

A STUDY ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS INSTANT COOKING FOOD PRODUCTS IN DINDIGUL CITY

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ABSTRACT: *To achieve greater efficiency, the industry needs to adopt the latest technologies that could provide economies of scale and cost effectiveness. Greater use of radiative technology in food processing, which is being used in many countries around the world, and application of bio-technology would go a long way towards increasing efficiency. The consumer attitude towards processed and instant foods has to be changed. For instance, even to this day, Indian consumers prefer a live poultry bird as against processed and frozen poultry meat. Industry should drive home the point that the processed, frozen and instant foods give greater utility in terms of hygiene, quality, convenience and cost. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the consumer behaviour towards instant cooking food products in Dindigul city.*

KEY WORDS: instant, behavior, cooking, masalas, soups.

1. INTRODUCTION

'Instant' is the words which is widely spelt by the modern man, to indicate the completion of any work quickly, thereby saving time and energy. The ever changing life style of modern man compels him to search for commodities which can give him better satisfaction in the changing circumstances of his life style. He in fact finds it difficult to do in a leisurely way his various day-to-day activities; right from his wake- up time in the morning to the time he goes to sleep in the night. He has to act fast, so that he can send his children to school early go to office in time and find time in the evening to attend to his other activities.

Keeping these needs of the segment of consumers in mind there is a revolution being cooked upon the Indian food scene by the modern business units by offering Instant (cooking) food products, hereinafter called 'Instant Cooking Food Products' (ICFPs), so as to provide quick satisfaction to the consumers and thereby to help them to save time, labour and money. In fact these ICFPs eliminate the conventional ways of preparing food in day- to- day life of modern man. Urban modern women seek to empower themselves in society as they have higher education, better employment opportunities, good exposure to the environment and political awareness to support them and their needs are growing at a faster rate today.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The concept of instant cooking foods products demonstrates the fact that the kitchen is not alien to change. Though it started working since the Second World War in western countries, it got its recognition in Indian only recently. The reasons for the late adoption of this concept by the Indians may be many. The notable reasons are mainly based on our value systems and traditions deep rooted in our society. From time immemorial the task of preparing and serving of food is identified with womenfolk in our country. As result the conventional method of cooking had come to stay our society. The legacy of cooking passed on from generation to generation makes womenfolk excel in that art. Moreover, India is a land of villages of chronic poverty and the inability to adopt modern changes especially in food habits.

The advent of instant food products now has changed the life style of the urban population and also is in roads into rural areas with the help of modern communication and aggressive advertisement campaigns.

Today women are no more confined to the four walls of their houses. They have come up the educational ladder and their exposure to modern developments coupled with their increased economic needs push them out of their homes and to seek remunerative employment it is an accepted fact that considering the requirements of the family, it is imperative for both the husband and wife to earn so as to make both ends meet. This cultural transformation is taking place especially in metros and urban cities.

A survey indicated that more than 70 per cent of women in the urban population are in government service or are privately employed or self employed. Their gradual shift in social order has a direct bearing on the household affairs especially on cooking food therefore, modern women look for devices to save time in cooking and yet maintain natural hand cooking taste by satisfying these twin objectives of modern women the instant cooking food stand tall today. Though the cause of the birth of instant cooking food articles called be related to the major wars fought in the last century, the credit of making this concept successful worldwide goes to modern marketers who are in search of satisfying the growing needs of these new segments of consumers.

India's instant cooking food market has crossed the Rs.150 crores mark and is growing 30-40 per cent every year. Interestingly, a study shows that in the south, families allocate about 10 per cent of the money spent on grocery to instant cooking food items, while in the north it is close to 20 per cent. Initially, there where companies like Nestle, Gits, Laija and a few others were only found in this industry. But today a number of companies have come up and increased their market share.

The study area Dindigul city of Tamil Nadu is the sixth district in the state and is growing in length and breadth on all socio-economic fronts, with a vast urban population of 13.54 per cent who constitute the most potential segment of the consumers for these products.

A pilot study was undertaken in central Dindigul with a sample of 300 respondents. The researcher was able to understand the reasons behind the preference for these products, the economic profile of the users, the role of influencers in the buying decisions of these products, the opinions and response to sales promotion methods of the companies and others related issues. Based on the experience of the pilot study the researcher has shaped the research framework for the present study.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study gives an insight into important factors which greatly influence the behavior of consumers who purchase ICFPs. This study is totally innovative and relevant to present day problems and needs of the society and the country, as ICFPs are beginning to occupy the status of important food items of modern man. The study in its purview will give importance to more specific aspects of life like literacy, employment, income and size of the family of the consumers, which shape their behaviours' in a certain direction. The study has been restricted to the following selected popular ICFPs in Dindigul city.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature focuses on the finding of earlier studies which have been done in the area of the present study. It explores the avenues for the future and the present research efforts related to the present study. A number of research studies have been carried out on different aspects of the study by researchers and academicians in Indian and abroad. A free and frank review of the available literature helps to identify the research gaps found in the earlier studies and this ensure objective linkage to the present study with the past. therefore, the review of the past studies done by the researcher is presented under two head-studies relating to consumer behaviour and studies relating to instant cooking food products.

4.1 Studies relating to Consumer Behaviour

Bullock⁴ in his article titled "consumer Motivations in Black and White: Part I", examined various factors such as the need to belong, conflicting self-image, need for security, role confusion, economic anxieties, credit buying, product attitudes and related concept of black and white populations. More than 1600 Negroes and white were subjected to tests and interviews. Based on an analysis of the responses obtained from the population, the author traced out three major areas such as (a) some motivations common to both groups of consumers, (b) media through which the two groups of consumers can be reached simultaneously, and (c) types of advertising patterns likely to have the greatest impact on the largest number of members of the two groups. This study pointed out that national advertising must be quite subtle in its appeal to the Negroes, if it is to avoid the alienation of the more lucrative white market.

Spellrer⁷ made a study on "Attitudes and intentions as predictors of purchase: A Cross Validation". The result of his study showed that the consumer attitudes and intentions could account for 17 to 40 per cent of their purchase actions. A cross-validation between actual and predicted purchases showed that the attitudes and intentions were effective in predicting purchases. He suggested that if the marketing plans were drawn on the basis of a thorough investigation into consumers' attitudes and intentions they would prove a success.

Katona⁸ probed the "Repetitiousness and Variability of consumer Behaviour". His assumption was that the attitudes of a consumer might remain unchanged over several years, provided nothing important happened during these years to make for changes. However, when the economic position of consumers has undergone substantial changes, there should be differences in the degree of stability of different attitudes among a large number of consumers. He found that low-income families purchased durable goods less frequently,

borrow least frequently and save least frequently. He also found that the behaviour of upper income families was repetitive both in buying durable goods and in positive saving.

Wells¹¹ in his article "Measuring Readiness-to-Buy" found that decisions of conformity were more frequent for new and moderately new products than for conventional products. He further stated that the desire to purchase new and moderately new products was greater among consumers in their desire to buy new and moderately new products than conventional products.

Valenzi and Eldridge¹⁸ in their study "Effect of price Information Composition Differences, Expertise and Rating Scales on Product Quality Ratings." tried to assess the effect of price information, composition differences, expertise, and rating scales on product quality ratings. They found that price influenced taste quality ratings of beer. But experienced beer drinkers relied on price cues than less experienced. Composition differences were not identified, though the beers actually differed in quality and price. The authors concluded that lack of familiarity with a product disposes one to rely on cues like price to evaluate product quality.

Gatewood and Perloff²⁰ made "An Experimental Investigation of Three Methods of Providing Weight and Price Information to consumers "by creating a shopping atmosphere like a Super Market within their laboratory itself and used that to study consumer problems. Further, they also through a simulated shopping experiment investigated the effect of providing the information regarding the price and weight of product to consumers. They found that presenting the additional information of price per ounce of net weight was useful in making accurate choices of products. This additional information of price and weight of products helped consumers to reduce the time required for making choices.

4.2 Studies Relating to Instant Cooking Products

A report which examined the ready meals industry in Ireland indicated that the increasing media attention surrounding the health and diet issues such as the levels of fat, salt and sugar contained in the processed food had an adverse effect on growth of the ready meals market.

The Ready Meals Global Industry Guide reported that the global ready meals market grew by 3.4 percent in 2009 to reach a value of \$ 46.9 billion. In 2010 it was estimated that the global ready meals market was to have value of \$55.1 billion, an increase of 17.5 percent since 2009. Further the report stated that the frozen ready meals segment dominated the market, generating 55.1 percent of the total world market's value. The leading company within this fragmented market was the Unilever, which generated 4.9 percent of the total market's value. The report concluded that the super market/hyper market were the dominant distribution channel distributing 68.4 percent of the market's value.

The Global Industry Guide reported a five-year forecast of the ready in meals industry covering five major markets viz., France, Germany, Japan, the UK and the US. It stated that market grew by 3.4 per cent in 2009 touching a value of \$ 46.9 billion. Further; it forecasted the industry to have a global market value of \$55.1 billion and a volume of 9.9 billion kgs.

J.Suresh reported that soup drinking was not a regular habit among Indians and hence that market was small and seasonal with consumption going up during winter. He further stated that the ready- to-use masalas are popular and command the biggest market size among processed foods.

Ravi Naware reported that the ready- to-eat concept was not new to India. Pickles and rice mixes had long been part of our tradition. And in the 1970s and 1980s preserves, jam and tinned pineapple slices, tuna fish and Sardines found place in Indian homes. He further stated that the different now was the availability of a range and mixed rice. Earlier, the packaging technology used was primitive, which means the addition of natural preservatives. But the retorting method had done away with preservatives and marketers claim that the packaged food cloud remains fresh for two years even without refrigeration.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specified objectives of the study are:

1. To find the socio-economic characteristics of the sample respondents and their shopping pattern in the study area.
2. To offer suitable suggestions based on the finding of the study.

6. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This section describes the methodology of the present study which includes sampling design, collection of data, period of study and tools of analysis.

6.1 Sample Design

According to 2011 census Dindigul had a population of 207327 with a sex-ratio of 1012 females for every 1000 males. The average literacy of the city was 81.69% compared to the national average of 72.99%.

The city had a total of 53573 households. The study is based on the primary data collected by the personal interview method. For this 300 household consumers in Dindigul city were selected by adopting the convenient sampling method.

For the purpose of selecting consumers, the number of households was obtained from the records of the District Statistical Office at Dindigul. The number of sample consumer respondents was decided by adopting the convenient sampling method.

6.2 Collection of Data

A reconnaissance survey of the study area was undertaken to understand the buying behaviour of the consumer in Dindigul city. Based on the information gathered, a detailed schedule was drafted, pre-tested and used in field survey. The direct personal interview method has been adopted to collect the primary data regarding the characteristics of the sample respondents, family profile, general shopping pattern, extent of consultation, influencers on the purchase decision, brand preference and the other aspects relating to the overall objective of the study.

The secondary data relating to marketing practices and the like were obtained from journals, books and websites.

6.3 Period of study

The primary data were collected between 1st April 2017 and 31st December 2017. The survey period refers to 2017.

6.4 Hypotheses

The researcher framed the following hypotheses and tested them using Chi-Square test.

1. There is no sex relation between independent and extent use of instant cooking food products.
2. There is no relation between extent use and education status of the consumer.

6.5 Tools of Analysis

In the present study the following tools were used to analyse the data: Chi Square Test, Multiple Log Linear Regression Model and Garrett Ranking Technique.

6.6 Limitation of the Study

The present study is limited to the study of consumer behaviour towards instant cooking products in Dindigul city, for which 300 household respondents only have been selected to get the required data through an interview schedule. The findings derived from the study are based on the socio-economic conditions of the study area, the size of the sample and the availability of authentic data. The primary data collected through interview schedules, being qualitative in nature, might have their own limitation. The results of the study may or may not be applicable to other areas.

7. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Socio- Economic Profile:

There are many factors influence the extent use of instant cooking products. For the analysis purpose socio-economic factors such as age, gender and educational status of sample respondents are studied.

Age

The age of the sample respondents plays an important role in the extent use of instant cooking food products. The age-wise distribution of sample respondents is given in the Table 1.

Table 1 Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
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1	Below 30 years	46	15.34
2	31 – 35 years	91	30.33
3	36 – 40 years	82	27.33
4	41 – 45 years	66	22.00
5	46 years and above	15	5.00
Total	Total	300	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 reveals that 91 (30.33 per cent) of the sample respondents belong to the age group 31 – 35 years, 82 (27.33 per cent) belong to the age group 36 – 40 years, 66 (22.00 per cent) respondents are in the age group of 41 – 45 years, 46 (15.34 per cent) respondents are below 30 years in their age and 15 (5.00 per cent) respondents are 46 and above in the age.

Gender

The taste and choice of food differ according to the sex of the individual. Gender-wise distribution of the sample respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	Sex	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	126	42.00
2	Female	174	58.00
Total	Total	300	100

Sources: Primary Data.

Table 1 shows that out of the 300 sample respondents 174 (58.00 per cent) of the rural consumer are female and the remaining 126 (42.00 per cent) are male.

Educational Status

The distribution of the sample respondents according to their educational status is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Educational Status-wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl. No.	Education	Number of the Respondents	Percentage
1.	Upto Primary	39	13.00
2.	Higher Secondary	111	37.00
3.	Graduates	89	29.67
4.	Professional/Technical	61	20.33
	Total	300	100.00

Sources: Primary Data.

It is seen from Table 3 that out of the 300 sample respondents 111(37.00 per cent) have had secondary education followed by 89 (29.67 per cent), 61(20.33 per cent) and 39 (13.00 per cent) who are graduates, professional and technical and upon primary level education respectively.

7.2 Consumers Behaviour Towards Instant Cooking Food Products

The influence of the socio-economic profile and the consumers' behavior in the extent use of instant cooking food products is presented below.

Chi-square result of age, gender and educational status and the extent use of instant cooking food products

Socio – economic profile	Calculated value	Degrees of freedom	Table value at 5% level of significance	Interpretation
Age	20.261	8	15.5	Significant
Gender	1.5540	2	5.99	Insignificant
Educational Qualification	2.9101	6	12.60	Insignificant

FINDING OF THE STUDY

- ☞ Majority (58.00%) of the respondents are female.
- ☞ Most (39%) of the respondents have education up to higher secondary level.
- ☞ The Chi-square test showed that there is an association between the age and the extent use of instant cooking food products.
- ☞ There is no association between the sex, educational status of the consumers and the extent use of instant cooking food products.

SUGGESTIONS

From the observation made during this study and from the opinions of the respondents, the following suggestions are made to the producers of the ICFPs, Government, advertising agencies and dealers.

- ❖ Most of the consumers of ICFPs are of the view that the prices are high. So, reduction in the cost of production of ICFPs may be studied by the manufacturers.
- ❖ Quality and taste should be improved at par with conventional method of cooking food. Consistency of the taste should be ensured by the manufacturers.
- ❖ Quality, taste and safety of the ICFPs should be improved and consistency of these should be ensured by the manufacture.
- ❖ Indian consumer being peculiar in their food habits, pure vegetarians and non-vegetarians, producers should ensure separately that the products are purely meant for vegetarians and non-vegetarians, to satisfy their sentiments.
- ❖ Food exhibition and contests may be conducted from time to time to demonstrate the preparation of ICFPs as recipe.
- ❖ Advertisements of ICFPs should be realistic, honest, rational and should not mislead and exploit the consumers.

CONCLUSION

Indian is almost sitting on a gold mine of processed food, which can become a top foreign exchange earner and employment generator provided appropriate policies and strategies are followed. The value of the Indian market is currently estimated at Rs.3230 billion, of which Rs.1076 billion accounts for processed food. The demand is expected to rise in the future, much of it to come from processed or instant or ready to eat food segment. In 2011, the instant food market is forecasted to have value of Rs.5500 billion, an increase of 20 per cent since 2017. This growth is expected to occur as the outcome of socio-economic changes, different value perceptions and rapid transformation taking place in Indian society.

However, the issues at the micro level, confronting the growth of the industry are production and procurement of quality raw material, use of traditional technologies leading to huge per unit operational cost, poor economies of scale and fragmented processing capacities. Moreover, non-compliance with the GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) in the processing plants, less awareness about quality certifications like HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Central Point), ISO are considered serious impediments to the industry and its export prospects.

Consumer behaviour is a stimulating sphere consisting of the consumer themselves. Consumption of the increase of instant food products is due to increase in urbanization, breaking up of the traditional joint family system, time, convenience changing lifestyle and increasing level of affluence in the middle income group. Pickles are found today in the kitchen shelves of the every Indian household. All the respondents are aware of various instant food products. The ready availability and saving of the time are the

reasons for consuming instant food products. Food zones and supermarket are the major sources of purchase of instant food products. The consumer's relationship with food and other everyday goods has changed dramatically, not only in the way products are purchased. But also in the way they are consumed.

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