiling or heating or mixing with water and readymade cooking materials such as sambhar powder, chili powder, rasam powder, turmeric powder, idli chilli powder, which make the cooking more convenient.

There are many factors which can influence the customers while buying the instant food products which are: proper hygiene, packaging, etc. The knowledge and information regarding products about the brands can be get through TV, social media, newspapers, etc. [3].

2. FACTORS INFLUENCING BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF CONSUMER'S TOWARDS INSTANT FOOD PRODUCT

- **Readily Available:** Instant food products like – curd, pickles, Maggi, instant upma, dosa, oats are easily available on any general stores. So, people feel easy to buy these products [8].
- **Urbanization:** Urbanization not only resulted in modernization but also intensively on hectic schedules. People remains busy in their day-to-day jobs and hence it influences people to buy instant food products [4][5][10].
- **Convenient:** It is too convenient for consumers to use instant food as it takes few seconds or no time in preparation [7][9][11][12].
- **Packaging:** Packaging is a factor which attracts everyone towards any product, thus play a significant role. The packing of instant food products is so attractive, youngsters get attracted and it influence them to buy instant food [4].
- **Advertisement:** Advertising promotes social messages and stimulate social action toward purchase of a product.

Spending on advertisement also creates positive impression about a brand in the minds of the consumers [4].

- **Quality:** Quality plays a major role in buying of any product. If the quality of a product is satisfactory then only people will buy. Instant food products are of good quality, which influence consumer to buy ready to eat/ready to cook food [6].
- **Emergence of Nuclear families:** Now there are more of nuclear families and women are also doing jobs, they do not have much time to prepare delicious food which influence them to buy instant food products [8][12].

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many researchers have conducted different studies to understand the factors which influence the consumer behavior towards instant food products in different geographical areas. Some of these researches are highlighted below:

A study was conducted to understand the consumer behaviour towards ready to eat products in Pune, India. They identified that convenience, variety, quality and time saving are the factors which influence the buying behaviour of people in Pune towards instant food products [1].

A similar study was conducted in Namakkal District to understand the buying behaviour of consumers towards instant food products. The study concluded that reduction in servants, industrial society, working women, nuclear families, convenience and prices of raw materials are the factors due to which there is a rise in the buying behaviour of consumers towards instant food products [11].

Consumer's consumption pattern and preferences about the food habits was examined. to identify the changing lifestyle of consumer regarding their taste and preferences. They concluded that the lifestyle of people regarding instant food increases as the increase in income of people. The awareness among people is also increased due to qualification and good sense of mind [12].

The perception of consumers was analysed with reference to the awareness and satisfaction. This research had also been done with the aim to know the reasons why consumers don't prefer online shopping. It was being analysed that the reason for the change in food habits in India are western influence and usage of ready to cook food increases [4].

Research was conducted to know about consumer buying behaviour towards ready to eat food industry in Northern India. This study also aimed to analyse the competition among different brands. It is concluded that people don't have time to cook time consuming dishes so they prefer instant food rather than make time consuming dishes [7].

To highlight the buying behaviour of consumers towards instant food products in Coimbatore City another such study was conducted. The study aimed to gain insight of the usage level of ready to cook food, involvement of consumers in buying instant food, and the satisfaction level of instant food products. He suggested that the consumer's demand towards instant products is very high [2].

A study was conducted in Tiruchirappalli City on buying behaviour of consumers towards instant food. The study highlighted various factors which influence consumers to buy

instant food products. It also aimed at analysing the consumer purchasing frequency of instant food products. The result of the study revealed that the main reason for increase in consumption of instant food habit is Urbanization. The other reasons for increase in demand of instant foods are readily available and it saves time [5].

Consumer behavior was studied towards instant food product in the Kanchipuram town. They conducted study on awareness regarding ready to cook food. They analyzed the factors affecting the demand of instant food products. They discussed the reasons behind increase in demand of instant food. The reasons are urbanization, nuclear families, time constraints [8].

To examine the buying behaviour of instant food products another study was conducted which also aimed to predict the demand for Instant Food Products of Hyderabad city. The results of this study revealed that the reasons for not purchasing particular brand were high price and poor taste whereas best quality, retailers influence and ready availability were considered for preferring particular brand of products by the consumers [4].

In the research presented on the current scenario, people are busy with their work schedule, so they thought preparing food is time consuming and instant food products can save their time. They highlighted the socio-economic profile of consumers. The study also focussed on the buying behaviour of consumer's and the factors which affects the purchasing of instant food products [8].

Another study was conducted to know the impact of factors on purchase intention of consumers. The main aim of the study was to understand the consumer behaviour in buying the processed food products. It was concluded that consumers are aware about the products and have extensive knowledge. Positive outlook towards instant food was shown in her study [10].

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the awareness of instant food products among youngsters of Delhi/NCR
- To understand the buying behavior of youngsters towards Instant Food Products
- To identify the instant food preferences among youngsters for instant food products.
- To understand factors influencing the buying behaviour of Instant Food Products.
- To analyze the customer satisfaction towards instant food Products.

5. SAMPLE

The study was conducted on youngsters of Delhi/NCR below the age of 35 years. A sample of 106 was collected using Purposive Sampling and analysed using Chi-square and T-Test. There were 52 Males and 54 females. According to WHO, young people cover the age range of 10-24 years. The sample was collected from 25 adolescents having group of 10-16 years and 81 young adults having an age group of 17-24 years. (Table.1).

Table.1. Respondent profile

Gender		
Male	Female	Total
52	54	106
Age Group		
Adolescent (10-16 years)	Youth (17-24 years)	Total
25	81	106

5.1 TOOLS USED

A self-administered questionnaire was administered on the respondents to understand the consumer's perception towards instant food products.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To understand the association of demographics variables like age and gender with buying behaviour, customer awareness, frequency of buying and preference towards different types of instant food products Chi-square test was used at 5% level of significance. Chi-square test of independence is used to find whether two variables are independent of each other or statistically associated with each other.

The data when analysed to understand the association of Gender with buying behaviour, customer awareness, frequency of buying and preference towards different types of instant food products revealed that there is no statistical association between gender and awareness of Instant Food Products.

H_{01} : There is no association between Gender and Customer Awareness about Instant Food Products

H_{a1} : There is an association between Gender and Customer Awareness about Instant Food Products

The Table.2 shows that Pearson chi square value for awareness is 2.011 and p value is 0.156 which implies that null hypothesis holds true. Both male and female are equally aware of the instant food products available in market.

H_{02} : There is no association between Gender and Buying Behaviour

H_{a2} : There is an association between Gender and Buying Behaviour

Chi-square value for purchase behaviour is 0.685 chi square value is 0.685 and p value is 0.408. This means that there is no statistical association between gender and purchase behaviour of Instant Food Products. Both male and female equally are purchasing the instant food products available in market. Null hypothesis holds true.

H_{03} : There is no association between Gender and Frequency of Buying Instant Food Products

H_{a3} : There is an association between Gender and Frequency of Buying Instant Food Products

The table 2 shows that Pearson's chi square value of gender and frequency of buying is 9.663 and p value is 0.085. This means that there is no statistical association between gender and Frequency of buying Instant food Products. Null hypothesis holds true.

H_{04} : There is no association between Gender and Preference of Instant Food Products

H_{a4} : There is an association between Gender and Preference of Instant Food Products

The value of chi-square for the association between gender and preference of instant food products is 2.880 and the p value is 0.237. Null hypothesis holds true which means that there is no statistical association between gender and preference of different types Instant Food Products. Both male and female have their preferences towards Raw food i.e., fresh fruits, vegetables, dry fruits and processed i.e., potato chips, cereal, bread instant potato mix, cake mixes, Yogurts.

Table.2. Gender and Consumer Perception

	Pearson's Chi-Square Value	Df	Significance (2-sided)
Awareness	2.011	1	0.156
Purchase Behaviour	0.685	1	0.408
Type of Instant food product Preferred	2.880	1	0.237
Frequency of buying	9.663	1	0.850

The data when analysed to understand the association of age with buying behaviour, customer awareness, frequency of buying and preference towards different types of instant food products revealed that there is no statistical association between age groups and awareness of Instant Food Products.

H_{05} : There is no association between Age and Customer Awareness about Instant Food Products

H_{a5} : There is an association between Age and Customer Awareness about Instant Food Products

The Table.3 shows that Pearson's chi square value for awareness is 0.037 and p value is 0.847 which means that both the age groups are equally aware of the instant food products available in market. This implies that null hypothesis holds true.

H_{06} : There is no association between Age and Buying Behaviour

H_{a6} : There is an association between Age and Buying Behaviour

Chi-square value for the association of age and purchase behaviour is 0.299 and p value is 0.584. Null hypothesis holds true which means that there is no statistical association between age groups and purchase behaviour of Instant Food Products. Both the age groups equally are purchasing the instant food products available in market.

H_{07} : There is no association between Age and Preference of Instant Food Products

H_{a7} : There is an association between Age and Preference of Instant Food Products

The value of chi-square. in Table.3, for the association between age and preference of instant food products is 0.804 and p value is 0.669. This means that null hypothesis holds true and there is no statistical association between age and preference of different types Instant Food Products. Both age groups taken under study have their preferences towards Raw food i.e., fresh

fruits, vegetables, dry fruits and processed i.e., potato chips, cereal, bread instant potato mix, cake mixes, Yogurts.

H_{08} : There is no association between Age and Frequency of Buying Instant Food Products

H_{a8} : There is an association between Age and Frequency of Buying Instant Food Products

The Table.3 shows that Pearson’s chi square value of Age and frequency of buying instant food products is 8.843 and p value is 0.115. This means that there is no statistical association between age groups and Frequency of buying Instant food Products. This implies that null hypothesis holds true.

Table.3. Age and Consumer Perception

	Pearson’s Chi-Square Value	Df	Significance (2-sided)
Awareness	0.370	1	0.847
Purchase Behaviour	0.299	1	0.584
Type of Instant food product Preferred	0.804	1	0.669
Frequency of buying	8.843	1	0.115

H_{09} : There is no difference between the level of customer satisfaction among Males and Females

H_{a9} : There is a difference between the level of customer satisfaction among Males and Females

To understand the difference in the level of customer satisfaction among males and females, t -test was used and the results revealed T value as 0.302 with a p -value of 0.764 as shown in Table.4 which is above 0.05 therefore, we can conclude null hypothesis holds true that means there is no difference in the satisfaction towards instant Food products among males and females taken under study.

Table.4. Comparison of Gender and Customer Satisfaction

	T	Df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Gender	0.302	104	0.764

H_{10} : There is no difference between the level of customer satisfaction among Adolescents and Youth

H_{a10} : There is a difference between the level of customer satisfaction among Adolescents and Youth

Similarly, to identify the difference in the level of customer satisfaction among adolescents and youth, t -test was used and the results revealed T value as -2.305 with a p value 0.035 as shown in Table.5 which is below 0.05 therefore, we can conclude that alternate hypothesis holds true which means there is a significant difference in that satisfaction levels of adolescents and youth towards instant Food products.

Table.5. Comparison of Age and Customer Satisfaction

	T	Df	Sig (2-Tailed)
Age	-2.305	104	0.035

7. CONCLUSION

The study among youngsters has been conducted and it is concluded that the preference of consumers related to food products has changed tremendously. The study revealed the positive perspective towards instant food products. It had seen through the study that instant food plays a vital role now a days. Food habits of consumers are now changed due to several reasons. The main reasons are ready availability, saves time, increase in number of working women, emergence of nuclear families. People are highly aware about the instant foods. It is shown in the study that there is no statistical association of gender and age with awareness, buying behavior, preference, & frequency of buying instant food products. It was also analyzed that there is no significant different between the customer satisfaction of males and females. While, it was concluded that there is a significant difference in the customer satisfaction of the adolescents and youths. The youngsters of Delhi and NCR are aware of the different instant food products and they are frequently bought by them owing to multiple factors like convenience, quick to make, urbanization etc.

7.1 SUGGESTIONS

The companies producing instant food products must realize the fact that, although in metropolitan cities like Delhi/NCR people are working and are short of time, which is one of the prime reasons for people switching over to instant food product, therefore they should come with nutritious and healthy food items. Also, the quantity and types of preservatives used in instant food products should not have any adverse effect on the health of the people.

7.2 LIMITATION

The study was conducted during Covid 19 pandemic that is why a small sample size of 106 respondents of only Delhi and NCR were considered to draw out results. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized.

7.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

The study can be conducted on a sample collected from PAN India. Also, the intensity of factors affecting the buying decision of Instant food products can also be analyzed.

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