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Purchasing intentions of women toward processed food

Rajni Pandey *

Department of Home Science, Magadh Mahila College, Patna University, Patna, Bihar-800001, India.

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Abstract

The growing urbanization, breaking up of the traditional joint family system, desire for quality, time which translates into an increased need for convenience, increasing level of affluence in the middle income group, availability of varieties of products in several categories, changing role of women, easy lifestyles and evolving preferential options portray the food market in India as promising multifaceted, competitive and aggressive one and all these had brought about changes in food habits. The consumers' relationship with food and other everyday goods has changed dramatically, not only in the way products are purchased, but also in the way they are consumed. With the changing lifestyles of the consumers, quick and easy to prepare food has become more of a necessity than a luxury. The motivation behind this investigation is to investigate the statistic and psychographic factors influencing purchaser purchasing of processed food products.

The response from consumers clearly indicates that taste, cleanliness, manufacturing and expiry date, vegetarian and non-vegetarian information, nutritional information possess priority in their purchase decision making. Majority of the respondents reported that changing lifestyles, external influence, health and quality concern are the major factors affecting their purchasing intentions toward processed food.

Keywords: Consumer Buying Pattern; Processed Food Products; Quality; Nutritional Labeling; Decision Making; Price

1. Introduction

Busy and hectic lifestyles, increase in working population and urbanization, increase in per capita and disposable incomes, diminishing trend of cooking skills and motivation, the rapid expansion of convenience food retail chains, significant improvements in food processing and packaging technologies, and significant change in food-related lifestyles have increased the demand and consumption of processed food in both developed and emerging economies. India is an emerging economy, and with increasing income and increased urbanization coupled with the huge impact of Western culture, Indian consumers are moving towards high valued products. Traditionally in Indian society Women have shown low involvement in the purchase activity. However, increasing urbanization, the impact of Western culture, education, deep penetration of media, Women have moved out of boundaries of the house and taken up both traditional and non-traditional jobs. This has not only strengthened the economy well-being of the family but has never compromised with the nutritional balance of the family. In this situation, there is a greater involvement of the women in buying food themselves. In today's busy lifestyle of the people, the roles of packaged foods products have become more predominant. In India, out-of-home food consumption is increasing due to the rapid globalization supported by industrial and infrastructural growth and an increase of household's disposable incomes along with the real increase in spending power. In the case of food products, the consumers are switching from traditional foods to packaged food products. Food consumption pattern of women consumers is rapidly changing from unprocessed, unbranded low quality food products to the processed packed products. This changing role of the women has always being a concern for the researchers especially in the field of consumer behaviour.

*Corresponding author: Rajni Pandey

Hence, the study attempts to analyze the various factors that affect the buying behaviour of women consumers towards packaged processed food with following objectives:

- To investigate the socio-economic profile of the women consumers of Patna City.
- To assess the purchasing pattern of processed food of the respondents.
- To explore the degree of knowledge and awareness of the use of labelled packaged foods.

1.1. Research Hypotheses

Null hypotheses (H0): Consumer intentions do not lead to a buying decision. There is no relationship between consumer satisfaction and buying decision. Alternative hypotheses (H1): Consumer intentions lead to a buying decision. There is a relationship between consumer satisfaction and buying decision.

Scope of the study

Packaged food products play a vital role in every human in his day-to-day life. The present study gives an insight into important factors creating awareness and purchasing frequency of the product. It is based on a questionnaire method confined to only the users of packaged food products.

2. Review of literature

A study conducted by Chavadi and Kokatnur (2010) on “Driving factors and effectiveness of sales promotion in shopping malls-A consumer perspective” identified the factors governing consumers’ choice of shopping malls. In-depth product mix, good ambience, better shopping experience and desired service requirements like fast billing, parking, long operation hours etc. are salient factors. Other factors such as convenience in location or proximity to home, promotional factors like price discounts and “Buy one Get one offer” etc. influence purchase acceleration whereas samples given with the products has no influence on purchasing behavior.

Sanlier & Karakus (2010) conducted a study to determine the food purchasing behaviour of consumers from a supermarket in Turkey. With a sample size of 430, the study was conducted to identify the criteria which are taken into consideration by consumers while purchasing food. The statistical analysis showed a significant relationship between education levels, expenditure on food/nutrition and nutrition & reliability. The study also inferred that women paid more attention to nutrition and reliability criteria than the man did. When consumers shop for food due consideration is given to nutrition, reliability, cost and convenience.

Carrillo et. al (2011) investigated consumers’ factors underlying food choices and their attitude towards healthy eating. The data was collected from 200 respondents in Spain. The factors that were evaluated were health, mood, convenience, sensory appeal, natural content, price, weight control, familiarity and ethical concern. Out of this sensory appeal, price and convenience were the most concerned factors, whereas weight control, mood and familiarity were least concerned.

Sharma, Bhattacharya & Sonwaney (2012) investigated the relationship between traditional shops and modern organizations market. The main aim was to analyze consumer buying behaviour in various retail format. Authors argued that Indian retail is witnessing a paradigm shift towards the organized market, coupled with economic growth, changing lifestyles, urbanization, women’s participation in economic activities and spread of IT are some for factors of the retail sector.

Kaur & Singh (2014) made an attempt to find out the factor that leads to the purchase of processed foods in Punjab state of India. The major proposition that authors took was that changing lifestyles and growth in disposable income, rising double-income families and proportion of women in the workforce are the main fuel in rapid growth in demand for processed food. They also tried to find out the motive of the consumer for their choice of food. Also inferred that increased income, choice of family members specially children’s and ease of storage, an increased health awareness was another factor that motivates the purchase of processed food, whereas ease of availability, influenced advertisements, packaging designs, friend’s recommendation, promotional offers, are the external factors that influence buyer’s behaviour towards processed foods.

Siddiqui (2014) made an effort to evaluate the buying behaviour of working women and housewives for packaged and non-packaged food. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire targeting 125 respondents from Maharashtra province of India. The findings of the study clearly indicated a strong relationship between packaged food

and working women. Though in spite of these findings, the study had certain limitations and gap in research as demographic factors like age, education, and psychographic characteristics were not taken into consideration.

Madhvapaty & Dasgupta (2015) conducted a study on changing food habit of Indian consumers. They pointed out there exist a considerable difference in consumer habits across various cities. The attention paid to food purchase differs between men and women significantly. The authors also inferred that consumers want more transparency from food companies especially in pricing and packaging approaches.

Fernandes & Londhe (2015) compared the working women segment with the non-working segment and analyzed the influence of reference groups on their buying behaviour. The independent variables that were taken into account were age, marital status and income. These were tested against informational influence and utilitarian influence. The study involved the use of independent T-test and ANOVA. The reference groups that were taken into account were information from experts, family members, friends, peers etc. The outcome of the study clearly indicated a significant difference between the two groups.

3. Research methodology

Patna city of Bihar State was selected purposively due to convenience of the researcher. Random sampling procedure was adopted for the study. From Patna City 50 women consumers of processed foods were selected randomly. An interview schedule was prepared and used for primary data collection from the field. While developing the schedule, relevant secondary sources of information were carefully examined and due importance was given to various independent and dependent variables. It was pre-tested on five women consumers in a City, Necessary changes were incorporate and schedule was finalized and finally used in the field. The collected data was analyzed through MS-Excel spreadsheet and SPSS software.

4. Results and discussion

The results of the study are discussed below.

4.1. Demographic profile

The demographic profiles of women under study are discussed below.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of women consumers

N = 50			
Demographic Parameters	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)	30-35	25	50
	36-40	15	30
	Above 40	10	20
	Total	50	100
Qualification	Undergraduate	10	20
	Graduate	20	40
	Graduate +	15	30
	Post Graduate	5	10
Family Type	Nuclear	40	80
	Join	10	20
Monthly Income (Rs.)	Up to 25,000	02	4
	25,000 - 50,000	10	20
	Above 50,000	38	76
Total		50	100

Table 1 shows distribution of women consumers according to their demographic profile. Majority of the women were in the age group of 30-35 years. Near about half of the respondents were graduate (40%), followed by graduate with additional qualification (30%).

Majority of them were from nuclear family (80%) with monthly income above 50,000 (76%).

4.2. Users of Processed food

Consumer, irrespective of income groups, is mainly influenced by the opinions of their family members. The distribution of users of processed food in the family surveyed in present investigation is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Distribution of women according to users of processed food

N = 50			
SN	Users of Processed Foods	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Children	20	40
2.	College going	04	08
3.	Adults	02	04
4.	All the Family Members	24	48
	Total	50	100

Table 2 reveals that all the family members (48%) were the major consumers of processed food, followed by children (40%). The college-going and adults were only minor users of processed food.

Table 3 Sources of Information of processed Foods

SN	Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Shopkeeper	-	-
2.	TV/Radio/Internet	35	70
3.	Friend & Relatives	12	24
4.	Newspapers & Magazines	03	06
5.	Others	-	-
	Total	50	100

The source of information for purchasing of processed food in the family has been presented in Table 3.

Table 3 illustrates that TV/Radio/Internet (media) were the main source of information for purchase of processed food by majority of the women (70%). It shows that the reach of new technology in spreading information/awareness surpasses any other source. While evaluating the impact of advertising on consumer durables market observed that 'friends' is the main influence followed by relatives and hence they should be given more emphasis while planning promotion strategies. Advertisement is the next major influencing factor for the consumer durables.

Most of the families take purchase decisions collectively in the case of consumer durables and also revealed that advertisement or publicity through mass media proves to be the best source of reaching the public closely followed by information from friends and relatives. The rural consumers give more importance to the advertisements compared to urban consumers. Both rural and urban groups found that all the advertising media are equally important and effective.

4.3. Factors Affecting Purchasing of Processed Food

The quality of the product and its easy availability are the primary and the vital determinants of any consumer's buying behaviour. The issues while purchasing processed food has been presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Distribution of women according to factors affecting purchasing of processed food

N=50			
SN	Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Price	10	20
2.	Overall Quality	25	50
3.	Convenience	-	-
4.	Brand Image	15	30
5.	Any other	-	-
	Total	50	100

Table 4 shows the issues while purchasing processed food. Overall quality of food was the main factor considered by 50% of women consumers while purchasing processed food, followed by Brand image (30%) and was closely followed by price i.e. 20%. The religious and health issues were reasons under any other options for purchasing processed food. A well designed packaging acts as the main identifying feature for quality and quantity and make the consumers more informative and choosy. It further informs the consumers as to what quality, quantity and price, the package is worth off. The majorities of consumers was highly enlightened and are concerned of quality of the products.

4.4. Places of Purchase for Processed Food

The places from where the purchase for processed food in the family has been presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Distribution of women according to places of purchase for processed food

SN	Places of Purchased for Processed Food	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Local Kirana shop	15	30
2.	Super store	25	50
3.	Mall	10	20
4.	Order online	-	-
	Total	50	100

It is revealed from the Table 5 that the majority of women (50%) preferred to buy the processed food from super store followed by Local Kirana shop (30%). Online shopping for processed food was still found to be minimal and it may take time for people to adapt to this method of buying processed food. However, Local Kirana shop (30%) still has a prominent place in the choices for people to buy processed food from as it is more convenient. The consumers uniformly, both in urban and rural areas, desire to have quality of the products at reasonable price and tend to rely more on the advice of the retailers.

Table 6 Distribution of women according to awareness about label reading

N=50			
SN	Awareness about Label Reading	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	49	98
2.	No	01	02
	Total	50	100

Table 6 awareness about label reading. Labeling is a very important tool for transferring information on products characteristics to consumers but its potential is not always well exploited. Distribution of women families according to awareness about label reading while purchasing processed food has been presented in Table 6.

The data from Table 6 shows that most of the respondents (98%) do read labels before purchasing processed food. This shows that today's buyer is an informed buyer. Buyer tends to choose the products for which the information is published transparently. This information enables the buyer to make comparisons and arrive at a decision based on his/her requirements.

4.5. Motivating Factor to Read Labels

Table 7 Distribution of women according to motivating factor to read labels

N=50			
SN	Motivating Factor to Road Labels	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Product Appearance	03	06
2.	Like to know specific information	15	30
3.	Preference of some ingredients	05	10
4.	Health Reasons	25	50
5.	Religious beliefs	02	04
6.	Advertisements or food promotion	-	-
7.	Any other	-	-
	Total	50	100

Package is one of the main elements of the product appearance and as such is an important source of information since consumers rely heavily on labels for product information and also packaging is a significant marketing expenditure larger than advertising itself. Distribution of women families according to motivating factors to read labels while purchasing processed food has been presented in Table 7.

Table 7 specifies the motivating factors to read labels among women while purchasing processed food. Health reasons (50%) were found to be the most opted motivating factor followed by like to know specifics (30%), prefers some ingredients (10%) product appearance, advertisement or food promotions. About (4%) read labels due to religious beliefs. Consumers' usage of food label varies enormously depending on their motivation, personal ability and shopping behaviour. Particularly, consumers' usage of label elements depends on how important they valued the labeled information.

4.6. Reasons for Not Reading Food Labels

Table 8 Distribution of women according to reasons for not reading the labels

N=50			
SN	Reasons For Not Reading The Labels	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Familiarity/trust with the food/other	30	60
2.	Time constraints	14	28
3.	Unclear about full label component		
4.	Any other	06	12
	Total	50	100

Distribution of women families according to reasons for not reading food labels while purchasing processed food has been presented in Table 8.

The data presented in Table 8 depicts that the major reason for not reading food labels was the trust of the buyers on the brand/outlet for 60% women. Lack of time was also found to be another major reason by nearly 30% of the women to not read the labels. No interest, not having enough time to read labels or having a prior knowledge about food items were found as reason for lack of attention to food label.

4.7. Most Read Component of the Food Label

Accurate, easy-to-read, and scientifically valid nutrition and health information on food labels is an essential component of a comprehensive public health strategy to help consumers improve their diets and reduce their risk of diet-related diseases. Distribution according to the most read component of food label while purchasing processed food has been presented in Table 9.

Table 9 Distribution according to the most read component of food labels

N=50			
SN	Most read component of the food label	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Brand Name	11	22
2.	Manufacture Date	15	30
3.	Expiry Date	24	48
4.	Nutritional Information	-	-
5.	List of Ingredients	-	-
6.	Net Content	-	-
7.	Price of food	-	-
8.	Health Claims	-	-
9.	Specific Logo	-	-
10.	Food storage Instructions	-	-
	Total	50	100

The data presented in Table 9 reveals that expiry date was the most read component of the food label for nearly 50% of the women. The next important label component read was manufacture date (30%) and was closely followed by brand name (22%).

Reading nutrition labels can help the buyer choose between processed food products and keep a check on the amount of processed foods included in the diet. Most pre-packed foods have a nutrition label on the back or side of the packaging. This type of label includes information on energy (kJ/kcal), fat (saturated and unsaturated), carbohydrate, sugars, protein and salt. It may also provide additional information on certain nutrients such as fiber. All nutrition information is provided per 100 grams and sometimes per portion of the food.

5. Conclusion

Food consumption pattern in India is rapidly changing from unprocessed, unbranded low quality food products to the processed, packaged products. 50 women were selected by convenience sampling method from Patna city, Bihar, India. The data on purchasing of processed food and reading food labels were collected using interview-cum-questionnaire method. The results of the study showed that the 50% of the women were in 30-35 years of age group. Near about half of the women were graduate. The monthly income of majority of the women was above Rs. 50,000. There are multiple factors that affect the consumers' behaviour towards the purchasing of processed foods. All the family members (48%) were the major consumers of processed food. TV/Radio/Internet (media) was the main sources of information that affect purchasing of processed food. Overall quality was the main factor considered by majority of women while

purchasing processed food. The highest consumption of processed food was found to be for special occasions. The majority of women preferred to buy the processed food from super store. Most of the respondents 98% read food labels before purchasing processed food. Health reasons were the major motivating factors for purchase of processed food. Expiry date was the most read component of the food label by nearly 50% of the women consumer. The small fonts (and hence difficulty in reading) was the major difficulty faced by majority of the women. It was also found that very few women were unaware of food labels. Most of the respondents view these labels as too scientific and difficult to understand, complaining that the letters of the nutritional label are too small and scarcely visible and that the actual nutritional values related to a single serving are not easily comprehensible. It is also important to underline that a high percentage of consumers believe that nutrition claims are not very reliable.

Recommendations

- Packaged food products are consumed more by lower age groups. Hence, manufacturers should make their products to taste like home cooked meals and also focus on other health aspects by attaching nutritive value to the products.
- Consumers nowadays prefer to purchase packaged food products mostly from retail outlets as they have wider choices for product selection. So, the display of the products on shelves of the stores is an area of focus in the marketing strategy of the packaged food manufacturers.
- The high price was an important reason for not purchasing certain categories of packaged food products as stated by the majority of the respondents. So manufacturers must strive to reduce the price to make it affordable for all the categories of the consumers.
- As the usage of packaged food products is more during special occasions like birthdays and get together, the marketers can adopt the strategy of product bundling to offer product combinations relating to the occasions.
- As there is a vital need for the consumer to save time in the present fast paced world, the packaged food products companies can give a tough competition to fresh food market provided if they are able to offer products at lower prices without compromising the quality.
- Preference of packaged food products is more among female consumers as it enables them to present more varieties for their families with less effort.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Disclosure of conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Authors short biography



Dr. Rajni Pandey, after getting first position (Topper) in the Panel of Successful candidates by BPSC (Bihar Public Service Commission), Patna in 2018, is presently Contributing as an Assistant Professor in Magadh Mahila College in Patna University. She also has been throughout TOPPER and Gold Medalist during her carrier graph of whether it was B.Sc. (Home-Science) from Rajendra Agricultural University, Pusa, Samastipur, M.Sc. and Ph.D. (HSEE) from CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hissar, Haryana. She qualified ICAR (JRF) in 1997 and UGC-NET in 2000. She has 4 years of professional experience in academics of teaching in Undergraduate as well as Postgraduate.. She is honoured as member of Research Development cell of Patna University. More than 19 research papers in journals of national and international repute has been published belonging to her and many have been presented by her in national and international conferences and seminars organized by premium universities and institutes. one more academic accomplishment she achieved recently is editor of a book.