



Consumer Preference Towards Branded Instant Food Products

(With Special Reference to Coimbatore District)

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Abstract

The present study is anticipated to find out the consumer preference for branded instant food products. The study aims to identify the components that influence the consumer's level of preference for instant food products. The mean score, weighted average method and Chi-square test have been analyzed using the primary data collected using a questionnaire. The results reveal that pickles and noodles are the most favored instant food items, with consumers showing a preference for new flavors and vegetarian options. Brand image plays a significant role in their purchasing decisions. The sensory appeal of instant food products is highly attractive, particularly in terms of taste and aroma, with a rating of 4.50.

Keywords: Consumer Preference, Instant Food Products, Brand Image, Taste and Aroma.

Introduction

In today's fast-moving world, instant food products have become really popular because of their convenience and ability to save time. With busy schedules and changing eating habits, more people are turning to ready-to-eat or easy-to-cook meals that offer both great taste and nutritional value. Among these, branded instant food products have gained a strong grip in the market, as consumers tend to trust well-known brands for their quality, consistency, and reliability.

When it comes to choosing instant food, people consider several factors, including taste, price, brand reputation, health benefits, and availability. Among these, brand image plays a key role, as many consumers associate familiar brands with trust and reliability. Over time, branded instant foods have built strong customer loyalty, with certain brands dominating specific product categories. The growing competition among brands has led to constant innovation in flavors, packaging, and healthier options to attract and retain

customers. In India, brands like Maggi and Aachi have become household names in categories like noodles, pickles, and ready-to-cook meals. Consumers are increasingly looking for variety, new flavors, and healthier choices, including vegetarian options, encouraging brands to evolve and meet changing preferences.

Review of Literature

Dr. E. Renuga (2023) in her study entitled “A Study on the Preference of Working Women for Instant Food Products in Coimbatore District.”. To evaluate the preference of working women towards instant food products.

The findings indicate a high level of acceptance for the MTR brand among respondents. They predominantly choose products like idli mix, dosa mix, vada mix, noodles, atta, pongal mix, and poori for breakfast. Additionally, there is a strong inclination towards purchasing rasam powder, kulambu masala, channa masala, variety mix, and pickles for their main course. **Naveen R. (2023)** in the study captioned “A Study on Customer Preferences towards Noodles.”. To study the factors influencing the customer preference for buying noodles. The findings highlight a significant rise in instant food consumption, driven by urbanization, shifting family dynamics, convenience, evolving lifestyles, and increasing affluence among the middle class. Noodles have become a staple in Indian households, with many instant meal products gaining widespread recognition among consumers. The demand for these products is primarily attributed to their easy availability and time-saving benefits. Grocery stores and supermarkets are identified as the preferred shopping destinations, emphasizing consumer preferences for convenient purchasing options. **A. Ezhilarasi (2021)** “Working Women Preference and Satisfaction of Using Ready-to-Eat Food Products in Chennai City.” To assess the working women’s preference and satisfaction with using the ready-to-eat products in Chennai city. The study reveals that the working women really favored the consumption of ready-to-eat food products. The working women feel that the ready-to-eat food products are readily available for the preparation of food products. The working women also viewed that the availability of ready-to-eat food products was fast. The study also found that the working women are pleased with the utilization of ready-to-food products in the region. **Kailash Patendra Amatya (2019)** “Consumer Preference on Instant Noodles in Kathmandu City.” To find out the level of awareness among the people towards the product, such as price, quantity, quality, and taste. The study reveals that television, newspapers, and F.M are the most effective advertising media for instant noodles. Wai-Wai is the most preferred brand, while Ruchee was found to be the least preferred. Noodles are primarily sought during lunchtime. Customer preference is influenced by factors such as brand, price, quality, taste, ease of preparation, and availability. This research provides valuable insights for instant noodle companies to improve consumer preference levels by strategically addressing these key factors. **Dr. M. Vasana (2019)** “Consumers’ Preference and Consumption towards Instant Food Products”. To identify the customer preference towards instant food products. The study finds that the majority of the respondents regularly purchase instant food products, with the primary reason being the convenience of shorter preparation time. Consumer satisfaction is notably high with the availability of instant food products. These findings provide valuable insights for manufacturers, helping them understand consumer choices and preferences. It also

serves as a basis for formulating effective marketing strategies to enhance sales in the instant food product market.

Statement of Problem

The increasing demand for branded instant food products is driven by lifestyle changes, socialization, and the need for convenience, particularly among students, working professionals, and double-income families. Consumers prefer ready-to-eat (RTE) and ready-to-cook (RTC) meals due to their ease of preparation, availability, and taste (Nguyen & Tran, 2019). Marketing strategies, cultural influences, and growing health consciousness also play a crucial role in determining consumer preferences. In Asian markets, traditional flavors dominate, whereas Western consumers increasingly seek organic and healthier options (Lee & Park, 2020). Brands that align with these trends by offering flavorful, nutritious choices with sustainable packaging gain a competitive edge. This raises the following question: What is the consumer's preference regarding branded instant food products?

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the components that influences the consumer's level of preference for instant food product brands.
- To explore the reasons for preference behind selecting specific instant food products.

Research Methodology

This study is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire, which covers aspects of the level of agreeability towards instant food products, consumer level of preference, and reason for preferring the brands of instant food products. A total of 290 consumers from the Coimbatore district participated in the survey, selected through a convenience sampling method. The data was analyzed using mean score, weighted average score, and the Chi-square test.

Results and Discussion

This study intends to determine the consumer preference and utilization of instant food product brands in Coimbatore district. The following paragraph shows the consumer preference of branded instant food products.

Table.1: Level of Preference towards the Various Branded Instant Food Products – Mean Score

Instant Food Product Brands	Mean Score	Aggregate Mean Score
<u>Tiffin Items</u>		
MTR	2.53	2.16
Krishna	1.96	
Milky Mist	2.23	
Aachi	2.54	
Double Horse	1.78	
Elite	1.93	
<u>Soup</u>		

Maggi	1.82	2.05
Knorr	2.41	
MTR	2.22	
Aachi	2.26	
Bambino	1.55	
<u>Noodles</u>		
Maggi	2.70	2.30
SunfeastYippe	2.25	
Top Ramen	1.99	
Anil	2.27	
<u>Rice Varities</u>		
MTR	2.46	2.24
Krishna	2.04	
Mother Receipe	2.02	
Aachi	2.51	
MambalamIyer's	1.80	
Annapoorna	2.30	
Sakthi	2.55	
<u>Masala Powders</u>		
MTR	2.32	2.30
Aachi	2.59	
Sakthi	2.64	
Everest	1.93	
Annapoorna	2.03	
<u>Gravy Powder /Paste</u>		
MTR	2.47	2.03
Krishna	2.03	
Mother Receipe	1.95	
Knorr	1.66	
<u>Pickle</u>		
Aachi	2.70	2.31
Sakthi	2.51	
Double Horse	1.73	

The above table depicts the level of preference of consumers towards the various branded instant food products. It has been divided into seven brands such as Tiffin Items, Soups, Noodles, Rice Varieties, Masala Powders, Gravy Powder/Paste and Pickle.

**Table 2: Level of Agreeability towards the Reason for Preferring Instant Food Products –
Weighted Average Score**

Reason for preferring instant food products	Level of Agreeability						Weighted Average Score
	Highly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Highly Disagree	Total	
Taste/Aroma	162	114	11	2	1	290	4.49
	(55.86%)	(39.31%)	(3.79%)	(0.69%)	(0.34%)	(100.00%)	
Readily available for cooking	92	154	35	7	2	290	4.13
	(31.72%)	(53.10%)	(12.06%)	(2.41%)	(0.69%)	(100.00%)	
Saves cooking time	122	117	43	6	2	290	4.21
	(42.06%)	(40.34%)	(14.82%)	(2.06%)	(0.69%)	(100.00%)	
Nutritive value	55	91	100	39	5	290	3.52
	(18.96%)	(31.37%)	(34.48%)	(13.34%)	(1.72%)	(100.00%)	
Saves cost of labour	53	111	88	34	4	290	3.60
	(18.34%)	(38.24%)	(30.45%)	(11.76%)	(1.21%)	(100.00%)	
Saves cost of fuel	56	105	80	44	5	290	3.56
	(19.31%)	(36.20%)	(27.58%)	(15.17%)	(1.72%)	(100.00%)	
Useful at the time of emergency	105	124	42	17	2	290	4.08
	(36.20%)	(42.75%)	(14.48%)	(5.86%)	(0.69%)	(100.00%)	
Useful at the time of long travel	94	107	60	23	6	290	3.90
	(32.41%)	(36.89%)	(20.68%)	(7.93%)	(2.06%)	(100.00%)	
Relief from burdensome cooking	67	112	74	31	6	290	3.70
	(23.18%)	(38.58%)	(25.61%)	(10.73%)	(2.06%)	(100.00%)	
Convenient for working women/men	138	94	42	14	2	290	4.21
	(47.58%)	(32.41%)	(14.48%)	(4.82%)	(0.69%)	(100.00%)	
Easily available in nearby shops	76	116	75	19	4	290	3.82
	(26.20%)	(40%)	(25.86%)	(6.55%)	(1.37%)	(100.00%)	
Influenced by family members/friends	51	85	86	60	8	290	3.38
	(17.58%)	(29.41%)	(29.31%)	(20.59%)	(2.77%)	(100.00%)	
Influenced by Advertisement/Brand Ambassador	59	84	78	59	10	290	3.41
	(20.34%)	(28.89%)	(26.89%)	(20.34%)	(3.44%)	(100.00%)	
Helpful to prepare variety of food items	61	117	71	33	8	290	3.65
	(21.11%)	(40.31%)	(24.57%)	(11.42%)	(2.60%)	(100.00%)	
Lifestyle	62	94	63	59	12	290	3.46
	(21.37%)	(32.41%)	(21.72%)	(20.34%)	(4.13%)	(100.00%)	

Table 3: Association of Select Variables with Level of Preference of branded Instant Food Products – Chi-Square Test

In order to find out the association between the selected variables namely area of residence, age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, type of family, earning members in the family, non earning members in the family, size of the family, monthly income (self), family income per month, food habit (self), source of motivation, period of consumption of instant food products, frequency of consuming instant food products, place of preference for using instant food products, preferred time to consume instant food products, amount spent on per month, brand preference, nature of purchase decision and mode of Purchase have been selected.

Ho: There is no association between the select variables and consumers level of preference towards instant food products.

Association of Select Variables with Consumers Level of Preference -Chi-Square

Select Variables	D.F	Chi-square value	Table value		Result
			At 5%	At 1%	
Area of Residence	2	0.055	5.991	9.210	Not significant
Age	6	3.971	12.592	16.812	Not significant
Gender	2	5.034	5.991	9.210	Not significant
Educational Qualification	8	7.018	21.955	26.124	Not significant
Occupation	6	5.883	12.592	16.812	Not significant
Type of Family	2	1.310	5.991	9.210	Not significant
Earning Members in the Family	6	4.402	12.592	16.812	Not significant
Non Earning Members in the Family	8	5.038	15.507	20.090	Not significant
Size of the Family	4	3.859	9.488	13.277	Not significant
Monthly Income (self)	6	10.620	12.592	16.812	Not significant
Family Income Per Month	6	4.197	12.592	16.812	Not significant
Food Habit (self)	2	6.042	5.991	9.210	Significant
Source of Motivation	12	16.270	21.026	26.217	Not significant
Period of Consumption	6	2.140	12.592	16.812	Not significant
Frequency of Consuming	4	15.340	9.488	13.277	Significant
Place of Preference	6	13.728	12.592	16.812	Significant
Preferred time to Consume	6	3.585	12.592	16.812	Not significant
Amount Spent on Per Month	6	9.635	12.592	16.812	Significant
Brand Preference	4	6.147	9.488	13.277	Not significant

Nature of Purchase Decision	2	7.564	5.991	9.210	Significant
Mode of Purchase	4	8.223	9.488	13.277	Not significant

**Significant at one per cent level

The above table shows that out of twenty one variables selected, five variables namely food habit (self) , frequency of consuming, Place of Preference , amount spent on per month and nature of purchase decision are found to be significant at one per cent level.

Finding of the Study

The findings of the study are divided into two sections namely, Level of Preference, and their agreeability towards the reason for preferring instant food products.

(I) Level of Preference towards the Various Branded Instant Food Products

The findings relating to Preference towards on branded instant food products shows that mean score level to used to such as Tiffin Items, Soup, Noodles, Rice varieties, Masala Power, Gravy Powder/Paste and Pickle among the consumers.

➤ **Tiffin Items**

MTR leads in awareness score (2.53) for Tiffin items, demonstrating its strong brand recognition, especially in South India, where Tiffin items are a attach

➤ **Soup**

Knorr high awareness score (2.41) shows its strong regional influence, particularly in South India, where the brand resonates well with consumers seeking traditional flavours.

➤ **Noodles**

Maggi leads in the noodle category, with a high score (2.70) suggesting it is a consumer favourite.

➤ **Rice varieties**

Sakthi is the top performer, with a higher score (2.55) indicating good consumer acceptance.

➤ **Masala Power**

Sakthi again performs well, leading in the masala powders the highest awareness score of 2.64, indicating it is the most recognized brand among consumers.

➤ **Gravy Powder/Paste**

The brand MTR has the highest mean score of 2.47, suggesting it is the most recognized or well-known brand among respondents. This could be due to factors like effective marketing, wide availability, or perceived quality.

➤ **Pickle**

Achi emerges as the leader in pickle awareness, with a score of (2.70).

(II) Level of Agreeability towards the Reason for Preferring Instant Food Products:

Strongest Reasons for Preference

- Taste/Aroma (4.49) is the most significant factor influencing consumers' preference for instant food products, with 55.86% highly agreeing.
- Convenience for working individuals (4.21) and Saves cooking time (4.21) are also highly rated; indicating that time-saving and convenience play a major role.
- Readily available for cooking (4.13) and Useful at the time of emergency (4.08) further reinforce the demand of instant food for its accessibility and utility.

Moderately Important Reasons

- Useful during long travel (3.90) and easily available in nearby shops (3.82) indicate that availability and portability contribute to the popularity of instant food.
- Relief from burdensome cooking (3.70) and Helpful to prepare a variety of food items (3.65) suggest that consumers value instant food for reducing effort and providing variety.
- Saves cost of labor (3.60) and Saves cost of fuel (3.56) show that some consumers associate instant food with cost-effectiveness.

Low Important Reasons

- Nutritive value (3.52) received a lower rating, indicating that consumers do not prioritize nutrition as a primary reason for consuming instant food.
- Lifestyle (3.46) suggests that instant food consumption is moderately influenced by lifestyle choices.
- Influence of advertisement/brand ambassador (3.41) and Influence of family members/friends (3.38) indicate that social and media influences have a lesser impact compared to convenience and taste.
- The lowest-rated reason is Influence of family members/friends (3.38), suggesting that personal preference and convenience are stronger drivers than social influence.

(III) Association of Select Variables with Level of Preference of branded Instant Food Products:

Out of the twenty-one selected variables, five variables namely food habit (self), frequency of consumption, place of preference, amount spent per month and nature of purchase decision are found to be significant at the 1% level.

Suggestion

To widen their market reach, top brands must consider regional preferences joined with great marketing efforts, at the same time as lesser-known brands must work on visibility and promotional efforts. With convenience and taste serving as key elements for consumers, marketing and advertising should emphasize these factors. In light of the concern for nutrition, brands can offer healthier choices, such as fortified or non-preserved products. In light of the influence of eating habits, frequency of intake, and associated

expenditure on preferences, brands must implement value-based pricing, promotional pricing, and wider distribution at retail outlets. Consumer engagement via social media, influencer campaigns, and loyalty offers help foster stronger relationships with consumers. With the matching of preferences and increased access, brands offering instant food products will increase sales and loyalty.

Conclusion

Consumer preference for branded instant food products is influenced by various factors; including convenience, brand reputation, quality, and taste, price, and health considerations. Modern lifestyles, characterized by busy schedules and a demand for quick meal solutions, have significantly contributed to the growth of the instant food market. Consumers tend to prefer well-established brands that ensure consistency in taste and quality while also offering a variety of choices. Additionally, health-conscious consumers are increasingly looking for products with natural ingredients, low preservatives, and nutritional benefits, leading brands to innovate and introduce healthier options. Marketing strategies, including attractive packaging, promotional offers, and digital advertising, also play a crucial role in shaping consumer buying behavior. Overall, branded instant food products continue to dominate the market due to their reliability, taste, and ease of preparation.

References

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