



A STUDY ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS READY TO EAT FOODS

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ABSTRACT:

With the increasing pace of modern life, consumers are increasingly seeking convenient food options that are easy to prepare and consume. Most of the time people prefer instant food like cup noodles, chapati, nuggets, instant idly, dosa mix etc. specially youngsters. Ready-to-eat (RTE) foods have emerged as a popular solution to this need, offering a range of convenient and easy-to-prepare options that require minimal time and effort. This study is limited to 102 respondents between the ages 15 to 45 in Tamil Nadu which had been contacted using social media. In this study 59.8% are males and 40.2% are females. Each respondent to this study asked to complete a short questionnaire in order to analyse the data. This study aims to investigate consumer behaviour towards RTE foods and identify the factors that influence their purchasing decisions, analyse the consumer perception and consumer satisfaction towards Ready-To-Eat Food products. The results of the study reveal that convenience, taste, and availability are the most important factors that influence consumer behaviour towards RTE foods. Consumers prefer RTE foods that are easy to prepare and have a long shelf life, and are willing to pay a premium price for RTE foods that they perceive as healthier and of better quality. Overall, the study provides important insights into consumer behaviour towards RTE foods and highlights the need for further research to explore the potential health risks associated with RTE foods.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, Ready-to-eat foods, Convenience, Health concerns, Brand reputation, Marketing strategies, Consumer satisfaction

INTRODUCTION:

Ready-to-eat (RTE) foods are becoming increasingly popular among consumers worldwide due to their convenience, time-saving properties, and varied options. The global market for RTE foods is expanding rapidly, with the industry projected to reach a value of \$233 billion by 2027. However, RTE foods have also raised concerns about their impact on consumer health and well-being. Despite the convenience and ease of access, the nutritional quality of RTE foods has come under scrutiny, with some products being high in salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats.

The states, the standard of living, the cost of product, convenience and many other factors influence consumer behaviour. For all living things, food and nutrition come first. Every living being consumes food. Food that is packaged and labelled as "Ready to Eat" is food that can be consumed right away. Due to the pressures of modern life, people choose quick, simple methods of cooking rather than taking their time. Consumption patterns have changed as a result of the emergence of ready-to-eat (RTE) food in the international market and also in Indian markets.

As consumers gain more knowledge about food items, their intentions and attitudes about ready-to-eat food products are changing, which has an impact on the food sector. This research article aims to explore consumer behaviour towards RTE foods, with a focus on identifying the factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions, attitudes, consumersatisfaction and perceptions towards these products.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To identify the factors that influence consumers to purchase and consume Ready-To-Eat food products.
- 2) To identify the consumer buying method of Ready-To-Eat foods.
- 3) To Analyse the consumer perception towards Ready-To-Eat food products.
- 4) To Analyse the consumers satisfaction towards Ready-To-Eat food products.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The significance of the study on consumer behaviour towards ready-to-eat foods may involve understanding consumer preferences, consumer satisfaction, attitudes, and behaviours related to this category of food products, and exploring the various factors that influence their decision-making process.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. A study by Verma and Chandra (2018) explored the factors influencing consumer behaviour towards ready-to-eat foods in India. The study found that factors such as taste, convenience, and variety were significant predictors of purchase behaviour, while health and nutritional concerns were relatively less important.
2. A study by Schermel et al. (2013) examined the nutritional quality of ready-to-eat meals in Canada. The study found that these meals often exceeded recommended daily intakes for salt, saturated fat, and calories, indicating that consumer behaviour towards these foods could have negative implications for public health.
3. A study by Neal et al. (2017) explored the impact of packaging design on consumer behaviour towards ready-to-eat meals in the UK. The study found that packaging design had a significant influence on purchase behaviour, with consumers preferring packaging that was easy to open, informative, and visually appealing.
4. Solanki & Jain, 2017 Published paper titled "A consumer buying behaviour towards ready to eat food industry". The main aim to conduct the research was to study about consumer purchase behaviour towards ready to eat food industry in northern India. They study that due to the lifestyle pressure now a days, consumers don't have the time to cook the food due to their busy schedule regarding their jobs, that's why they prefer to go restaurants or cafe or ready to eat foods for hungriness. Also, it was stated that individuals are single who are not married bachelor's preferred to consume ready to eat food products mostly therefore, it was mostly preferable.
5. A study by Thogersen et al. (2016) examined the influence of social norms on consumer behaviour towards convenience foods in Denmark. The study found that social norms regarding healthy eating had a significant impact on consumer behaviour, and that interventions targeting social norms could be effective in promoting healthier eating habits.
6. A study by Aschemann-Witzel et al. (2018) explored the role of emotions in consumer behaviour towards convenience foods in Germany. The study found that emotions such as guilt, pleasure, and convenience-seeking were significant predictors of purchase behaviour, and that targeting emotional responses could be an effective strategy for promoting healthier eating habits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This research is based on both primary and secondary sources.

➤ **Primary Data:**

The Primary data is collected by circulating a questionnaire to the consumers in the age group of between 15 to 45 using Google Forms which are distributed using social media and based on their input the analysis was done.

➤ **Secondary Data:**

The secondary data is collected from Articles, Magazines, Books and Internet.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Data analysis is the process of transforming raw data into useful information that can inform decisions and improve outcomes. It involves a range of methods and techniques to analyse and interpret data, and is an essential component for research. Data analysis involves examining and interpreting the data collected during a study to draw meaningful conclusions and make informed decisions.

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Each respondent to this study asked to complete a short questionnaire in order to analyse the data.

Factors that influence consumers to purchase and consume Ready-To-Eat food products:

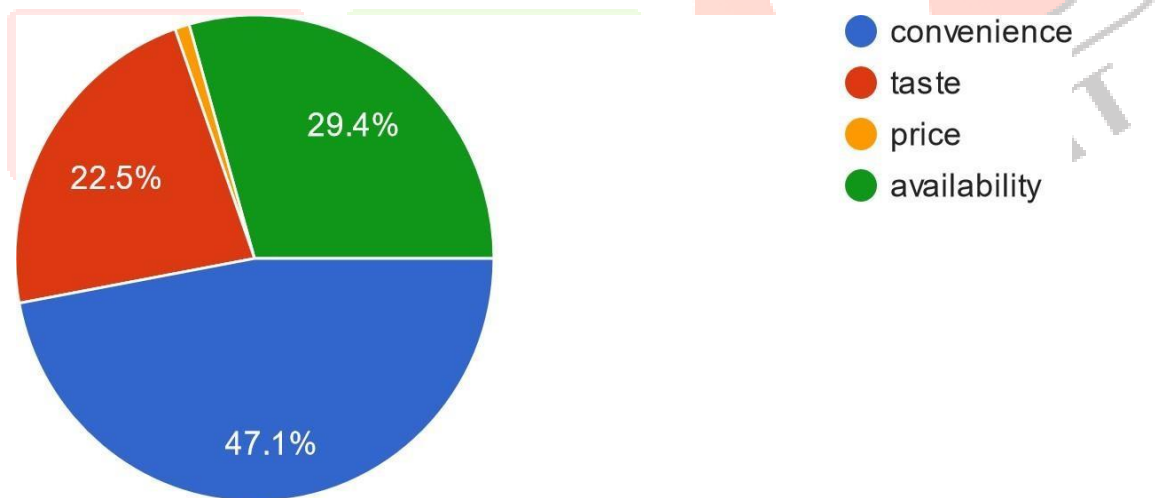


Figure 1.1

From the above figure 1.1 it shows that 47.1% of the consumers prefer convenience, 29.4% of the consumers prefer availability, 22.5% of the consumers prefer taste and very few prefer price to purchase and consume Ready-To-Eat foods.

1. Frequency of RTE purchases in a week:

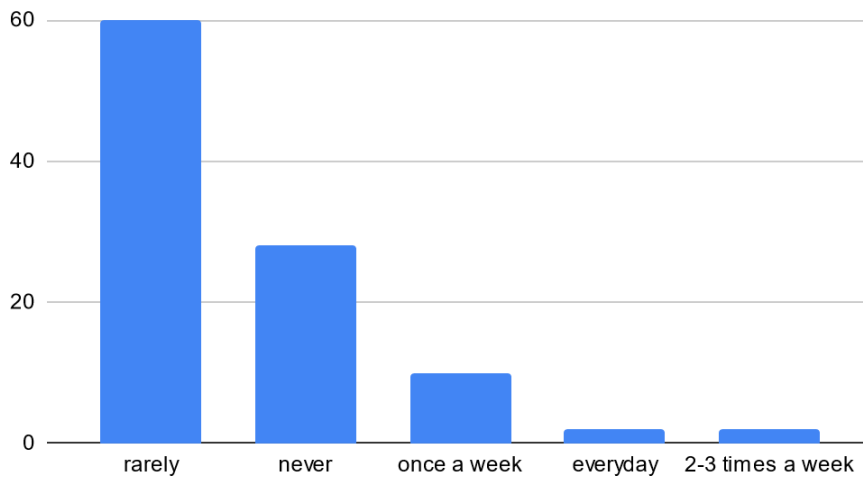


Figure 1.2

From the above figure 1.2 it shows that 60% of the consumers rarely purchase ready-to-eat foods in a week.

2. Purchasing RTE foods primarily for:

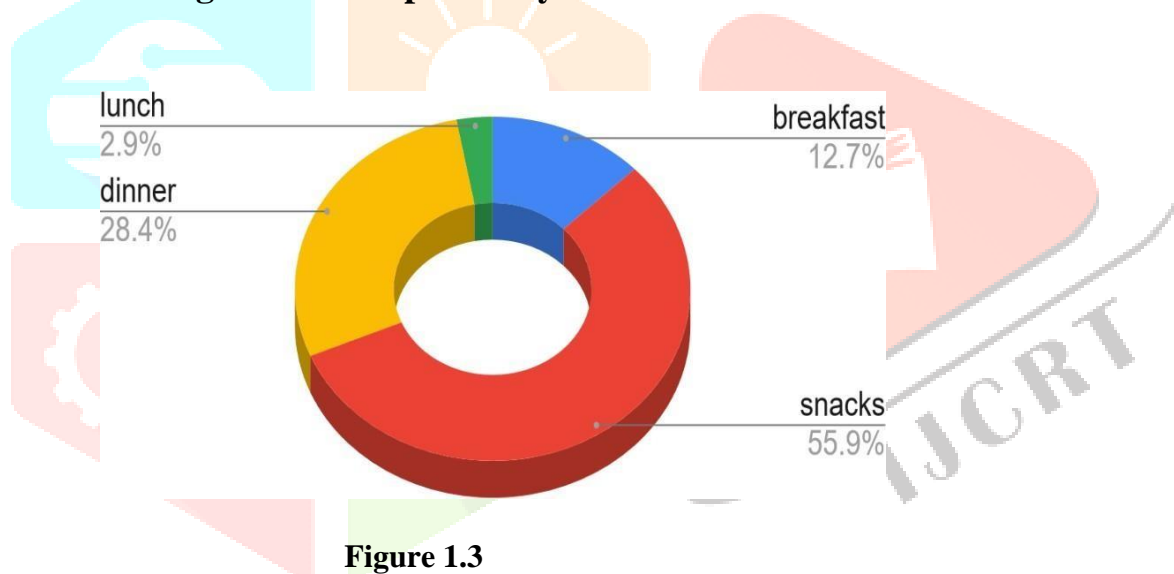


Figure 1.3

From the above figure 1.3 it shows that 55.9% of consumers prefer RTE foods as snacks and 28.9% of consumers prefer RTE foods for dinner.

3. Consumer satisfaction towards ready to eat foods:

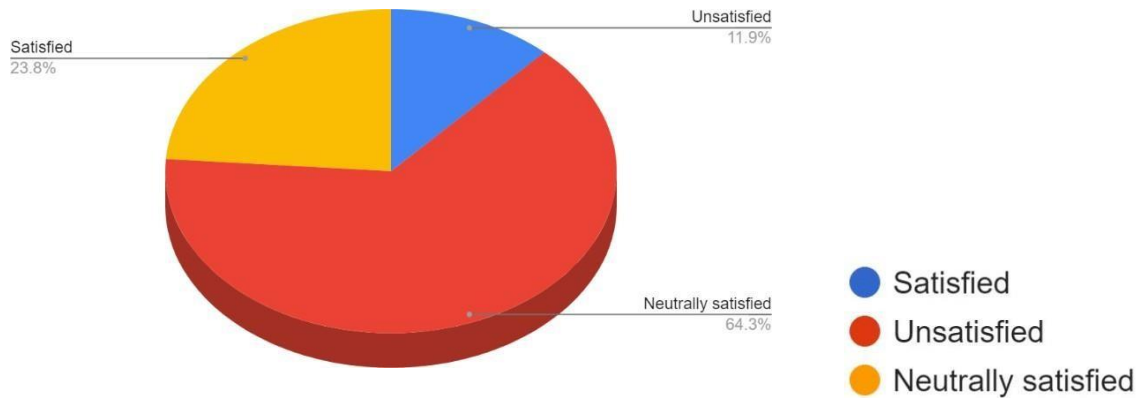


Figure 1.4

From the above figure 1.4 it shows that 64.3% of consumers are neutrally satisfied by consuming Ready-To-Eat foods, 23.8% are satisfied and 11.9% are unsatisfied. Overall the majority of consumers are neutrally satisfied.

4. Consumer buying method of Ready-To-Eat foods:

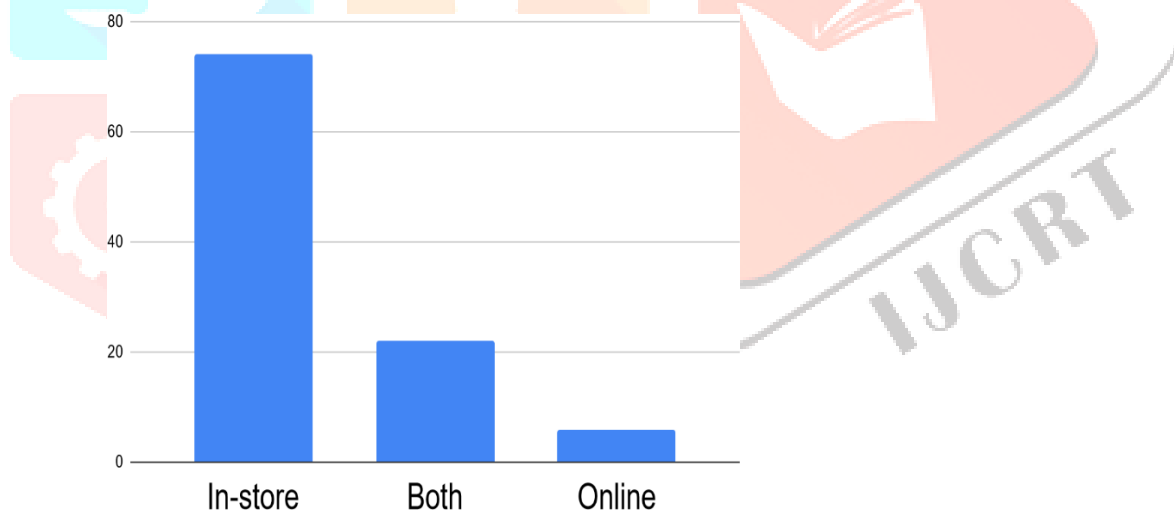


Figure 1.5

From the above figure 1.5 it shows that 72.5% of consumers prefer in-store for buying RTEfoods. In-store purchases offer consumers the convenience of being able to quickly grab a meal or snack while they are already shopping for groceries or other items and it is easily available in nearby stores.

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE RTE FOOD MARKET:

1. **Convenience:** Consumers who lead busy lifestyles often prioritize convenience when it comes to food choices. RTE food offers a quick and easy meal solution, especially for those who don't have the time or resources to cook from scratch.

2. **Health and nutrition:** Consumers are becoming increasingly health-conscious and are looking for healthier RTE food options that offer better nutrition profiles. The rise in demand for organic, natural, and plant-based foods is a testament to this trend.
3. **Taste and flavour:** Taste is a crucial factor that influences consumer behaviour in the RTE food market. Consumers expect their food to be flavourful and enjoyable, and are more likely to buy products that satisfy their taste preferences.
4. **Price:** Price is an important factor that influences consumer behaviour in any market, including the RTE food market. Consumers are more likely to buy RTE food products that are affordable and offer value for money.
5. **Brand reputation:** Consumers tend to choose RTE food products from brands they know and trust. A brand's reputation for quality, safety, and reliability can significantly influence consumer behaviour.
6. **Packaging:** The packaging of RTE food products can significantly impact consumer behaviour. Consumers are more likely to buy products that are easy to store, transport, and use, and that are environmentally friendly.
7. **Marketing and advertising:** Effective marketing and advertising campaigns can influence consumer behaviour by creating awareness and interest in RTE food products. Clever packaging, appealing visuals, and targeted messaging can all make a difference in how consumers perceive and choose RTE food products.

CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN PURCHASING RTE FOODS:

Consumer decision-making process is a vital aspect of understanding consumer behaviour towards ready-to-eat (RTE) foods. This process refers to the series of steps that a consumer takes before making a purchase. In the RTE food market, the consumer decision-making process can be influenced by various factors, including social, cultural, personal, and psychological factors.

When it comes to purchasing RTE foods, consumers follow a specific decision-making process, which can be divided into the following stages:

1. **Problem recognition:** The first stage of the decision-making process is recognizing the need for a product. Consumers recognize the need for RTE foods when they do not have the time or resources to prepare a meal from scratch.
2. **Information search:** After recognizing the need for RTE foods, consumers begin to search for information about the available options. They may consult friends and family, read reviews online, or search for information on the RTE food products' nutritional value, taste, and convenience.
3. **Evaluation of alternatives:** Once consumers have gathered information about the available RTE food products, they evaluate the different options. They may consider factors such as taste, nutritional value, price, and convenience when evaluating the alternatives.
4. **Purchase decision:** After evaluating the alternatives, consumers make a purchase decision based on the RTE food product that they believe best meets their needs and preferences.
5. **Post-purchase evaluation:** The final stage of the decision-making process is post-purchase evaluation. Consumers evaluate whether the RTE food product met their expectations in terms of taste, convenience, and nutritional value. If the product does not meet their expectations, they may be less likely to purchase it again in the future.

In the RTE food market, convenience is a crucial factor that influences the consumer decision-making process. Consumers are often pressed for time and may not have the resources to prepare a meal from scratch. As a result, RTE food products that offer quick and easy meal solutions are likely to appeal to consumers.

Additionally, nutritional value and taste are also essential factors that influence the consumer decision-making process. Consumers are becoming increasingly health-conscious and are paying more attention to the nutritional content of the food they consume. RTE food products that are perceived to be unhealthy may not appeal to this segment of the market. Similarly, RTE food products that are not tasty and satisfying are less likely to be purchased again in the future.

In conclusion, understanding the consumer decision-making process is critical for RTE food manufacturers to develop and market products that meet the needs and preferences of their target market. By considering the factors that influence the consumer decision-making process, manufacturers can develop RTE food products that are convenient, nutritious, and appealing to their target market.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY TOWARDS RTE FOODS:

Consumer satisfaction and loyalty towards RTE foods can be influenced by several factors, including quality, packaging, variety, price, and brand reputation.

Quality: Consumers expect RTE foods to be of high quality, with good taste, texture, and freshness. Brands that consistently deliver high-quality products are more likely to retain customers.

Packaging: The packaging of RTE foods should be attractive, easy to open, and convenient to use. Consumers may switch to a different brand if the packaging is difficult to open or use.

Variety: Consumers want a variety of options when it comes to RTE foods, including different flavours, cuisines, and dietary requirements. Brands that offer a wide variety of options are more likely to retain customers.

Price: While consumers are willing to pay a premium for convenience, they still expect RTE foods to be reasonably priced. Brands that offer competitive prices are more likely to attract and retain customers.

Brand Reputation: The reputation of the brand also plays a significant role in consumer satisfaction and loyalty towards RTE foods. Brands that are known for their quality and reliability are more likely to retain customers.

It's also important to note that consumer satisfaction and loyalty towards RTE foods may vary depending on the specific product category and consumer demographics. For example, younger consumers may be more willing to try new flavours and cuisines, while older consumers may be more concerned with health and nutrition.

Overall, brands that prioritize quality, packaging, variety, price, and brand reputation are more likely to build a loyal customer base and grow their business in the RTE food market.

CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS RTE FOODS:

Overall, consumer perception towards RTE (ready-to-eat) foods is positive. RTE foods are popular because they offer convenience and save time for busy consumers who are looking for quick and easy meal options. Consumers appreciate the variety of flavours and taste profiles that RTE foods offer, and they also appreciate the fact that these products are often shelf-stable and easy to store.

However, consumer perception towards RTE foods can also be influenced by health and nutrition concerns, packaging and labelling, brand reputation, safety and quality concerns, and price. Consumers are becoming increasingly health-conscious and are looking for RTE food options that offer better nutrition profiles. They also pay attention to packaging and labelling, which can influence their purchasing decisions. The reputation of the brand and safety and quality concerns are also important factors that can impact consumer perception. Finally, price can also influence consumer perception, with some consumers perceiving cheaper RTE foods as being of lower quality, and more expensive products as being of higher quality.

Overall, RTE food companies need to understand and address consumer concerns and perceptions in order to build trust and loyalty among consumers and drive growth in the market.

FINDINGS:

1. From this research it has been found out that 89% of the respondents are aware of Ready-To-Eat Food Product and 62% of them had purchased it.
2. The study depicts that 47% of the respondents consider convenience as the primary reason for purchasing Ready-To-Eat Food Products and 22.5% of them consider taste while purchasing RTE foods.
3. From the study it has been found that 51% of the respondents are neutrally satisfied with Ready-To-Eat Food Products.
4. It has been found that 38% of the respondents purchase ready-to-eat foods once a week.
5. 41.2% of the respondents prefer RTE foods that are low in calories.
6. It has been found that 56% of the respondents purchase RTE foods primarily for Snacks and 28.4% of them purchase it for dinner.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Increase the variety of healthy and nutritious RTE food options to meet changing consumer preferences.
- Improve the quality and taste of RTE foods to enhance consumer satisfaction.
- Use sustainable packaging options to reduce environmental impact.
- Provide clear and accurate labelling to inform consumers about the nutritional content of RTE foods.
- Ready-To-Eat Food Products should be made easily available at retail shops.
- Quantity should be increased and prices should be reduced.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the research indicates that consumers are increasingly turning to ready-to-eat (RTE) foods due to the convenience they offer. While taste and quality remain important factors for consumers when choosing RTE foods, factors such as price, packaging, and brand also play a significant role. Additionally, health and nutrition are becoming more important considerations for consumers, with many seeking RTE options that are low in fat, salt, and sugar.

Overall, the findings suggest that the RTE food market will continue to grow as consumers seek out convenient, taste and healthy options. However, companies must continue to adapt to changing consumer preferences and invest in marketing strategies to stay competitive in this crowded market.

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