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Title - A Study on Consumers' Behavior & Perception towards Processed Food in Urban Haryana.

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ABSTRACT:

OBJECTIVE: Food consumption pattern in India is rapidly changing from unprocessed unbranded low quality food products to processed, packaged unbranded products. The main objective of this paper is to find the factors that lead to purchase of processed food.

METHOD/STATISTICAL TOOL : Research was carried out in five cities of Haryana. A sample of 500 respondents was taken for research according to chosen methodological research approach the quantitative data was analysed by using confirmatory factor analysis through SPSS software.

FINDINGS: Research revealed that

- a. External influence
- b. Health and brand consciousness
- c. Quality are the major factors that influence people to eat Processed Food.

Keywords: Processed Food, External Influence, Quality, Consumption Pattern

APPLICATION: The study focus upon future consumption of eco friendly processed food in relation to improvement in living standard.

INTRODUCTION:

Food is any substance or item whether in processed, semi processed or unprocessed form provides nutritional support to the body. Once it is ingested and assimilated by the body in sufficient quantity, it provides energy, stimulates growth and helps to maintain life. Globally, major sources of the food available for consumption are plants and animals. These foods are available in the form of natural, organic, processed, fast food, junk food etc. Unbalanced and hectic life styles of the modern society has witnessed significant shift from the natural and

organic diet to the processed food items. Not only they prove more appealing as compared to the traditional food, but they are also less costly and save lot of time and energy. These foods are available in the form of ready to eat food, are very portable and have a long life. Sometimes these foods require minimal preparation at one's own kitchen. Apart from being commercially prepared, it also optimizes ease of consumption.

Historically processed foods are in use for thousands of years in form of bread and bakery products. But they become more popular during World War I when canned food and packed meat was served in refrigerator cars to the military. During World War II, frozen food and its industry came into origin. Later many companies continued with their innovative products for home use globally. India is world's second largest producer of food after China. Indian food processing industry stands at number five position in terms of production, consumption, export and annual growth in India.

In India, Kissan Brand was the first vegetable and fruit brand, primarily set in the year 1935 to serve British settling in India. Later on in 1950, it was taken over by UB Group which was further acquired by Hindustan Lever in 1993. Presently other leading global and national corporate in this category are LT Food (Brand Dawat), REI Agro Ltd (Raindrops Basmati Rice), Modern Dairies (Milk and Milk Products), Britannia Industries Ltd (Biscuits), Nestle India (Nescafe, Maggi etc), Heritage food Ltd (Agri and Bakery Products), MTR foods (Ready-to-eat), McCain Foods India (Frozen Food), Ruchi Soya Industries (Cooking Oil) etc. Success of these corporate have led Indian government to think and set Agri Export Zones and Food Industries in various states like Punjab, Gujarat, Uttaranchal, Assam, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana etc.

These industries constitute production and processing of food like milk and milk products, dairy products, poultry, meat, fisheries, fruits, vegetables, spices, pulses, plantation, alcoholic and non alcoholic beverages, grains, jaggery, confectionery, soya products, chocolates, cocoa products, packed mineral water etc. This sector has a major chunk in the contribution of national GDP and employment generation. This sector also leads in terms of annual growth rate, production, distribution, consumption, export and earning foreign exchange. This industry had a huge volume of export of Rs. 31563.43 crores in the year of 2014-15. This all is possible owing to India's comparative advantage of its geographical location as it is well connected to Middle East,

Europe, and rich economies of Asia like Japan, China, Singapore, Thailand, Gulf Countries, and Korea etc. The Indian wholesale and retail market of this industry is flourishing day by day and it is believed that still it is in its transition phase.

The Increase in Per capita income of Indians will contribute in a large way toward its retail market. India has a high potential of growth of retail market though its super markets, stores, departmental stores, hyper markets etc. Life style of Indian consumer is almost taking a bend toward western life style and culture. Proportion of working class among male and female is increasing. Trend of late working hours is also becoming popular owing to increasing workable shifts in corporate. Labour has become more mobile and moving away from their native place. Students are away from their houses for higher studies. Ready-to-eat, Semi processed, convenient or highly processed food has proved a blessing to the society. These processed foods are highly popular among the consumers owing to their inherent properties of convenience, highly tasty, long life, additives, safer to eat etc. In spite of all these characteristics of processed food, they have been criticized on many grounds in recent past. Natural Peanut butter has usually a layer of partially hydrogenated oil on the top which are totally unsafe for the health of consumers. Additives like BHA or BHT in oil (to prevent them from being rancid) and food preservatives like sodium nitrate can lead to cancer. Presence of high amount of salt, sugar and fat in processed food can lead to high blood pressure, obesity, heart diseases etc. Environmental harms are increasing day by day due to poor management and disposal of solid waste from non biodegradable substances like Plastic bags, bottles, cans, tins etc used for packing of these processed foods.

Wide spread subsidized organic farming of foods and currently applied measures to increase the sustainability of such food for consumption has increased the supply of processed food in the market. These products are highly advertised through various channels of media and networking sites that a consumer is influenced to buy them. A need is generated by the advertisers that influence both behavior and perception of prospective customers and consumers.

TV advertisements, web sources, social networks, relatives, branding, labeling, government policies, manufacturer marketing strategies, Influences of near and dear ones, society transition, time constraints, etc are important determinants which influence the behavior of a consumer toward processed food. A consumer doesn't buy the product only, rather he buys the perceived

benefit out of that product. An attempt is made to target at the perception segment of ultimate consumer. Price, quality, value, Nutritional aspects, Sensory aspects, safety, production process of food, food habits, style and trend as a fashion appeal are considered to be important determinants while forming perception with regard to processed food.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

A consumer behavior is widely influenced and involved when he is confronted with ethical products purchase decisions. It results into beginning of search for more information in this regard.

Zander and Hamm (2012) analyzed the information search behavior of European consumers for organic products. He has strongly recommended the marketers to revise their system of information provision and advised them to focus mainly on the consumer needs. While Ratchford (1982); Smith et al. (1999); Solomon et al. (2006) was of the view that a consumer look for the information only, till his marginal benefit sought is equal to his marginal cost. Zander and Hamm (2012) has a major outline that the behavior and consumer search pattern of the consumer mainly depends upon their socio economic characteristics and less on environmental or social aspects of food production. On the contrary, Morel and Kwakye (2012) opined about the post purchase behavior and repetition of green and eco friendly products by the respondents. However they came up differences among men and women purchase behavior of Eco Friendly products. Zeithmal (1988) through his Means-End Model has stressed that the consumer perception is strongly built about a product around its price, quality and value. Anojan and Subaskaran (2015) are of the view that the modern consumer is well educated and demanding for healthy and nutritional products along with benefits in terms of health, safety and environmental quality. Marshall (1995) has discussed about the economic factors and conditioning of decision making process by psychological, social, cultural influences.

India is second largest producer of food processing industry which has a potential to become number one. Sarvamangla (2014) has stressed on quality label packing of food to attract consumers and maintain it for longer period. He concluded 56% of female respondent, 60% married respondents, 44% young population of 31-40 year of age, 56% post graduate, 36%

housewives etc prefer processed food in India. Health issues related to baby products discussed by Kalaiselvi and Mohanapriya (2013) was sufficient to study the women's perception in this regard where they prefer tinned food. Gupta has studied behavior of migrants from various states to metros and their purchase decision about packed food products. She studied their demographic characteristics along the factor responsible for decision making on factor analysis. She also studied the perception about responsibility of different stakeholders for maintaining food quality where consumer is himself more responsible than any government. Whereas Gupta and Jain (2014) consider brand as a strong parameter as they opined that any consumer has less time to take such decision. They took their respondents from Urban and rural areas of Ambala district of Haryana

PROBLEM FORMULATION:

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

Processed food is no doubt an old field, still not properly explored by researchers in India. Companies and manufacturers are still struggling hard to understand the behavior and perception of their prospective and current customers and consumers. They have to design their marketing strategies, keeping in mind these two aspects. Due to lack of structured study in this area, proposed work will try to fill and bridge the gap. This study aimed at understanding the behavior and perception of urban consumers of Haryana toward processed food. An attempt was made to provide a framework to assess the awareness level, their motive behind the choice of a particular food and factors responsible for understanding the purchase decisions with regard to eco friendly products.

STATISTICAL TOOLS:

ANOVA, SPSS, Chi- Square, Regression analysis and other appropriate statistical tools and techniques will be used as per the need of further studies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To examine the awareness level of consumers for processed food;
2. To examine the consumers' motives for their choice of foods ;

3. To explore the possibilities of change in consumer behavior and perception due to education and price factors ;
4. To study the factors responsible for adoption and purchase decision of eco friendly processed food by consumers ;
5. To explore the future consumption of eco friendly processed food in relation to improving living standard ;

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The main focus of study was on understanding the factors affecting behavior and perception of consumers towards processed food. The study was also focus upon future consumption of eco friendly processed food in relation to improvement in living standard.

METHODOLOGY/ PLANNING OF RESEARCH WORK:

The research work was start with Introduction of the study undertaken. It was followed by the critical review of the literature survey from where the essential gaps will be identified. These gaps will formulate objectives of the study under purview. Research design wasdescriptive in nature whereas sampling design was be of non-probability style. Data collection was based upon both primary and secondary sources. Target population of the study will be urban voters of Haryana state where sampling frame of study was consists of consumers in selected districts. At the primary data collection stage, itcovered a survey through a structured questionnaire for sample size of 500 consumers. The sampling units includedconsumers mainly from urban segment of Gurgaon, Panchkula, Kurukshetra, Fatehabad and Sirsa districts etc. These consumers were selected as per convenient sampling basis.Secondary data was collected from various published Government Reports, journals, Magazines, Newspaper columns, e- sources and previous research studies. Collected data then classified, tabulated and presented in Ms-Excel reports along with other MS-office softwares. After due codification, data was analyzed with relevant statistical tools and techniques as per requirement of study with the help of available statistical softwares.

FACILITIES REQUIRED FOR THE PROPOSED WORK:

Accessed to various libraries both off and on the screen for literature survey, personal computer for documentation, data collection from respondents and others facilities as per needs.

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