

A Study on Consumer Behaviour of Ready-to-Eat Food with Special Reference to Women in Mumbai

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Abstract:

There is a famous quote of George Bernard Shaw which states that “There is no love sincerer than the love of food.” Food has gained its importance by each passing day. It has also developed into a business for many; like food bloggers, food quality inspectors, ready-to-eat food manufacturers and a lot more. This paper throws light on the Ready-to-Eat (RTE) food and the behaviour of consumers towards the same. Ready to eat food means food prepared or cooked in advance or is partially cooked in advance, with no further cooking or preparation required before being eaten. This type of food is generally ready to consume without any more preparation.

The objective of this research paper is to understand the consumer behaviour with regard to RTE food with special reference to women in Mumbai. The researcher would also explain about the need of RTE in day-to-day living. According to the research findings the women (especially working women) are in favour of RTE food and also believe that RTE food would have a bright future in a city like Mumbai. Further, the consumers are also of the opinion that these food packets can be beneficial to cater to the taste of each and every individual of the family. Additionally, the consumers have also stated that these food products are very convenient and time-saving in a fast paced city like Mumbai.

Keywords: Ready-to-Eat food, Women, Convenient

Introduction

Ready to eat food means food prepared or cooked in advance or is partially cooked in advance, with no further cooking or preparation required before being eaten.

Ready to eat (RTE) food is also known as ‘Convenience Food’ or ‘Easily Prepared Food’. In order to enhance the easiness of feasting; it is equipped; majorly through processing. This type of food is generally ready to consume without any more preparation. It can be easily transported, or it may have a long shelf life or may also offer a blend of such convenient characters. The term RTE is seldom applied to them; as the restaurant food meets the same definition. RTE foods comprise convenience dried products, frozen foods such as only to fry starters, cake mix, shelf-stable foods and snack foods. These foods are such that mostly need not be cooked; they either just need to be fried or heated. People store these on pantry shelf or

in the refrigerator or freezer, until they are ready to use them. Although RTE food is convenient, some require special handling to ensure food safety.

It has been thousands of years since bread, cheese, salted food and other prepared foods have been sold. Along with the improvements in the food technology, other kinds of food products were developed. Types of convenience foods can vary from country to country and geographic region. Like in the western countries like the United States of America or Canada RTE foods like burgers, pizzas are the most common. In India ready meals like *palak panner* or butter chicken gravy are available in ready-to-eat packets. In countries like Singapore or Thailand dishes like Chinese rice, fish gravy, banana bread etc. are all available as convenient food packets.

Statement of Problem:

RTE food packets are gaining momentum amongst a lot of consumers. Their main

feature is to save time and energy; which would be utilised for cooking. Are women aware about these RTE food packets? Have the RTE food packets proved to be a boon to the working women in the new age development of Mumbai?

Women's Backbone: Ready-to-Eat Food

For every woman it is essential to be independent in today's generation. For any woman to be independent and to stand on her own feet she needs to be firstly financially independent. They have to earn and be financially stable. In India a female's primary job is considered to take of her house and family. A very less percentage of females are allowed to go out and work. For those females to handle house and work responsibility becomes difficult. That is the time Ready-to-Eat food packets comes to their rescue. They can offer the same taste to their family by just devoting a few minutes to the kitchen. They have to just buy these RTE packets and heat it for a while, and they are ready to be served on the table.

Since the time of Mahabharata and Ramayana it is believed that women are meant to take care of the house. Be it Sita or Kaikeyi they are responsible for the household work. This tradition has been passed on till present date. In those times they used to cook for the entire kingdom together in one kitchen which would lead to a lot of burden for the females. The quality and the purity of food used to be of immense importance for them. Each and everything should be prepared from scratch. Their major work was to initiate the cooking activities for the entire family and the army at large. They believed in fresh food and would not appreciate food stacked up for the next meal also. They were very particular about the freshness of the food. The dish which would be served for lunch should never be served for dinner. They believed that would bring the freshness of the food at stake; which was strictly not appreciated. In those days when the Ready-to-Eat meals or frozen foods were not available there were very few lifestyle diseases. As per the ancient mentality the food starts losing their nourishment as soon as it is kept for more than two hours. So it was very much necessary to eat it fresh so that the health of the people was not sacrificed or kept on stake. With the introduction of refrigerators and further the institution of Ready-to-Eat food products has encouraged people to stack

up food for all the three meals or sometimes even for days. With today's fast life where it is important for females to work in order to cope up with the standard of living and where women are need in a dire need to have a mark for themselves it is not possible for them to cook three meals a day. Either they cook for the entire day or they stack up frozen foods; where ready-to-eat food comes to their rescue.

We all believe that a way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Hence, it is very important to provide them with tasty food. In today's fast life it has become impossible for females to devote their time in cooking food for their family. It's more like a daily challenge for them to handle two things side by side. We are living in a challenging environment where the standard of living is raising day in and day out. It becomes very much necessary for both the man and the woman of the house to earn and run their house. There are no more nine to five jobs. Currently, the jobs definitely start at nine AM, but they no more end at five PM; there is definitely no end time to it. After coming back so late in the night you cannot expect anyone to sit and cook for the family. Sometimes definitely you might not get the same tasty taste in the RTE food packets, but then they are left with no choice rather than relying on the same. Hiring maids to cook food can also be one of the choices but the everyday increasing rates of maids really haunts the middle class people.

RTE foods are misunderstood as expensive but ultimately they all most cost the same as home cooked food. Having a RTE food packet is somewhere down the line better than having food ordered from a restaurant. Working woman in India is mostly not aware of RTE, or they have misunderstood RTE as stale food or are not aware the time it saves. Over the above there are still so many families who are still of the old school mentality where they feel females are just meant for house responsibilities like cleaning, washing utensils and clothes and main job is to cook fresh meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner respectively. These families still are not open to the fact that women can go out and work for her livelihood. Because of such people there is no positive word for Ready-to-Eat food products.

The working women professionals now spend at about ten hours at work and about two hours

commuting, boosting in-between the snacking habits. Young, mobile professionals prefer pre-lunch snacks, while pre-dinner meals are popular amongst those who tend to return home very late and have family responsibilities on their head. Such changes amongst the attitude and life style of people have triggered innovations, with RTE foods now offering on the deserts and breakfast in a cup as well. There is a plethora of other Ready-to-Eat foods like frozen snacks, instant pasta, soups and granola bars which help the working women to manage her work and family.

Review of Literature:

Dr Siddiqui Aaliyah (2014) in her paper has tried to assess the purchasing behaviour of employed females and females working at their homes for packed and non-packed foodstuff. According to her, there are some products are made certain or essentially bought principally by females. The aim of this research is to identify the fondness of packed and non-packed foodstuff of employed females and housewives and further to inspect the association amongst employed females and packed foodstuff. For this reason the study was done in Maharashtra along with certain females who are employed and also the ones responsible for household work.

Sivakami R and Chithra S (2014) analysed the purchasing behaviour of employed females with regards to convenience food packets in Thanjavur district. The researcher endeavours to understand the purchase attitude of working females with regards to convenience food packets. The primary aim of this study is to recognize the features impelling the purchase behaviour of RTE food packets. They had also studied the product loyalty of convenience food brands. Higher prices were a significant purpose for not purchasing of RTE food packets. Therefore, struggles could be made to decrease the cost of these food packets in order to upswing its sales. If there would be a decrease in the cost the employed females would be capable to purchase additional products. The convenience factor and the changes in the lifestyle were the major reasons due to which the working women were more positively inclined towards RTE food packets.

Srinivasan Sunder and Shende Murlidhar Kiran (2016) had researched about the benefits

of convenience foods to non-working women. The researcher aimed to discover for the usage of RTE food by house-wives and of their necessity to select, the kind of RTE food they usually desire and the advantages they saw by consuming such a suitable product in their household. These women were regarded as the market leaders to experiment these convenience foodstuffs in their kitchens. The research also focused to apprehend the advantages these employed females obtained by consumption of convenience foods.

Research Methodology:

Objective of the Study:

- The researcher wants to understand the awareness level of RTE food products among females. Further, identify the attitude of women towards Ready-to-Eat food packets.

Hypothesis:

1. **H₀:** There is a negative attitude among working women in context of RTE food products in the market; in the city of Mumbai
- H₁:** There is a positive attitude among working women in context of RTE food products in the market; in the city of Mumbai

Source of Data:

- Primary Source: Interaction with women from south Mumbai with regards to their opinion on the Ready-to-Eat food market.
- Secondary Source: Convenience Food Facts (Arlene Monk and Nancy Cooper), Indian Super Foods (Rujuta Diwekar) and websites.

Research Design:

- This is an Exploratory Research

Sampling Plan:

- This research is carried on with Random Sampling technique.

Scope of Research:

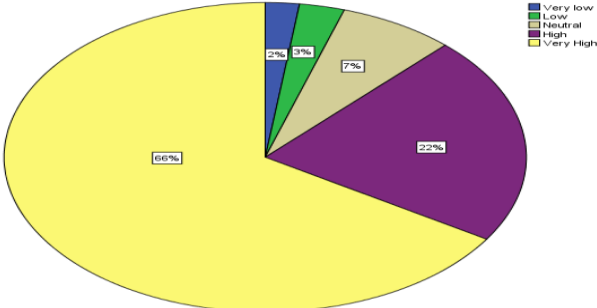
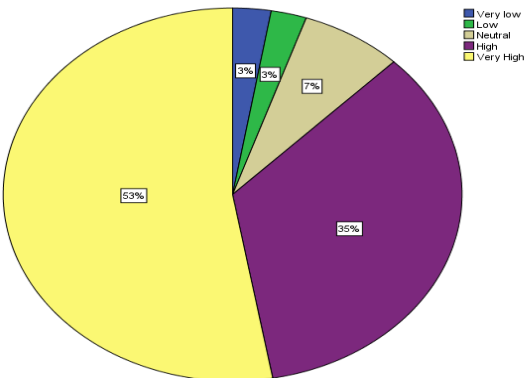
- This research is limited to southern part of Mumbai due to place limitation.
- Further the secondary data is collected from only 1000 female consumers due to time limitation.

Sample Size

➤ A sample size of 1000 female consumers is taken into consideration

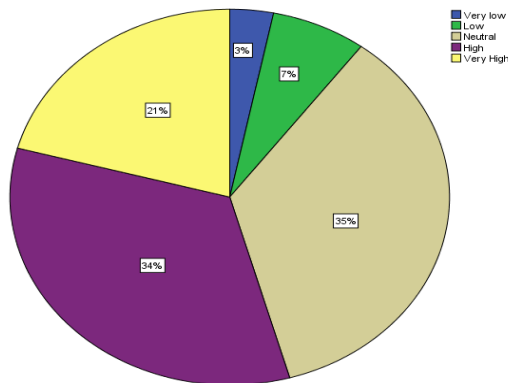
for research purpose.

Data Analysis and Findings:

Questions	Answers																					
<p>1. Women as an important pillar in the family.</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="483 432 1286 734"> <thead> <tr> <th>Woman: Important Pillars</th> <th>Frequency</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Very low</td> <td>21</td> <td>2.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>28</td> <td>2.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neutral</td> <td>72</td> <td>7.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High</td> <td>218</td> <td>21.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very High</td> <td>661</td> <td>66.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>1000</td> <td>100</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> 	Woman: Important Pillars	Frequency	Percent	Very low	21	2.1	Low	28	2.8	Neutral	72	7.2	High	218	21.8	Very High	661	66.1	Total	1000	100
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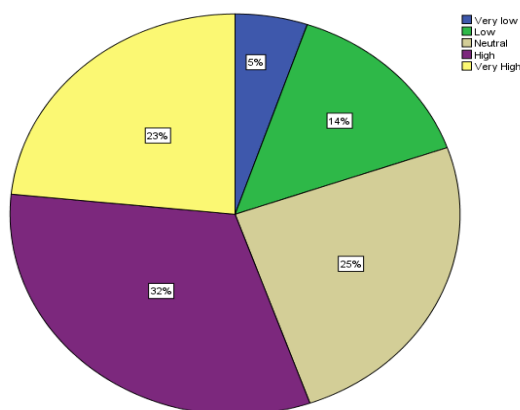
3. Household decisions are always taken by women

Women: Household Decisions	Frequency	Percent
Very low	32	3.2
Low	70	7
Neutral	354	35.4
High	336	33.6
Very High	208	20.8
Total	1000	100



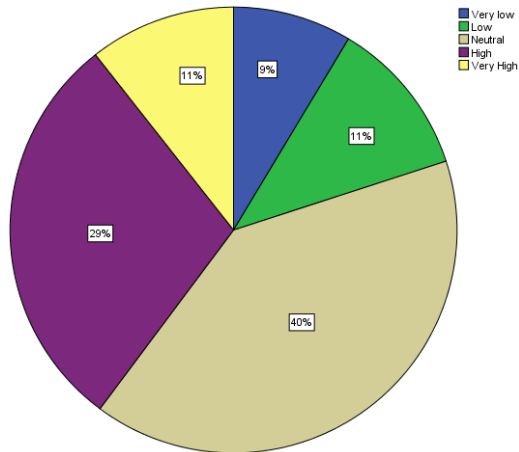
4. In the 21st century there are still some women restricted to the kitchen of the house

Women: Restricted by the Kitchen of the House	Frequency	Percent
Very low	52	5.2
Low	144	14.4
Neutral	250	25
High	320	32
Very High	234	23.4
Total	1000	100



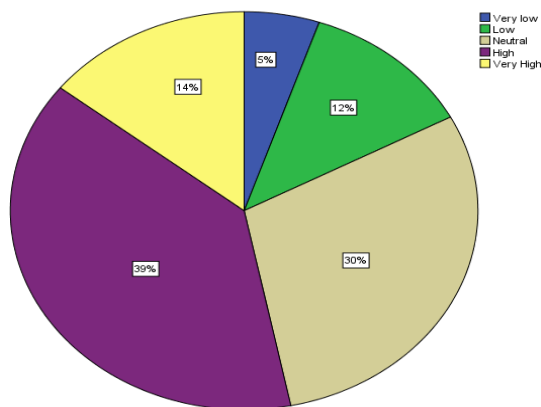
5. RTE food packets are a new sunrise for women

RTE Food Packets: New Sunrise for Women	Frequency	Percent
Very low	86	8.6
Low	114	11.4
Neutral	402	40.2
High	292	29.2
Very High	106	10.6
Total	1000	100



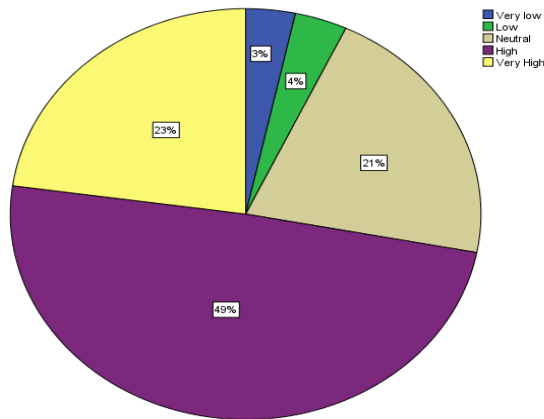
6. RTE food is preferred by working women

Working Women: Preference to RTE	Frequency	Percent
Very low	52	5.2
Low	120	12
Neutral	296	29.6
High	388	38.8
Very High	144	14.4
Total	1000	100



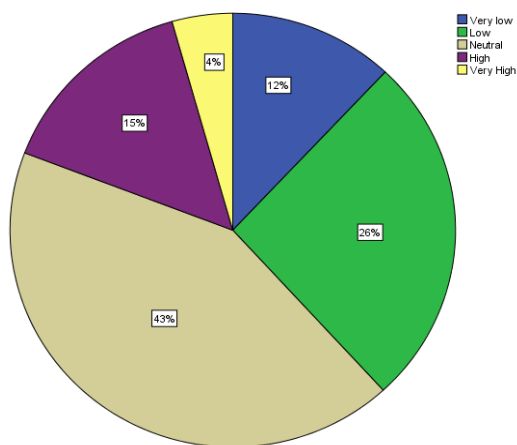
7. RTE food saves time and energy

RTE Food: Saves Time and Energy	Frequency	Percent
Very low	34	3.4
Low	36	3.6
Neutral	210	21
High	492	49.2
Very High	228	22.8
Total	1000	100



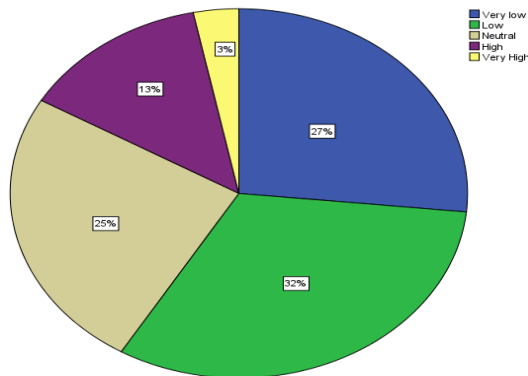
8. Family members are satisfied when RTE food is served

Satisfaction of Family Members with RTE	Frequency	Percent
Very low	120	12
Low	262	26.2
Neutral	426	42.6
High	148	14.8
Very High	44	4.4
Total	1000	100



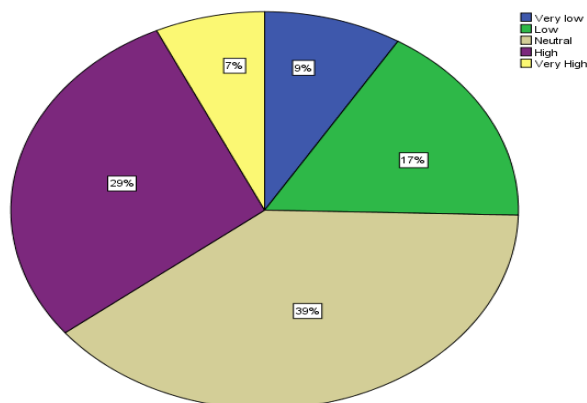
9. There is a high frequency of preparation of RTE food packets for your family

Frequent Preparation of RTE food Packets	Frequency	Percent
Very low	266	26.6
Low	320	32
Neutral	248	24.8
High	134	13.4
Very High	32	3.2
Total	1000	100



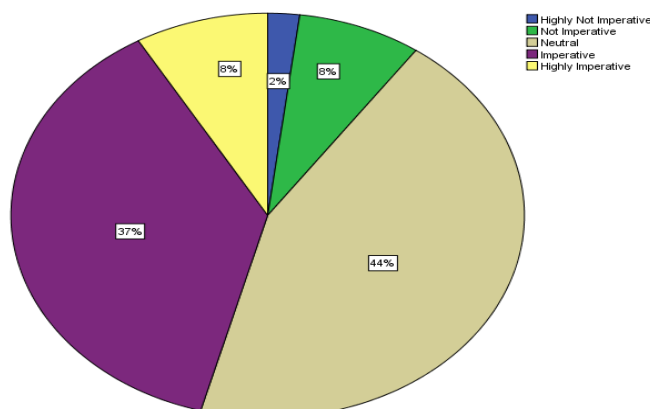
10. Wide variety of RTE food packets will play a vital role in increasing the preference of women

Wide Variety of RTE: Important role in increasing the preference of women	Frequency	Percent
Very low	88	8.8
Low	166	16.6
Neutral	390	39
High	286	28.6
Very High	70	7
Total	1000	100



11. The positive attitude of women is imperative in enhancing the sales for various RTE products

Positive attitude of Women Imperative: To Enhance Sales of RTE Food Products	Frequency	Percent
Highly Not Imperative	20	2
Not Imperative	78	7.8
Neutral	444	44.4
Imperative	374	37.4
Highly Imperative	84	8.4
Total	1000	100



Hypothetical Analysis:

The following hypothesis is tested to know the positive attitude among general population in context of RTE food products in the market; in the city of Mumbai by using Kolmogorov Smirnov Test

- Null Hypothesis (H30): There is no positive attitude among working women in context of RTE food

products in the market; in the city of Mumbai.

- Alternative Hypothesis (H3A): There is a positive attitude among working women in context of RTE food products in the market; in the city of Mumbai.

Table 3.1: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to know the among working women in context of RTE food products in the market; in the city of Mumbai

Description	Decisions
N	1000
Normal Parameters	Mean
	Std. Deviation
Most	Extreme Absolute
Differences	Positive
	Negative
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	7.503
Significance (2-tailed)	0.00

Source: Compiled from the questionnaire

Inference: It can be seen from the table 1 that the significance (0.00) is less than the assumed value (0.05). So we reject the null hypothesis (Ho). This means that there is a positive attitude among working women in context of

RTE food products in the market; in the city of Mumbai. The reason for the positive attitude is that most of the women are involved in the buying decision for RTE products as they are

the influencers in purchasing at all convenient locations.

Multiple Correlation Analysis

Multiple Correlation has been used to find out the association among the Experience, Women and Health with Attitude of the people towards RTE products.

The value r (correlation coefficient) ranges from -1 to $+1$ [-1 indicates negative correlation, $+1$ indicates positive correlation]. If the value of r is between $[0.75$ to 1 (it is high association), 0.5 to 0.74 (moderate association), less than 0.5 (low association).

The following table depicts the correlation of (Experience, Women and Health with Attitude of the people towards RTE products)

Table: [Attitude * Experience], [Attitude * Women] * [Attitude * Health]

Variables	Description	Attitude	Experience	Women	Health
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.132	.541	.151
	Sig.		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	1000	1000	1000	1000
Experience	Pearson Correlation	.132	1	0.013	.132
	Sig.	0.000		0.689	0.000
	N	1000	1000	1000	1000
Women	Pearson Correlation	.541	0.013	1	.098
	Sig.	0.000	0.689		0.002
	N	1000	1000	1000	1000
Health	Pearson Correlation	.151	.132	.098	1
	Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.002	
	N	1000	1000	1000	1000

Inference(s) for [Attitude * Experience], [Attitude * Women] * [Attitude * Health]

There is a positive correlation between [Attitude * Experience], [Attitude * Women] * [Attitude * Health]. The highest value of r ($=0.541$) has been observed for [Attitude * Women]. It indicates that there is a moderate

correlation between Attitude and Women. It can be inferred that women plays a pivotal role in determining the attitude of the people towards RTE products.

Cross Tabulation of Number of Family Members * Preference towards RTE Products

Number of Family Members	Preference towards RTE Products					Total
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
Less than 2	2	4	8	2	0	16
2-4	16	192	258	80	4	550
4-6	8	88	206	70	8	380
6 and above	0	20	26	8	0	54
Total	26	304	498	160	12	1000

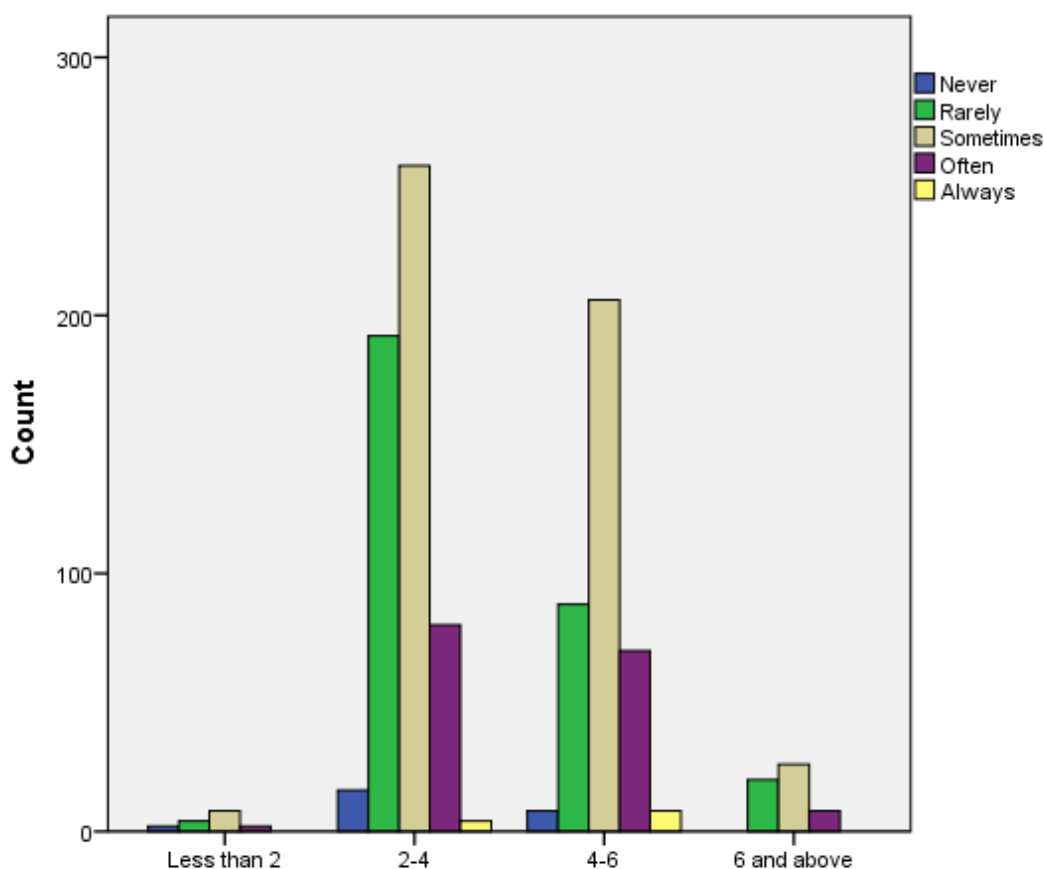
Table 8(B): Chi-Square Analysis of Family Members * Preference towards RTE Products

Description	Value
Chi-Square	28.351
df	12
Sig	.005

Source: Compiled from the questionnaire

Inference: It can be seen from the table 1(a) that the significance (0.000) is less than the assumed value (0.05). This means that preference towards RTE Products differ by number of family members.

Graph for Cross Tabulation of Number of Family Members * Preference towards RTE Products



Inference: It can be seen from the graph that preference towards RTE Products differs by number of family members. It is clearly observed that a family of 2-4 members has the

highest consumption of RTE food packets. Presently, there is a nuclear family tradition which is trending. This proves that RTE is trending more in nuclear families.

Summary of Findings:

Hypothesis Statement	Critical level and Statistical test Used	Inference
Hypothesis Null Hypothesis(H0): There is no positive attitude among working women in context of RTE	The critical level or level of significance is set at 5%(0.05)	If the critical level or level of significance is less than 5%(0.05), null hypothesis is rejected

food products in the market; in the city of Mumbai	Kolmogorov Smirnov test (Non Parametric Test of Hypothesis) Multiple Correlation Regression analysis Factor Analysis Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	Null hypothesis is rejected There is a positive attitude among working women in context of RTE food products in the market; in the city of Mumbai
Alternative Hypothesis(HA): There is a positive attitude among working women in context of RTE food products in the market; in the city of Mumbai		

Hypothetical Analysis – The hypothesis which is formulated has been tested by using Chi-Square test and Kolmogorov Smirnov test

Chi-Square is called as goodness-of-fit test. It is used to test how observed frequencies differ from expected frequencies

Kolmogorov Smirnov test has been used to test how the percentage of cumulative observed frequencies differ from percentage of cumulative expected frequencies.

- The study shows that out of 1000 respondents, 428(43%) of the respondents are male and 572(57%) are female. It shows that majority of the respondents were female than male.
- The study reveals that out of 1000 respondents, 284(28.4%) of the respondents are in the age group between 10-20 years, 270(27%) between 21 – 30 years, 174 (17.4%) between 31 – 45 years and 272 (27.2%) are above 45 years. It indicates that majority of the respondents are between the age group above 45 years followed by between 21 – 30 years.
- It shows that out of 1000 respondents, 354 (35.4%) of the respondents are students, 358 (35.8%) are service, 216 (21.6%) are professionals and 72 (7.2%) of the respondents are housewives. It indicates that majority of the respondents are students and service.
- The study highlights that out of 1000 respondents, 342 (34%) of the respondents are having the income between INR 0-10000, 98 (10%) are having the income between INR 10001-25000, 434 (43%) are having

the income between INR 25001 – 40000 and the remaining 126 (13%) of the respondents are having the income above INR 40000. It shows that majority of the respondents are having the income between INR 25001 – 40000.

- Out of 1000 respondents , 44 (4%) of the respondents rated the awareness level towards the RTE products as extremely low, 106 (11%) as low, 314 (31%) as neutral, 294 (29%) as high and 242 (24%) as very high.
- It shows that out of 1000 respondents, 223 (22.3%) of the respondents are of the opinion that they prefer to have breakfast and lunch as RTE. Further 98 (9.8%) prefer to have breakfast, lunch, brunch and tea as RTE; whereas 107 (10.7%) desire breakfast, lunch and snacks as RTE and 189 (18.9%) consume breakfast, lunch, tea, snacks and dinner as RTE. Lastly 383 (38%) breakfast, lunch, tea, snacks, dinner and dessert as RTE.
- It shows that out of 1000 respondents, 21 (2%) of the respondents are of the belief that woman are the important pillars of the house as very low, 28 (3%) as low, 72 (7%) as neutral, 218 (22%) as high and 661 (66%) as very high.
- The study highlights that out of 1000 respondents , 31 (3%) of the respondents are of the view that Women have become very knowledgeable in today's age and can make decisions of what is wrong and right for their health as very low, 22 (2%) as low, 72 (7%) as neutral, 298

- (30%) as high and 577 (58%) as very high.
- The study reveals that out of 1000 respondents, 32 (3%) of the respondents are of the view that Women in their homes are responsible for most of the housework as very low, 48 (5%) as low, 138 (14%) as neutral, 308 (31%) as high and 474 (47%) as very high.
 - The study analyses that out of 1000 respondents, 27 (3%) of the respondents are of the belief that women have become more competent in today's dynamic environment as very low, 25 (3%) as low, 72 (7%) as neutral, 348 (35%) as high and 528 (53%) as very high.
 - The study indicates that out of 1000 respondents, 32 (3%) of the respondents are of the view that the household decisions are always taken by women as very low, 70 (3%) as low, 354 (35%) as neutral, 336 (34%) as high and 208 (21%) as very high.
 - Out of 1000 respondents, 52 (5%) of the respondents are of the belief that in the 21st century there are still some women restricted to the kitchen of the house as very low, 144 (14%) as low, 250 (25%) as neutral, 320 (32%) as high and 234 (23%) as very high.
 - From the research, it depicts that out of 1000 respondents, 86 (9%) of the respondents are of the outlook that the RTE food packets are a new sunrise for women as very low, 144 (14%) as low, 402 (40%) as neutral, 292 (29%) as high and 106 (11%) as very high.
 - It reveals that out of 1000 respondents, 52 (5%) of the respondents are of the view that the RTE food is preferred by working women as very low, 120 (12%) as low, 296 (30%) as neutral, 388 (39%) as high and 144 (14%) as very high.
 - The study analyses that out of 1000 respondents, 34 (3%) of the respondents are of the view that RTE food saves time and energy as very low, 36 (4%) as low, 210 (21%) as neutral, 492 (49%) as high and 228 (23%) as very high.
 - Out of 1000 respondents, 120 (12%) of the respondents are of the view that the family members are satisfied when RTE food is served as very low, 262 (26%) as low, 426 (43%) as neutral, 148 (15%) as high and 44 (4%) as very high.
 - The study depicts that out of 1000 respondents, 266 (27%) of the respondents are of the belief that there is a high frequency of preparation of RTE food packets for your family as very low, 320 (32%) as low, 248 (25%) as neutral, 134 (13%) as high and 32 (3%) as very high.
 - From the research, it shows that out of 1000 respondents, 88 (9%) of the respondents are of the belief that the wide variety of RTE food packets will play a vital role in increasing the preference of women as very low, 166 (17%) as low, 390 (39%) as neutral, 286 (29%) as high and 70 (7%) as very high.
 - Out of 1000 respondents, 20 (2%) of the respondents are of the belief that the positive attitude of women enhances the sales for various RTE products as highly not imperative, 78 (8%) as not imperative, 444 (44%) as neutral, 374 (37%) as imperative and 84 (8%) as highly imperative.
 - The study shows that out of 1000 respondents, 258 (26%) of the respondents are of the view that the RTE food is a healthy choice as Strongly Disagree, 310 (31%) as Disagree, 330 (33%) as Neutral, 80 (8%) as Agree and 22 (2%) as Strongly Agree.

Conclusion:

From the above findings we can conclude that women in Mumbai are aware about the Ready-to-Eat food. Further, it is still observed that people feel that women are responsible for the household chores like cooking, cleaning etc. and restricted in the kitchen only. Further, it is also seen that RTE is a new sunrise in the food market and helps to save time and energy. Additionally, a wide variety of RTE food packets would boost the usage of RTE amongst females.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

1. The RTE companies should increase the variety of food available in ready to eat form.
2. The awareness among the working and non-working women should increase, in order to make their life easier.
3. The promotion of RTE food packets has to increase; especially amongst working females; as they can save a lot of time and energy and also maintain the work-life balance smoothly.
4. The housewives should use RTE food packets in order to cater to each and every person's need: MTR breakfast mixes (in a joint family) easily; without wasting much time.
5. The researcher is of the opinion that more varied pack sizes should be introduced to cater to different appetite levels; as per the quantity.
6. The researcher recommends that staple Indian cuisine should be made available in RTE food sector; so that regular meals can be easily replaced.

Future Scope of Study:

1. The study can be carried out in all parts of the country; especially areas where these products are sold.
2. The study can also include a greater number of RTE food companies.

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