

RETAILER PERCEPTION AND PATRONIZATION ALONG WITH CONSUMER PROFILING FOR SNACK CAKES

Praveen Paul Jeyapaul and M. Ramya Sri

Mepco School of Management studies, Mepco Schlenk Engineering College, India

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors impacting the overall satisfaction of retailers' towards snack cake brands and to find if there is a significant difference in the demand for snack brands based on the type of outlets that sell snack cakes such as bakeries, departmental stores, grocery shops or super markets. This study also explores the consumers' preference towards buying snacks based on age, size of family, preference of size of packages, amount of money spent on snacks daily and what makes the consumers' to notice the product. A Structured questionnaire was designed to collect the needed primary data. Data was collected from 141 retailers' and 102 consumers' in Chennai city. Convenience sampling method was used for data collection. The collected data was analysed using chi-square analysis and simple linear regression. The outcome of analysis reveals that there is a significant relationship between the type of outlet and demand for snack cake and there is a significant relationship between age, size of family and amount of money spent on snacks daily. Further, it was found that brand image of snack cake has no significant impact on the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards snack cake. , it was also found that Product attributes of snack cakes and relationship the retailers have with sales personnel of snack cake brand have a significant impact the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards snack cake.

Keywords:

Snack Cake, Brand Image, Product Attributes, Sales Personnel Relationship, Promotional Material

1. INTRODUCTION

Snack cakes, as their name implies are for snacking anytime a hankering for cake and frosting strikes. Snack cakes are designed for spur of the moment desire to snack and eating on the go and they aren't for birthdays, anniversaries, or farewell parties [1]. A snacking cake is a mid-day treat that gets you through the day and makes you feel good—what that the frosting is for. [2]. Snacking cakes are often sheet cakes with minimal icing. It a powdered sugar icing, not buttercream as you'd get on a cake. Technically, snack cakes are a category for a certain type of cakes. They're always single-layer, frequently sliced into squares, and usually topped with a little glaze or icing. Snacking cakes are a delightful category in their own right, but they aren't gourmet in the traditional sense. They won't expect you to create intricate designs or fantastical shapes; normally, all you'll need is a bowl or two, a whisk, and a baking pan. And the end product will be towering, moist, soft cake squares with no strings attached.

Cake consumption is on the rise owing to its widespread use as a culinary celebration on many special occasions. The market is divided between packaged and unpackaged cakes, as well as handmade cakes. Further, specifically, cake market is divided into sponge cakes, cupcakes, cheesecakes, and other cakes based on product type. The retailing of cakes/snack cakes is done through supermarkets/hypermarkets, bakeries, specialty shops

specialising in cakes, convenience/general stores, internet channels (Instagram, Whatsaap groups), and other distribution channels. [3]

Branded Snack Cakes are relatively a new concept in India. Lotte Choco Pie was first introduced in India in 2010. Further, Sunfeart Yumfills was launched in 2018. However snack cakes are a game changer in the snack industry in India. It can also be noted that cake industry in India in general growing rapidly and is expected to reach USD 13 to 14 billion by 2025 with Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) growth of over 9% during 2020-2025 [4]. Understanding retailer adoption of new products in the FMCG category is essential since they are the vital link in connecting the manufacturer and end consumer [5] [6].

In any supply chain, including branded snack cakes, retailers are considered to be the core player in making the product available to the end consumer, and of course retailers are irrevocably as the backbone in the supply chain [7] [8]. Retailers are the Last-mile delivery partners of manufacturers [9] and are considered the principal link between manufacturers and end consumers [10]. They have a critical role in the distribution and have the ability to convince consumers to buy a particular brand thus influencing demand and drive efficiencies in the supply chain system [11]. Further, to make an informed purchase, consumers also need to be aware of the new product being launched in the market especially in the food industry. Wholesalers and retailers operate of improving consumer awareness [12]. These channel partners function as powerful gatekeepers between manufacturers and consumers and they also wield the power to either encourage or hamper the successful commercialization of food products [12].

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 RETAILERS' PERSPECTIVE IN ADOPTING NEW PRODUCTS

Retailers may be reluctant to stock a new product owing to the uncertainties associated with customer purchase of the same. There are many factors that motivate a retailer to adopt and stock a brand. Most of the retail adoption studies predominantly investigate the impact of profit-related variables [13], consumer support, and trade support variables [14] on retail adoption decisions for a particular brand or product. Relationship maintained between the supplier and retailer has a significant impact on the retailer satisfaction and adoption of new products [11]. Everdingen et al (2011) found that relationship reliance has a large negative effect on a retailer new product adoption probability, and relationship length has a significant favourable effect [15].

It is a basic and common sense fact that retailers predominantly patronise brands that bring them high profits.

However other factors such as support from manufacturer in logistics, supplying products at the right time, proper promotions, sales person support etc., also influence retailers in stocking and dealing a brand. Logistical excellence is a powerful source of competition between manufacturers/suppliers and is considered the most essential part to make retailer satisfied [16]. Logistics quality is addressed by different researches such as [17], [18], [19] and [20].

Another factor that influences retailers and which they may expect is the personal touch in the business relationships between the manufacturer/suppliers and retailer. In business-to-business (B2B) settings, the buyer-supplier relationship involved in the transaction is one of the most critical elements contributing to both of their success and the personal relation maintained by the supplier with the buyer (retailer) plays a pivotal role in the retailer stocking the produce of supplier [21] [22]. It is observed that personal relationships fostered by the people representing both entities (manufacturer and retailer) provide significant benefits to both stakeholders [23] [24]. Proper and meaningful communication between the supplier and retailer is another influencing aspect. Good communication can be termed as the adhesive that holds together a channel of distribution [23]. Many studies have found that there is a positive relationship between good communication and mutual trust in the distribution channel (e.g., [25], [26], [27], [28]). Other factors that may impact retailers to stock a product such as Sales personnel representing the manufacturer/supplier and the Services offered by them; Price of the product to end consumer; Delivery Services offered; proper communication and delivery of Promotional programs; supplying proper and adequate Merchandise; and Installation Service offered are discussed in 'The J.D. Power 2022 Appliance Retailer Satisfaction Study' [29]. In spite of all the advantages associated with the positive effects of maintaining or improving the retailers' satisfaction, it is observed that most manufactures/suppliers take very little efforts to keep the retailers satisfied [30].

2.2 CUSTOMERS'/CONSUMERS' PERSPECTIVE IN ADOPTING NEW PRODUCTS

This section talks about the factors that may influence consumers in adopting a new product. Subjective norms, independent of the extent of innovation, appear to be a major component in understanding Indian customers' new food purchase decisions. Subjective norms, in particular, are demonstrated to have direct implications on attitudes, buying intent, and behaviour from the consumers for adopting new kinds and brands of processed food products [31]. Nostalgic feeling acts as a motivational factor among consumers spurring them to purchase of new products even during unpleasant times and dangerous situations. The study by Xia, Wang and Santana (2021) found that heightened nostalgia enhances purchase intentions for new products. Furthermore, by actively influencing nostalgia and creating nostalgia through a stressful personal scenario could increase trial of new products [32]. Food neophobia is a common and understandable phenomenon as nobody wants to experiment with food varieties especially if they are new or unfamiliar. Food neophobia is a reluctance exhibited by individuals to taste or try out new or novel foods [33].

Johns, Edwards and Hartwell (2011) have found that almost all people belonging to various ethnic and demographical

background have food neophobia. This is a big challenge for manufacturers and marketers in introducing new food products in the market [34]. However it may also be noted here that many individuals may try new food products for novelty sake, but may not adopt the same for regular usage. This is presented in a research where it was found that consumers' perception about the innovativeness of product and the extent of their product knowledge influence purchase intentions directly and the above also moderate the effects of attitude and subjective norm on intention to buy a new product. Consumers who believe that the new product is innovative have a higher association between positive attitude and purchase intention than those customers who think the product is less innovative [35]. It is well known that consumers' intention to embrace new products is influenced by the originality. However, level of new product utility is considered to be more important than product originality along with consumer innovativeness and curiosity to try new products [36]. It is observed that, over domain specific innovativeness of new products, consumers' intrinsic innovativeness is the most important factor in new product adoption [37]. It is also found that age and income are better indicators of new product ownership than natural consumer innovativeness as a personality feature [38].

While introducing new products, special interest events like food expo may give a better platform for launching the same. It is seen that big special-interest event drew a diverse group of dealers and buyers of relevant goods [39]. It is also worth noting that popularity of these shows don't always imply that they're being used efficiently [39]. Buyers of new products expect their choice to be validated by their social group as posited by Optimal Distinctiveness Theory. Accordingly, social identity of individuals arises from a basic conflict between their desire for validation (purchase or otherwise) and resemblance to others (assimilation) in the group to which they belong to, and a contrasting need for the same individual to be unique and individuation (difference) [40]. In organisations, to improve the capacity for new product development and extensive communications in uncertain situations, the concept of continuous learning with market orientation is essential. Customer commitment is also important in enhancing new product adoption [41]. There is an interdependence of consumers' own attitudes and beliefs with those of the group they are attached with. The perceived qualities of new meals and their innovativeness among Indian consumers are important personal elements influencing their new food purchasing decisions. Interpersonal communication sources and subjective norms at the group level are key mediators of Indian consumers' new food purchases, reflecting collectivist inclinations [42]. There is a relationship between customer attitudes and new product uptake, as well as how that relationship may be influenced by other characteristics of consumers. Furthermore, the magnitude of consumption attitudes' influence is determined by the demographic features of customers. Consumers who are older/mature and have a lower income are more affected [43]. Consumers' attitudes about existing products are negatively associated with market innovation adoption, but independent decision making and preference for high-tech products are positively associated [44].

Researchers and practitioners have long recognised the ability to foresee the adoption and defection behaviour of others in their social networks using data on consumer product adoptions and

defections. Investigation of cross-decision social effects indicated by factors such as the impacts of customer defections on network neighbour adoption decisions and the effects of customer adoptions on network neighbour defection decisions is done by Vardit Landsman and Irit Nitzan (2020) [45]. The findings another study show that, unlike perceived value, expected value plays a substantial role in moderating the relationship between a sense of familiarity and adoption of new or novel food products. The findings of this study are important for retailers and manufacturers since it helps in the understanding of buying behaviour of food products among Indian consumers' who have limited experience with new value-added food products. This study reveal that Indian consumers are more likely to be influenced by familiarity with a similar food product and they are more willing to adopt new products based on attributes or cues of expected value (e.g., intrinsic and extrinsic search attributes) rather than perceived value (e.g., experience and credence attributes) [46].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research followed descriptive research design. This research includes 141 retailers and 102 consumers' who buy snack cake as respondents. Thus the total sample size is 243. Type of data used is Primary and Secondary data. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire and data was collected through a survey. Convenient sampling was chosen. Statistical Tools Used for this research are Chi-Square Test, Regression is used for analysis of data.

3.1 OBJECTIVES FRAMED FOR RETAILERS' PERSPECTIVE

- To explore the relation between type of outlet and demand for snack cake.
- To explore the relation between type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake.
- To find the factors that influences the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards snack cake.

3.2 OBJECTIVES FRAMED FOR CONSUMERS' PERSPECTIVE

- To explore the relation between age and amount of money spent on snacks daily.
- To explore the relation between size of the family and preference of size of packages.
- To identify the factors that makes the consumer to notice the product.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The following sections describes the demographics of the respondents of this study namely the retailers and end consumers of snacks in general and snack cakes in particular. The demographic details of retailers are presented first in Table 1 and the demographic details of consumers are presented in Table 2.

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RETAILERS

The table below (Table.1) presents the demographic profile of retailers. The profile summarizes the type of outlet that sell snack cakes (such as bakeries, departmental stores, grocery shops, super markets), profile of the customers based on their individual status catered by the retailers of snack cakes, quantity of snack cakes sold per week and promotional materials given to the retailers by the suppliers.

Table.1. Demographic profile of Retailers

Variable	Category	Number of retailers
Type of outlet	Bakery	2
	Departmental store	5
	Grocery Shop	44
	Super Market	90
Profile of the customers	Individual Adults (no kids)	40
	Kids	14
	Parents	69
	Teenagers	18
Quantity of Snack cakes sold per week	1-2 pieces	38
	2-3 pieces	99
	More than 3 pieces	4
Promotional materials given by supplier	Posters	60
	Shelf Roll	48
	Wobbler	33

It is seen from the above Table.1 that out of 141 Snack cake retailers, 63.8% fall in the category of Super market, followed by grocery shops. A predominant portion of Snack cake customers are parents and most shops retails 2 to 3 pieces of Snack cake packets a week. The promotional material issued by the suppliers of snack cake is posters.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CONSUMERS

The Table.2 presents the various demographic profile of customers such as their gender, age, occupation, marital status along with their snack cake consumption pattern.

Table.2. Demographic profile of Consumers

Variable	Category	Frequency
Gender	Female	33
	Male	69
Age	Below 20	6
	21-30	25
	31-40	24
	Above 40	47
Occupation	Employee	33
	Self Employed	14
	Student	21

	House Wife	34
Marital Status	Married	73
	Unmarried	29
Family Members	2-3 nos.	19
	3-4 nos.	52
	Above 4 nos.	31
Snacks regularly consumed by Consumers	Biscuits/Cookies	60
	Snack Cakes	14
	Chips	19
	chocolates	9
Frequency of Snacks Consumption	Daily	26
	Once in two days	36
	Once in two weeks	18
	Weekly twice	22
Preference of Snack cake Packages	Individual Shots	51
	Whole box	51
Amount of money spent on Snacks daily	Rs. 25-50	32
	Rs. 50-75	2
	Rs. 75-100	39
	Above 100	29
Have you Noticed Display Materials	Yes	69
	No	33
Usually noticed product detail materials	Billing Centre	2
	Entrance	12
	Posters	29
	Shelf	32
	Wobbler	26
Sample of snacks offered helps in decision making	Strongly agree	11
	Agree	43
	Disagree	13
	Strongly disagree	26

The demographic profile of consumers show that most of the respondents are male (48.9%). Further, more than 94% of the respondents are aged more than 20, and around 70% of them are aged more than 30. Thus, it can be logical to derive any purchase decision from these respondents. When it comes to the occupation of the respondents, among females, 24.1% of respondents are house wives and equal number of respondents are working as employees. The sample also has a few self-employed individuals. 51.7% respondents are Married, 36.8% respondents are having 3-4 members in their family. More than half of the respondents (58.8% respondents) say that they consume biscuits/cookies as their regular snacks and a small percentage of respondents consume snack cakes regularly. 25.5% respondents consume biscuits/cookies/snack cakes as snacks once in two days.

Equal numbers of respondents prefer individual shots and whole box of snack cake packages. Some prefer individual packs because they are not forced to consume a whole pack of snacks once the packet is open and don't need the hassle of preserving the open packet for later. A huge portion of the respondents

(66.7%) respondents spend more than Rs.75 daily on snacks for themselves and the family. When it comes to the impact of the merchandising/promotional material (PoP), 48.9% respondents noticed display materials, 31% respondents usually noticed product detail materials in Shelf. Samples offered at the stores or elsewhere also have an impact on the decision making regarding purchase of snacks - around 53% respondents agree that samples help them in deciding on a particular snack for purchase.

5. ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND OUTCOME

On the retailers' front, to find if there is a relationship between the type of outlet (i.e., Bakery, Departmental store, Grocery Shop or Super Market) and the demand for snack cake, and to find out if there is relationship between the type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake, chi square test was performed and the results were analysed. Also from the consumers' side, to find if there is a significant relationship between age and amount of money spent on snacks daily and to find if there is a relationship between size of the family and preference of size of packages of snack cakes, chi square test was performed and the results were analysed.

Further, to find out if there is a significant impact from various influencing factors such as Brand image of snack cake, its Product attributes and Relationship with sales personnel of snack cake brand on the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards snack cake, simple linear regression (MLR) was computed and the results were compiled into a single Table.(Table.4) and analysed.

5.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VARIABLES TAKEN UP FOR THE STUDY AMONG RETAILERS AND CONSUMERS

The following null hypotheses were formulated to find if there is a significant relationship between the type of outlet and demand for snack cake (H₀₋₁) and to find if there is a significant relationship between the type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake (H₀₋₂) among retailers.

H₀₋₁: There is no significant relationship between the type of outlet and demand for snack cake.

H₀₋₂: There is no significant relationship between the type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake.

Similarly for the customers of snack cake, following null hypotheses were formulated to find if there is a significant relationship between age and amount of money spent on snacks daily (H₀₋₃) and if there is a significant relationship between size of the family and preference of size of packages (H₀₋₄).

H₀₋₃: There is no significant relationship between age and amount of money spent on snacks daily.

H₀₋₄: There is no significant relationship between size of the family and preference of size of packages.

The outcome of the chi-square metric thus computed is presented in Table.3. While observing the results of the chi square test for relationship between type of outlet and demand for snack cake, it is seen that the null hypothesis is rejected (at p ≤ 0.01) and it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between the two variables. While observing the buying pattern of snack cake by consumers it can be seen that most of the consumers buy snack

cakes from Super Markets followed by Grocery Shop. Very few respondents have said that they buy snack cakes from Bakeries or Departmental stores. This shows that the manufacturers/super stockists/stockists/wholesaler of snack cake should be concentrating on modern trade (MT) rather than traditional retailers.

Table.3. Relationship between antecedents and responses

Sl.	Hypothesis	p	H ₀ Status	Outcome
	Relationship between type of outlet and demand for snack cake	0.000	Rejected	There is a significant relationship between the type of outlet and demand for snack cake.
	Relationship between type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake	0.124	Accepted	There is no significant relationship between the type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake – signifying that all outlets have timely availability of snack cake.
	Relationship between age of customers and amount of money spent on snacks daily	0.001	Rejected	There is a significant relationship between age and amount of money spent on snacks daily.
	Relationship between size of family and preference of size of packages	0.004	Rejected	There is a significant relationship between size of the family and preference of size of packages.

The results of the chi square test between relationship between type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake shows that the asymptotic significance is 0.124 which is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant relationship between the two variables, type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake. This signifies the fact that all types of retail outlets have timely availability of snack cake. This also further shows that the supply channel for snack cake is efficient.

Further, on the customer/consumers of snack cakes, while observing the results of the chi square test shown for relationship between age of customers and amount of money spent on snacks daily in the above table, the asymptotic significance is lesser than 0.01 ($p \leq 0.01$), and the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between the two variables, age and amount of money spent on snacks daily. Observing the data it can be seen that customers whose age is above thirty, spend an average ₹ 75 to ₹ 100 on a daily basis on snacks in general and many customer whose age is above forty spend above ₹ 100 on a daily basis on snacks, while younger customers spend considerably less amount of money on snacks in general, for example customers in the age group of 21 to 30 years spend only ₹ 25 to ₹ 50 on snacks. This could be explained by the fact that older customers have a bigger family size for which they buy higher volumes of snacks.

While observing the results of the chi square test for relationship between size of the family and preference of size of packages, the asymptotic significance is lesser than 0.01 ($p \leq 0.01$) and thus the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between size of the family and preference of size of packages. The data shows that smaller families naturally go for smaller packs of snacks while bigger families go for bigger packs of snacks. Families whose size is bigger than 4, go for both individual, smaller packs/shots and whole boxes of snacks/snack cakes.

5.2 IMPACT FROM THE INFLUENCING FACTORS AND THE OVERALL SATISFACTION OF THE RETAILERS TOWARDS SNACK CAKE

To find if there is any impact from the variables such as Brand image of snack cake, Product attributes of snack cake and Relationship of retailer with sales personnel of snack cake brand, simple linear regression (SLR) was computed and the individual results are compiled in Table.4. The null hypothesis in each case was that there is no significant impact from the antecedents on the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards snack cake.

Table.4. Impact of various antecedents on overall satisfaction of the retailers towards snack cake

Factors	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Change Statistics			Coefficient	Constant
				R ²	F	Sig. F		
Brand image of snack cake (x_1)	.077	.006	-.001	.006	.827	.365	-	-
Product attributes (x_2)	.164	.027	.020	.027	3.854	.042	0.715	1.355
Relationship with sales personnel (x_3)	.237	.056	.049	.056	8.246	.005	1.113	0.624

The outcome of the SLR reveals that the brand image of snack cake has no significant impact on the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards snack cake since $p = 0.365$ and $p \geq 0.05$. This means that brand image has no role to play in the retailers' patronisation of a snack cake brand. So whatever the brand name is, brand image is, the retailers look into other factors other than brand image. However, the factors product attributes of snack cake and the relationship the sales personnel of a snack cake brand maintains with the retailer has a significant impact on the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards a particular snack cake brand. The regression equations thus formed from the results of the regressions performed is presented below.

$$y = 1.355 + 0.715x_2 \quad (1)$$

$$y = 0.624 + 1.113x_3 \quad (2)$$

where,

y: overall satisfaction of the retailers towards snack cake

x_2 : Product attributes of snack cake

x_3 : Relationship with sales personnel of snack cake brand

Regression Eq.(1) implies that as the retailers' satisfaction on the product attributes such as Quality of packaging, Consistency in Quality of product, Variety of products offered, Product packaging colour is attractive, Taste of the product enables the customers to prefer the product, Quantity of product supplied as per requirement, Shelf life of the product and Timely availability of product on demand, increases then their overall satisfaction towards a particular snack cake brand also increases.

The Regression Eq.(2) presented above implies that as the retailers' satisfaction with the relationship maintained by sales personnel indicated by attributes such as sales personnel giving proper response to queries, Ease in contacting the representatives, Payment norms of snack cake brand, Executives visiting shop regularly to convey schemes and Satisfaction level with damage policy, increases, the retailers' overall satisfaction towards a particular snack cake brand also increases.

5.3 FACTORS THAT MAKE CUSTOMERS NOTICE THE PRODUCTS

To identify the effectiveness of in-store promotional material and to find out which in-store promotional material has the maximum reach with the customers, they were asked to rank the in-store promotional material usually supplied by different brands of snack cakes. The usual in-store promotional materials usually supplied by different brands are Product displays, Category displays, Stickers, Posters, Danglers, Wobblers. Out of all the promotional materials, it was also enquired which placement (eye level) attracted them the most. The ranking thus obtained were compiled and the overall ranking was obtained.

From the results it is seen that the promos at the customers eye level is ranked as (1) which implies that promos at eye level makes the consumers to notice the product first. This is followed by Product display (2), Category display (3), Sticker (4), Poster (5), Dangler (6), Wobbler (7). It is also seen from the data that 8.5% respondents said that they usually noticed product detail materials in the entrance of the outlet, and 20.5% respondents said that they usually noticed product detail materials in posters, followed by 22.6% respondents said that they usually noticed product detail materials in the shelf of the outlet and 18.4% respondents said that they usually noticed product detail materials in wobblers.

6. CONCLUSION

As the country becomes more affluent, customer spend on snacks increases and snacks are no longer regarded as luxury but rather have become a necessity. Owing to the growing demand, the snack industry in India is growing multi-fold year on year. The Indian snacks market had reached a massive turnover of INR 38,603 Crore in 2022. It is expected that the market would reach INR 70,731 Crore by 2028 with a CAGR of 10.4% during the period 2023-2028 [47]. Manufacturers of snacks should take in to account the role of retailers and customers bolstering this growth. This study aims at finding out if there is a relationship between the type of outlet (i.e., bakery, departmental store, grocery shop or super market) and the demand for snack cake, and to find out

if there is relationship between the type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake. Also from the consumers' side, it is attempted to find if there is a significant relationship between age and amount of money spent on snacks daily and to find if there is a relationship between size of the family and preference of size of packages of snack cakes. Further, the impact from various factors such as brand image of snack cake, its product attributes and sales personnel relationship with retailers of snack cake brand on the overall satisfaction of the retailers towards snack cake was also analysed.

The outcome of the analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between the type of outlet and demand for snack cake i.e, most of the consumers buy snack cakes from super markets followed by grocery shop and very few consumers buy snack cakes from bakeries or departmental stores. This shows that the manufacturers/super stockists/stockists/wholesaler of snack cake should be concentrating on modern trade rather than traditional retailers. There is no significant relationship between the type of outlet and timely availability of snack cake – signifying that all outlets have timely availability of snack cake. It can be seen that older/elderly customers spend more money on snacks on a daily basis, while younger customers spend considerably less amount of money on snacks in general. This could be explained by the fact that older customers have a bigger family size for which they buy higher volumes of snacks. Parents make up the majority of snack cake purchasers. The most common snack cake volume sold is four packs. The majority of retail shops 70.2% sold 2-3 packs of snack cake every week.

Brand image has no role to play in the retailers' patronisation of a snack cake brand. So whatever the brand name is, the retailers look into other factors other than brand image. Product attributes such as quality of packaging, consistency in quality of product, variety of products offered, product packaging colour is attractive, taste of the product enables the customers to prefer the product, quantity of product supplied as per requirement, shelf life of the product and timely availability of product on demand increases the overall satisfaction of retailers towards a particular snack cake brand. Also, retailers' satisfaction with the relationship maintained by sales personnel indicated by attributes such as sales personnel giving proper response to queries, ease in contacting the representatives, payment norms of snack cake brand, executives visiting shop regularly to convey schemes and satisfaction level with damage policy, increases the retailers' overall satisfaction towards a particular snack cake brand. Most of the Retailers' are satisfied with snack cake products.

In-store promotions at the customers' eye level have a major impact on the customer decision making on snack cakes. Posters were used as promotional material by 42.5% of retail businesses. The majority of respondents 48.9% indicated they observed display elements of the display shelf. Majority of respondents 22.6% indicated they usually observed product information materials on the outlet shelf. A majority of respondents believe that samples aid in decision-making.

The managerial implication of the outcomes of this research is that marketing strategists can identify the factors that impact the retailers' satisfaction to stock snack cakes and also to identify correct target group for snack cakes along with the factors that consumers use to evaluate snack cakes before purchase. Further,

the promotional material and the place of placement of the same is identified and could be capitalised to the fullest possible extent.

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