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Consumer Buying Behaviour and Awareness towards Ready to Cook Food Product (A Study Done at Kolkata City of West Bengal State, India)

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Abstract: Consumer behavior is one of the stimulating and challenging areas in marketing studies being a human activity focused on the purchasing, consuming and using of the products and services. Understanding the behavior of consumer is a great challenge. It involves the psychological processes that consumers go through in recognizing needs, finding ways to solve these needs, making purchase decisions, interpret information, make plans and implement those plans by engaging in comparison shopping or actually purchasing a product. The present paper highlights the determinants of consumer behavior regarding buying decision-making. This research intends to study on the relationships among demographic characteristics, consumer's perceptions and customer buying behavior towards ready to cook food products. Present research broadly focuses on three aspects viz. satisfaction of consumer, convenient usage, usefulness. Data was gathered from various sampling units through well structured questionnaire to study in retail malls belonging to kolkata city of west Bengal. Convenience sampling was adopted to arrive at ultimate respondents. Quantitative statistics were used to analyze data variables and test hypotheses. Pearson's chi-square is used for interpreting data. Research showed that demographic characteristics are related to consumer's perception. While education become most influencing factor as it's affecting consumer buying behavior. Study elicited that among all attributes easy to cook and times saving have greater influence on consumers for RTC products. Low cost of home preparation and differences in tastes were the major reasons for non consumption, whereas ready availability and save time of preparation were the reasons for consuming Instant Food Products. Retail shops are the major source of information and source of purchase of Instant Food Products.

Keywords: *Consumer, Buying Behaviour, Instant Foods, Households, Determinants.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The word 'food' refers to the chemical substances taken into the body in order to keep the 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 has the 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. Modern retail formats are showing robust growth as several retail chains have established a base in metropolitan cities and spreading all over India at a rapid pace. In urban Indian, families are experiencing growth in income but dearth of time. More and more women are taking up corporate jobs, which is adding to family's income and leading a better lifestyle. Rising income has led to a demand for convenience and services. The demand for frozen, instant, ready to cook and ready to eat food has been on rise, especially in metropolitan and large cities in India. Food retailers have undergone enormous change in the last two decades. Several factors have contributed to

this change: substantial industry consolidation; globalization; retail format proliferation; alternative delivery options; and threatened profit margins. Above all, the changes impacting food retailing, the change in consumer demographic and demand preferences have driven consumers to demand greater convenience, higher quality, more variety, and better nutrition, and more services while maintaining a focus on price. The Indian 'Ready-to-Eat' industry is making a huge growth and Ready-to-Eat foods market in India reached at Rs 2900 crore in 2015 and 3500 crore in 2016 (**Tata Strategic Management Groupreport, Vijayabaskar and Sundaram, 2012**). The advancement of science and technology offered the people new foods processing vessels, equipment but still they search new techniques to render minimum time in cooking, as conventional methods of cooking takes too much time. To gather most of resources today both men and women have to necessarily go for employment in the ever changing socio-domestic scenario. To augment the household income and cooking food in traditional methods is really an ordeal for women. Capitalizing this situation, business houses ranging from small time manufactures to multinational corporations have started innovating and commercializing "easy to cook food items" like noodles, vermicelli, gulab jamun, instant idli, vada, dosa mix, etc., that are otherwise called instant.

Rabo India Finance had projected that the Indian food processing industry would increase to Rs 11,500 billion by 2014-15. Processed products like 'chapattis', 'subzies' and portion packs of concentrated curries are fast becoming regular diets, especially for young couples. The product range includes foods like 'puri-bhaji' and 'dosa-vada'. Processed food products like pickles, chutneys, juices and curry powders had made their entry into the kitchens of most middleclass households a long time back. There are a whopping 15 crore middle class individuals, of which 60% are below 35 years — a segment that is increasingly depending on processed foods. This throws open an ideal opportunity for small entrepreneurs who are eyeing this segment for making a fortune. 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. The changes impacting food retailing, the change in consumer demographic and demand preferences have driven consumers to demand greater convenience, higher quality, more variety, and better nutrition, and more services while maintaining a focus on price. Retailers experimented with new ways of selling. They brought some key ideas that formed the basis of self-service operations in grocery retailing; a layout that encouraged the circulation of customers throughout the store; the arrangement of products that permitted customers to compare and handle all the items.

II. WHY READY TO EAT FOOD (RTE)

- ✓ Process of Indian food and its culture unit the core factors for popularization of able to eat foods.
- ✓ Main motivation for these able to eat foods is quick growing foreign market.
- ✓ Retail outlet culture is currently growing quickly in Asian country.
- ✓ Shelf lifetime of these foods area unit a minimum of 12-18 months.
- ✓ Quality, style and flavor of those foods remain nearly as good as recent up to the termination date.
- ✓ Women desperate to pay longer out of the room.
- ✓ A lot of operating bachelors staying removed from homes.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- ✓ To analyze factors influencing the buying behaviour of ready to cook Food Products,
- ✓ To evaluate the awareness of consumers towards ready to cook food products
- ✓ To review the market of Ready to Eat food.

- ✓ To study the Perception of Ready to Eat Food.
- ✓ To know consumers attitude towards food product labels

IV. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study was based on primary data collected from sample consumers by survey method. As many of the consumers furnished the required information from their memory and experience, the collected data would be subjected to recall bias. The study area was limited to kolkata cities of west Bengal and the findings may not be applicable to other markets, as vast Differences exist among the consumers with regard to demographic and psychographics characteristics.

Problem statement

Due to hasty transition in under developing countries population, especially those who are dwelling in urban areas resulted dramatic increase in their food consumption pattern. It was found through different researches that non-preference for ready to cook food was due to various reasons viz. low cost of home preparation, differences in taste, customized recipes, non-inclination of ready to cook food by all family members, higher prices, and lack of awareness and non-availability of RTC products. It was also found that difference between the taste of home-made and RTC products prevent consumers from buying RTC products because most of family members disliked packed foods.

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research work is done in the past regarding awareness, purchase behavior, brand preference, factors influencing brand preference and alternative purchase plans has been reviewed **Vijaybhaskaret al (2012)** studied all the major factors influences consumers in terms of awareness creation and decision making stages. Many hidden factors influence the consumer to go for healthy Ready-to-eat products based on their accumulated knowledge. Low cost of home preparation and differences in tastes were the major reasons for non consumption. The average monthly expenditure on Instant Food Products was found to be highest in higher income groups. Whereas many studies supports that although ready to eat food makes life easy still due to some reason most of the consumers avoid it.

Factors influencing the consumption of food products has been reviewed and resented as under.

A. Awareness of consumers

B. Factors influencing consumption

A. Awareness of consumers

[1] That the need for effective nutritional education for young consumers has become increasingly apparent, given their general food habits and behaviour, particularly during adolescence and analyzed that the interaction between young consumers' food preferences and their nutritional awareness behaviour, within three environments (home, school and social). The authors suggested that food preferences are often of a 'fast food' type and consequently the food habits of many young consumers may fuel the consumption of poorly nutritionally balanced meals. While young consumers were aware of healthy eating, their food preference behavior did not always appear to reflect such knowledge, particularly within the school and social environments.

[2] To create awareness of high fat content of pies, studied consumer and producer awareness about nutrition labeling on packaging. 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. Regular pie eaters could be encouraged to select these as a lower fat option.

[3]The buying behavior is vastly influenced by awareness and attitude towards the product. Commercial advertisements over television was said to be the most important source of information, followed by displays in retail outlets. A large number of

respondents laid emphasis on quality and felt that price is an important factor while the others attached importance to image of manufacturer.

B. Factors influencing consumption

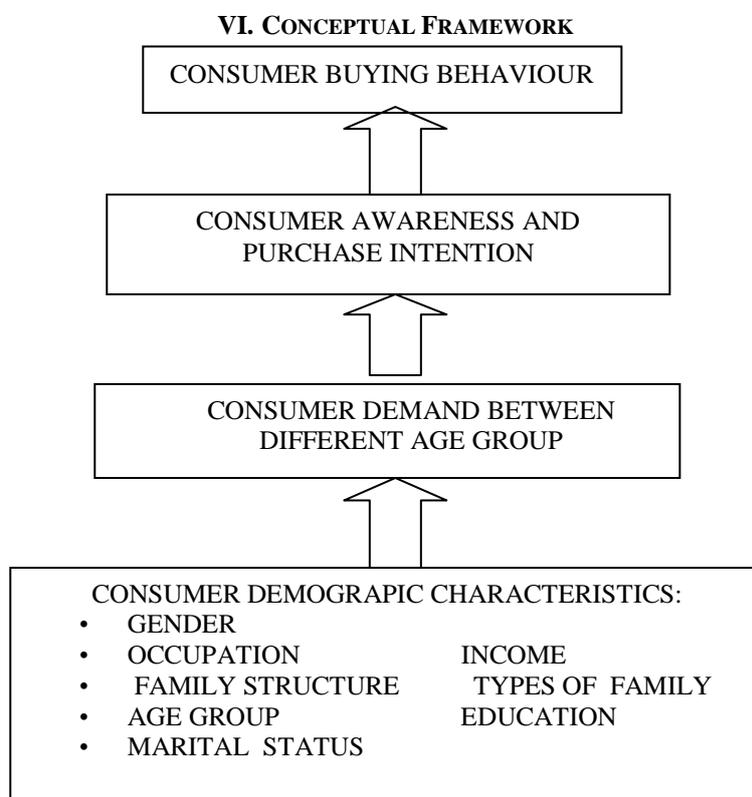
[4] There is complete agreement between ranking given by the housewives and working women regarding the reasons promoting them to buy ready to cook food products. Age, occupation, education, family size and annual income had much influence on the per capita expenditure of the Instant food products.

[5] Good quality and availability were the main factors, which influenced the rural consumers of a particular brand of a product.

[6] Buying behaviour is very much influenced by experience of their own and of neighbour consumers and his own family. The involvements of his own family members were exerting maximum influence on his purchases. Above all, the quality of the product and its easy

Availability was the primary and the vital determinants of his buying behaviour.

[7] 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 consumer's preferred mostly branded products compared to rural consumers



Hypothesis

Ho1 There is no significant relation between age group and demand of such food.

Ho2 There is no significant relation between consumer awareness and purchase intention.

Ha1 There is significant relation between age group and demand of such food.

Ha2 There is significant relation between consumer awareness and purchase intention.

VII. METHODOLOGY

Present investigation undertaken to know the awareness of consumers about ready to cook food products, factors influencing consumption of instant food products. This chapter covers the following aspects:

- A. Description of study area
- B. Sampling design and data collection
- C. Analytical tools

A. Description of study area

Kolkata city is the capital city and popular or major city in west Bengal. The major consumers in the study area are highly influenced by ever changing environment of the city. In case of food products, the consumers are switching from traditional foods to ready to cook food products. The present research was confined to kolkata city in west Bengal. Although 110 questionnaires were filled but only 100 respondents were formed as a sample due inadequate information in rest 10 questionnaires. Total samples of 100 consumers were selected by employing convenience sampling. Thus 25 housewives, 38 working professional, 21 self employed and 16 students were selected and surveyed. Only those respondents were considered who visited Malls during survey hours. The survey was done at Big Bazaar and Easy day at kolkata city.

B. Collection of Data

To evaluate the objectives of the study, required data were collected from primary as well as secondary sources.

Primary data

The data required for the study were collected from the selected respondents by personal interview method using well-structured schedule.

1. General information from the individual respondents on their social, economical and demographic characteristics like age, educational status, occupation, annual income, family size and family type.
2. Monthly family expenditure on food and non-food items in general.
3. Information regarding the consumption pattern of ready to cook food products and also regarding decision making relating to RTC Food Products.

Secondary data

The secondary data on location, demography and other details about the study area were collected from city statistical office and other records and journals.

C. Analytical tools

The collected data was analyzed with the help of SPSS the Factor Analysis were conducted and also the Chi-square test was used. Well structured questionnaire containing close ended questions was used. Awareness was evaluated by including brand names and different media vehicles A survey was conducted among the customers to check their awareness, identify reasons for purchase and examine the perception towards Ready to Cook food products. Analysis of which is explained as follows:

VIII. AWARENESS OF CONSUMER TOWARDS READY TO COOK FOOD PRODUCT

A. Demographic & Socio-Economic Profile of Customers

The demographic and socio economic profile of the consumers of Ready to Cook food products was observed. The age group of consumers, their income level, marital status, gender, occupation and family structure are observed which are discussed as follows:

Serial No.	Particulars	No. of consumers	Percentages (%)	Serial No.	Particulars	No. of consumers	Percentages (%)
1.	AGE GROUP			6.	EDUCATION LEVEL		
	15 - 25	22	22%		Madhyamik/HSC	12	12%
	26 - 45	60	60%		Graduation	47	47%
	45 & above	18	18%		Post Graduation/Doc.	41	41%
2.	GENDER			7.	INCOME		
	Male	52	52%		Less than 2 lakh	19	19%
	Female	48	48%		2 – 5 lakh	44	44%
3.	TYPE OF FAMILY				5 & above lakh	37	37%
	Single income	42	42%	8.	OCCUPATION		
	Double income	58	58%		Housewife	25	25%
4.	MARITAL STATUS				Salaried persons	38	38%
	single	31	31%		Self employed	21	21%
	Married	69	69%		Student	16	16%
5.	FAMILY STRUCTURE						
	Joint	38	38%				
	Nuclear	62	62%				

The middle and upper class segment both group are showing great interest towards ready to cook food products.

Sources of information to create awareness about Ready to Cook food products: TV had created a great impact on consumers mind related to awareness of RTC products. From television 96% of the consumers were aware about ready to cook food products.

B. Buying Behavior of Consumers

1) Frequency of purchase

If there is proper effective distribution channel of products then the frequency of purchasing the ready to cook food products depends on the mood of customer. Maximum number of the consumers (96%) buys RTC products whenever needed.

2) Nature of purchase Decision

65% of the consumers of ready to cook food products are impulsive buyers and 35% of the consumers are the planned purchasers of ready to cook food products.

3) Place of Purchase

Most of consumers buy the ready to cook food products from all places, but most of the consumers (74%) buy RTC products from retail outlets and very few (21%) do online purchases and 5% from other sources.

4) Segment that demands more of such food

SERIAL NO.	SEGMENT	NO. OF CONSUMERS	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.	Children	72	72
2.	Adults	22	22
3.	Elderly	06	06

However, the users (72%) are children of RTC products category, but the decision-makers are their parents.

Chi Square calculation for age group of consumers demanding RTC food

AGE GROUP	DEMAND(O)	E	(O - E)	(O - E) ²	(O - E) ² /E
Children	72	33.33	38.67	1495.37	44.87
Adults	22	33.33	-11.33	128.37	3.85
Elderly	06	33.33	-27.33	746.93	22.41
	100				71.13

For 2 degree of freedom the tabulated value of chi-square at 5% level is 5.99 and at 1% is 9.21. Since the observed value of chi-square exceeds even the 1% tabulated value, it is highly significant. We reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is significant relation between age group and demand of such food.

5) Segment that purchase intention of such food

Purchases intention between different income group

	Below 2 lakh	2 – 5 lakh	above 5 lakh	total
Awareness	06	32	20	58
Not awareness	13	12	17	42
Total	19	44	37	100

Calculation of expected frequency

Awareness	11	26	22	59
Not awareness	08	18	15	41
Total	19	44	37	100

$$\begin{aligned} \text{chi-square} &= (6-11)^2/11 + (32-26)^2/26 + (20-22)^2/22 + (13-08)^2/8 + (12-18)^2/18 + (17-15)^2/15 \\ &= 2.27+1.38+0.18+3.13+2.00+0.27 \\ &= 9.23 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Degree of freedom} = (2-1) (3-1) = 2$$

For 2 degree of freedom the tabulated value of chi-square at 5% level is 5.99 and at 1% is 9.21. Since the observed value of chi-square exceeds even the 1% tabulated value, it is highly significant. We reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is significant relation between consumer awareness and purchase intention between different income groups. I.e. they are associated.

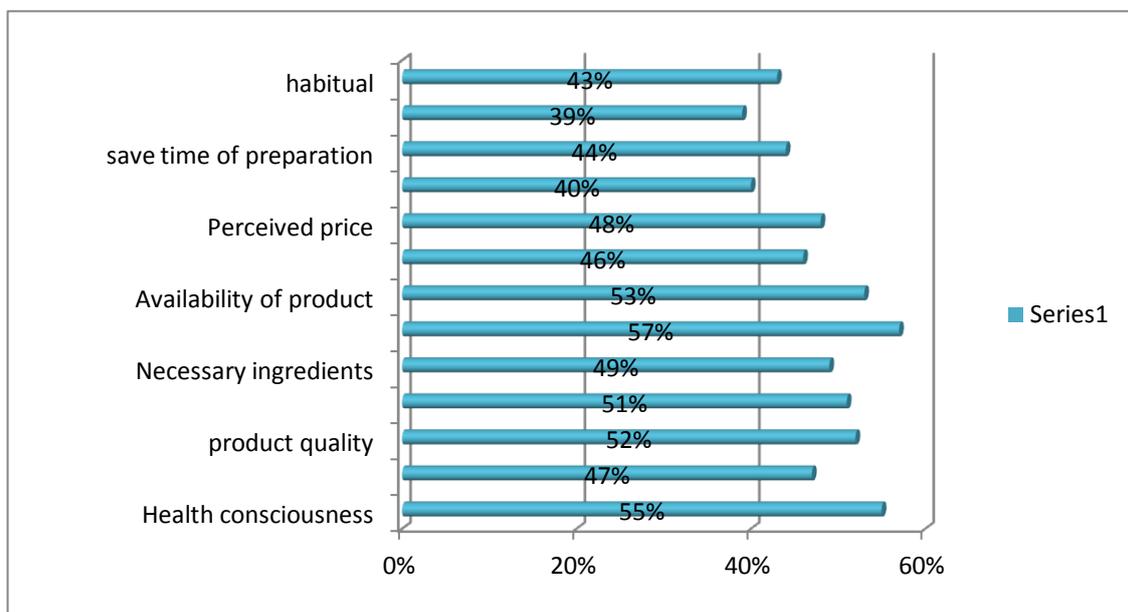
C. The impact of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on their purchase intention

Weighted mean of the attributes preferred by consumers for purchasing Ready to cook food product

FACTORS	SL.NO.	ATTRIBUTES	WT.MEAN	PERCENTAGE
INTRINSIC FACTORS	1.	Health consciousness	4.2	55%
	2.	Nutrition value	3.6	47%

	3.	Product quality	4.0	52%
EXTRINSIC FACTORS	4.	packaging	3.9	51%
	5.	Necessary ingredients	3.8	49%
	6.	Brand name	4.4	57%
	7.	Availability of product	4.1	53%
	8.	Advertisement	3.5	46%
	9.	Perceived price	3.7	48%
	10.	Taste liked by family members	3.1	40%
	11.	save time to preparation	3.4	44%
	12.	Influence of friends/relatives	3.0	39%
	13.	Habitual	3.3	43%

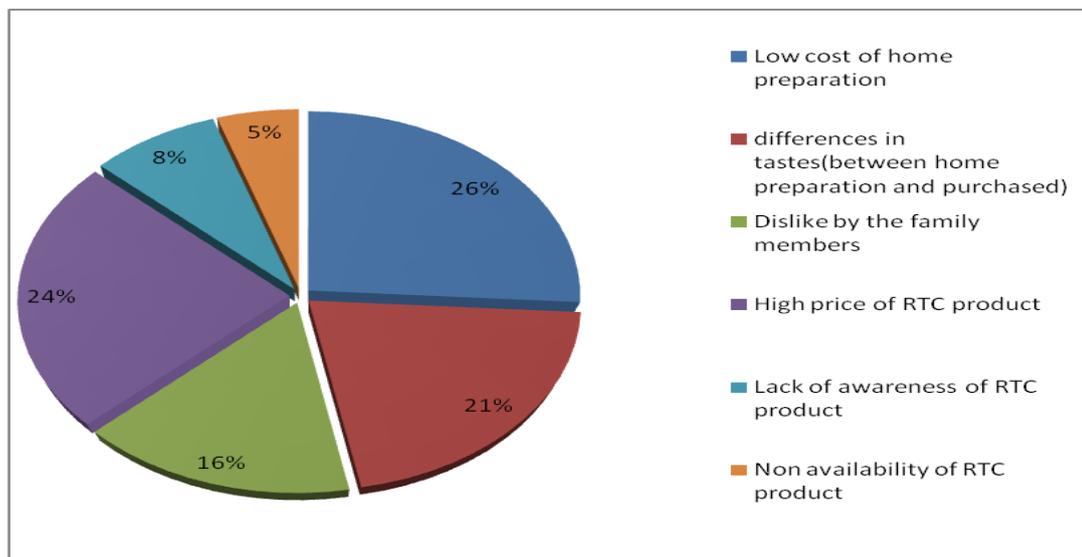
Habit of usage was also one of the factors considered by consumers due to the conventional and routine usage of this product. The other factors such as traditional usage, tastes liked by family members, availability of products at reasonable price and availability of quality Products were quoted by few respondents. For the extrinsic factors, average of the respondents were taken on different factor like perceived price, brand image, packaging and availability were taken into consideration from the consumer purchase intention model from this data that price have no impact while brand name, packaging and availability and advertisement as extrinsic factor has impact on purchase intention. For the intrinsic factors, we found out that health, quality and value are positively correlated to purchase intention, but health is comparatively more correlated then other two factors. Similar to these results, the study conducted by Raga van (1994) shows that quality, availability and price were the important factors, which had influenced purchase of vegetables by respondents from modern retail outlet.



Figures indicates factors for purchasing RTC food product

D. Distribution of the respondents based on their response to the questions associated with factors for not purchasing the ready to cook food products

SL.NO.	FACTORS/REASONS	NO.OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Low cost of home preparation	66
2.	Differences in tastes(between home prepared and purchased)	52
3.	Dislike of purchased product by the family members	41
4.	High price of RTC product	61
5.	Lack of awareness of RTC product	19
6.	Non availability of RTC product	11



Figures indicates factors for not purchasing RTC food product

It was revealed from the Table that 66 per cent of respondents 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 52 per cent of the consumers. About 41 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 61 per cent of respondents accordingly. Due to non-availability of these products by 11 per cent of the respondents and only 19 per cent of consumers were not Purchasing RTC food due to lack of awareness about the product availability in market.

Working hours of consumers of ready to cook food products

There are about 59% of the double income families and the ratio of people working for 8-10 hrs is highest. So, they don't have time to cook food, that's why they are using the ready to cook food products. There is direct relationship between working hours and consumption of the ready to cook food products.

IX. CONCLUSION

Due to the increasing number of nuclear and double income families, long working hours are the major reason for purchasing these products. Consumer behavior towards buying ready to cook food had huge impact of socioeconomic profile of consumers. This also brings large deviation in taste and preference for products. Housewives were the major decision makers in all the income groups as the housewives set the consumption pattern of food products in the family. Reasons for not preferring particular brand of the product by respondents was due to the factors such as high price followed by poor taste, poor quality and less keeping quality. It was found that children and youngsters prefer these foods more than adults and they can promote their products in a way that it attracts more adults. The easy to cook, convenience, satisfaction, usefulness and saving of time are the major reasons for purchasing RTC products. The factors that influenced brand Preference of the selected instant food products were best quality followed by retailer's influence, ready availability and convenience.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Today the ready-to-eat product produced from India area unit totally on Basmati rice Pulao, Biryani, Dal, Channa, Rajma, Spicy Vegetable Curry, Mushroom, Punier, Chicken, Broccoli, Sweets and many additional South Indian dishes. Food corporations ought to increase the promotion of RTE food to make awareness among individuals regarding the thought of RTE food and win over customers regarding the misconception regarding the else preservatives in RTE food.
- 2) Different brands should target adults and elderly people also and promote their products in a way that attracts more adults and people, as instant food is generally preferred by kids & youngsters. Most of the buyers are impulsive in buying

behavior, as they only buy such items when some how they got attracted so retailers and manufacture need to be more innovative for packaging and promotion strategy. Some consumers said that they buy the product rarely because it contains high amount of salt, fat and sugar and other preservatives which is harmful for patients of hypertension, diabetes, heart disease tec. So, different companies can introduce some products that are specific for diabetic and hypertension patients that contain less sugar in it So it becomes imperative to discuss consumer behaviour, being a human activity focused on the purchasing, consuming and using of products and services, as one of the stimulating and challenging areas in marketing studies.

- 3) The basis of concern is also important for the Government and other stakeholders such as processors to understand, in order to maintain consumer confidence in their ability to protect their interests, and make sure that their safety had not been compromised.
- 4) Companies are required to emphasize more on explaining the ingredients of the food products on the labels and the message should be conveyed in proper manner. Labels must be presented in precise and attractive way.

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