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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	ROLE OF SELF-AWARENESS IN STRATEGY FORMULATION PROCESS <i>KURIAN MATHEW</i>	1
2.	CHALLENGES OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS IN INDIA <i>DR. AMIT KUMAR BANSAL & SARITA BANSAL</i>	5
3.	PRODUCTIVITY OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PACKAGE (CASE OF WOLAITA ZONE) <i>TADELE TAFESE HABTIE</i>	9
4.	PATTERN OF POPULATION GROWTH DURING 1901 TO 2011 IN THE INDIAN HIMALAYAN REGION <i>DR. B. R. PANT</i>	13
5.	A STUDY ON RURAL CONSUMER AWARENESS AND BRAND PREFERENCE OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VADAKARAPATHY PANCHAYATH) <i>DR. P. S. CHANDNI & JENIFERSARA.D</i>	27
6.	ROLE OF MICRO-FINANCE INSTITUTIONS IN DEVELOPMENT FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED IN HARYANA STATE AMONGST WOMEN: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY <i>RAVI DUTT & DR. R. K. SHARMA</i>	32
7.	IMPACT OF TOURISM ON INDIAN ECONOMY <i>DR. JASJEET GILL</i>	37
8.	FACTORS DETERMINING WOMEN SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR <i>SHILPA BAGDARE</i>	40
9.	REVIEW OF CHANGES IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN PUNJAB <i>DALVIR SINGH</i>	44
10.	EFFECT OF BANK CREDIT ON FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF FIRMS IN INDIA <i>DR. NEELAKANTA N. T.</i>	52
11.	FACTORS INFLUENCING PASSENGERS' SATISFACTION TOWARDS SERVICES PROVIDED BY KADAMBA TRANSPORT CORPORATION WITH REGARD TO SHUTTLE SERVICES IN GOA <i>GOURI K. MANERKAR</i>	55
12.	A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE MANAGEMENT IN PSEUDO-MODERN ERA <i>SAI JANANI & A. ABIRAMI</i>	58
13.	COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INDIAN Vs. GLOBAL SMARTPHONE MARKETING STRATEGY IN INDIAN MARKET <i>ASHISH KUMAR, VARUN KHARE & DR. KOMAL CHOPRA</i>	60
14.	RECURRING FAILURES IN CORPORATE GOVERNANCE: A GLOBAL SYNDROME? <i>KRISHNA A KAPADIA</i>	66
15.	A REVIEW PAPER ON LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO GREEN ECONOMY: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIA <i>YESUNEH GIZAW CHERNET</i>	71
16.	ENGINEERING EDUCATION IN INDIA: YESTERDAY AND TODAY <i>SONY KURIAN</i>	76
17.	FINANCIAL REGULATORY ARCHITECTURE: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE <i>MANAS SHANKAR RAY</i>	79
18.	CASUAL WORKERS AND THEIR WAGES <i>MAMTA LAMBA</i>	83
19.	ISSUES AND PROSPECTS OF FDI IN RETAIL SECTOR IN INDIA <i>SADHANA SINGH</i>	90
20.	IMPACT OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) ON ECONOMIC GROWTH <i>CHIRANJEEV RANGA</i>	94
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER	97

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A STUDY ON RURAL CONSUMER AWARENESS AND BRAND PREFERENCE OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VADAKARAPATHY PANCHAYATH)

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ABSTRACT

Consumers around the world vary greatly in age, income, education level, and tastes and understanding how these differences affect consumer buying decision is never easy. However, marketing success largely depends on the ability to anticipate what buyers will do and what they prefer from available products. Today, the highly fragmented instant food industry with large number of players both from the organized and unorganized sectors has resulted in severe competition and as a result, Instant food businesses in India have shifted their focus to understand consumer choices better on one side and increasingly moving away from products to embracing a structured brand management to achieve competitiveness and profitability in the market place. The present study explores the consumers awareness on instant food products and its brand preference. The study highlights that, Price, Brand image, Quality & Taste, Easy availability, Package and Hygiene of particular brand are the most important factors influencing consumers decision making for instant food product preferences.

KEYWORDS

brand awareness, brand preference, instant food products.

INTRODUCTION

Instant food products are those products which are made instantly. These food products are made within less time. The instant food products are not only easy to cook but also have a significant role and place in the celebration of the family functions and religious functions of the people. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defined instant food products as "instant food products which are prepared and packaged often in powered form are required only the addition of a liquid as water or milk for final preparation." In the modern days, where the life is at fast pace with the time very valuable to every person, "instant foods" plays an important role in everyone's day-to-day life. The term 'instant food' means simple, fast and convenient food, which is easy and fast to prepare besides being hygienic, free from microbial contamination and also convenient to eat. Unlike olden days where man used to have his food lavishly and slowly, the present trend changed the habits to foods, which are simple and easy to digest. Hence, the existence of these foods fulfilled all the needs of modern human being. Preparing food with instant mixes have become a way life and no doubt they are going to be an integral part of food habit in future.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kubendran and Vanniarajan (2005) founded that, the change in consumption pattern is due to changes in food habits. If income and urbanization increase among consumers, the percentage of income spent on consumption increases. The urban consumers prefer mostly branded products compared to rural consumers. The most significant factors influencing buying decisions were accessibility, quality, regular supply, door delivery and the mode of payment.

Ramaswamy et al. (2005) studied consumer behaviour towards instant food products in Madurai, the second largest city in Tamil Nadu and observed that consumers do build opinion about a brand on the basis of which various product features play an important role in decision making process. A large number of respondents (78%) laid emphasis on quality and 76% on price which is an important factor, while 64% of respondents attached importance to the image of the manufacturer and 50% considered packaging as an important factor and an equal percentage (50%) felt longer shelf life influenced them.

Banumathy and Hemameena (2006) while studying consumer brand preference with respect to soft drinks, found that after globalization most of the consumers like the international brands such as Pepsi and coco-cola. Consumers preferred a certain brand or a particular drink mainly because of its taste and refreshing ability.

Indumathi et al. (2007) in their study have revealed that occupation of the women, income of the family and saving time while cooking are the most influencing factors of spicy products. The authors say that most of the consumers have purchase 200 gm pack of powders and masalsa, while small number of consumers prefer 100 gm packets.

Ranjith kumar (2007) concluded that the advertisement influences product purchase for a non-durable product like masala powder, the main factor is the quality. Consumers get more awareness and influence from the advertisements. As there is an option for home made preparation of masala powder, the marketers should be highly competitive without sacrificing the quality of the product.

Saritha Bahi (2012) has develop a model to understand the determinants of consumer behaviour regarding buying decision. The frequency of consumer's shopping for food products has been analysed among different occupations. Efforts have been taken to know the attitude of the consumers towards food product labels and their perception about food safety which has also analysed.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is based on a survey conducted in Vadakarapathy Panchayath in Palakkad district. The researcher has mainly focused on consumer awareness and brand preference of instant food products. The scope of the study was limited only to the instant food product users. The study may be useful to the manufactures to take suitable measures to improve the various aspects of the products and it helps the consumer to develop right attitude towards instant food products.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the recent trend the consumption pattern of the consumer has been changed. Depending upon their income level, they acquire durable as well as non-durable items in the case of food habits and also have changed their attitude because of the strategies, which are adopted by the companies to attract the consumers. Specially in the case of instant food products there is vast behavioral changes among the consumers, they were aware of the products through various medias,

advertisement and evaluate the uses and benefits of these products in these circumstances, the researcher felt that there is a need to study about the awareness level of consumers and their consumption level with regard to instant food products.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To know the consumer awareness about the instant food products.

HYPOTHESIS

- There is no significant relationship between age and period of using instant food products.
- There is no significant relationship between educational qualification and price of instant food products.
- There is no significant relationship between occupation and reasons for purchasing instant food products.
- There is no significant relationship between area of residence and watching manufacturing date of instant food products.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the methods which are used to solve the research problem systematically. The study has been conducted by framing questionnaire for interviewing the consumer. This study is based on primary data only. The required information was collected through the questionnaire from the customers directly. The first part of the questionnaire consists of personal details and second part of the questionnaire consists awareness and third part of the questionnaire consists of brand preference. Direct interview method or survey research approach has been adopted

STATISTICAL TOOLS USED

➤ **SIMPLE PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS**

This is the simplest way to analyze different types of data. In this method we found out the percentage of each data with respect to total. Using this percentage rate we can analyze the data. In this research it is used to classify the respondents under their socio economic status and also to cater to the needs of the objectives framed

➤ **CHI-SQUARE TEST**

A statistical test used to determine the probability of obtaining the observed results by chance under a specific hypothesis. It can be calculate using a formula.

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O-E)^2/E$$

In this research the chi-square test is used to find out whether there is any association of variables namely age, monthly income, educational qualification and satisfaction of respondents.

➤ **WEIGHTED AVERAGE METHOD**

The term weight stands for the relative importance of the different items of the series. Weighted average refers to the weighted arithmetic mean calculated after assigning weights to different values of variables.

$$\frac{\sum wx}{\sum w}$$

It is applied here to findout the most influencing factor of purchase behaviour in respondents.

➤ **CORRELATION**

Correlation analysis is a statistical technique used to measure the degree and direction of relationship between the variables. This tool is used to assess the correlation of age and monthly income with level of satisfaction of respondents. Co-efficient correlation is calculated as under

$$r = \frac{\sum xy}{\sqrt{\sum x^2 \sum y^2}}$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CORRELATION

TABLE 1: AGE AND PERIOD OF USING INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS

Age	Period of usage
109	59
94	147
47	44
250	250

Calculated r value=0.8965

When r =0value. There is no correlation between the variables.

Interpretation

There is positive correlation between age of the respondents and their period of using instant food products.

TABLE 2: EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION AND PRICE OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS

Educational qualification	Price
46	20
113	63
42	139
31	19
18	9
250	250

Calculated r value=0.70315

When r =0 value. There is no correlation between variables.

Interpretation

There is positive correlation between Educational qualification and price of the instant food products.

TABLE 3: OCCUPATION AND REASONS FOR PURCHASING INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS

.Occupation	Reasons for purchased
90	32
55	118
28	55
20	34
57	11
250	250

Calculated r value; 0.7059

When r=0 value. There is no correlation between the variables.

Interpretation

There is positive correlation between Occupation and Reasons for purchasing instant food products.

TABLE 4: AREA OF RESIDENCE AND WATCHING MANUFACTURING OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS

Area of residence	Watching manufacturing date
147	220
103	30
250	250

Calculated r value=0.0002557

When $r = 1$ value. There is perfect positive correlation.

Interpretation

There is positive correlation between Area of residence and Watching manufacturing of instant food products.

FINDINGS**CORRELATION**

- There is no significant relationship between age and period of using instant food products.
- There is no significant relationship between educational qualification and price of instant food products.
- There is no significant relationship between occupation and reasons for purchasing instant food products.
- There is no significant relationship between area of residence and watching manufacturing date of instant food products.

SUGGESTIONS

More varieties of instant food products with details of ingredients on the label is recommended at the food court of private organization and in the retail outlet. More aggressive advertisement with celebrities can be done in the most effective media namely television.

As per the analysis professionally qualified and school level educated respondents are neutral in their level of satisfaction towards advertisement. In hence the advertisement should carry attractive presentation and messages.

Respondents in nuclear type of family have exposed their dissatisfaction towards products package. Hence there should be immediate attention in their regards to make the factors more economical and satisfactory.

It is better to increase the quantity of the instant food products so that the consumers can purchase more. It is suggested to the manufactures of that all the details regarding instant food products to collect consumers taste and preference, needs etc should be collected properly and design the product accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays due to busy schedule of people and both are working in a modern family, using instant food products is an unavoidable one It is obvious to note that the food habits of people changed much whole companies a decade before. The marketing study reveals that the instant food products are more popular in Vadakarapathy panchayath because, I found the usage of instant food products is significant in and around Palakkad. I found that Out of 7 factors like price, quality, quantity, packaging, taste, advertisement and availability of products, regarding price consumers highly satisfied and rest of the factors them are satisfaction level is average. Hence we can say that most of the respondents have positive opinion regarding instant food products.

LIMITATIONS

Following are the limitations, which made constraints while conducting the study.

- ❖ The result may not hold good for a long time.
- ❖ Time is a major constraint for a detailed study.
- ❖ The information collected only from the consumer.
- ❖ The analysis was based on the data collected with the help of the questionnaire and this might have its own limitation.

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ANNEXURE**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

- 1) Name:
- 2) Age:
 - a) Below 30 years
 - b) 31-45 years
 - c) Above 45 years
- 3) Marital status
 - a) Married
 - b) unmarried
- 4) Educational qualification:
 - a) School level
 - b) Graduate
 - c) Post graduate
 - d) Professional
 - e) Others specify....

- 5) Occupation:
 - a) Private employee
 - b) Govt employee
 - c) Self employed
 - d) Professionalist
 - e) Home maker
- 6) Monthly income:
 - a) Below Rs.15000
 - b) Rs.15000-Rs.30000
 - c) Above Rs.30000
- 7) Family type:
 - a) Joint family
 - b) Nuclear family
- 8) Size of the family:
 - a) 2-4 members
 - b) 5-6 members
 - c) Above 6 members

CONSUMER AWARENESS

- 9) Which products do you purchase maximum for your family?
 - a) Idly mix
 - b) Dosa mix
 - c) Noodles
 - d) Soupy noodles
 - e) Chapatti
 - f) Bhel poori
 - g) Chicken soup
 - h) Bread
 - i) Others specify...
- 10) How long you are using instant food products?
 - a) Below 6 month
 - b) 6 month-1year
 - c) Above 1 year
- 11) When do you use instant food products?
 - a) Breakfast
 - b) Lunch
 - c) Dinner
 - d) Evening snacks
- 12) Where did you buy the instant food products?
 - a) Retail shop
 - b) Fruit stall
 - c) General stores
 - d) Departmental stores
 - e) Others specify....
- 13) Who influence to take decision in purchase of instant food products?
 - a) Self
 - b) Children
 - c) Parents
 - d) Friends & relatives
- 14) How frequently you buy instant food products?
 - a) Daily
 - b) Weekly
 - c) Monthly
 - d) When required
- 15) How do you know about the promotional factor of instant food products?
 - a) Television
 - b) Magazine
 - c) Banner advertisement
 - d) News paper & journals
 - e) Radio television
 - f) Others specify
- 16) Which of your personal factors influence you to purchase instant food products?
 - a) Job Nature
 - b) Family Size
 - c) Reduce work
 - d) Interest in new flavor
 - e) Time constraint

BRAND PREFERENCE

- 17) Rank the following product features which influences your purchase decision?

Sl/no	factors	Rank
1	Price	
2	Brand image	
3	Quality & Taste	
4	Easy availability	
5	Package	
6	Hygiene food	

18) Which brand do you used?

products	Brand names		
Idly mix	Eastern	Aachi	Nirapara
Dosa mix	Aachi rava dosa	Eastern	Nirapara
Noodles	Maggi	yippee	Foodles
Soupy noodles	knoor	Maggi	Top raman
Chapatti	Annapoorna	Pillsbury	Aashirvaad
Bhel poori	Pillsbury	Lakshmi	Sakthi
Chicken soup	Knoor	Campbell's	Maggie
Bread	Milka	Elite	Britannia
Others specify...			

19) How do you feel about the price of instant food products?

- a) Very High
- b) High
- c) Normal
- d) Low
- e) Very low

20) Reasons for purchasing instant food products?

- a) Quality
- b) Easy availability
- c) Cheaper
- d) Tasty
- e) Others specify....

21) Do you have the practice of observing expiry date?

Yes / No

22) if yes, what will be your reaction?

- a) Calling customer care
- b) Keep it as such
- c) Return the product
- d) Asking explanation
- e) Others specify...

23) How many times you have consumed instant food products in a week?

- a) once
- b) twice
- c) More than thrice

24) Level of satisfaction

Sl/no	factors	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied
1	Price					
2	Quality					
3	Quantity					
4	Packaging					
5	Taste					
6	Advertisement					
7	Availability of products					

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