A STUDY ON CONSUMERS’ BUYING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS IN COIMBATORE

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ABSTRACT

The study is an attempt to analyze the existing buying behaviour of Instant Food Products by individual households and to predict the demand for Instant Food Products in Coimbatore. The results of the research reveals that all the respondents were aware of Pickles and Sambar Masala but only less percentage were aware of Dosa / Idli Mix. About 96.11 percent consumers of Dosa / Idli mix and more than half of consumers of Pickles and Sambar Masala prepared their own. The major reason for non-consumption of Instant Food Products is because these respondents produce their products at less cost and with better taste. These Instants food Products are normally consumed as they are readily available and some time to save considerable extent the time to prepare. Retail shops are the major source of information and source of purchase of Instant Food Products. The average monthly expenditure on Instant Food Products was found to be highest in higher income groups.

Key words: Instant food products, Buying Behavior, Dosa / Idli mix.
INTRODUCTION

The word 'food' refers to the chemical substances consumed by individuals in order to keep their body in a healthy and active condition. The body requires food for growth, repair and replacement of its worn-out tissues. Hence, food has to provide the required raw material, energy and other regulating substances, like vitamins and for the smooth functioning of the body, besides meeting the calorific requirements like carbohydrates, proteins, fats, etc., India is the world’s second largest producer of food next to China and deemed to be potential of being biggest industry with food and agricultural sector contributing 26 per cent to Indian GDP. It has the capacity of producing over 600 million tons of food products every year; it is likely to be doubled in next ten years. Food and Food Products accounts for the largest share of consumer spending, with 53 per cent of the value of final private consumption. This share is significantly higher than in developed economies, where food and food products account for about 20 per cent of consumer spending (www.tata.com). The average monthly per-capita consumer expenditure (MPCE) was Rs. 511 for rural India, which comprised of Rs.305 for food and Rs. 206 for non-food commodities. For urban population, it is Rs. 1060, which comprised of Rs.441 for food and Rs. 619 for non-food items. There was a decline in the share of food in total expenditure that is 54 per cent in rural areas compared to 64 per cent in 1987-88 and 42 per cent in urban areas compared to 56 percent during 1987-88 (National Sample Survey Organization, GOI).

In India, majority of food consumption is still at home. Nevertheless, out-of-home food consumption is increasing due to increase in urbanization, breaking up of the traditional joint family system, desire for quality, time which translates into an increased need for convenience, increasing number of working women, rise in per capita income, changing lifestyles and increasing level of affluence in the middle income group had brought about changes in food habits. In the last two decades, the share of urban population has increased from 23.3 per cent in 1981 to 27.8 percent in 2001. During the same period the female work participation rate had increased from 19.7 to 25.7 per cent. The per capita income increased from Rs.7, 328 in 1980-81 to Rs.10,306 in 2000-2001. The change in food habits was evident from the growth of food processing industries.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ali M (1992) discussed in his study that to create awareness of high fat content of pies, studied consumer and producer awareness about nutrition labeling on packaging. For this, seven leading pie brands were analyzed for fat content and are ranged from 7.1 to 19.2% fat. Potato topped or cottage pies had the lowest fat content (7.1-9.2% fat). Most pies did not
display nutritional labeling on packaging. Over half of the consumers (52%) who responded to the survey (42% response rate) were aware of the campaign. The study was successful at raising consumer awareness about the high fat content of pies and influencing the food environment with a greater availability of lower fat pies. It is possible to produce acceptable lower fat pies and food companies should be encouraged to make small changes to the fat content of food products like pies. Potato topped pies are lower in fat and are widely available. Regular pie eaters could be encouraged to select these as a lower fat option. Amitha (1998) deals in her study that there is complete agreement between ranking given by the housewives and working women regarding the reasons promoting them to buy Instant food products. Age, occupation, education, family size and annual income had much influence on the per capita expenditure of the Instant food products. Banumathy and Hemameena, M (2006) discussed in their study on brand preference of soft drinks in rural Tamil Nadu that using Garrets ranking technique, to rank factors influencing the soft drinks preferred by rural consumer. They found that, the product quality was ranked as first, followed by retail price. Good quality and availability were the main factors, which influenced the rural consumers of a particular brand of a product. Bristow. D. N, Schneider. K. C., and Schuler. D. K., (2002) discussed in their study that the change in consumption pattern was due to changes in food habits. If income and urbanization increase among consumers, the percentage of income spent on consumption increases. The urban consumers’ preferred mostly branded products compared to rural consumers. The most significant factors influencing buying decisions were accessibility, quality, regular supply, door delivery and the mode of payment.

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

Coimbatore city is one of the major cities in Tamil Nadu. The major consumers in the study area are highly influenced by ever changing environment of the city. Hence, most of the consumers of the study area are adopting the consumption habits of the metropolitan consumers. Therefore, considering the growing market and popularity of instant food products in the area, an attempt was made to study the buying behaviour of consumers towards Instant Food Products. Based on less cost and frequent use of instant food products, the products such as Dosa / Idli mix, pickles and Sambar Masala were selected after discussion with the local consumers of the study area about the consumption of instant food products, which are either homemade or purchased from the market and the marketers as well as about the brands available and preferred in the study area.

To study the buying behavior of consumers towards instant food products, multistage random sampling technique was adopted. In the initial stage,
Coimbatore city was selected to the researcher. In the second stage, three areas of the city were selected based on population as high, medium and low population. In the next stage, were selected major areas i.e. R. S. Puram, Peelamedu and Ukkadam to collect information about buying behavior of the consumers in the urban markets. Finally, 60 consumers from each area were selected randomly totally accounting to 180 samples. The secondary data on location, demography and other details about the study area were collected from city statistical office and other records and journals.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### TABLE No. 1 - INCOME WISE DISTRIBUTIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS OF COIMBATORE CITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSEHOLDS INCOME / MONTH</th>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>OVERALL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R.S.PURAM (n=60)</td>
<td>PEELAMEDU (n=60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Rs.10,000 (IG1)</td>
<td>15 (25.00)</td>
<td>16 (26.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs.10,001 to 15,000 (IG2)</td>
<td>21 (35.00)</td>
<td>19 (31.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs.15,001 to 20,000 (IG3)</td>
<td>16 (26.67)</td>
<td>19 (31.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Rs.20,000 (IG4)</td>
<td>8 (13.33)</td>
<td>6 (10.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Income-wise distribution of sample households is presented in Table 1. Respondents with monthly income of less than Rs. 10,000 were considered to belong to Income Group 1 (IG1), those with income group between Rs. 10,001 and Rs. 15,000 were classified into Income Group 2 (IG2), those with income of Rs. 15,001 to Rs.20,000 were grouped as Income Group 3 (IG3) and finally those with income of more than Rs. 20,000 were categorized as Income Group (IG4). Accordingly, the proportion of household respondents in IG1, IG2, IG3 and IG4 was 25 per cent, 35 per cent, 26.67 per cent and 13.33 per cent respectively, in R. S. Puram area. In Peelamedu area, this proportion was 26.67 per cent, 31.67 per cent each and 10 per cent in IG1, IG2 and IG3 and IG4 respectively. Whereas in the case of Ukkadam, the proportion was 25 per cent in IG1, 40 per cent in IG2, 28.33 per cent in IG3 and 6.67 per cent in IG4. However, at an overall the proportion of respondents in IG1, IG2, IG3 and IG4 was 25.56 per cent (46 in number), 35.56 per cent (64 in number), 28.89 per cent (52 in number) and 10 per cent (18 in number), respectively.
It was evident from Table 2 that the awareness of consumers about Instant food products across different income groups, about 66.67 per cent, 56.67 per cent and 46.67 per cent of the respondents of R. S. Puram, Peelamedu and Ukkadam areas were aware of the Dosa / Idli mix products availability in the market. However, on the overall, among different income groups, very small per cent of the respondents in IG3 (22.78 per cent) followed by 17.22 per cent in IG2, 8.89 per cent in IG1 and 7.78 per cent in IG4 were aware of this product availability in the market. It is because of the reason that in almost all the rural areas, the Dosa / Idli mix was prepared by their own, and the same reason may hold good in this area also. In case of pickles and Sambar Masala, cent per cent of the respondents in all the areas and across income groups were aware about these selected instant food products.
products due to their common and traditional usage of these products.

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMPTION OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS.

TABLE 3: REASONS FOR NOT PURCHASING THE INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. NO.</th>
<th>REASONS</th>
<th>DOSA/IDLI MIX</th>
<th>PICKLES</th>
<th>SAMBAR MASALA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low cost of product</td>
<td>120 (66.67)</td>
<td>85 (47.22)</td>
<td>100 (55.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Differences in tastes (between prepared and purchased)</td>
<td>95 (52.78)</td>
<td>98 (54.44)</td>
<td>98 (54.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dislike of purchased product by family members</td>
<td>75 (41.67)</td>
<td>94 (52.22)</td>
<td>88 (48.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>High price of market product</td>
<td>165 (91.67)</td>
<td>95 (52.78)</td>
<td>75 (41.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lack of awareness of products availability in market</td>
<td>20 (11.11)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Non-availability of Instant food Products</td>
<td>35 (19.44)</td>
<td>20 (11.11)</td>
<td>35 (19.44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages to the number of respondents

It was revealed from the Table 3 that 66.67 per cent, 47.22 per cent and 55.56 per cent of respondents of Dosa/Idli mix; Pickles and Sambar Masala respectively were not purchased these products because of their low cost of preparation. Differences in taste between homemade and purchased product was the reason for not using Dosa/Idli mix, pickles and Sambar Masala by 52.78 per cent and 54.44 per cent each of the consumers. About 41.67 per cent, 52.22 per cent and 48.89 per cent of respondents were not purchased these products because of disliking by their family members. High price was the reason for not consuming the same products by 91.67 per cent, 52.78 per cent and 41.67 per cent of respondents accordingly. Dosa/Idli mix, pickles and Sambar Masala were not purchased due to non-availability of these products by 19.44 per cent, 11.11 per cent and 19.44 per cent of the respondents, respectively. And only 11.11 per cent of consumers were not purchasing Dosa/Idli mix due to lack of awareness about the product availability in market.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The important findings of the study are summarized and suitable conclusions are drawn and presented below.

The general characteristics of the 180 households revealed that majority (35.56 per cent) of households belonged to income groups IG2, while IG3 comprised of 28.89 percent households followed by
IG1 (25.56 per cent) and IG4 (10 per cent) in the study area.

The average family size varied from 3 to 6 members and the average age of the respondents varied from 30 years to 40 years and majority of the households were nuclear families, in selected areas of the Coimbatore city. Classification of households according to their food habit revealed that more than 80 per cent of IG1 and IG4 respondents and more than 75 per cent of IG2 and IG3 were non-vegetarians and remaining were vegetarians in of R.S. Puram, Peelamedu and Ukkadam areas.

The awareness of consumers about Instant food products across different income groups in different areas of the Coimbatore city showed that, small proportion of the respondents in IG3 (22.78 per cent) were aware of Dosa/Idli mix product in the market followed by 17.22 per cent in IG2, 8.89 per cent in IG1 and 7.78 per cent in IG4. In case of pickles and Sambar Masala, cent per cent of the respondents in all the areas were aware of these two instant food products.

The user categories of different Instant food products across different income groups in the study area presented that in case of Dosa/Idli mix, majority (96.11 per cent) of respondents prepared Dosa/Idli mix in their home only.

Reasons for not purchasing the Dosa/Idli mix, Pickles and Sambar Masala by the respondents were low cost of preparation (66.67 per cent, 47.22 per cent and 55.56 per cent of respondents of respectively), Differences in tastes between homemade and purchased product (52.78 per cent of the consumers, whereas 54.44 per cent each), disliking of these products by their family members (41.67 per cent, 52.22 per cent and 48.89 per cent), High price (91.67 per cent, 52.78 per cent and 41.67 per cent) and non-availability of these products in the area (19.44 per cent, 11.11 per cent and 19.44 per cent).

REFERENCES


Chen, A., 2001, Using free association to examine the relationship between the characteristics of brand associations


