

The Changing Landscape in demand of RTC food products in Mumbai

Mrs. Sayali Yadav, Dr. Vinita Pimpale

*Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Guru Nanak Khalsa College and
Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, R.A.Podar College)*

Abstract: *In a competitive market, the food industry would want to expand their products on a global scale. Growing population of working women, increase in overall population, demanding work schedules, consumption habits enhanced the growth of the ready-to-cook food products in the global market. The increase in disposable income and customers choices for healthy food products coupled with the growing demand for RTC food products also further advance the demand for RTC food products.*

The purpose of this research is to study the growing demand of Ready-to-Cook product based on demographic factors and to understand the brand perception of Ready-to-Cook food product market in Mumbai city.

The research methodology includes primary data collection through questionnaire method and secondary information through published articles and books. This paper contributes to the Ready-to-Cook food industry by studding the important demographic factors and brand perception related to various brands.

The paper may be useful to the companies who are dealing or planning to enter in Ready-to-Cook food industry.

Keywords: *Food industry, Ready-to-Cook (RTC) food products, brand perception.*

I. Introduction

As lifestyle is changing rapidly, Foreign Institutional investments are becoming more vibrant there is a drastic change in Indian culture and food habits. Many of the Indian families are now leaving in nuclear set up. Most of the family members do not have sufficient time to cook the food in traditional way. Despite of modern cooking devices, consumers still require depending on ready-to-cook (RTC) food as it is less time consuming. The dual income consumers prefer these types of products due to lack of time availability for cooking at their disposal. The RTC products may vary from noodles, pasta, masala packages, stuffed paratha, vegetable gravies, breakfast items etc. and many more. Rapid urbanization is also one of the reasons for people to buy such products. Food should be healthy, tasty and in addition offer extra value to consumer: convenience. Convenience food reduces preparation difficulties and save cooking time. Convenience depends totally on the consumer needs. People living in a city or working throughout the day have shown appreciation to RTC food products as they are easy and quick to consume: 'to go concept.

Consumer needs and wants create demand. Their demand always depends on the attitude regarding the products. But consumer attitude is not easy to evaluate. It includes the consumer awareness perception, motivation, decision making power, adoption process and many other things. In case of ready-to-cook products, the choice of a product depends on many factors of consumer attitude. After all, consumer attitude can teach companies of all sizes about the consumption patterns of their consumers as well as the internal and external influences that affect those customers. When marketers understand the attitude of consumers, marketer can create products and services that provide the consumers with more value. And then marketer can market those products and services in ways that the consumers understand. Consumer attitude is a key to analyze the customer preferences, their mind sets and the factors of influence.

Demographic variables and socio-economic characteristics of the consumers are also important variables, which decide the consumption pattern of food products in the family. Factors influencing the consumer's choice of RTC food are flavor, texture, appearance, advertising and brand image. Other factors positively influencing RTC food demand are rising income level, influence of western countries, increasing global trade, travelling, convenience in preparation due to lack of time and cost effectiveness. (P. Selvarajan, 2012)¹.

¹ Meenambekai,R and Selvarajan, P. (2012) Consumer Attitudes toward Ready-to-eat Packed Food Items (with special to Jaffna Divisional Secretariat Division), Proceedings of 7th International Research Conference on Management and Finance, Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Colombo, pp.322-333, December 14

Development of the metropolitan cities due to increase in population, emergence of industries, evolution of various new factors, time factor, etc., created the need for RTC food in the market. Due to industrialization, the labor category is getting attracted to it because of better emoluments and hence there is shortage of home maid-servants. Due to this, the housewives, to save time started using RTC foods. Earlier times, a single family consisted of many people i.e., a group of several nuclear families were living in a single place. Hence, larger quantities of the food were used to be prepared. But as these joint families started disappearing due to various reasons, each single family started using these RTC foods to save time and energy. (P. Selvaraj, 2012)

Ready-to-cook food is food that is offered or exposed for sale without additional cooking or preparation, which is packaged on the premises where they are being sold and are ready for consumption. Canned foods, convenience foods, fast foods, frozen foods, instant products, dried foods, preserved foods, etc. all come under Ready-to-Eat foods. (P. Selvaraj, 2012).

RTC food is food that is commercially prepared often through processing to optimize ease of consumption. Such food is usually ready to eat without much of further preparation. It may also be easily portable, have a long shelf life, or offer a combination of such convenient traits. The food industry is on a high as Indians continue to have a feast, fueled by what can be termed as a perfect ingredient for any industry - large disposable incomes. The food sector has been witnessing a marked change in consumption patterns. RTC or convenience food, is now dotting the shelves of urban stores and supermarkets. RTC dishes are semi cooked and then packaged in foils. All that one must do is dip the pouch in hot water for 3-5 minutes, cut open and serve or devour! Even better, just microwave the pouches and pour out the delicacies.

There is a tremendous change in the last ten years in our country of people consuming habits. The choices before them are plenty and proliferation of micro entrepreneurs will also be influencing factors for this product segment. Other than convenience there are many hidden forces and upcoming forces determine this market. Over the centuries there has been witnessed change in the pattern of consumption, from raw to cook to RTC food; emergence of it at the Global Food Industry and now to the Indian markets. The consumers are getting more aware about food products and so their intention and perception towards RTC food products is changing over in Food Retail Industry. In 1975, when the state of emergency was declared, MTR had to shut down its business unit as it was running into losses. However, at that time, the son of the owner of MTR employed his former employees to work for packaged food products.

The food processing industry is one of the largest industries in India and it is ranked fifth in terms of Production, Consumption, Export and Expected growth. Demand for RTC meals has captured a large amount of the food retail market in India. Thus, the emerging change in consumer's perception, socio-economic-political factors has led to change in consumers purchase intention toward RTC Food Products and thus providing a huge business opportunity.

II. Literature Review:

Vijay Abaskar M. and Dr. N. Sundaram (2012) conducted a study to find out what are the influential factors determining the market for RTE / RTC products. It was observed that RTE market segment is defined by high growth in middle class section people and their life style changes due to job factors. Product availability, convenience, variety and unwillingness to spend time by youngster are the main reasons behind growing RTE market. Due to life style changes and long working hours people are choosing these products and ready to go with it.²

Mr. A. Karuppusamy and Dr. C. Arjunan (2012) analysed the existing buying behaviour of instant food products by individual households and to predict the demand for these products. The results of the research reveal that all the respondents were aware of Pickles and Sambar Masala but only less percentage were aware of Dosa / Idli Mix. The major reason for non-consumption of instant food products is because these products are prepared at less cost and with better taste. These instant food products are normally consumed as they are readily available and some time to save considerable extent of preparation time. 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.³

M. Bala Swamy et al (2012) analysed the existing buying behaviour of instant food products by individual households and to predict the demand for Instant Food Products of Hyderabad city in Andhra Pradesh. It was

² Vijay Abaskar M. Dr. N. Sundaram (2012) "A Market Study On Key Determinants of Ready-To-Eat/Cook Products With Respect To Tier-I Cities In Southern India", Zenith, Vol. 2 Issue 6, pp 168-180.

³ Mr. A. Karuppusamy, Dr. C. Arjunan (2012) "A Study On Consumers' buying Behaviour Towards Instant Food Products In Coimbatore", Namex International Journal of Management Research, Vol. 2 Issue 2, pp 24-30.

observed that low cost of home preparation and differences in tastes were the major reasons for non-consumption of instant food products, whereas ready availability and saving preparation time were the reasons for consuming instant food products. It was further concluded that retail shops are the major source of information and source of purchase of instant food products. The average per capita purchase and per capita expenditure on instant food products had a positive relationship with income of households. High price and poor taste were the reasons for not purchasing a particular brand whereas best quality, retailer's influence and ready availability were considered for preferring particular brand of products by the consumers.⁴

V.Pradeepa and Dr. G. Kavitha (2013) observed that, demographic factors like age group, educational qualification and family income have a significant impact on the brand of instant food used but there is no significant relationship between gender, occupation and type of family with the brand of ready to eat product used. Further the study revealed that technological changes and the changes in the food habits of people are the main reasons for the rapid growth of ready to eat food industry. The consumption of ready to eat food products is seeing a very sharp rise because of changes in customers taste & preference, changes in life style, easy availability, etc. It was concluded that, RTE food products have now become as essential component in the daily lives of people.⁵

Ms. Inderpreet Kaur and Dr. Sukhdev Singh (2013), in their study on Shifting preferences of Consumers: A Journey from Conventional food to Convenient food, developed a food choice model based on demographic and psychographic variables explored in Indian context. In view of both spouses working people have been forced from traditional breakfast of Pranthas to time saving as well as healthy fast cooking cereal based breakfast. Cereal based food corporates like Kellog's ,Quaker, Mohun, Saffola and Britannia are pulling out all the stops of modern marketing, targeting primarily nuclear households. Due to rise in double income households there is lack of time for cooking traditional breakfast's. it was concluded that recent food scares, as well as concern for the environment and animal safety and unethical practices has made consumers more aware of the origins of their food and led to growing demand for healthy nutritive rich cereal based meals.⁶

III. Research Methodology:

This research is carried on in two stages. During first stage the research is of exploratory nature. Exploratory research provides insights into and comprehension of an issue or situation. During second stage descriptive research is conducted by applying survey method. The tool used for data collection is a questionnaire, which covered the demographic profile of consumers, details about purchase patterns, and various factors considered for understanding the consumption pattern among women consumers.

3.1 Gap Analysis:

From the literature reviewed, it was understood that many studies have been undertaken to explain the consumption pattern of the customers towards convenience food at national and international level. These studies were mainly oriented towards increasing habit of convenience food consumption. Some of these studies had highlighted basic demographic factors affecting food consumption pattern of the various customers. But it was found that, very few studies have been conducted in this area regarding brand aspect of the RTC food. Hence this study focuses on verifying the results of the earlier study conducted in this area. The study also tries to analyse various aspects relating to brand of RTC food.

3.2 Objectives:

From the gap analysis, the following objectives are drawn for the research:

- To study the growing demand of Ready-to-Cook product based on demographic factors
- To understand the brand perception of RTC food product market in Mumbai

3.3 Stated Hypothesis

From the gap analysis, the following hypothesis are drawn for the research:

H1 RTC food industry has a tremendous market potential.

H2 RTC food is preferred by single women compared to married one.

⁴ M. Bala Swamy , T. Anil Kumar, K. Srinivasa Rao (2012) "Buying Behaviour Of Consumers Towards Instant Food Products", International journal of Research and computational Technology, Vol.2 Issue 2.

⁵ V.Pradeepa and Dr. G. Kavitha (2013), "A Study on Customer Preference Towards Ready – to – Eat Food Products in Coimbatore City", Journal of Commerce & Management Thought, Vol. IV Issue 3, pp 599-611

⁶ Ms. Inderpreet Kaur and Dr. Sukhdev Singh (2013), "Shifting preferences of Consumers: A Journey from Conventional food to Convenient food", International Journal of Management Research & Trends , Vol 4, Issue 1.

3.4 Data Used

Both primary and secondary data is used for the research.

3.5 Data Collection tools

Questionnaire based method was implemented for primary data collection. Structured questionnaire was prepared, and responses were collected from women consumers. The standard questionnaire was prepared consisting 25 questions. It included a variety of multiple choice, open ended and close ended questions. Primary data is being collected using "Google Survey form" and using internet as a medium. Secondary data is collected from journal articles, books and web resources.

3.6 Sample of the Study

Convenience sampling is used as a method of sampling. The responses were collected from 100 women consumers residing in Mumbai city.

3.7 Limitation of the Study

1. The use of convenience sampling might have affected the generalizability of the present findings as the study sample may not be representative of all the women consumers in Mumbai.
2. The respondents are only from the Mumbai city.
3. The research investigation is limited to a specific sample size which is 100 women consumers.

IV. Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Outcome of secondary data:

1. RTC food demand is increasing tremendously because of changing lifestyle, convenience required, long working hours and increasing number of working women.
2. Out of all these important forces increasing number of working women is really a deciding force for RTC food market. A working woman is career oriented and tends to look for options to cook food when she must play multiple roles in her family. She often looks for ways in which she can reduce her cooking time be it for breakfast, lunch or dinner.
3. As more and more women are coming in working force, time available with them to spend for cooking is less. Due to less time availability women consumers are preferring RTC products. The manufacturers of RTC food products still must study the factors related to working women in depth. So that they can cater to this market in a right manner.
4. Growth in income of upper middle-class families is also a contributing factor or the growth of RTC food market. Due to high disposable income at upper middle-class people consumption of RTC food is growing.
5. Demographic factors like age group, educational qualification, gender and family income have a significant impact on the brand of instant food.

4.2 Verification of objectives

With the help of the primary data collected, the determined research objectives of the study are verified as follows:

4.2.1 To study the growing demand of Ready-to-Cook product on the basis of demographic factors

Table 1: Occupational Status * Do you consume RTC products? Crosstabulation

Occupational Status		Do you eat RTC products?		Total	
		Yes	No		
Working Women	Self-Employed	Count	14	0	14
		% within Occupational Status	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Salaried Professional	Count	46	08	54
		% within Occupational Status	85.2%	14.8%	100.0%
Non Working Women	Homemaker	Count	20	12	32
		% within Occupational Status	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	80	20	100
		% within Occupational Status	80%	20%	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 1: Both working women and non-working women (80%), say that they consume RTC products, showing the growing demand of RTC product.

Table 2: Do you consume RTC products? * Age Crosstabulation

Do you consume RTC products?		Age				Total
		18-25	26-35	36-45	46 & above	
Yes	Count	08	16	34	22	80
	% within Age	100.0%	80.0%	89.5%	73.3%	80%
No	Count	0	04	08	08	20
	% within Age	0.0%	20.0%	10.5%	26.7%	20%
Total	Count	08	20	42	30	100
	% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 2: The women from all the age categories are buying RTC products, indicating growth in demand for RTC products.

Table 3: Do you consume RTC products? * Education Level Crosstabulation

Do you consume RTC products?		Education Level					Total
		School Level	Graduate	Post Graduate	Professional	PhD	
Yes	Count	16	20	24	14	02	86
	% within Education Level	88.9%	71.4%	85.7%	77.8%	100.0%	86%
No	Count	02	04	04	04	0	14
	% within Education Level	11.1%	28.6%	14.3%	22.2%	0.0%	14%
Total	Count	18	24	28	18	02	100
	% within Education Level	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 3: Women with different educational background like school level, graduate, post graduate, professional and PhD are buying RTC products. It proves that irrespective of educational background, demand for RTC food is growing.

Table 4: Do you consume RTC products? * Marital Status Crosstabulation

Do you consume RTC products?		Marital Status		Total
		Married	Single	
Yes	Count	58	20	78
	% within Marital Status	82.9%	83.3%	78.0%
No	Count	12	10	22
	% within Marital Status	17.1%	33.3%	22.0%
Total	Count	70	22	100
	% within Marital Status	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 4: Demand for RTC products based on marital status of the women shows a growth. As both single and married women are preferring RTC food products.

Table 5: Do you consume RTC products? * Family Type Crosstabulation

Do you eat RTC products?		Family Type			Total
		Nuclear	Joint	Single	
Yes	Count	30	28	16	74
	% within Family Type	78.9%	87.5%	80.0%	74%
No	Count	16	08	02	26
	% within Family Type	21.1%	12.5%	20.0%	26%

	Family Type				
Total	Count	46	36	18	100
	% within Family Type	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 5: Based on family type to which the woman belong to like nuclear, joint and single, demand for RTC food is growing.

4.2.2 To understand the brand perception of RTC food product market in Mumbai

(A) Most preferred brand:

Table 6: Most preferred brands in the Ready to Cook food products

Brands	Responses	
	N	Percent
Nestle(Maggi)	48	48.0%
MTR	14	14.0%
Knorr	18	18.0%
ITC	02	2.0%
Mother's Recipe	02	2.0%
Gits	12	12.0%
Other	04	4.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 6: The Most preferred brand in the RTC food products is Nestle (Maggi), according to highest 48% of respondents.

(B) Factors contributing to the Brand perception of RTC foods.

Table 7: Factors for RTC Brand perceptions

Appealing product packages	Responses	
	N	Percent
Nestle(Maggi)	44	44.0%
MTR	14	14.0%
Knorr	20	20.0%
Parampara	04	4.0%
ITC	04	4.0%
Mother's Recipe	04	4.0%
Gits	10	10.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 7: The Most preferred brand in the RTC food products based on appealing product packages is Nestle (Maggi), according to highest 44% of respondents

Table 8: Factors for RTC Brand perceptions

Packed in hygiene conditions	Responses	
	N	Percent
Nestle(Maggi)	34	34.0%
MTR	16	16.0%
Knorr	16	16.0%
Parampara	04	4.0%
ITC	04	4.0%
Mother's Recipe	06	6.0%
Gits	20	20.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 8: The Most preferred brand in the RTC food products based on packed in hygiene conditions is Nestle (Maggi), according to highest 34% of respondents

Table 9: Factors for RTC Brand perceptions

Tasty	Responses	
	N	Percent
Nestle(Maggi)	48	48.0%
MTR	10	10.0%
Knorr	20	20.0%
Parampara	06	6.0%
ITC	04	4.0%
Mother's Recipe	05	5.0%
Gits	07	7.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 9: The Most preferred brand in the RTC food products based on taste of the product Nestle (Maggi), according to highest 48% of respondents

Table 10: Factors for RTC Brand perceptions

Wide variety of dishes	Responses	
	N	Percent
Nestle(Maggi)	24	24.0%
MTR	28	28.0%
Knorr	10	10.0%
Parampara	12	12.0%
ITC	07	7.0%
Mother's Recipe	07	7.0%
Gits	12	12.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 10: The Most preferred brand in the RTC food products based wide variety of dishes offered is MTR according to highest 28% of respondents and second highest is Nestle (Maggi), according to second highest 24% of respondents

Table 11: Factors for RTC Brand perceptions

Affordable to buy	Responses	
	N	Percent
Nestle(Maggi)	50	50.0%
MTR	18	18.0%
Knorr	10	10.0%
Parampara	06	6.0%
ITC	06	6.0%
Gits	10	10.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 11: The Most preferred brand in the RTC food products based on affordability to buy the product is Nestle (Maggi), according to highest 50% of respondents

Table 12: Factors for RTC Brand perceptions

Easy availability	Responses	
	N	Percent
Nestle(Maggi)	58	58.0%
MTR	08	8.0%
Knorr	16	16.0%
Parampara	02	2.0%
ITC	08	8.0%
Gits	08	8.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 12: The Most preferred brand in the RTC food products based on easy availability of product in the market is Nestle (Maggi), according to highest 58% of respondents

Table 13: Factors for RTC Brand perceptions

Personality Endorsement	Responses	
	N	Percent
Nestle(Maggi)	40	40%
MTR	08	8.0%
Knorr	14	14.0%
Parampara	10	10.0%
ITC	10	10.0%
Mother's Recipe	08	8.00%
Gits	10	10.0%
Total	100	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation Table 13: The Most preferred brand in the RTC food products based on personality endorsement is Nestle (Maggi), according to highest 40% of respondents

So it can be concluded from Table 6 to Table 13, that brand perception of Nestle (Maggi) brand is highest positive among RTC food brands in Mumbai.

4.3 Inferential Analysis:

4.3.1 Hypothesis 1: RTC food industry has a tremendous market potential

H₀: There is no significant difference between customers approach towards RTC products, leading to its growth.

H₁: There is a significant difference between customers approach towards RTC products, leading to its growth.

Test Statistics: Friedman Test

Ranks	Mean Rank
Frequency of Buying	17.22
RTC food is tasty	12.50
Children like RTC food than homemade food	12.17
RTC food offers sophistication	13.35
My entire family is excited when the RTC food is served	15.66
RTC food offers novelty in cooking tasty food	14.60
Consumption of RTC food is a requirement of modern lifestyle	11.44
How much do you spend in a month on food when you eat out?	9.43
How much do you spend on RTC Food per month?	7.38
The prices of RTC food products are affordable.	8.98
RTC food has sufficient quantity compared to its price.	14.26
Price element is an important factor while buying RTC food product.	10.63
RTC food products are cheaper compared to restaurant food	9.00
RTC food is easily available in market	8.04
RTC food saves time for cooking	7.83
RTC food saves time for going restaurants	8.20
RTC food acts as a food supplement	12.77
RTC food offers wide variety of dishes	10.77
RTC food offers the food which many a times we do not know how to cook	10.68
RTC food offers storage convenience	8.07
RTC food packages are convenient in handling.	8.04

Source: Primary Data

Test Statistics	
N	100
Chi-Square	221.041
Df	20
p-value	.000

Source: Primary Data

Since $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, we reject H_0 . And conclude that there is a significant difference between customers approach towards RTC products, leading to its growth. In other words, customer mostly approaching or agreeing to different factors like frequently buying of RTC products, RTC Food self-perception, RTC Food Price Influences, RTC Food Convenience Aspects. Thus, leading in the growth of RTC products in India.

4.3.2 Hypothesis 2: RTC food is preferred by single women compared to married one.

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the RTC food preference between single women and married one.

H_1 : There is no significant difference in the RTC food preference between single women and married one.

Test Statistics: Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks				
Marital Status		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Do you consume RTC products?	Married	72	21.01	735.50
	Single	28	20.92	125.50
	Total	100		

Source: Primary Data

Test Statistics	
	Do you consume RTC products?
Mann-Whitney U	104.500
p-value	.977
Grouping Variable: Marital Status	

Source: Primary Data

Since $p\text{-value} = 0.977 > 0.05$, we do not reject H_0 . Hence, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the RTC food preference between single women and married one. In other words, as of now RTC food is equally preferred by single women and the married one.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Findings of the study

- Based on demographic factors, it was found that demand for RTC food products is growing in the market
- The study reveals that Nestle (Maggi) is having the highest brand perception among the women consumers in Mumbai.

5.2 Conclusion

Extensive social, political, economic, and environmental changes have occurred in the past decades. Many families have both the parents working, time is passing and even bringing drastic changes in the eating habits and thereby food consumption pattern among the families.

From the study it is found that as the time availability to cook food is less, demand for RTC food products is growing. Another interesting result revealed by the research is that married as well as single status women prefer RTC food products.

It is concluded that food consumption pattern is changing in India day by day. Specially there is an increasing trend among the families to consume more of RTC food.

5.3 Recommendations

- Companies must work on the brand image of RTC food to cater to customer’s needs.
- Companies can come out with innovative products in RTC food to satisfy growing demand of the market.

VI. Scope for further Study

- Similar study can be conducted in other cities.
- Similar study can be conducted for other focus groups.
- Detailed study can be conducted for brand perception of RTC food products.

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