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A STUDY ON CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS READY-TO-EAT FOOD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLLEGE STUDENTS IN VIRUDHUNAGAR DISTRICT.

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Abstract

Ready to eat (RTE) food is also known as ‘Convenience Food’ or ‘Easily Prepared Food’. In order to enhance the easiness of feasting; it is equipped; majorly through processing. This type of food is generally ready to consume without any more preparation. It can be easily transported, or it may have a long shelf life or may also offer a blend of such convenient characters. The term RTE is seldom applied to them; as the restaurant food meets the same definition. RTE foods comprise of convenience dried products, frozen foods such as only to fry starters, cake mix, and shelf-stable foods and snack foods. These foods are such that mostly need not be cooked; they either just need to be fried or heated. People store these on pantry shelf or in the refrigerator or freezer, until they are ready to use them. Although RTE food is convenient, some require special handling to ensure food safety.

Key words: Convenience Foods, Taste, Precooked items and Nutrition.

INTRODUCTION:

India has one of the best street food cultures on this planet, hands down. But when it comes to Health and Hygiene, meh. You are a working professional and crave for food, what you prefer “cooking” which takes your lots of time and what if you are a bad cook. So what next! RTE that is Ready- to- Eat Food. The Ready-to-eat products market in India is growing due to several reasons including the increase of working women in the country, busy schedules and companies providing a range of products to make people eat more. RTE food industry comprises companies that manufacture foods that can be eaten instantly and the foods that do not require any additional cooking or ingredients upon opening. Ready to eat foods are packaged in airtight sealed solutions and are manufactured to last fresh for long time in packed lunches, frozen food, home meal replacements, ready meals and more. Frozen food is an alternative to fresh, canned and cooked foods, which is most dynamic and largest sectors of the food industry. The major factor driving the growth of the frozen food market is convenience.

History of Ready-to-Eat food:

India is most versatile when it comes to food but when it comes to ready to eat food market it is certainly behind of many of the developed nation. Instead of saying “ready to eat” it will more correctly to say ready to cook. Although the ready to eat (RTE) food category was first introduced in India in 1987, it was not well received by Indian consumers due to the dependence on traditional cooking. In the early 2000s, with the advent of new technology that improved the shelf life of products and the growth of storage and distribution centers, RTE products began to gain popularity. Several segments were introduced in the industry resulting in an increase in

product differentiation. One of these segments was developed by using retort technology, and came to be known as the heat and eat food industry.

Maggi no doubt one of the most famous brand in India, “Maggi” is synonymous with instant noodles, and had 90% market share in India prior to a nationwide ban by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. Following the ban, the market share was reduced to 53% in India.

According to data research company Nielsen, the breakfast mixes market is growing at 17% and is currently pegged at Rs 275 crore. The RTE meals market is currently valued at Rs 23 crore. It grew at a compounded annual growth rate of 3–5% in the last five years. India is a formula one market; it’s the engine of growth of the world, so chances are there to be a growth rate of 10%.

TYPES OF READY-TO-EAT FOOD:

Vegetarian Food	Non-Vegetarian Food
Alloo Matar	Chicken Curry
Palak Paneer	Butter Chicken
Sarso Ka Sang	Karahi Chicken
Chana Masala	Mughalai Chicken
Kadi Pakora	Mutton Masala
Cheese Tomato	Mutton Korma
Dal Makhani	Karahi Mutton
Rajma Masala	Mutton Biryani
Pav Bhaji	Tandoori Tikka

RATIONALE OF RESEARCH

Ready-to-Eat food has created a lot of buzz in the market. RTE is used by a lot of different people be it soldiers, navy forces, astronauts, single men, working women, students staying abroad etc. and the list is endless. A single type of product used by numerous different set of people gained a lot of market attention. There are several people who depend on RTE food packets for their daily meals.

During the course of research the researcher has come across a lot of pros and cons regarding the Ready-to-Eat food packets. Post 2010, we have seen a rise in the number of people who have started focusing more on their health due to the rise in the number of chronic diseases. This proved to be a major hit for the RTE food industry and even for the people who were dependent on them. The target customers are trying to find healthy alternatives to RTE food packets. A health nutritionist Cynthia Sass suggested five alternatives to frozen food packets.

Purchase of Salads from a super market: According to Cynthia freshly cut salads would be a better option to choose than the preservatives filled frozen food packet.

Fast Casual Meals: There are a lot of casual fast meals which are available in the market like hot dogs, sausages, cottage cheese rolls, burgers, and chipotle salads etc. which are freshly made and are a better choice for a meal than RTE food packets.

Pack a Meal: The nutritionists also suggests an option of packing a dry meal like all cut vegetables in a zip lock bag with a little olive oil and just mix it when you need to eat it.

Smoothies and Shakes: These are not just meant for breakfast; fresh fruit juices and shakes can be had for a meal as well. This would be a very healthy and a balanced meal than the one filled with preservatives.

Make a Meal ahead of Time: There are many of us who are comparatively free on weekends rather than weekdays. We can cook our whole week meals and freeze it in our freezer and keep it ready day wise. This is a way much better alternative as we have cooked it by our self and we exactly know what are the ingredients used as compared to the RTE food packets; where we are unaware of the ingredients used in the packet.

The researcher’s husband is a sea fearer and most of the days they need to rely on RTE food packets as fresh foods are not possible each and every day. To understand their point of view on

the same the researcher undertook this topic. There is a lot of time and energy saving which the RTE food provides and hence they are also known as Convenience Foods.

Along with knowing the objective of undertaking this research topic, the researcher has to be aware about the problem which the society faces at large. The research carried out by the researcher should try to solve the issues which are prevalent in the society regarding RTE food products. The next sector would state the problems which the people face for RTE food products.

Features of Ready-to-Eat Food:

Cooking not required: In most of the RTE food there is no need to cook. For this reason such types of food are famous. As they do not require any cooking procedure; it saves a lot of time and efforts.

Long shelf life: This is one of the important characteristic of RTE food. Freshly cooked food gets spoilt in a day or two. But the RTE packets stay for a long time until removed from the pack (due to the preservatives). Further, it is also to be noted that every RTE pack also has an expiry date which is mentioned on the packet of the RTE, depending upon the ingredients added.

Shelf-stable convenience foods are further categorized as:

Ready-to-Eat (RTE) and Ready-To-Serve (RTS) food – example: Dosas, idlis batter, pav bhaji, meat products like pre-cooked ham, sausages, chicken products, curry gravies (vindaloo, palak paneer), rice, vegetables like aloo chole, navratan kurma, channa masala, chapattis etc.

Ready-to-Cook food – example: instant mixes like kulfi mix, cake mixes, gulab-jamun mix, falooda mix, ice cream mix, jelly mix, pudding mix etc., pasta products like macaroni, noodles, vermicelli etc.

No further preparation: Most of the time no further preparation is required and can be directly consumed. But there are some RTE foods which either need hot water or do require little preparation time.

Portable: Unlike freshly cooked food, which is difficult to move from one place to another; RTE is easily portable. This feature is very useful when food is required while travelling or picnics (which almost gives taste of home-made food).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In today's fast-paced world, ready-to-eat (RTE) food products have gained significant popularity, especially among college students who often have limited time for meal preparation. The increasing academic work load, changing life style patterns and the influence of urbanization have contributed to the growing consumption of the convenience foods. However, despite the convenience they offer, concerns related to health, nutrition, affordability and taste preferences influence consumer attitudes towards RTE food.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the consumer attitudes of the college students towards Ready-to-Eat foods.
- To measure the consumer's satisfaction level of the Ready-to-Eat foods.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research it defined as a "systematized efforts to gain a new knowledge" research methodology is way to systematic solve the problem. Research methodology generally refers to the systematic procedure carried out in any project of suitable classification and service of the different of the study as to the objective, scope and limitations of the study. Research methodology describes how the research study was undertaken. This includes the specifications of research design, sampling design and sample size, methods of data collection and tools for analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN:

The research design used in this project by researcher is the descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is adopted for analysis the data. A descriptive study is undertaken in order to ascertain and describe the characteristics of the variables related to the study.

SAMPLING DESIGN

SAMPLE SIZE

For this present study, data has been collected from 60 college students in Virudhunagar District Only.

DATA METHODS OF COLLECTION

The data collected in two ways.

- Primary data
- Secondary data

Primary Data:

The Primary Data are those which are collected as fresh and for the first time and thus happen to be original in character. The researcher here used the questionnaire, which includes open ended and multiple choice questions.

Secondary Data:

Secondary Data are those which are collected for some earlier research work and are applicable in the study the Researcher has presently undertaken. The secondary data has also collected from various journals, websites and books.

COMPANIES SELLING READY-TO-EAT OR READY-TO-COOK FOOD PRODUCTS

There are many brands available in India which offers ready to eat food. You can have noodles, soup, sabji, dhal paste, sambhar, idlibatter and much more. Currently, there are many Indian and Foreign companies selling RTE food products. Below is the top fifteen list of RTE companies in India.

Mavalli Tiffin Room (MTR):

The Mavalli Tiffin Room is the brand name of a food related enterprise in India. Having its origin as a humble mess located on Lalbagh Road in Bangalore, it has ten other branches in Bangalore, as well as one in each of Udupi, Mysore, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, London, Bellevue and Dubai. MTR created the South Indian breakfast item, Rava Idli. While the packaged foods division was acquired by Orkla of Norway, the MTR chain of restaurants continues to be run by the original family that started it. The Mavalli Tiffin Room was founded as a restaurant by Parampalli Yagnanarayana Maiya and his brothers in the year 1924. In the 1970s, when India was under emergency, a Food Control Act was introduced in 1975 which mandated that food was to be sold at very low prices. This move made it difficult for MTR to maintain high standards in its restaurant business and forced it to diversify into the instant food businesses, selling ready-to-eat snacks such as chutneys and rasams. Since then, MTR has expanded and diversified, with MTR Department Stores opened next to the restaurant. Currently, the MTR brand represents two separate entities; the Mavalli Tiffin Room restaurant business and MTR Foods, the pre-packaged food business.

Haldiram's:

Haldiram Snacks Food Pvt. Ltd., doing business as Haldiram's is an Indian multinational fast-food restaurant chain, founded in 1937, as a confectionery and deserts shop in Bikaner, Rajasthan, by Ganga Bhishen Agarwal. It is currently based in Noida. Haldiram's is also a FMCG company as most of its restaurants have a integrated retail section, where packaged Indian Snacks and confectioneries are sold under its own brand. In order to drive expansion, the company's first manufacturing plant was started in Calcutta (now Kolkata). In 1970, a larger manufacturing plant was established in Jaipur. Another manufacturing plant was established in New Delhi in the early 1990s. In 2003, the company began the process of developing convenience foods to be marketed to consumers. In 2014, Haldiram's was ranked 55th among India's most trusted brands according to the Brand Trust Report; a study conducted by Trust Research Advisory. In 2017, the company was named the country's largest snack company. In 2022, it was announced that the packaged snacks businesses of Delhi-based Haldiram Snacks and Nagpur-based Haldiram Foods International would be first demerged and then merged into an entity named Haldiram Snacks Food. Delhi based brothers Manohar and Madhusudan Agarwal obtained a 56% stake of the merged entity, while Nagpur-based Shiv Kishan Agarwal received the remaining 44%. **South Indian breakfast at Haldiram's restaurant, Gurgaon.**

Haldiram’s has over 410 products. Its product range includes traditional namkeens, western snacks, Indian traditional and contemporary sweets, cookies, sherbets, and pickles. Products such as gulab jamun and Bikaner bhujia and papadam are popular. The company also produces ready-to-eat food products. In the 1990s, the production of potato-based foods was enabled by the importation of machinery from United States designed of these purposes. Haldiram’s products are marketed at various retail locations such as bakeries and confectionery stores, among others, and also on various commercial websites. Prior and up to August 2003 in the United States market, the company’s products were limited to potato chips. In the United States, the company’s products are carried by many Indian supermarkets and are popular with the Indian diaspora.

Nestle India Limited:

Nestle India Limited is the Indian subsidiary of Nestle. Nestle started its business in India in 1912 as “The NESTLE` Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company (Export) Limited”. After Independence of India, the company incorporated in India in 1959. Nestle produce milk products such as dairy whitener, condensed and toned milk, yoghurt, milk based formula foods etc., Nestle also products noodles, sauces, seasonings, pasta and ready to eat cereals, instant coffee and tea powders. It also produces ready to drink beverages and confectionery. Nestle India manufactures international quality products under popular brand names such as Necafe, Maggi, Milky Bar, Kit Kat, Bar One, Milkmaid and Nestea. Recently Nestle India has also introduced daily consumption products like Nestle Milk, Nestle Slim Milk, Nestle Dahi and Nestle Jeera Raita. Nestle` India also exports its products. Currently Nestle India has its head Office at Gurgaon, India with 9 manufacturing units and 4 branch offices employing over 8000 people. Currently, Nestle India Limited is owned by Nestle Group with 59.8% shareholding. Nestle India shares are traded on both NSE and BSE. Nestle India Limited share price can be checked at Enrich Money’s stock analysis page.

Gits Food Product Limited:

Gits Food Products Pvt. Ltd. Produces packaged food products. It offers ready meals, instant mixes, savorys, and dairy products. The company was founded in 1963 and is based in Mumbai, India. Gits pioneered the convenience packaged food segment by being the first company to introduce the concept of Instant Mixes in India. Since inception, the quality policy, as set by the founders is simple and valuable: “We will not sell what we don’t relish ourselves”. It was founded as a small family enterprise in 1963 by the partners Gilani and Tejani. GITS is now at the forefront of the instant foods revolution in India. GITS Produced ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook concept with a range of dehydrated soup mixes such as tomato and vegetables. The company has also diversified into Dairy products in 1996. The composite Dairy plant manufactures a range of Milk powder as well as Pure Ghee has special grade AGMARK quality symbol.

College students consumes Ready-to-Eat foods

Table- 1

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	1	1.67
Weekly	38	63.33
Occasionally	18	30
Rarely	3	5
Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

Inference:

It is inferred from above table that 1.67 percent of the respondents says that they are consumes Ready-to-Eat food daily, 63.33 percent of respondents says that they are consumes RTE food weekly, 30 percent of respondents says that they are consumes RTE food occasionally, 5 percent of the respondents says that they are consumes RTE food rarely.

Satisfaction level of Ready-to-Eat food consumed by college students

Table- 2

Respondents	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied	Total
Frequency	13	27	12	3	5	60
Percentage	22.22	44.44	19.44	5.56	8.33	100

Inference:

It is inferred from above table that 22.22 percent of the respondents says that they are highly satisfied with their consumes of Ready-To-Eat (RTE) food, 44.44 percent of the respondents says that they are Satisfied with their consumes of Ready-To-Eat food, 19.44 percent of the respondents says that they are Neutral with their consumes of Ready-To-Eat (RTE) food, 5.56 percent of the respondents says that they are dissatisfied with their consumes of Ready-To-Eat (RTE) food, 8.33 percent of the respondents says that they are highly dissatisfied with their consumes of Ready-to-Eat foods.

CONCLUSION:

Consumer Attitude may be defined as a feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness that an individual has towards an object. It refers to a product, brand name, service or an advertisement. As we, all know that an individual with a positive attitude is more likely to buy a product and this results in the possibility of liking or disliking a products. It is a learned tendency to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to the given object. Consumer Attitude basically comprises of beliefs towards, feelings towards and behavioral intentions towards some objects. Beliefs plays a vital role for consumers because it can be either positive or negative towards an objects. These components are viewed together since they are highly interdependent and together represent forces that influence how the consumer will react to the object. Attitude can be fixed way of thinking when it endures for a longer time. Attitude towards a certain behavior is based on the expectations and beliefs of the consequences as a result of particular behavior. The **Ready-To-Eat** food market has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by increasing demand for convenient and hassle-free food options. This study has provided on overview of the ready-to-eat food market, including its current trends, opportunities and challenges. Ready-To-Eat (RTE) Food market is poised for continued growth, driven by increasing demand for convenient, healthy and sustainable food options. Manufactures must prioritize innovation, sustainability and consumer wellness to remain competitive in this dynamic market.

WEBSITES

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