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Full Length Research Article

Consumer Awareness: Case of Ready-to-Eat Food Products in Kashmir Valley

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Abstract

The present study entitled "Consumer awareness: Case of ready-to-eat food products in Kashmir valley" was conducted during the year 2021. The present study was a descriptive type of research in nature and was based on both primary and secondary data. The area of study was district Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory of India. The total numbers of 300 people were selected for the study as sample and the investigation incorporated convenient sampling technique. The study found that the majority of the out of 300 respondents all of 300 respondents i.e. (100 per cent) were familiar with the "Ready-to-Eat" food products. Furthermore, the study revealed that, 123 respondents i.e. (41.00 per cent) said that they get information about "Ready-to-Eat" food products from family. As far as advertisements are concerned the highest numbers of respondents which includes 141 respondents i.e. (47.00 per cent) said that internet is the mode of advertisement increasing their awareness towards "Ready-to-Eat" food products. Study also concluded that, 187 respondents i.e. (62.33 per cent) said that Advertisements through TV, Internet, Radio and hoardings keep them up to date regarding the segment.

***Key words*: Ready-to-eat, Descriptive, Consumer awareness, Food products**

The varied climatic conditions of India, which favours the mass production of food grains and accessibility of hopeful infrastructural facilities, are the key gears which have always supported the food processing segment of our country to turn into the fifth biggest within the world. Indian food processing sector represents 32 percent of the total food market and the sector fetches more than 2.2 per cent of the absolute Foreign Direct Investment inflows to India. The Indian food processing segment was estimated at INR 25,691.30 billion during the period of 2018 and is projected to arrive at INR 53,435.52 billion by financial year 2024, extending at a "Compound Annual Growth Rate" of 12.09 per cent from the financial year 2020 to 2024 [1]. The "Ready-to-Eat" food industry incorporates those products which could be eaten instantly and which do not need any further cooking or fixings subsequent to opening. These are the commercially prepared food items with are sold to the consumers as hot, ready to consume with an objective to ease in eating. The "Ready-to-Eat" food products include the food items such as canned and preserved food items, instant eatables, frozen and dried foods etc. [2]. These products are gaining popularity among the consumers due to its ease in preparation, consumption and storage [3]. The experts are with an opinion that the Indian "Ready to Eat" segment is projected to grow at a promising "Compound Annual Growth Rate" of 16.24 per cent and is projected to earn the revenue of 68.47 percent till the period of 2024 [4]. Consumer awareness is all about the quality and quantity of information a consumer holds with respect of goods and services available in the market. Every marketer in the present era of globalization focused on the achieving the highest degrees of profits. In every single imaginable manner, the producers are attempting to increase the offer of their goods and services. While having the objectives of profit maximization the marketers underestimate the consumer focus and satisfaction. In this view many sellers cheat the consumers in the form of black marketing, selling low quality products, price discrimination and so on. In this way to save himself from being cheated, it is essential for a customer to know. Thusly, consumer awareness implies making attention to a buyer towards his privileges and obligations. It has been noticed all the time that a shopper doesn't get right products and ventures. He is charged an extremely excessive cost or debased or bad quality products are offered to him. Consequently, it becomes necessary to make him aware. Consumers are exploited because they are ignorant, honest and have very less information about the market. Therefore, it becomes very necessary to aware the public so that they will safeguard themselves from the exploitations by the sellers as whole. Awareness and knowledge enable the consumers to tackle down the issues which they face during purchase of goods and services. Studies are evidence that the level of awareness varies

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from consumer to consumer, from product to product, from market to market and so on. A study conducted during the year 2010 on 300 consumers concluded that, out of 41.6 per cent of respondents possessed a least degree of awareness with respect to customer terms. Among them, 15.0 percent were male and 26.6 percent were females. Just 23.3 per cent respondents had fractional awareness within that 15.0 percent are guys and 8.3 percent females. Out of aggregate, 35 percent respondents had elevated level of awareness with 20% having a place with guys and 15 percent to females. Level of awareness with respect to different phrasings was seen that 53.3 percent males and 66.6 percent females knew about the Ag mark [5]. The “Ready-to-Eat” food products are widely preferred due to changing lifestyle of the people. As people are getting busy in their daily activities, they don’t possess enough time to cook which leads them towards convenient eatables [6]. There are several other factors which are responsible for increasing consumption and preference of “Ready-to-Eat” food products such as taste orientation and convenience, health orientation, and easy accessibility [7]. Studies are in support of the claim that there is an increasing demand of “Ready-to-Eat” food products however it must be taken into consideration that the consumer awareness and availability of products have been identified as the key factors influencing the buying pattern of the consumers with respect to “Ready-to-Eat” food products [8]. Another study conducted in India seeking consumer awareness regarding food and food ingredients concluded that out of 126 numbers of respondents, 91.7 per cent of consumers were aware with respect to preservatives used in food, 84.9 per cent were aware about the flavouring agents used in food but their knowledge and level of awareness was inadequate in terms of the impact of the synthetic flavouring and preservation agents used in packed food stuffs [9]. However, there are certain studies which state that the educated customers are mostly health conscious and are highly aware regarding the food items which they are consuming and their impact on health. Furthermore, the factors influencing their perception level towards “Ready-to-Eat” food products were found as ingredients, brand and packaging of food items [10]. With an objective to convert the increasing demand for “Ready-to-Eat” food products into business opportunities all the business organizations need to increase the level of consumer awareness regarding all the aspects associated with the “Ready-to-Eat” food products [11].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The investigation was a descriptive type of research in nature and was based on both primary and secondary data. The area of study was district Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory of India. The total numbers of 300 people were selected for the study as sample from the study area by employing convenient sampling technique. The primary data was collected through a predetermined schedule and the secondary data was collected through online websites, journals and so on. Finally, the percentage analysis and frequency analysis were used to present the data to get meaningful results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Familiarity of respondents with “Ready-to-Eat” food products

The (Table 1) represent the familiarity of respondents with “Ready-to-Eat” food products. Within the 300 number of respondents all 300 respondents i.e. (100 per cent) were familiar, followed by 0 respondents i.e. (0.00 per cent) were not familiar with the with “Ready-to-Eat” food products.

Table 1 Familiarity of respondents with “Ready-to-Eat” food products

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	300	100
No	0	0.00
Total	300	100

Source of information about “Ready-to-Eat” food products to the respondents

The (Table 2) represents the information about “Ready-to-Eat” food products to the respondents. Out of 300 respondents, 32 respondents i.e. (10.66 per cent) said that they get information from friends about “Ready-to-Eat” food products, followed by 123 respondents i.e. (41.00 per cent) said that they get information from family, followed by 88 respondents i.e. (29.34 per cent) said that they get information from advertisement, followed by 57 respondents i.e. (19.00 per cent) said that they get information from retailers, followed by 0 respondents i.e. (0.00 per cent) said that they get information from others about “Ready-to-Eat” food products.

Table 2 Source of information about “Ready-to-Eat” food products to the respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Friends	32	10.66
Family	123	41.00
Advertisement	88	29.34
Retailers	57	19.00
Others	0	0.00
Total	300	100

Most commonly known brand of “Ready-to-Eat food” products to the respondents

The (Table 3) represents the most commonly known brand of “Ready-to-Eat” food products to the respondents. Out of 300 respondents, 17 respondents i.e. (5.67 per cent) said that the mostly commonly known brand of “Ready-to-Eat” food products to them is MTR, followed by 32 respondents i.e. (10.67 per cent) said that the mostly commonly known brand to them is Haldiram’s, followed by 39 respondents i.e. (13.00 per cent) said that the mostly commonly known brand to them is Balaji, followed by 46 respondents i.e. (15.34 per cent) said that the mostly commonly known brand is Britannia, followed by 68 respondents i.e. (22.66 per cent) said that the mostly commonly known brand to them is Parle, followed by 53 respondents i.e. (17.66 per cent) said that the mostly commonly known brand to them is ITC, followed by 45 respondents i.e. (15.00 per cent) said that the mostly commonly known brand of “Ready-to-Eat” food products to them is Kissan.

Table 3 Most commonly known brand of “Ready-o-Eat” food products to the respondents

Brands	Frequency	Percentage
MTR	17	5.67
Haldiram’s	32	10.67
Balaji	39	13.00
Britannia	46	15.34
Parle	68	22.66
ITC	53	17.66
Kissan	45	15.00
Total	300	100

Modes of advertisements increasing the consumer awareness towards “Ready-to-Eat” food products

The (Table 4, Fig 1) represents the Modes of advertisements increasing the consumer awareness towards

"Ready-to-Eat" food products. Out of 300 respondents 64 respondents i.e. (21.33 per cent) said that television is the mode of advertisement increasing their awareness towards "Ready to Eat" food products, followed by 15 respondents i.e. (5.00 per cent) said that radio is the mode of advertisement increasing their awareness, followed by 38 respondents i.e. (12.67 per cent) said that newspaper is the mode of advertisement increasing their awareness, followed by 141 respondents i.e. (47.00 per cent) said that internet is the mode of advertisement increasing their awareness, followed by 42 respondents i.e. (14.00 per cent) said that banners and hoardings is the mode of advertisement increasing their awareness towards "Ready-to-Eat" food products.

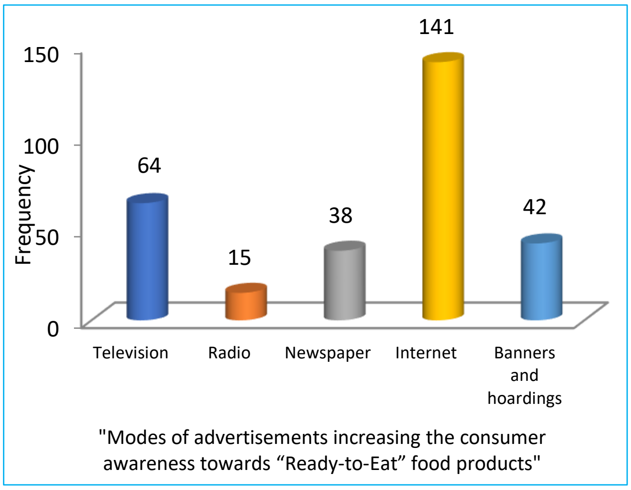

Fig 1 Modes of advertisements increasing the consumer awareness towards "Ready-to-Eat" food products

Table 4 Modes of advertisements increasing the consumer awareness towards "Ready-to-Eat" food products

Modes of advertisements	Frequency	Percentage
Television	64	21.33
Radio	15	5.00
Newspaper	38	12.67
Internet	141	47.00
Banners and hoardings	42	14.00
Total	300	100

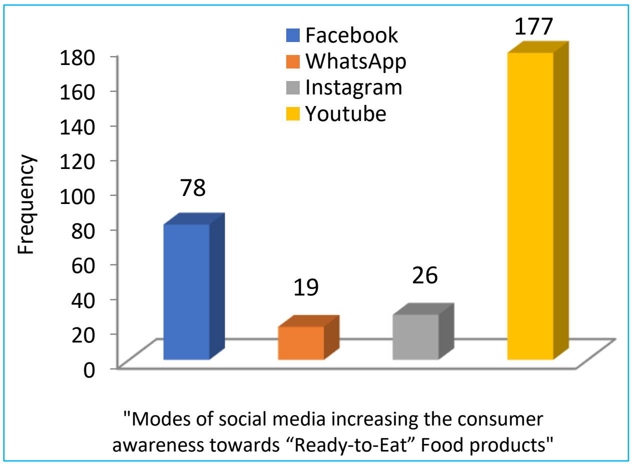

Fig 1 Modes of social media increasing the consumer awareness towards "Ready-to-Eat" food products

Modes of social media increasing the consumer awareness towards "Ready-to-Eat" food products

The (Table 5, Fig 2) represents the Modes of social media increasing the consumer awareness towards "Ready-to-Eat" food products. Out of 300 respondents, 78 respondents i.e. (26 per cent) said that Face Book is the social media network which increases their awareness towards the "Ready-to-Eat" food products, followed by 19 respondents i.e. (6.33 per cent) said that Whats App is the social media network which increases their awareness, followed by 26 respondents i.e. (8.67 per cent) said that Instagram is the social media network which increases their awareness, followed by 177 respondents i.e. (59.00 per cent) said that YouTube is the social media network which increases their awareness towards the "Ready-to-Eat" food products.

Table 5 Modes of social media increasing the consumer awareness towards "Ready-to-Eat" Food products

Modes of social media	Frequency	Percentage
Face book	78	26
Whats App	19	6.33
Instagram	26	8.67
YouTube	177	59.00
Total	300	100

Most informative agency keeping the consumers aware an up to date regarding "Ready-to-Eat" food products

The (Table 6) represents the most informative agency keeping the consumers aware an up to date regarding "Ready-to-Eat" food products. Within 300 number of respondents, 113 respondents i.e. (37.66 per cent) said that traders like retailers, wholesalers and distributors, keep them up to date regarding the "Ready to Eat" food products, followed by the 187 respondents i.e. (62.33 per cent) said that advertisements through TV, internet, radio and hoardings keep them up to date regarding the "Ready-to-Eat" food products.

Table 6 Most informative agency keeping the consumers aware an up to date regarding "Ready-to-Eat" food products

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Traders like retailers, wholesalers and distributors	113	37.66
Advertisements through TV, Internet, Radio and hoardings	187	62.33
Total	300	100

CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted during the year 2021. It was revealed from the study that all the 300 respondents i.e. (100 per cent) were familiar with "Ready-to-Eat" food products. Furthermore, the study revealed that, 123 respondents i.e. (41.00 per cent) said that they get information about "Ready-to-Eat" food products from family, followed by 88 respondents i.e. (29.34 per cent) said that they get information about "Ready-to-Eat" food products from advertisement. Also, the highest number of respondents which includes 68 respondents i.e. (22.66 per cent) said that the mostly commonly known brand of "Ready-to-Eat" food products to them is Parle, followed by 53 respondents i.e. (17.66 per cent) said that the mostly commonly known brand of "Ready-to-Eat" food products to them is ITC. As far as advertisements are concerned the highest number of respondents which includes 141 respondents i.e. (47.00 per cent) said that internet is the mode of advertisement increasing their awareness towards "Ready-to-Eat" food products followed by 64 respondents i.e. (21.33 per cent) said that television is the mode of advertisement increasing their awareness towards “Ready-to-Eat” food products. Furthermore, the majority of respondents which included 177 respondents i.e. (59.00 per cent) said that YouTube is the social media network which increases their awareness towards the “Ready-to-Eat” food products. Lastly the study concluded that out of 300 respondents, 113 respondents i.e. (37.66 per cent) said that Traders like retailers, wholesalers and distributors, keep them up to date regarding the “Ready-to-Eat” food products, followed by 187 respondents i.e. (62.33 per cent) said that Advertisements through TV, Internet, Radio and hoardings keep them up to date regarding the “Ready-to-Eat” food products.

Limitations

- Present investigation was limited till the district Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir union territory of India therefore results can’t be generalized.
- Due to COVID-19 pandemic issues only 300 numbers of respondents got ready for a face-to-face interaction otherwise the size of sample would have been more.
- There will be always a wide range of scope of further study in this subject. As researcher we tried our level best to compile an empirical paper on this topic but there are still many facts and figures behind the blanket and our continuous effort will be to put them forward in public domain soon.

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