

An Analysis of Consumer Buying Behavior Towards Instant Food Products in Erode District

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Abstract

The current study is to examine customer purchasing behaviour toward instant meal products in Erode District. Instant meal products have grown in popularity among customers as their lifestyles change and their time restrictions increase. The study focuses on issues such as convenience, time savings, health and dietary considerations, brand influence, and consumer satisfaction. 144 individuals provided primary data using a standardized questionnaire. Data were analysed using statistical procedures such as descriptive analysis and ANOVA. According to the research, convenience is the most influential element in purchasing decisions, although consumer health awareness is rapidly improving. Brand reputation and recommendations play an important influence in shaping consumer preferences. The study emphasizes the importance of healthier rapid meal options and higher product quality. The findings help manufacturers and marketers better grasp consumer expectations.

Keywords: Consumer Buying Behaviour, Instant Food Products, Convenience, Health Awareness, Brand Influence

Introduction

In today's fast-paced world, changes in work culture, urbanization, and increased time limitations have had a huge impact on consumer dietary habits. One of the most visible effects of this transition is an increase in demand for instant food products that are quick to prepare, convenient, and easy to consume. Instant foods like noodles, ready-to-eat meals, soups, and snacks have become staples in people's diets, particularly among students, working professionals, and nuclear families. This trend is becoming more noticeable not only in major cities, but also in semi-urban and emerging areas such as Erode District.

The success of instant meal products in the market is heavily influenced by consumer purchasing behaviour. Buying behaviour refers to the decision-making process and activities that people do while purchasing products and services. Several factors influence purchasing decisions for quick food products, including convenience, taste, price, availability, brand image, nutritional content, health concerns, and marketing methods. Understanding these aspects enables manufacturers and marketers to create products that better fulfil consumer expectations.

Erode District, noted for its blend of traditional food culture and expanding urban impact, provides an intriguing location for researching customer behaviour toward rapid food products. While traditional home-cooked meals are still crucial, rising work pressure, long commute times, and changing lifestyles have prompted customers to choose instant food options. At the same time, increased understanding of health, nutrition, and food safety has made customers more concerned about the quality, ingredients, and nutritional value of quick foods.

In recent years, health and dietary concerns have risen to prominence. When purchasing instant food products, consumers are paying more attention to nutritional labels, preservatives, artificial substances, and calorie counts. This has resulted in an increase in demand for healthier rapid foods that are low in fat, high in protein, and devoid of preservatives. Consumers' willingness to pay a premium for healthier products demonstrates a trend toward more mindful purchase practices.

Brand reputation and marketing methods have a significant impact on customer purchasing behaviour. Advertising efforts, special offers, celebrity endorsements, and internet reviews all help shape consumer attitudes and encourage brand tries. In competitive markets, brand trust and perceived quality frequently drive repeat purchases and customer pleasure.

Despite the prevalence of instant meal products, consumer satisfaction varies according to product quality, flavour, price, nutritional value, and availability. Identifying the gaps between consumer expectations and product performance is critical for improving product quality and increasing customer happiness. As a result, understanding consumer

views and areas for development can assist producers in developing better and healthier product choices.

Objectives of the Study

- To study consumer preferences and perceptions of instant food products, especially in terms of convenience and time-saving.
- To understand the importance of health and dietary factors in consumers' instant food purchasing decisions.
- To examine the influence of brand, marketing, and product quality on consumer satisfaction and improvement expectations.

Research Methodology

The study is based on primary data obtained from 144 people in Erode District. A structured questionnaire was utilized as the primary research technique to collect data on consumer preferences, attitudes, and purchasing behavior for quick food products. The sample strategy used was convenience sampling. The acquired data was coded and analyzed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, descriptive statistics, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to detect significant differences and correlations between variables. The findings were analyzed to generate relevant inferences regarding customer purchasing habits.

Review of Literature

Firozkhan.I. Pathan & Dr.S.M. Porapur(2024) the researcher examined that the relationship between the components that influence customer purchasing behaviour for garments/clothing products in Ramdurg Rural area. To accomplish so, questionnaires were provided to respondents who live in the Ramdurg area and are frequent garment consumers. The researcher chose 60 respondents using non-probability quota sampling. Three villages were chosen from the study: Turnur, Rankaloppa, and Halgatti, with 20 respondents selected at random from each village. The acquired data was analyzed using correlation, regression, and descriptive statistics to display the dataset, as well as statistical tools. The correlation model was employed in connection to objective one, and the regression model was used to test the study's hypothesis, and SPSS was used to test the remaining objectives.

Naincy Prajapati (2023) the author stated that Influencer marketing is a contemporary and inventive form of digital advertising that involves cooperating with individuals who have a large and active online following, known as influencers, to promote products, services, and companies. The fundamental idea is to use the influencer's credibility, authenticity, and influence over their following to positively effect consumer behavior. The current article is a comprehensive study that aims to gain a deep understanding of influencer marketing and its ubiquity in order to determine its genuine impact on consumer awareness and attitudes. The study is descriptive in nature, with secondary data sources.

Saqib Ali, Nadeem Khalid, Hafiz Muhammad Usama Javed,* and Dewan Md. Zahurul Islam (2020) the authors stated that the findings demonstrated that optimism and innovativeness have a favorable impact on adoption intentions, whereas insecurity and discomfort had a negative impact on adoption intentions when using OFDO services. The findings also indicated the moderating role of contextual factors like the COVID-19 epidemic. Furthermore, the PLS-MGA results show that the impacts of optimism and innovativeness are stronger in demographic variables such as youth, maleness, high income, and education level, among others. Insecurity and discomfort, on the other hand, have a greater impact on the opposite, i.e., the elderly, women, those with low incomes and education. Finally, this report offers valuable information for researchers, practitioners, service providers, and marketers.

Ika Atsari Dewi, Panji Deoranto, Voni Lariska Saraswati (2019) the authors stated that is to explore how product features influence consumer preferences and purchasing decisions for organic products. Data was collected by distributing questionnaires and interviewing 100 customers who purchased and consumed organic products from this retail outlet. The data collected was then analyzed using SPSS 17.0 and Smart PLS 3.2.0 software. This study's

findings show that variables related to product features have a considerable impact on consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. Consumer preferences can moderate the relationship between product features and purchasing decisions. Packaging design is the most influential factor in determining product qualities. Price is the most powerful factor in determining consumer preferences. Meanwhile, consumer demands are the most important factor influencing purchasing decisions.

Vinod Kumar Bishnoi & Ruchi Sharma (2009) the authors stated that The purpose of this study is to determine whether customers' residential backgrounds have varying influences on their purchasing decisions as a result of TV advertising. The survey included 866 Haryana teens (431 males and 435 females), 440 of them lived in rural areas and 426 in cities. The data was examined using counts, percentages, averages, and ANOVA. According to the survey, rural youths prefer television advertising over their urban counterparts. TV advertising has increased their involvement in product selection and purchase; they prefer to acquire TV-advertised products, which is beneficial when purchasing new products. Urban youths do not purchase TV-advertised products unless they require those brands.

Analysis & Interpretation

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
What motivates you to purchase instant food products?	145	2.7241	1.59201	.13221
How do you feel about the nutritional value of most instant food products?	145	2.0759	1.00749	.08367
Which factor most influences your choice of instant food product?	145	2.7448	1.48033	.12293
How often do you look at the nutritional label before purchasing instant food products?	145	2.2966	1.17924	.09793
How do you rate the overall quality of instant food products available in your area?	145	2.1034	1.12869	.09373
In which situations do you typically consume instant food products?	145	2.4759	1.13702	.09442
How much time do you typically save by consuming instant food products instead of preparing a meal?	145	2.6552	1.38634	.11513
Do you think instant food products are ideal for busy people?	145	2.2552	.86425	.07177
Do you consider health or dietary concerns when purchasing instant food?	145	3.3241	1.37378	.11409
Would you be willing to pay more for healthier instant food options (e.g., low-fat, high-protein)?	145	2.1172	.84577	.07024
How important is the presence of preservatives or artificial ingredients in instant food products to you?	145	3.1931	1.49674	.12430

How likely are you to try a new instant food brand if it is recommended by someone (e.g., friend, celebrity, online reviews)?	145	2.1241	1.12967	.09381
How do advertising campaigns influence your decision to purchase instant food products?	145	2.1310	.97365	.08086

	One-Sample Test					
	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
What motivates you to purchase instant food products?	20.605	144	.000	2.72414	2.4628	2.9855
How do you feel about the nutritional value of most instant food products?	24.811	144	.000	2.07586	1.9105	2.2412
Which factor most influences your choice of instant food product?	22.328	144	.000	2.74483	2.5018	2.9878
How often do you look at the nutritional label before purchasing instant food products?	23.451	144	.000	2.29655	2.1030	2.4901
How do you rate the overall quality of instant food products available in your area?	22.441	144	.000	2.10345	1.9182	2.2887
In which situations do you typically consume instant food products?	26.221	144	.000	2.47586	2.2892	2.6625
How much time do you typically save by consuming instant food products instead of preparing a meal?	23.063	144	.000	2.65517	2.4276	2.8827
Do you think instant food products are ideal for busy people?	31.421	144	.000	2.25517	2.1133	2.3970
Do you consider health or dietary concerns when purchasing instant food?	29.137	144	.000	3.32414	3.0986	3.5496
Would you be willing to pay more for healthier instant food options (e.g., low-fat, high-protein)?	30.144	144	.000	2.11724	1.9784	2.2561
How important is the presence of preservatives or artificial ingredients in instant food	25.689	144	.000	3.19310	2.9474	3.4388

products to you?						
How likely are you to try a new instant food brand if it is recommended by someone (e.g., friend, celebrity, online reviews)?	22.642	144	.000	2.12414	1.9387	2.3096
How do advertising campaigns influence your decision to purchase instant food products?	26.356	144	.000	2.13103	1.9712	2.2909

Interpretation

The study examines the elements that influence customer behaviour in the buying of instant meal products. A one-sample t-test was used with 145 respondents to assess their attitudes toward several aspects of instant food products, such as buying motivations, nutritional concerns, convenience, health, and branding. The test value used for comparison is 0, which means that each item is compared to a neutral value to see if the average replies depart considerably from the baseline.

Motivation for buying instant food products:

The average score of 2.7241 ($t = 20.605$, $p = 0.000$) indicates that respondents are moderately motivated to buy instant food products. Given that the test value is 0 and the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that the mean score deviates significantly from 0 (neutral). This implies that incentives for purchasing fast meals are not neutral, but rather tilt toward some degree of liking or need.

The average score of 2.0759 ($t = 24.811$, $p = 0.000$) suggests modest worry about the nutritional value of instant meal products. This finding suggests that while participants may not completely ignore the nutritional aspect, they do not consider it a significant factor when purchasing quick meals. Again, the p-value is statistically significant, indicating that respondents' sentiments toward nutritional value are not neutral.

Variables Influencing Product Choice: A mean score of 2.7448 ($t = 22.328$, $p = 0.000$) indicates that respondents prioritize variables beyond price and convenience when selecting instant food products. There is a distinct preference for specific product attributes, which influences purchasing decisions in addition to the basic characteristics.

Labelling Awareness: A mean of 2.2966 ($t = 23.451$, $p = 0.000$) indicates moderate attention to nutritional labels before purchasing. While the mean is not particularly high, it does indicate that many respondents examine labels but do not do so consistently. The significant t-test result indicates that this conduct differs from a neutral position.

Quality Instant Food Products:

The mean score of 2.1034 ($t = 22.441$, $p = 0.000$) indicates that respondents rate the overall quality of available quick food products slightly negatively but above neutral. Consumers may believe that instant foods in their area are of poor quality, but the mean indicates a tiny positive inclination, indicating room for development.

Participants consume instant foods in various contexts, as evidenced by their mean score of 2.4759 ($t = 26.221$, $p = 0.000$), indicating their practical use in daily routines. The findings demonstrate a definite inclination to utilize quick foods frequently, most likely in convenient or time-constrained situations.

Respondents reported saving a moderate amount of time when using instant foods, with a mean score of 2.6552 ($t = 23.063$, $p = 0.000$). This big result reinforces the view that one of the primary benefits of instant meal products is time efficiency, which is compatible with their hectic lifestyles. **Perceived Suitability for hectic People:** A mean of 2.2552 ($t = 31.421$, $p = 0.000$) indicates that respondents believe instant food is ideal for their hectic lifestyle. The high statistical significance shows that the vast majority of participants link fast foods with convenience for time-pressed consumers.

A mean score of 3.3241 ($t = 29.137$, $p = 0.000$) indicates that consumers prioritize health and dietary considerations when purchasing instant food products. This indicates that respondents are very worried about how instant foods affect their health, especially dietary restrictions, which influences their purchasing preferences.

Respondents are willing to spend more for healthier quick food options, with a mean of 2.1172 ($t = 30.144$, $p = 0.000$).

This readiness is moderate. The substantial t-value indicates that this is not a neutral reaction, although the preference for healthier options is not overwhelming.

Consumers are concerned about the inclusion of preservatives and artificial substances in instant foods, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.1931 ($t = 25.689$, $p = 0.000$). Respondents with a mean of 2.1241 ($t = 22.642$, $p = 0.000$) are somewhat willing to try new instant food brands suggested by others. This finding indicates that peer or influencer recommendations can affect product trials, but the effect is not significant.

Advertising campaigns had a moderate effect on respondents' purchase decisions, as indicated by the mean score of 2.1310 ($t = 26.356$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that, while marketing methods have an impact on customer behavior, they are not the only driving element.

AN		OVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
What motivates you to purchase instant food products?	Between Groups	4.318	1	4.318	1.584	.211
	Within Groups	316.232	116	2.726		
	Total	320.551	117			
How do you feel about the nutritional value of most instant food products?	Between Groups	.075	1	.075	.067	.797
	Within Groups	130.442	116	1.125		
	Total	130.517	117			
Which factor most influences your choice of instant food product?	Between Groups	36.745	1	36.745	17.792	.000
	Within Groups	239.568	116	2.065		
	Total	276.314	117			
How often do you look at the nutritional label before purchasing instant food products?	Between Groups	5.430	1	5.430	4.081	.046
	Within Groups	154.341	116	1.331		
	Total	159.771	117			
How do you rate the overall quality of instant food products available in your area?	Between Groups	39.302	1	39.302	38.807	.000
	Within Groups	117.478	116	1.013		
	Total	156.780	117			
In which situations do you typically consume instant food products?	Between Groups	26.965	1	26.965	23.462	.000
	Within Groups	133.315	116	1.149		
	Total	160.280	117			
How much time do you typically save by consuming instant food products instead of preparing a meal?	Between Groups	1.859	1	1.859	.942	.334
	Within Groups	228.921	116	1.973		
	Total	230.780	117			
Do you think instant food products are ideal for busy people?	Between Groups	8.356	1	8.356	12.582	.001
	Within Groups	77.042	116	.664		
	Total	85.398	117			
Do you consider health or dietary concerns when purchasing instant food?	Between Groups	16.605	1	16.605	9.139	.003
	Within Groups	210.759	116	1.817		
	Total	227.364	117			
Would you be willing to pay more for healthier instant food options (e.g., low-fat, high-protein)?	Between Groups	33.849	1	33.849	78.452	.000
	Within Groups	50.049	116	.431		
	Total	83.898	117			
How important is the presence of preservatives or artificial ingredients in instant food products to you?	Between Groups	.460	1	.460	.198	.657
	Within Groups	269.820	116	2.326		
	Total	270.280	117			
How likely are you to try a new instant food brand if it is	Between Groups	39.343	1	39.343	36.246	.000
	Within Groups	125.911	116	1.085		

recommended by someone (e.g., friend, celebrity, online reviews)?	Total	165.254	117			
How do advertising campaigns influence your decision to purchase instant food products?	Between Groups	.354	1	.354	.378	.540
	Within Groups	108.739	116	.937		
	Total	109.093	117			

Interpretation

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between two groups ($df = 1$) in their attitudes and behaviours about instant food products. ANOVA compares variability between groups to variability within groups; a significance value (Sig.) of less than 0.05 indicates a significant difference between groups. Factor impacting the choice of instant food product ($F = 17.792$, $p = .000$). This finding suggests that the two groups have considerably different influences on their product choices = (such as price, flavor, brand, or convenience). Group membership is a significant factor in determining decision-making criteria. The frequency of checking nutritional labels ($F = 4.081$, $p = .046$) A significant difference indicates that one group is more concerned with nutritional information than the other when purchasing instant meal products.

Overall quality perception ($F = 38.807$, $p = .000$). The very high F-value indicates a significant variation in how groups perceive the quality of instant food products accessible in their location. Situations of consumption ($F = 23.462$, $p = .000$). This suggests that the groups consume instant food in various situations (e.g., crises, hectic schedules, or routine meals) Perception of instant meals as excellent for busy people ($F = 12.582$, $p = .001$). The groups had significant differences in how strongly individuals link rapid meals with a busy lifestyle. Consideration of health or diet problems ($F = 9.139$, $p = .003$) this shows that health consciousness differs significantly between the two groups. Willingness to pay extra for healthier instant food options ($F = 78.452$, $p = 0.000$). This is one of the most compelling findings, suggesting a significant gap between groups in their willingness to pay a premium for healthier choices. Likely to try a new brand based on recommendations ($F = 36.246$, $p = .000$). This demonstrates how social influence (friends, celebrities, or online reviews) affects the two groups differently.

Conclusion

The analytical study on consumer purchasing behaviour for instant food products in Erode District demonstrates that instant foods have become a significant aspect of current consumption patterns as a result of changing lifestyles, time restrictions, and increased work obligations. The data show that convenience and time savings are the key motivators for consumers to choose quick meal products, notably among students, working professionals, and nuclear families. Instant foods are widely used as quick meal options amid hectic schedules and emergency scenarios.

The study also found that while purchasing instant meal products, people are becoming more concerned with their health and diet. Although convenience remains a key criterion, respondents are increasingly concerned about nutritional value, preservatives, artificial substances, and overall food quality. Many consumers actively study nutritional labels and are willing to pay a higher price for healthier options, indicating a move toward more informed and health-conscious purchasing behaviour.

Brand image, product quality, and social influence all have a big impact on consumer decisions. Recommendations from friends, family, and internet reviews are important in enticing consumers to try new companies, while perceived quality has a big influence on repeat purchases and satisfaction. However, the impact of traditional advertising appears to be limited, implying that customers rely more on trust, experience, and peer recommendations.

Overall, the survey found that, while instant meal products are popular due to their convenience, customers demand improvements in nutritional content, ingredient transparency, and product quality. To satisfy changing consumer expectations, manufacturers and marketers should prioritize producing healthier instant food options, improving labelling clarity, and establishing strong brand trust. The findings of this study can assist firms in developing successful marketing strategies, resulting in increased consumer satisfaction and long-term expansion of the instant food market in Erode district.

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