

An empirical investigation of consumer's preference in RTE Market

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Abstract

Branded Packaged foods have become famous in the Indian markets and retail general stores supply these products with sealed aluminum laminates. The purpose of the paper is to determine the factors which affect the purchase decision of Indian consumers of ready-to-eat (RTE) foods. The research is based on a sample of youth in the age of 20-30 years either working or studying in various colleges across India and studied their consumption pattern of RTE foods. We studied five major players in this market- MTR, Aashirvaad, Kitchens of India, Haldiram's and Amul. We have used analysis of variance techniques to understand the difference between the brands of RTE in Indian markets. The paper concludes RTE foods have not yet been readily accepted by the Indian youth market, but there is an immense market potential for this variety of foods. Moreover major factors that influence the buying decision of consumer are convenience, taste and availability. The brands in the study perform satisfactorily on the factors selected. Consumers believe that RTE food category should include more variety at reasonably affordable prices which will carter the demand of this product in future. Presently Haldiram is perceived as the best brand of RTE food products in terms of price and Amul in terms of variety.

1. Introduction

People often associate consumption-related behaviours with the affective state they are experiencing (Garg, Wansink and Inman, 2007). Consumers believe food advertising has emerged as a big business. When we think of taste perception of new food products available in the new emerging markets, we tend to think not only of vegetables or snacks but also packaged ready-to-eat (RTE) food products. The RTE industry is characterized by high concentration, high price-cost margins, large advertising-to-sales ratios and aggressive introduction of new products (Nevo, 1999). These facts have made this industry a classic example of a concentrated differentiated-products industry in which price competition is approximately cooperative and rivalry is channeled into advertising and new product introduction (Scherer, 1982). However despite our seemingly constant exposure to food, we have remarkable difficulty in discerning one taste from another with just our taste buds (Elder and Krishna, 2010). This choice has become even more difficult after the introduction of varieties of RTE food products. With rapid urbanisation and change in socio-economic status in India, there has been an increase in demand for convenience RTE food products.

Life in big cities of India has changed rapidly with increase in the disposable income. People often associate consumption related behaviours with the affective state (sad versus happy) they are experiencing. This has motivated many supermarkets to introduce variety of RTE items in Indian markets. Some of the typical RTE Indian meal components include Indian breads, pulaos, cereals, vegetables, lentils (dals), dosas, idlis, fish, chicken and

mutton curries and many more dishes have started appearing in Indian markets. Indian consumers are looking for high quality packaged food products that are safe and healthy to use. India is facing intense competition with different brands of packaged food products available in its markets like Haldiram, MTR, Aashirvaad, Kitchens of India to name a few.

Most RTE foods come in a flexible plastic packaging known as retort pouches. The retort pouch is a flexible laminate packaging, which can withstand thermal processing, and combines the advantages of the metal can and the boil-in bag. When the customer needs to eat, the food item pouch is either put in microwave oven to warm it or keep in heated water for a few minutes and then serve to eat. These food items are normally sold in pouches, well packed in cardboard printed boxes and carry about 300 grams of cooked food. Shelf life of these foods is at least 12-18 months. The amount of money Indian spends on RTE snacks and food is US\$ 5 billion in a year. RTE packaged food industry is over Rs. 4000 crores or 1 billion US dollars and it is growing at the rate of 20% per annum (Euro monitor International, 2009). A couple of years ago, this segment of FMCG product was staring at the prospect of more challenges than sales, but RTE Indian meals and main course dishes have since then started moving from shelves to shopping carts. While it is still a small market, manufacturers have firmly established it as a consumption category, and are trying to develop it further.

In this paper, we examine how consumer's different affective tastes influence consumption of RTE packaged food products in India and whether this relationship is attenuated by product type and RTE brands available in Indian markets.

Our research makes five important contributions. First, we show the factors that influence the purchase decision of RTE food products within the Indian population. Second, we ascertain the awareness of consumers towards RTE food products. Third, we find the consumption patterns through their preferences for different brands available. Fourth, we establish the empirical framework underlying the phenomenon using brand awareness and factors influencing purchase decisions. Fifth, we offer useful implications for public policy officials, market researchers, businessmen and consumers who are interested in purchasing RTE packaged food products in Indian markets. In turn these findings become relevant to brand managers who are increasingly being held accountable for contributing to the health problems.

We organise the rest of the article as follows: we first summarize prior findings, introduce RTE food products in the Indian markets. Next, we describe the analysis of variance (ANOVA) measures. Then, we specify and report the findings. In the final section, we offer implications for managers and researchers.

2. A brief survey of literature

Our objective is to understand how consumers buying behaviour of various RTE packaged food products change and factors that influence their purchase decisions in the Indian markets. We begin with a brief summary of previous findings.

Prior research

Consumers the world over don't have enough time to prepare meals from scratch. The most common occasions among consumers across countries for eating RTE meals is for Dinner, and Breakfast is the least likely (ACNielsen, 2006). Consumers prefer to purchase RTE food products from the place they usually buy which enhances their frequency of purchase. The quality of food such as flavour, appearance texture and odour; socio-economic factors such as availability, price and culture; biologic factors such as energy and nutrient

requirements; and psychological factors including behaviour, moods and attitude towards eating influence food choice among consumers (Blades, 2001). However the consumption patterns of the population can be formulated in different groups such as young, educated etc. The marketing of RTE foods should not only consider the attitudinal and product factors of the product itself. Other factors like packaging play a very important role in determining the quality and sales of the product itself (Margretts, 1998).

However the brand of the RTE food product adds importance in the purchase decisions of the consumer. Brand awareness provides a sense of familiarity especially in products such as soaps, a sense of presence or commitment and substance and it was very important to recall at the time of purchasing process. Awareness is created by conventional mass media, event promotions, publicity, sampling and other attention getting process (Aaker, 2000). Brand extensions represent one of the most frequently used branding strategies (Völckner & Sattler, 2006). Extending brands both within and beyond the original product category is deemed to be profitable because, in general, it is assumed that brands that are already known and recognized require lower new product introduction expenses, such as advertising, trade deals, or price promotions (Collins-Dodd and Louviere 1999; Tauber 1988). Nevertheless, the success of brand extensions is uncertain. Failure rates of brand extensions in many fast-moving consumer good (FMCG) product categories are approximately 80% (Ernst & Young and ACNielsen 1999; *Marketing* 2003). Therefore, potential determinants of brand extension success (i.e., success factors of brand extensions) have emerged as an important focus of research inquiry to provide insights that may help managers reduce the failure rates of brand extensions (e.g., Aaker and Keller 1990; Bottomley and Doyle 1996; Dacin and Smith 1994; Swaminathan, Fox, and Reddy 2001). The findings of previous studies provide important insights into the factors that influence brand extension success. In particular, they reveal the kinds of success factors that play an important role in the success of an extension product, at least under certain conditions.

A significant body of research attests to the importance that managers and scholars attach to package design (e.g., Bloch 1995; Garber, Burke, and Jones 2000; Hertenstein, Platt, and Veryzer 2005; Rettie and Bruwer 2000; Schoormans and Robben 1997). Taken together, the results suggest that package design is an extremely influential medium because of its pervasive impact on purchasers, its presence at the crucial moment when the purchase decision is made, and consumers' high level of involvement when they actively scan packages in their decision making. The design of package elicits various responses. The relevance of packaging in purchase of RTE foods have tremendously increased especially in the Indian context. It has been observed that different types of RTE food require different types of packaging. Most of the research has been conducted to find the changing trends in the consumption pattern of foods in India. Indian people prefer to go in for RTE foods because of convenience, growing working culture of consumers, more working people moving away from homes, which has improved tastes of the RTE food products (Bhanga, 2009).

TechnoPak (2009) in its annual report identifies the different trends in the Indian food market. It has been observed that a majority of people (99%) consider nutrition and health in their purchase decisions. Increasing number of people are moving towards the convenience and change that RTE provide: 35 - 40% of housewives regularly shop for packaged and convenience foods items like noodles, pasta and soup powders, and 'ready to cook' offerings from companies like MTR and Aashirvaad, regardless of whether they are shopping from traditional format or modern format grocery store. Consumers also are showing growing

preferences for foods that be eaten on the move like snacks. The urban lifestyle lends itself to the 'snacking and grazing' consumption behavior, which one observes in more developed countries. As Indian consumers increasingly move to a more cosmopolitan lifestyle, snack foods that are easily portable and hygienic have become a ready substitute for hot-snacks.

In terms of variety and geographical preferences, Sharma (2009) has observed that traditional Indian foods remain an under-penetrated area as far as RTE segment is concerned. The visible trends in the category suggest that certain RTE Indian meal dishes such as lentils (dal makhani), chhole, palak paneer, rajma etc. are especially popular across all regions (north, east, south and west), among both vegetarian and non-vegetarian consumers, and are therefore part of most players' brand portfolio. Marketing of the RTE foods also involves easy availability and reach to the potential consumers. They also mention the importance of retail trade in the promotion of the RTE food. Market modern retail can help in growing significant demand for categories such as RTE, as modern trade helps in building visibility and awareness for such categories.

Specifically, there are two major gaps in the knowledge. First, little research examining young people and working class are considered. Moreover, market segmentation on the basis of manufacturers' and retailers' has not been extensively studied. The second knowledge gap is related to the brands of RTE food availability in Indian markets. Underlying the factors that influence the purchase decision of selecting a particular RTE food product in Indian consumers is not yet been touched upon.

Therefore, in order to develop guidelines that address the outlined gap, we begin by identifying factors that are important to and are used by customers in differentiating one packaged RTE food product brand with other in Indian markets. Further the consumption (taste, price, nutritional value, availability and variety) and purchase decision of the Indian consumers towards RTE food products market is studied. We anticipate the availability of RTE food products are mostly attracted by the young population (both students and professionals) in the age group of 20-30 years in India. Specifically, with top five competitive RTE food brands (MTR, Aashirvaad, Kitchens of King, Haldiram's and Amul) in the Indian markets have been selected to understand if there is a difference in the diverse factors between and within the selected brands is significant or not by applying the statistical technique of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

3. Method

3.1 Design and procedure

In this study, descriptive research technique was adopted. Main objective of the survey is to know the consumers' preference of a particular brand of RTE food items in Indian markets. A non-probability convenient sampling technique was used to collect primary data keeping in view the subject matter of research, easy accessibility and convenience of the researcher. The study period was 3 months (January 2010 – March 2010). Sample units i.e. the customers were approached through online survey and were asked to complete the questionnaire in a stipulated time period. The questionnaire was spread across India. The target population was youth in the age group of 20 to 30 years of age working in various multinational companies and the students studying in various colleges across India. A survey design was employed, and a sample of five Indian RTE packaged goods companies were selected namely, Haldiram, Amul, MTR, Aashirvaad and Kitchens of India. A total of 165 responses were received and after editing the filled in questionnaire, the

unsuitable or partial responses were discarded and the final analysis included 127 responses.

The questionnaire probed three areas of the consumer profile/psyche: the consumer's demographic information, generic factors related to RTE foods and brand preference ratings. Collected data were categorized, tabulated and interpreted on the basis of different dimensions mentioned in the questionnaire.

3.2 Estimating Measures

In order to determine the most important and the least important factor (taste, price, nutritional value, availability and variety) that influence the purchase decision of the respondents to buy a particular brand of RTE (MTR, Aashirvaad, Kitchens of King, Haldiram's and Amul) food products, we have used one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). We have conducted five one-way ANOVA with respect to the different factors. The null and alternative hypothesis for the study has been formulated as:

Null hypothesis: Mean effect of the factor is not significantly different from zero.

Alternative hypothesis: Mean effect of the factor is significantly different from zero.

The ANOVA model assumes that the data within a treatment mechanism are independent and normally distributed and that data across the population have homogeneous variance. The data is analysed by using SPSS, version - 17.

4. Discussion and Results

4.1 Demographic profile of the consumers using RTE food products

The results of the demographic profile of the consumer's preferences for RTE food products are presented in table 1. The respondents (85.04%) represented an array of age groups and had maximum age of 20-25 years. Around 33.6 per cent of the respondents were female. The majority of the respondents were students and working professionals. Most of the respondents were vegetarian (75.64%). The majority (36.22%) currently consume RTE foods very rarely. Very few people consume RTE food products every day. This indicates that RTE foods have not yet been readily accepted by the Indian market and there is an immense market potential. Haldiram (around 30%) is the most preferred brand of RTE food product among the respondents followed by Amul, MTR, Aashirvaad and Kitchens of India (Figure 1).

Gender (n = 127)	%	Age group (years)	%	Food habit	%
Male	66.4	Less than 20	02.37	Vegetarian	75.64
Female	33.6	20-25	85.04	Non-Vegetarian	15.7
		26-30	11.02	Both	8.66
		31-35	01.57		

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of the respondents

In order to understand other priorities of the consumer's that motivate them to buy RTE food items in India, we asked different questions to the respondents through our questionnaire. Around 50 per cent of the respondents prefer to purchase RTE food items because of their taste and convenience. The other factors are availability, price, variety and nutrition. Packaging and Special schemes offered with RTE food products influence customer's buying decision to a small extent. The improvement in socio-economic situation in the Indian economy prompts its citizens to buy RTE packaged food products. Indian

consumers prefer to purchase RTE food products because they are fast to cook, easily available and provide convenient taste change for a particular meal.

However most of the Indian people consume RTE food products for using at their homes (36.5%) followed by consumers staying at hostels, workplace or while travelling. The reason for this may be because RTE foods inevitably require a little amount of preparation which might not be possible during travelling or at workplace. Majority of people prefer to have Snacks like Pastas and Pizzas. There is equal preference for fast food, sweets and main Indian meals. It is interesting to find that in case of RTE food, people overwhelmingly preferred vegetarian dishes. The respondents that prefer non-vegetarian food also favour to buy vegetarian RTE food items. Indian consumers are pragmatics and want variety in their selection process for RTE food items, along with reduction in prices and availability in different packaging styles and sizes.

4.2 RTE brand preference in Indian markets

The design of a package of a particular brand elicits various responses from consumers (Bloch, 1995). Studies have focused on specific design elements, including colour (Garber, Hyatt, and Starr, 2000), imagery (Underwood and Klein, 2002), shape (Folkes and Matta, 2004; Yang and Raghuram, 2005), size (Folkes and Matta, 2004; Wansink, 1996), proportions (Raghuram and Greenleaf, 2006), unity and prototypicality (Veryzer and Hutchinson, 1998), but they do not establish link to generic design and preferred brand factors. Indian RTE food products have variety of brands namely Veetee, Gits, Kohinoor, Secrets of Sea, Shakti Bhog, Aashirvaad, Kitchens of India, MTR Foods, Amul, and Haldiram's, which have different taste, sizes, shapes, colour, proportions and the like. This increases intense competition among the available RTE food items brands in Indian markets. Consumers prefer different brands because of their peculiar taste and preference.

We have incorporated top five brands of RTE food products available in India which include Aashirvaad, Kitchens of India, MTR Foods, Amul, and Haldiram's. The respondents rank Amul as the number one RTE food item brand particularly in terms of taste, followed by Haldiram's. These respondents also rate MTR (Mavalli Tiffin Room) as a good brand among RTE food products. In the terms of price, Amul, Haldiram's and MTR are perceived to be affordable. Aashirvaad and Kitchens of India are considered to be expensive RTE food products. In terms of nutrition, all the brands are perceived equally. The respondents do not differentiate with respect to nutritional value of the RTE item selected. In terms of variety, the respondents have rated Haldiram's to be significantly better than Amul. The other three brands are perceived to provide a similar amount of variety. In terms of availability, Aashirvaad, Haldiram's and Amul brands are perceived to be best in terms of availability in Indian markets. Kitchens of India brand of RTE is perceived to be least available. This is surprising considering that ITC has one of the strongest distribution channels in our country. From our initial observations we have observed that Haldiram's is the most preferred brand in spite of Amul being rated ahead of it in most attributes.

4.3 Empirical Analysis

In order to find which brand is preferred by Indian consumers, we used one-way analysis of variance (one way ANOVA). ANOVA analysis is a statistical/experimental method used for studying the cause-and-effect of one or more factors on a single dependent variable. One-way ANOVA is used when the independent variables are of nominal scale (categorical) and the dependent variable is metric (continuous), or at least interval scaled. The respondents result for one-way ANOVA [table 1(a) to table 5 (c)] was extracted by the

Completely Randomised Design using single factor. We compare the mean values of five different brands namely MTR, Aashirvaad, Kitchens of India, Haldiram's and Amul and try to relate the purchase preferences of RTE food products made by the respondents in terms of taste, price, nutritional value, availability and variety.

TASTE

We ran one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the different brand choice made by the respondents as a categorical scale or independent variable and the ratings given by the respondents for the taste preference of the RTE as a continuous variable or dependent variable. Table 2(a) - 2(c) a one-way ANOVA on taste ratings revealed a significant difference among brands of RTE in Indian markets [$F(4,660) = 18.176, p < .05$]. Significant differences were observed between MTR and Kitchens of India, MTR and Haldiram's and MTR and Amul. There was no significant difference between MTR and Aashirvaad. Therefore on Taste, it is clear that Haldiram's is rated no. 1, Amul is no.2, MTR and Aashirvaad are a joint no.3 and Kitchens of India is no.4.

Brands of RTE	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
MTR	2.6316	1.36778	.11860
Aashirvaad	2.5789	1.35518	.11751
Kitchens of India	2.1203	1.46183	.12676
Haldiram's	3.4662	1.54992	.13440
Amul	3.2406	1.58664	.13758

Table 2(a): Respondents brand choice on the different Taste among the brands of RTE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	156.520	4	39.130	18.176	.000
Within Groups	1420.842	660	2.153		
Total	1577.362	664			

Table 2 (b): One way Analysis of Variance for the Taste among RTE brands

Brand RTE (I)	Brand RTE (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
MTR	Kitchens of India	.51128*	.17992	.037
	Haldiram's	-.83459*	.17992	.000
	Amul	-.60902*	.17992	.007
Aashirvaad	Haldiram's	-.88722*	.17992	.000
	Amul	-.66165*	.17992	.002
Kitchens of India	Haldiram's	-1.34586*	.17992	.000
	Amul	-1.12030*	.17992	.000
Haldiram's	MTR	.83459*	.17992	.000
	Aashirvaad	.88722*	.17992	.000
	Kitchens of India	1.34586*	.17992	.000
Amul	MTR	.60902*	.17992	.007
	Aashirvaad	.66165*	.17992	.002
	Kitchens of India	1.12030*	.17992	.000

* Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Table 2 (c): Post- Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for the Taste among RTE brands: Significant results

PRICE

Table 3(a) – 3(c) a one-way ANOVA on price ratings revealed a significant difference among brands of RTE in Indian markets [$F(4,660) = 13.222, p < .05$]. The significant difference have been observed between MTR and Kitchens of India, Aashirvaad and Kitchens of India, Haldiram's and Kitchens of India and Amul and Kitchens of India. When comparing the mean value of these brands we find that Kitchens of India is significantly different in terms of its price among other brands and thus respondents prefer less of this brand. There is no significant difference between MTR and Aashirvaad, and also between Amul and Haldiram's on this parameter. Therefore, ratings of brands on this parameter are Haldiram's and Amul a joint no.1, MTR and Aahirvaad a joint no.2 and Kitchen's of India is no.3.

Brands of RTE	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
MTR	2.8271	1.44343	.12516
Aashirvaad	2.7444	1.44942	.12568
Kitchens of India	2.0451	1.34764	.11686
Haldiram's	3.1128	1.41236	.12247
Amul	3.1955	1.54948	.13436

Table 3 (a): Respondents brand choice on the different Price among the brands of RTE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	109.964	4	27.491	13.222	.000
Within Groups	1372.286	660	2.079		
Total	1482.250	664			

Table 3 (b): One way Analysis of Variance for the Price among RTE brands

Brand RTE (I)	Brand RTE (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
MTR	Kitchens of India	.78195*	.17682	.000
Aashirvaad	Kitchens of India	.69925*	.17682	.001
Kitchens of India	MTR	-.78195*	.17682	.000
	Aashirvaad	-.69925*	.17682	.001
	Haldiram's	-1.06767*	.17682	.000
	Amul	-1.15038*	.17682	.000
Haldiram's	Kitchens of India	1.06767*	.17682	.000
Amul	Kitchens of India	1.15038*	.17682	.000

* Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Table 3 (c): Post- Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for the Price among RTE brands: Significant results

NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Table 4(a) – 4(c) a one-way ANOVA on nutritional value ratings revealed a significant difference among brands of RTE in Indian markets [$F(4,660) = 11.137, p < .05$]. The significant difference have been observed between MTR and Haldiram's; MTR and Amul.

When comparing the mean value of these brands we find that MTR brand of RTE is significantly different in terms of its nutritional value among other brands. There is no significant difference between MTR and Aashirvaad and Haldiram's and Amul. Therefore, rankings for the brands on this parameter are Amul is no. 1, Haldiram's is no.2, MTR and Aashirvaad is a joint no. 3, and Kitchens of India is no.4.

Brands of RTE	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
MTR	2.3158	1.26352	.10956
Aashirvaad	2.4586	1.40082	.12147
Kitchens of India	2.0752	1.30049	.11277
Haldiram's	2.8346	1.36615	.11846
Amul	3.0827	1.62390	.14081

Table 4 (a): Respondents brand choice on the different Nutritional Value among the brands of RTE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	86.896	4	21.724	11.137	.000
Within Groups	1287.459	660	1.951		
Total	1374.355	664			

Table 4 (b): One way Analysis of Variance for the Nutritional Value among RTE brands

Brand RTE (I)	Brand RTE (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
MTR	Haldiram's	-.51880*	.17127	.021
	Amul	-.76692*	.17127	.000
Aashirvaad	Amul	-.62406*	.17127	.003
Kitchens of India	Haldiram's	-.75940*	.17127	.000
	Amul	-1.00752*	.17127	.000
Haldiram's	MTR	.51880*	.17127	.021
	Kitchens of India	.75940*	.17127	.000
Amul	MTR	.76692*	.17127	.000
	Aashirvaad	.62406*	.17127	.003
	Kitchens of India	1.00752*	.17127	.000

* Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Table 4 (c): Post- Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for the Nutritional Value among RTE brands: Significant results

AVAILABILITY

Table 5(a) - 5(c) a one-way ANOVA on availability ratings revealed a significant difference among brands of RTE in Indian markets [$F(4,660) = 11.263$, $p < .05$]. The significant difference have been observed between Kitchens of King and all other brands of RTE available in the market. While comparing the means we can say that the availability of Kitchens of King is the lowest indicating that this brand is less available in all Indian markets. There was no significant difference between MTR, Aashirvaad, Haldiram's and Amul. Therefore, on Availability it is clear that Haldiram's and Amul is a joint no.1, MTR and Aashirvaad is a joint no.2, and Kitchens of India is no.3.

Brands of RTE	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
MTR	3.0451	1.57087	.13621

Aashirvaad	2.9098	1.56408	.13562
Kitchens of India	2.2556	1.42305	.12339
Haldiram's	3.3534	1.48322	.12861
Amul	3.3233	1.59330	.13816

Table 5 (a): Respondents brand choice on the different Availability among the brands of RTE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	105.218	4	26.305	11.263	.000
Within Groups	1541.444	660	2.336		
Total	1646.662	664			

Table 5 (b): One way Analysis of Variance for the Availability among RTE brands

Brand RTE (I)	Brand RTE (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
MTR	Kitchens of India	.78947*	.18740	.000
Aashirvaad	Kitchens of India	.65414*	.18740	.005
Kitchens of India	MTR	-.78947*	.18740	.000
	Aashirvaad	-.65414*	.18740	.005
	Haldiram's	-1.09774*	.18740	.000
	Amul	-1.06767*	.18740	.000
Haldiram's	Kitchens of India	1.09774*	.18740	.000
Amul	Kitchens of India	1.06767*	.18740	.000

* Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Table 5 (c): Post-Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for the Availability among RTE brands: Significant results

VARIETY

Table 6 (a) -6 (c) showed that one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicates that there is a significant difference among the variety of different RTE food brands available in the Indian markets. An ANOVA on the choice of the variety revealed a significant effect of brand preferred [$F(4,660) = 12.830, p < .05$]. The post-hoc comparison test revealed that the significant difference in terms of variety ratings by the respondents is seen among MTR and Kitchens of India and Haldiram's. There is no significant difference between MTR and Amul on this parameter. Therefore, rankings of brands on this variety parameter is Haldiram's no.1, Amul is no.2, MTR and Aashirvaad is joint no.3 and Kitchens of India is no.4.

Brands of RTE	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
MTR	2.2481	1.06177	.09207
Aashirvaad	2.2105	1.05925	.09185
Kitchens of India	1.8571	1.05272	.09128
Haldiram's	2.7519	1.14419	.09921
Amul	2.5113	1.10520	.09583

Table 6(a): Respondents brand choice on the different variety among the brands of RTE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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Between Groups	60.436	4	15.109	12.830	.000
Within Groups	777.248	660	1.178		
Total	837.684	664			

Table 6 (b): One way Analysis of Variance for the variety among RTE brands

Brand RTE (I)	Brand RTE (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
MTR	Kitchens of India	.39098*	.13308	.028
	Haldiram's	-.50376*	.13308	.002
Aashirvaad	Haldiram's	-.54135*	.13308	.001
Kitchens of India	MTR	-.39098*	.13308	.028
	Haldiram's	-.89474*	.13308	.000
	Amul	-.65414*	.13308	.000
Haldiram's	MTR	.50376*	.13308	.002
	Aashirvaad	.54135*	.13308	.001
	Kitchens of India	.89474*	.13308	.000
Amul	Kitchens of India	.65414*	.13308	.000

* Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Table 6(c): Post- Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for the variety among RTE brands: Significant results

Thus, to summarise, we can say that the respondents prefer Haldiram's RTE food items more than Amul and other brands available in the markets. We compare the mean values of the same characteristics of two different brands and try to relate the purchase preference of two brands of RTE food products made by the respondents.

1. *Taste*: Haldiram's and Amul brand have common taste preference among the respondents. Though Haldiram's brand of RTE food products is perceived more important in terms of taste of the items commonly used by the respondents.
2. *Nutrition value*: Haldiram's brand of RTE is more or less similar to that of Aashirvaad and Kitchens of India with respect to nutritious values in the RTE food items. The respondents perceive Amul brand as more nutritious and MTR as least nutritious RTE brand available in Indian markets.
3. *Variety*: Haldiram's is the most preferred brand among its competitors in terms of selection choice that it provides its customers.
4. *Availability*: Haldiram's brands not only has variety but also its ease in availability makes it number one brand of RTE food products available in India. Equally competent are Aashirvaad, MTR and Amul brands though only Kitchens of India has lower availability out of the brand in markets.
5. *Price*: Haldiram's Price rating is significantly different from that of Amul (More affordable) and Kitchens of India (More expensive). Haldiram's price is similar to that of MTR's and Aashirvaad.

Since MTR, Aashirvaad and Kitchens of India are not rated no.1 on any single factor, we may conclude that the people prefer to buy these brands because of non availability of Amul or Haldiram's. We observed that there is no particular preference for a single kind of RTE food (fast food, sweets, snacks and main meal) in any region. As such, the need may be influential on brand, quality, contents and type.

5. Managerial Implications

As the study captures various perceptions of the respondents, it will be helpful for a manufacturer to customise some products, which can be used easily, or placed at an affordable price. This strategy is particularly important, as the number of respondents who would like to invest on value for money food products that offers taste, nutrition and affordability at the same time, is increasing. It would also be beneficial for retailers, located in regions where the density of young working population is high, to stock those products and brands, which are preferred, or have brand awareness. It is clear that not everyone eats the same food and there are a lot of differences in the food habits of people. There are various socio-cultural factors that affect the consumption of foods. Through the study on RTE packaged foods we have also tried to identify those factors.

6. Conclusions and Future Work

The paper concludes RTE foods have not yet been readily accepted by the Indian youth market, but there is an immense market potential for this variety of foods. Moreover major factors that influence the buying decision of consumer are convenience, taste and availability. The brands in the study perform satisfactorily on the factors selected. Consumers believe that RTE food category should include more variety at reasonably affordable prices which will carter the demand of this product in future. Presently Haldiram is perceived as the best brand of RTE food products in terms of price and Amul in terms of variety.

The results make it difficult to segment the market on the basis of demographic factors as no demographic factor plays a satisfying role in determining the frequency of buying RTE food products by its consumers. There is a need to segment the markets on the basis of behavioural factors such as occasions, benefits, user's status and usage rate. In particular, older segments need to be studied. With respect to the competition we believe that there is a tough competition among the major players having almost similar share in the Indian markets. More effort should be devoted in educating customers about the RTE category, so that the overall market size grows. Price wars will not help any of the players and providing variety and availability can play an important role in capturing the market. Availability can be improved by widening and strengthening the distribution network.

In summary, this research examined speaks widely to the diverse community involved in RTE food products in Indian markets, its execution and consumption. Although our findings might raise a new set of questions, we believe that meaningful answers have been provided, benefiting both future marketers designing activities and research.

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