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A SEGMENTATION STUDY OF WOMEN CONSUMERS IN SALEM BASED ON THEIR CONSUMPTION PATTERN OF READY-TO-EAT FOOD

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Abstract:-Food is something that people consume on a daily basis. Undoubtedly food accounts for the largest share of consumer spending. An interesting feature of the time- starved modern Indian consumer is that, they are in no mood to spend an hour in the kitchen preparing food, and thus they are now adopting a new eating habit to suit their lifestyle. Ready-To-Eat Food is a result of this new shift. Though these products are well known for their convenience and taste, health is definitely taking precedence among consumers who are making this shift in the food products. Segmenting the market is an important marketing strategy adopted by the marketer and when it comes to Ready-To-Eat Food, segmentation based on lifestyle can be applied to develop proper marketing strategies. Thus the present study aims to profile the Ready-To-Eat Food consumer lifestyles segments with special reference to Salem, a growing metropolitan city in Tamilnadu. The study will explore new highlights in the field of segmentation.

Keywords:Consumer behavior , Segmentation , Food related lifestyle , Marketing strategy, Quality consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

Food is something that people consume on a daily basis. Undoubtedly food accounts for the largest share of consumer spending. With more disposable income in their pockets, people are more interested in new products and their propensity to try and taste different things increases. Another interesting feature of the time- starved modern Indian consumer is that, they are in no mood to spend an hour in the kitchen preparing food, and thus they are now adopting a new eating habit to suit their lifestyle. The modern consumer is stocking up packaged and Ready-To-Eat / Cook products that not only serve the purpose of a tasty meal but also save the time. Thus taste and convenience become major requirements. This is the result of the busier lifestyle of the modern consumer with both partners working and lesser time available for shopping as well as preparing food at home. Thus Ready-To-Eat food products becomes handy to them.

READY-TO-EAT FOOD PRODUCTS:

Ready-To-Eat food products are those which can be used without any cooking .These products are those which are prepared in advance and that which can be consumed as it is purchased .The shelf life of such products will be less than 18 months. Ready-To-Eat (RTE) foods market in India is currently worth Rs.130 Crores. And it is expected to further expand to Rs.2900 crores by 2015.

Many companies like ITC, MTR,HUL,Parle ,Amul have already placed their foot prints in this field. The Ready-To-Eat products are available in large varieties starting from chapattis and rotis to gravies like Paneer Butter Masala ,Palak Paneer , Chicken Tikka and other breakfast items like upma, semia, pongal etc. along with snacks like samosas ,pakodas and even bhaji. The previous studies have helped to understand that the rising demand for the Ready food products are mainly attributed to changes in socio- demographic characteristics and consumer lifestyles along with the emerging organized and open format retail. However, in addition to the convenience factor, Health is another feature which companies are adopting to target their consumers. While variety and taste are two important needs, health is definitely taking precedence among consumers who are making this shift in the food products.

To survive in the market, today's marketer need to always keep a track of the ever changing needs of the customer to optimize their market. To identify the needs of the customers the first step is market segmentation. The justification for

segmenting consumer markets is that consumers who share similar characteristics will share similar attitudes, wants and needs. Thus they will have similar responses towards marketing stimulation. When it comes to Ready-To-Eat Food, segmentation based on lifestyle can be applied to develop proper marketing strategies. Although there is growing demand for Ready-To-Eat Food Products in India no information is available regarding marketing strategies for these products. Therefore the present study aims to fill this gap by profiling the Ready-To-Eat Food consumer lifestyles segments with special reference to Salem, which is growing to be a Metropolitan city and includes a wide range of consumers who differ in the lifestyle, attitudes, and other factors. Such a diversified consumer group needs special care and attention while drafting marketing strategies. Thus, a study about the segmentation of consumers of Salem will definitely help to explore new areas in the field.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The following are the objectives for the proposed study:

1. To find out the factors which influence the purchase of the Ready-To-Eat food products.
2. To understand the Ready-To-Eat food related lifestyle of Salem consumers.
3. To segment the Salem consumers based on their Ready-To-Eat Food orientation .

This section deals with the research methodology adopted by the researcher for the present study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for the study is as follows:

Type of research:

The present study is Descriptive in the sense that the study tries to describe the buying pattern of consumers regarding Ready-To-Eat Food Products. The degree of purchases and usage of the Ready -To-Eat Food products varies with respect to age, income, professional status, type of family etc of the respondents. An exploratory research is used to explore the relationship, without manipulating the variables. In the present study the factors like price, quality, taste, brand, packaging, purchase place, convenience, etc are analysed to determine the various consumer segments existing in the market.

Sampling design:

Sampling design is the way of selecting a sample from the whole population of the study. The present study has the population as the women in Salem city. The researcher has collected a sample of 300 from various sources such as schools, colleges, banks, hospitals, telephone directories, departmental stores, Rotary Clubs, Ladies Clubs, and Associations like IMA, IDA, and BDA etc.

Data collection tools:

The present study is conducted based on the data collected from the consumers. For this purpose Schedule method is adopted by the researcher. Schedules containing a set of questions related to the study were taken to the respondents and the researcher personally sought the answers to the questions listed in the proforma. The researcher then recorded the answers provided by the respondents in the space meant for them. In certain cases the schedule was handed over to the respondents where they are able to fill it up by themselves.

Pilot study:

Before starting the data collection, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher. The framed schedule was administered to 25 respondents randomly selected from the sampling frame. The difficulties faced by the respondents in answering certain questions were noted and the required changes were administered to frame the final schedule. The final schedule was administered to collect the primary data for the study.

Framework of analysis :

The collected data is analysed using SPSS and the results were interpreted accordingly. The statistical tools included many tests like ANOVA, Factor analysis and Cluster analysis

FINDINGS

The Preferences and satisfaction of the respondents towards the purchases and consumption of Ready-To-Eat Food Products are analyzed with the help of factor analysis . The various factors influencing the purchases and consumption of Ready-To-Eat Food products which emerged out of the pilot study conducted were presented in the form of Statements in the Schedule. The respondents are asked to mark their opinions about these statements on a five point scale ranging from “Strongly agree to strongly disagree”.

Factor Analysis

Factor Analysis is used for analyzing the various factors influencing the food lifestyle of the respondents towards Ready-To-Eat Food Products.

Table 1: Factor Analysis - KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.755
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2,173.18
	Df	66
	Sig.	0.000

Kaiser (1974) suggests that values of 0.9 or higher are great and values below 0.5 are unacceptable. Since the value obtained in this study is 0.755 the sample adequacy is very high and Factor Analysis can be effectively applied here. The output of the Factor analysis is obtained by using the Principal component analysis and specifying the rotation.

Table 2: Communalities

Variables	Extract
RTE food products reduces the time taken for cooking (X ₁)	0.780
RTE food products saves time without going to restaurants (X ₂)	0.561
RTE is preferred as home cooking is difficult (X ₃)	0.661
RTE food products are cheaper compared to restaurants (X ₄)	0.653
I feel that RTE Food Products available have affordable price (X ₅)	0.517
RTE food products are costlier compared to food cooked from scratch (X ₆)	0.743
RTE Food Products are useful for dishes which I do not know to make or which is difficult to prepare(X ₇)	0.763
RTE Food products give me pride for cooking tasty food (X ₈)	0.654
My entire family is excited when the Ready-To-Eat Food is served. (X ₉)	0.696
I find that the information on the labels of RTE food products are sufficient enough to know their value and quality (X ₁₀)	0.636
RTE Food Products are of equal quality when compared to home cooked food (X ₁₁)	0.824
I will surely recommend RTEfood Products to my friends and relatives (X ₁₂)	0.599

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 2 shows the communality values. Communality value can be defined as the proportion of variance in any one of the original variables, which is captured by the extracted factors. Communality values below 0.5 are not considered for analysis and thus 4 statements have been eliminated. From the table it can be seen that after four factors were extracted and retained, the communality is 0.78 for variable 1, 0.561 for variable 2 and so on. This means that 67.39 % of the variance is being captured by the four extracted factors together whereas variable 5 exhibits a low communality value of 0.517. This implies that only 51.7 % of the variance in variable 5 is captured by the extracted factors.

The history of the derived components and the methodology used for extraction of the four variables is given in Table 3. Note that the first component accounts for the most variance (21.21 %), the second accounts for the second greatest amount (19.23 %), the third accounts for the amount (17.5 %) and the fourth accounts for the amount (9.46 %) and so on.

Table 3: Total Variance Explained

Compo Nent	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumu %	Total	% of Variance	Cumul %	Total	% of Variance	Cumul %
1	3.486	29.046	29.046	3.486	29.046	29.046	2.545	21.207	21.207
2	1.863	15.526	44.572	1.863	15.526	44.572	2.307	19.225	40.432
3	1.781	14.845	59.417	1.781	14.845	59.417	2.100	17.502	57.934
4	0.957	7.975	67.392	0.957	7.975	67.392	1.135	9.458	67.392
5	0.682	5.685	73.078						
6	0.649	5.410	78.487						
7	0.575	4.790	83.277						
8	0.547	4.560	87.837						
9	0.455	3.792	91.629						
10	0.392	3.268	94.897						
11	0.309	2.577	97.473						
12	0.303	2.527	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Four components are extracted because Eigen values greater than 1. Together they account for approximately 67.39 % of the variance. It is also noted that while the rotated (Rotation section) and unrotated (Extraction section) solutions each account for the same total amount of variance, the amount of variance attributed to each component differs between the solutions. The history of the derived components is outlined in the Table 4 and also shown by the Scree plot.

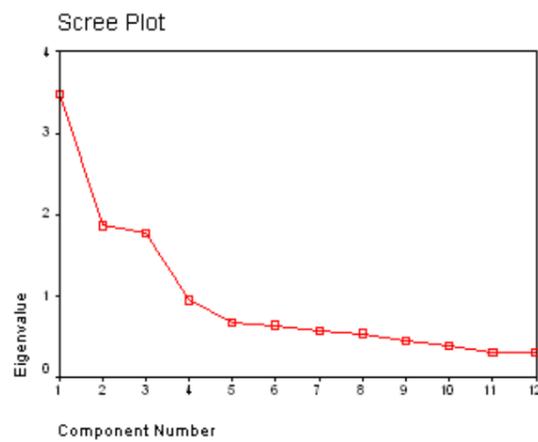


Table 5 shows the rotated component matrix which lists the factor loadings for each variable in the rotated solution. The table shows that the four factors extracted together account for 67.31% of the total variance. It is observed from the analysis that 3 variables load into the first component in the component matrix. The rotated component matrix indicates a clearer separation. It is clear that the first rotated factor F1, explaining 21.21 % of total variance, reveals strong associations between X_{10} , X_{11} and X_{12} having loadings of 0.828, 0.794, 0.729 respectively on factor 1. This suggests that factor 1 is a combination of these variables. Therefore this factor can be interpreted as “Quality” according to the characteristics of the composite variables.

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix

Variables	Component			
	1	2	3	4
X10	0.828	0.067	-0.032	-0.066
X11	0.794	0.080	0.100	-0.081
X12	0.729	0.060	0.253	-0.022
X7	0.104	0.851	0.059	0.453
X9	0.123	0.838	0.133	-0.077
X8	0.153	0.770	0.128	0.018
X4	-0.045	0.770	0.875	0.241
X5	0.462	0.471	0.798	0.265
X6	0.092	0.069	0.727	0.010
X1	0.106	-0.010	0.798	0.871
X3	0.041	0.140	0.727	0.645
X2	-0.065	0.124	0.212	0.568

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Now for factor 2 the variables X_7 , X_8 and X_9 have a high loading of 0.851, 0.838, and 0.77 respectively. These variables can be clubbed into a single factor called “Diverse cuisine”. As for factor 3 it is evident that X_4 , X_5 and X_6 have the highest loading of 0.875, 0.798, 0.721 and this factor can be termed as “Economy”. As for factor 4, it is evident that X_{11} , X_{12} , X_3

have the highest loading of 0.871, 0.645 and 0.568 and this factor can be termed as “Convenience” factor.

1.Level of Agreement for the convenience factors in purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products.

Table No.6 describes the level of agreement stated by the respondents regarding the convenience factor towards the preference of purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products. The factors which determine the level of agreement are “Ready-To-Eat food products reduces the time taken for cooking (X₁), Ready-To-Eat food products saves time without going to restaurants (X₂) and Ready-To-Eat food is preferred as home cooking is difficult (X₃)”.

It is clear from Table 6 that 49.67 % of the respondents have agreed with the convenience factor of “Ready-To-Eat food products reduces the time taken for cooking”, 50.33 percent of the respondents agree with the convenience factor of “Ready-To-Eat saves convenience without going to restaurants” and 45.67 percent of them strongly agree with the convenience factor of “Ready-To-Eat is preferred as home cooking is difficult”

Table No.6 Level of Agreement for the convenience factors in purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products.

Convenience Factors	SDA		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		SA		Mean Rank
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
(X ₁)	6	1.00	27	4.50	83	13.83	298	49.67	186	31.00	2.17
(X ₂)	16	2.67	45	7.50	123	20.50	302	50.33	114	19.00	1.88
(X ₃)	7	1.17	56	9.33	121	20.17	274	45.67	142	23.67	1.95
Reliability	0.642										

To identify the factor which has strong influence on the respondents' attitude towards Ready-To-Eat Food Friedman's test analysis was used and the results are also given in Table 6 . It can be noted that among the 3 factors “Ready-To-Eat food products saves time without going to restaurants”(X₂) was ranked first with the mean score of 1.88. It is followed by the “Ready-To-Eat is preferred as home cooking is difficult” – X₃ (1.95) . This shows that most of them believe that the Ready-To-Eat Food is an alternative to the habit of going out to eat as it gives them the convenience of eating the restaurant - like tasty food at home. Further the reliability among the factors relating to quality also observed through Cronbache's alpha method and its result is also shown as 0.642.

2.Level of Agreement for Economy factors in purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products.

Table No.7 describes the level of agreement stated by the respondents regarding the Economy factor for the preference towards Ready-To-Eat Food Products. The factors which determine the level of agreement are “Ready-To-Eat food products are cheaper compared to restaurants (X₁), “I feel that Ready-To-Eat Food Products available have affordable price” (X₂), “Ready-To-Eat food products are costlier compared to food cooked from scratch” (X₃).

It is clear from Table 7 that 41.83 % of the respondents agree with the Economy factor of “Ready-To-Eat food products are cheaper compared to restaurants”, and 44.50 percent of them agreed with the Economy factor of Ready-To-Eat food products are costlier compared to food cooked from scratch . Thus it is clear for the findings that respondents agree that the Ready-To-Eat food is costlier compared to other options like home - cooked food and restaurants.

Table No.7 Level of Agreement for Economy factors in purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products.

Economy Factors	SDA		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		SA		Mean Rank
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
(X ₄)	40	6.67	84	14.00	151	25.17	251	41.83	74	12.33	1.97
(X ₅)	23	3.83	103	17.17	168	28.00	227	37.83	79	13.17	1.90
(X ₆)	22	3.67	78	13.00	124	20.67	267	44.50	109	18.17	1.87
Reliability	0.785										

The Friedman's test analysis shows that among the three factors the most ranked factor is "Ready-To-Eat food products are costlier compared to food cooked from scratch (X₆)" (mean score of 1.87). It is followed by the statement "I feel that Ready-To-Eat food products available have affordable price (X₅) with the mean score of 1.90 and "Ready-To-Eat food products are cheaper compared to restaurants"(X₄) with the mean score of 1.97 was ranked third. Further the reliability among the factors relating to quality also observed through Cronbache's alpha method proves to be 0.785.

Thus the analysis shows that respondents consider the Ready-To-Eat food products are not considered as a cheaper option available. It also supports the previous findings that price is not considered by the respondents and it is mainly considered as a convenience product.

3 Level of Agreement regarding the diverse cuisine factors in purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products.

Table No.8 describes the level of agreement stated by the respondents regarding the Diverse cuisine factor towards the preference of purchase and consumption. The factors which determine the level of agreement are "Ready-To-Eat food products are useful for dishes which I do not know to make or which is difficult to prepare (X₇), Ready-To-Eat food products give me pride for cooking tasty food (X₈)" and "My entire family is excited when the Ready-To Eat food is served".(X₉).

Table No.8 Level of Agreement for the diverse cuisine factors in purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products.

Diverse cuisine Factors	SDA		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		SA		Mean Rank
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
(X ₇)	21	3.50	73	12.17	133	22.17	271	45.17	102	17.00	1.65
(X ₈)	33	5.50	139	23.17	167	27.83	151	25.17	110	18.33	2.04
(X ₉)	79	13.17	182	30.33	147	24.50	124	20.67	68	11.33	2.17
Reliability	0.914										

With reference to the factor X₇ which states "Ready-To-Eat food products are useful for dishes which I do not know to make or which is difficult to prepare", 17% of the respondents strongly agree and 45.17% agree, making a total of 62.17%. In the case of factor X₈ "Ready-To-Eat Food products give me pride for cooking tasty food" agreement level is slightly lower with 25.17% showing agreement and 18.335 stating strongly agree. The agreement level(20.67%) and Strong agreement (11.33%) is the lowest for the factor X₉ "My entire family is excited when the Ready-To-Eat Food is served."

Thus the analysis makes it clear that on quality the Ready-To-Eat Food is not considered equal to the home cooked food. However these products are preferred for the variety and taste they offer.

Further Friedman's test analysis shows the most influencing factor. The factors "Ready-To-Eat food products are useful for dishes which I do not know to make or which is difficult to prepare" was ranked first with the least mean score (1.65).

It is followed by the “Ready-To-Eat food products give me pride for cooking tasty food” .Thus it is clear that the Ready-To-Eat food is not accepted for its quality and it is used only because of their taste and diverse cuisine. Further the reliability coefficient among the factors relating to quality also observed through Cronbache's alpha method and proves to be 0.914.

4.Level of Agreement for quality factors in purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products.

Table No.9 Level of Agreement for quality factors in purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products.

Quality Factors	SDA		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		SA		Mean Rank
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
(X ₁₀)	46	7.67	87	14.50	142	23.67	222	37.00	103	17.17	1.88
(X ₁₁)	56	9.33	143	23.83	186	31.00	134	22.33	81	13.50	2.2
(X ₁₂)	72	12.00	122	20.33	179	29.83	136	22.67	91	15.17	1.92
Reliability	0.914										

Table No.9 describes the level of agreement stated by the respondents regarding the Quality factor towards the preference of purchase and consumption of Ready-To-Eat food products. The factors which determine the level of agreement are “I find that the information on the labels of Ready-To-Eat food products is sufficient enough to know their value and quality (X₁₀), Ready-To-Eat food products are of equal quality when compared to home cooked food (X₁₁), and “I will surely recommend Ready-To-Eat food products to my friends and relatives (X₁₂)”.

It is clear from table 9 that a large number of (37%) of the respondents agreed with the Quality factor of “I find that the information on the labels of Ready-To-Eat food products are sufficient enough to know their value and quality” (X₁₀), and another 17.17% strongly agreed making a total of 54.17%. But the percentage of respondents who agreed (22.33%) and strongly agreed (13.5%) for Factor X₁₁ “Ready-To-Eat Food Products are of equal quality when compared to home cooked food” is only 35.83%. So also 31% are neutral for the same factor. Further 29.83 % are neutral with Factor X₁₂ “I will surely recommend Ready-To-Eat food products to my friends and relatives” and the number of respondents who strongly agreed and agreed is only 37.83%. This makes the researcher to find that respondents do not have the attitude that the Ready-To-Eat food is of equal quality to the home cooked food. However the information provided on the products reveals their quality.

The most influencing factor is identified using the Friedman's test analysis . The findings of this analysis shows that respondents are satisfied with the Ready-To-Eat products and the information given in the products. This is clear from the fact that the statement “I find that the information on the labels of Ready-To-Eat food products are sufficient enough to know their value and quality.” was ranked first. It is followed by the “I will surely recommend Ready-To-Eat food products to my friends and relatives”. Further the reliability among the factors relating to quality also observed through Cronbache's alpha method and its results is also shown as 0.914.

SEGMENTATION OF THE MARKET BASED ON THE FOOD LIFESTYLE AND CONSUMPTION PATTERN OF THE RESPONDENTS:

Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis is used to identify various segments existing in the respondents according to their food related lifestyle orientations. Such an analysis helps to understand the Segmentation of Salem respondents based on their Food related. The data collected from the primary sources of information were arranged systematically and sequentially relevant to the analysis. In order to group the respondents in the various clusters based on the food related lifestyle orientations and to identify the effective factors in each cluster, the researcher has applied one of the Advance multivariate statistical technique cluster analysis. The factors identified in the Factor analysis are used as the base for the Cluster analysis. The orientation factors considered here are Quality orientation, Diverse Cuisine orientation, Economy orientation, and Convenience orientation. The grouped respondents in each cluster are segregated based on their demographic characteristics like age, sex, occupational status, educational qualification, monthly family income and family set-up.

The most important part in the clustering problem is selecting the variables in which the clustering is based. The researcher has selected the four food lifestyle orientation ; Quality orientation, Diverse cuisine orientation, Economy orientation , and Convenience orientation . In the clustering procedure hierarchical clustering method have been adopted for

the 1st stage in this method. Agglomerative methods have been used with average linkage between groups method.

Considering the co-efficient values the number of clusters have been decided as 4. Then non-hierarchical k-means (quick clustering) clustering method has been used to find out the food orientation effective in each cluster. The output of initial cluster centers, final cluster centers and ANOVA tables are interpreted to decide the variables in each cluster.

Table 10 shows the initial cluster formations for variables selected with their mean scores.

Lifestyle orientation	Cluster			
	1	2	3	4
Quality orientation	5	1	5	1
Diverse cuisine orientation	1	1	5	1
Economy orientation	5	1	2	1
Convenience orientation	5	1	2	5

The final cluster centers table Table No 11 contains the mean values for each variable in each cluster. From the table the variables in each cluster are identified for the three cluster segments. The variables for which the mean values greater than 3 are being selected in each cluster which is equivalent to the moderate level of orientation factors in the food related lifestyle of the respondents.

TABLE 11 Final Cluster Centers

Lifestyle orientation	Cluster			
	1	2	3	4
Quality orientation	4.03	2.13	4.28	2.44
Diverse cuisine orientation	4.00	2.58	4.40	2.72
Economy orientation	4.26	1.66	2.65	3.90
Convenience orientation	4.38	1.85	2.51	3.63

So in cluster I the various food related lifestyle orientations about the Ready-To-Eat Food are selected as the mean scores are more than 3. In cluster 2, no orientation occurs as mean values are lesser than 3. The variables Quality and Diverse cuisine are prominent in the III cluster with the mean value greater than 3. The variables Economy and Convenience are dominating in the IV cluster with the mean value greater than 3.

The variables in each cluster segment are identified based on the mean values in the final cluster center table. The number of respondents in each cluster are also found and given in Table 12

TABLE 12 Numbers of respondents in each Cluster

Cluster	N
1	171
2	71
3	204
4	154
Total	600

Table No. 12 shows the number of respondents in each cluster out of the 600 respondents. The I cluster is grouped by 171 respondents (28.5 %) Cluster II by 71 respondents (11.83 %), Cluster III by 204 respondents (34 %) and Cluster IV by 154 respondents (25.67 %).

Table No 13 shows the consumer segmentation that has emerged out of the analysis .

TABLE 13 Cluster Formations with Variables and Mean Values

Cluster			
1	2	3	4
Quality orientation		Quality orientation	
Diverse cuisine orientation		Diverse cuisine orientation	
Economy orientation			Economy orientation
Convenience orientation			Convenience orientation

From Table 13 it is inferred that all the variables of the food lifestyle are effective in the first cluster of respondents. These respondents are the ones who are interested in the Ready-To-Eat food. They are most inclined towards purchasing and consuming Ready-To-Eat food. They are quality conscious and are taste oriented .However they believe that the Ready-To-Eat food products are good value for money. They feel that the Ready-To-Eat food is a convenience product and take pride in using and serving these products. The respondents in this cluster can be named as “Ready Foodie”.

Cluster II does not have any of these factors prominent in them. This cluster contains the respondents who are either against the Ready-To-Eat food products or are indifferent to the concept. They are not interested in innovative products and they do not think that Ready-To-Eat food is of good quality. They have strong beliefs about the food lifestyle and attributes of food. Due to this belief their purchases are likely to be accidental or on impulse. This cluster can be named as “The Traditional Foodie”.

Cluster III consists of respondents who are quality conscious and at the same time are oriented towards diverse cuisine. This cluster may be called “Quality Seekers” who are always behind quality of the food .They are always on the look out for quality food, and consider buying only superior quality food. They also search for food that satisfies their taste buds. They are more adventurous and are ready to try new and tasty products.They are good lovers of tasty and quality food. In this venture these respondents are accepting the Ready-To-Eat food which is an innovative concept.

The last, Cluster IV is inclusive of those respondents who are using the Ready-To-Eat Food for the convenience aspect. They are called “convenience seekers”. The main motivating factor for the purchases of Ready-To-Eat food for this cluster is Convenience. They are price conscious too and are likely to go to the cheapest option. They are not very brand

conscious and are likely to buy any product if it provides them convenience in purchase and consumption. As a convenience product the respondents in this segment welcome the Ready-To-Eat Food products.

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions can be adopted by the marketers while forming their strategies for different market segments of Ready-To-Food Lifestyle are :

Ready foodie:

As these are the most oriented segment towards Ready-To-Eat, emphasizing the product attributes will tempt this segment. As this segment consider the Ready-To-Eat as value for money, there is an opportunity to charge a premium price. There is also a scope for adding new product varieties and extend the product range. Use of celebrities and famous chefs is also another aspect which can be used to catch their minds.

Traditional foodie:

This segment can be captured by emphasising food attributes which may encourage them to buy the Ready-To-Eat food products.

Promoting Ready-To-Eat food which are traditional and wholesome, will attract the attention of these conservative group. Emphasising the origin and ingredients is also another aspect of luring this group.

The traditional segment of consumers take it as a pride to cook at home from scratch, the Ready-To-Eat food products can be positioned in such a way that a touch of cooking it at home and customising it according to their liking can be added with the recipe.

Quality seekers:

As the consumers in this segment are lovers of good and tasty food, stimulating their taste buds through the advertisements is the best way of approaching this segment.

Introducing new varieties will also attract these innovative people. Out-of-the box thinking practices than the routine practices will do wonders here.

These consumers give importance to the joy of eating more tasty products and this motive can be used to attract them. They can also be lured with free gifts and promotions.

Convenience seekers:

This segment is more convenience oriented and the availability and usage of the RTE products are to be stressed to this group.

Pricing should be done very carefully.

Attributes and brands may not attract them and as they look for convenience in purchasing the ambience and point of purchase features can be concentrated upon.

CONCLUSION:

Consumer Behavior towards RTE food products is undergoing a sea change and it is now evident that consumers are moving towards these innovative products. Though these products satisfy the immediate need of time conscious consumer, there is a hesitation on their part due to health and quality aspects. Marketers can make use of this aspect to improve the nutritional aspects of these products and thereby to increase the repurchase of the products. Marketers also need to communicate this aspect to consumers. The findings of this study also reinforces the usefulness of the socio-demographic features and food related orientations to have a close understanding of the consumption pattern of the Ready-To-Eat Food products and thus to segment the market based on this factor. The marketing strategies can be focused to these segments so that the marketer can satisfy the different needs of different segments.

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