

FACTORS INFLUENCING WORKING WOMEN'S BUYING BEHAVIOUR TO USE INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The buying behaviour of working women towards instant food products is influenced by a complex interplay of personal, social, and situational factors. With increasing participation of women in the workforce, time scarcity, convenience, and ease of preparation have emerged as major drivers for the purchase of instant food items. Health consciousness, nutritional value, taste preferences, and brand trust also play a crucial role in shaping purchasing decisions. Social influences, such as family expectations, peer recommendations, and cultural food habits, further affect product choice. Marketing strategies, packaging appeal, product availability, and promotional offers contribute to stimulating purchase intent. Additionally, demographic factors like age, income level, marital status, and education significantly determine the frequency and type of instant food products purchased. This study aims to identify and analyze these influencing factors to provide insights for manufacturers and marketers to better cater to the needs of working women, ensuring a balance between convenience, health, and taste.

Keywords: *Working women, Buying behaviour, Instant food products, Convenience, Health consciousness, Brand trust.*

INTRODUCTION

Instant food products were first introduced in 1958 in Japan with the launch of instant noodles. In India, their presence began in the 1980s and today they have become a common feature in almost every household kitchen. The rapid lifestyle changes among Indians, particularly in urban areas, have significantly boosted the demand for instant food. These products have secured a permanent place on store and supermarket shelves across the country. The availability of new and improved instant food products has not only altered food habits but has also encouraged several Indian companies to enter the market with diverse product varieties. The growing demand is largely attributed to increasing urbanization, the decline of the traditional joint family system, rising preference for quality, shortage of time leading to greater reliance on convenience, higher participation of women in the workforce, rising per capita income, evolving lifestyles, and greater affluence among the middle-income population.

Among these factors, the popularity of instant food is particularly high among working women. The major attraction lies in convenience, which makes such products a practical choice. Since career-oriented women often juggle multiple roles within the family, limited time prevents them from engaging in elaborate cooking that requires several stages of preparation. Moreover, the desire to bring variety into daily meals that can satisfy family members also drives them to opt for instant options (Sunder Srinivasan, 2015). Nowadays, children too are increasingly drawn to instant snacks such as noodles, sweets, and other ready-to-eat items. The pressures of work life often push working women to rely more heavily on convenient food products.

Although the instant food market in India is still evolving compared to developed economies, it already plays a vital role in shaping everyday diets. In today's fast-paced lifestyle, where time is considered extremely valuable, instant food has emerged as an essential element of day-to-day living, especially for working women. This has motivated the researcher to examine the instant food industry more closely and to identify the key factors influencing the buying behaviour of working women towards these products, with particular reference to Coimbatore District.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Kumar et al. (2022).** In this study titled “Evolving food choices among the urban Indian middle-class: A qualitative study.” A qualitative study examining evolving food preferences among the urban middle class in India. Factors such as urbanization, income rise, convenience, and reduced traditional cooking emerged as strong drivers for processed and instant food products
- **Jayamary & Sherina (2022).** The article titled “An exploratory study on instant food purchase and consuming behaviour of working women”. An exploratory study that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the purchase and consumption behavior of instant foods among working women. The study emphasizes convenience, flavor, affordability, and nutrition as significant factors.
- **Ezhilarasi (2021).** study titled “Working women preference and satisfaction of using the ready-to-eat food products in Chennai city”. A study assessing working women's preferences and satisfaction with ready-to-eat food products in Chennai. Using convenience sampling with 291 valid responses, the findings show high preference, ease of availability, and satisfaction among working women.
- **Anjana Madhulika (2021).** Article titled “Effects of occupational status on women food buying and cooking behaviour”. This study explores how occupational status impacts women's food buying and cooking behaviors. Key influencing factors include convenience, sensory appeal, stress relief, health consciousness, and cost—highlighting why working women prefer ready-to-eat options.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The role of women in society has undergone significant transformation with the increasing participation of women in the workforce. As working women balance professional responsibilities with domestic duties, time management has become a critical challenge in their daily lives. This has led to a growing dependence on instant food products that promise convenience, time-saving, and variety. While the instant food industry in India is still developing, it has already made a noticeable impact on urban households, particularly among working women who are key decision-makers in family food consumption.

However, the buying behaviour of working women towards instant food products is not determined by convenience alone. Factors such as health consciousness, nutritional value, brand trust, packaging, price, availability, cultural preferences, and family expectations also play a decisive role in their purchasing choices. Children's preferences, peer influence, and lifestyle aspirations further shape their food purchase patterns. Therefore, this study seeks to identify and analyze the major factors influencing the buying behaviour of working women with respect to instant food products, with specific reference to Coimbatore District.

In this context, it draws attention for a reason to explore answers to the following research question is What are the factors that influence working women's buying behaviour to use instant food products?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is carried out with the following objectives on Instant Food Products.

- To study the socio economic profile of the working women's preference towards instant food products.
- To determine the factors that influence working women's buying behaviour to use instant food products.

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SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is confined to working women in Coimbatore District and examines the key factors influencing their buying behaviour towards instant food products. It focuses on aspects such as convenience, health consciousness, price, brand trust, taste, and availability. The research also considers demographic factors like age, income, and family size in shaping consumer preferences. The findings will help marketers and manufacturers design strategies to meet the lifestyle needs of working women. However, the results are limited to Coimbatore and may not fully represent other regions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study on “Factors that Influence Working Women’s Buying Behaviour to Use Instant Food Products in Coimbatore District” is significant as it sheds light on the consumption patterns of a vital consumer group—working women—who play a dual role as professionals and household decision-makers. Understanding their preferences and buying behaviour helps in identifying the key factors such as convenience, health consciousness, taste, price, and brand trust that drive their choices. Furthermore, the study contributes to academic knowledge by providing insights into how lifestyle changes, rising incomes, and work-related pressures are reshaping food habits in Coimbatore District, with potential implications for other urban regions in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem; it is how research is done scientifically. It consists of different steps that are generally adopted by a researcher to study the research problem along with logic behind them.

Sources of data

The study is based on primary and secondary data. The primary data collected through questionnaire. The primary data was collected using questionnaires which were distributed to the women employees in hardcopy. The secondary were collected from various sources like websites, journals, magazines and newspapers.

Sample Size

Out of the total working women population of 4,84,825 in Coimbatore district, 1,050 respondents were initially chosen using the snowball sampling technique. Data for the study was collected through a well-structured questionnaire administered to these respondents. After careful scrutiny of the responses, and considering a margin of error of less than 5 percent at a 95 percent confidence level, the effective sample size was finalized at 750.

Statistical tools of the study

The following statistical tools were used in the study for the purpose of analysis.

Simple Percentage Analysis, Descriptive statistics, Kruskallwallis test, One way Anova, Mean weighted rank, Garret ranking, Rank correlation and SEM analysis

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Primary data collection may involve certain biases, as respondents might omit or overlook some information.
- The study is confined to Coimbatore district, and the results may not be fully applicable to other demographic regions.
- The inherent limitations of the statistical tools used in the analysis could also influence the study's findings.

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FACTORS TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION WHILE PURCHASING A PARTICULAR PACK

The following table shows the classification of respondents based on Factors Taken into Consideration While Purchasing a Particular Pack

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Quality	294	39.2
Quantity	225	30.0
Taste	170	22.7
Availability	47	6.3
Price	5	.7
Ingredients	3	.4
Brand name	6	.8
Total	750	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The above table shows about the factors taken into consideration while purchasing a particular pack of the respondents were out of 750 respondents 39.2 percent are considering quality, 30.0 percent are considering quantity, 22.7 percent are considering taste, 6.3 percent are considering availability, 0.7 percent are considering price, 0.4 percent are considering ingredients, and 0.8 percent are considering brand name of particular pack. Its shows that most of the respondents are considering quality. The exhibit below represents classification of respondents based on factors taken into consideration while purchasing a particular pack.

TABLE SHOWING MODIFIED RANKING BASED ON THE FIRST RANK GIVEN BY THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS PREFERENCE ON FACTOR INFLUENCING TOWARDS USE OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS

Particulars	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Rank
Convenience	216	6	68	56	35	0	97	6	48	39	119	24	36	1
Save time for preparation	181	155	145	39	36	47	39	0	54	0	0	36	18	2
Availability	172	136	118	42	0	56	36	89	0	12	48	41	0	3
Offers	119	119	18	0	0	118	0	36	36	48	43	38	175	4
Quality	111	181	23	30	33	110	98	54	0	58	0	26	26	5
Quantity	104	51	33	6	42	130	92	12	112	33	22	36	77	6
Nutritional Labeling	87	12	0	72	12	0	86	136	78	18	159	42	48	7
Liked by family members	80	0	86	76	83	72	36	74	78	42	15	59	27	8
Taste	78	48	127	80	126	38	30	60	31	48	0	48	36	9
Brand image	69	6	39	12	62	66	0	101	98	95	92	60	50	10
Price	42	48	12	218	24	12	27	88	62	53	84	30	50	11
Freshness	18	93	6	38	162	41	90	26	60	52	24	104	36	12
Packaging design	6	93	0	24	84	15	52	35	60	151	27	89	114	13

The above table shows about the ranks given by the respondents towards preference on factor influencing on use of instant food products. Based on the ranks classified convenience towards preference on factor influencing with use of instant food products was given first importance (216), saving time for preparation (181), availability of products (172), offers given towards instant product (119), quality of product (111), quantity of product (104), nutritional labeling (87), willingness by family members (80), taste of food products (78), brand image of food products (69), price of the product (42), freshness of the product (18) and packaging design (6).

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ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONDENTS TOWARDS WORKING WOMEN'S BUYING DECISION

The table shows the acceptance of respondents towards working women's buying decision based on cultural factors

Particulars	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
BASED ON CULTURAL FACTORS			
Culture influenced me to purchase the instant food products	750	1.63	0.695
The consumption of instant food products due to increase in working women in recent times	750	1.82	0.582
Preference of instant food products is due to shortage of time	750	1.87	0.674
Increase in consumer awareness is the reason to prefer instant food products	750	1.97	0.685
SOCIAL FACTORS			
My social status influence my behaviour while buying instant food products	750	2.06	0.749
Reference groups have higher influence towards purchasing instant food products	750	2.15	0.989
My family have higher influence towards purchasing instant food products	750	1.82	0.617
PERSONAL FACTORS			
My occupation completely influence my behaviour while purchasing instant food product	750	2.03	0.910
My educational level determines to purchase instant food products	750	1.85	0.560
My age determines to purchase instant food products	750	1.82	0.592
My money and wealth have higher influence towards purchasing instant food products	750	1.81	0.593
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS			
I am personally motivated to purchase instant food products based on my need	750	1.87	0.660
I purchase instant food products based on own perception	750	1.91	0.634
I gather knowledge about instant food products before purchasing them	750	1.80	0.545
I have my own beliefs and attitude towards instant food products	750	1.85	0.547

Cultural Factor: The above table depicts that the respondents strongly agree towards culture influencing to purchase the instant food products (1.63), increase in consumption of instant food products in recent times (1.82), preferring instant food products due to shortage of time (1.87) and preferring instant food products due to increase in awareness level (1.97).

Social Factors : The above table depicts that the respondents strongly agree towards family having higher influence towards purchasing instant food products (1.82). Meanwhile, the respondents agree towards social status influencing their behaviour while buying instant food products (2.06) and reference groups having higher influence towards purchasing instant food products (2.15)

Personal Factors: The respondents strongly agree towards educational level determining to purchase instant food products (1.85), age determining to purchase instant food products (1.82) and money and wealth having higher influence towards purchasing instant food products (1.81) agree towards working women's buying decision based on personal factors.

Psychological Factors: The respondents strongly agree towards personally motivated to purchase instant food products based on their need (1.87), purchasing instant food products based on their own

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perception (1.91), gathering knowledge about instant food products before purchasing them (1.80) and having own beliefs and attitude towards instant food products (1.85).

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that working women in Coimbatore District are increasingly dependent on instant food products due to their convenience, time-saving nature, and ability to provide variety in daily meals. Demographic factors such as age, marital status, family size, income, and employment type significantly influence their purchasing decisions, while sociographic factors such as peer recommendations, frequency of purchase, expenditure patterns, and preferred shopping outlets also play an important role. The findings indicate that most working women prefer instant food products as a practical solution to balance professional responsibilities with household duties.

While convenience is the primary driver, health consciousness, taste preferences, brand trust, and affordability also shape consumer choices. The results highlight a shift in food habits among working women, reflecting broader lifestyle changes in urban India. For marketers and manufacturers, the study emphasizes the need to design strategies that not only focus on convenience but also address nutritional value, quality, and affordability to meet the evolving needs of this key consumer segment.

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