Consumer Perception Towards Ready-To Eat Food Products: Evidence From A Tier Ii City- Salem

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Abstract

An Increasing Share Of Indian Consumers Wallet Is Going Towards Food Purchases. The Recent Trend Is More Inclined Towards Upgrading Their Consumption Basket By Allocating More To Beverages And Processed Foods. The Change In The Family Structure – Disintegration Of Joint Family And Emergence Of Nuclear Units, Rise In Single Person Household, Migration Of Educated Persons To Cities, Engagement Of More Women To Their Career Goals, Etc Has Increased The Spread Of More On-The-Go Products, Especially The Ready-To-Eat Varieties. Though The Demand And Income Is More In Tier 1 Cities , Tier 2 And 3cities Are Not Less Behind As They Have More Disposable Cash Due To Low Cost Of Living . Consumers In Tier 2 And 3 Cities Are Well Travelled And Well Aware Of Various New Brands And Commercials. They Have A Liking Towards Quality Innovation And More Convenient Food. However Not Much Of Efforts Were Taken To Explore The Attitude Of Consumers Of Tier Ii And Tier Iii Cities Towards These Products. Hence This Study Is Proposed To Fill This Research Gap. The Study Explores The Factors Considered By Consumers In Tier Ii Cities While Making Rte Food Purchase Decisions And Throws Light On Various Aspects Of Rte Food Lifestyle Of The Consumers In These Areas And Help The Marketers Develop Proper Strategies To Design The Appropriate Marketing Mix. The Primary Data Is Collected From 600 Sample Respondents In Salem City In The State Of Tamilnadu. Factor Analysis Is Used For Data Redundancy And To Find The Factors That Affect Their Perception. Regression Analysis Was Applied To Design The Impact Of These Factors. The Results Clearly Indicate That Consumers Consider Diverse Cuisine, Quality And Economy When They Make Ready-To-Eat Food Purchase Decisions. The Orientation Factors Found From The Study Is Used To Segment The Ready-To-Eat Food Market Into 4 Clusters Namely; Ready-To-Eat Foodie, Traditional Foodie, Quality Seekers, Convenience Seekers.

1. **Introduction:**

Food Is Something That People Consume On A Daily Basis. Brands For Food And Beverages Grow Due To The Regular Nature Of Their Use And Consumption. Undoubtedly Food Accounts For The Largest Share Of Consumer Spending. However With Time At A Premium And Indians Getting Busier, The Demand Is More For "On-The-Go" Products. By The Next Decade Indian Consumers Will Be Demanding Convenience, Not Just Of Products But Of Availability Too. The Change In The Family Structure – Disintegration Of Joint Family And Emergence Of Nuclear Units, Rise In Single Person Household, Migration Of Educated Persons To Cities, Engagement Of More Women To Their Career Goals, Etc Has Increased The Spread Of More On-The-Go Products, Especially The Ready-To-Eat Varieties.

Ready-To-Eat Food Products Are Those Which Can Be Used Without Any Cooking .These Products Are Prepared In Advance And Can Be Consumed As It Is Purchased .The Shelf Life Of Such Products Will Be Less Than 18 Months. Though The Ready- To- Eat Food Was Introduced In India In Early 1987, It Was Not Well Accepted By Indians. Later In 2000's Due To The Emergence Of Retort Technology These Products Gained Popularity And Were Produced With Higher Shelf Life. This Food Segment Also Known As Heat And Eat Food

Market Is Growing Presently At Cagr Of 22% And Will Be Approximately Valued At Inr 7 Million By Fy 2020 .(Value Notes, 2019) The Article By *Janice Wong ,* " *Indian Foods Big Potential For Growth*" Expresses The Views Of Pinaki Mukherjee, Lead Consultant With Data Monitor India's Consumer Market Team(Janice Wong, 2010) . With Both Rising Popularity Of Indian Cuisines And The Burgeoning Indian Diaspora Across The Globe, The Recent Rise In Demand In The Local Market Is A Substantial One. The Factors Contributing To This Growth Would Be Changes Like Cold Chain Development, Disintermediation, Streamlining Of Taxation, Economies Of Scale On The Supply Side, Coupled With Increasing Disposable Incomes, Diminishing Culinary Skills And The Raising Need For Convenience On The Demand Side.

Many Companies Like Itc, Mtr,Hul,Parle ,Amul Have Already Placed Their Foot Prints In This Field. The Ready-To-Eat Products Are Available In Large Varieties Starting From Chapattis And Rotis To Gravies Like Paneer Butter Masala, Palak Paneer, Chicken Tikka And Other Breakfast Items Like Upma, Semia, Pongal Etc. Along With Snacks Like Samosas, Pakodas And Even Bhaji. No Doubt Ready-To-Eat Food Products Provide 'Convenient Food', Authentic Dishes And Entice On The Go Along With A Wide Assortment Of Emerging Desi Brands. Though This Category Is A Big Hit In The Metros (Especially With Nris Culture) The Success Of These Items In Hinterlands Is Still On A Growing Stage. However The Trend Is Now Changing. The Plates Are Flying Towards Non Metros Now. According To An Article By *Soundariya Preetha* (2012) "Tapping The Food Sector For Self-Employment", Many Women In The Rural Areas Are Engaged In Preparing Such Food And Selling Them To The Needy Ones .The Demand Is Huge For Such Ready-To-Eat And Preserved Food Items .Thus Tier 2 And 3 Cities Create A Huge Scope For Innovative And Convenience Products.

The Food And Beverage Industry Has Started Identifying The Potential In These Tier 2 Cities, Where The Rent Is Cheaper And The Younger Population With More Disposable Income Is Growing. Though Income Of Consumers In Tier 1 Cities Are More Than That Of Tier 2 Cities, These Consumers Have Less Disposable Cash As The Cost Of Living Is High In Tier 1 Cities. Consumers In Tier 2 And 3 Cities Are Well Travelled And Well Aware Of Various New Brands And Commercials.(Dungarwal.S.S, 2016). They Have A Liking Towards Innovative And More Convenient Food. (Amin Ali, 2018). They Look Forward For Quality As Well As Health In Their Food Purchases.

The Main Factors Which Were Considered While Making Food Purchases Are Price, Brand Image, And Outlet. (*Rishikesh Raj Singh,* 2004). However They Also Consider That Healthy Eating Is Important For Health And Endorsement Is Given To The Guidelines For The Balance Of Good Health. (*Davies And Smith*, 2004). The Key Message Is Enjoyment Of A Variety Of Ready-To-Eat Foods From Four Groups Every Day, Including Bread, Other Cereals And Potatoes, Fruits And Vegetables, Milk And Dairy Foods And Meat, Fish And Alternatives.

Ac Nielsen, A Unit Of The Nielsen Company, The World's Largest Market Research And Information Provider Conducted An Online Consumer Opinion Survey In May-June 2010, To Know About The Drivers That Influence The Purchase Of Ready-To-Eat (Rte) Meals. The Survey Found That Rte Is Cheaper Than Buying All The Ingredients And Preparing From Scratch As Their Reason For Purchasing Rte Meals. *"A Study On The Factors Affecting The Consumer Buying Behavior Of Ready-To-Eat Industry*", (*Shruthika Kanchan* ,2010) Reveals The Main Reason For The Growth Of The Rte Segment Is The Rapid Expansion Of The Retailing, Replacing Malls With Super Markets, Modern Super Stores And Convenience Stores And Lifestyle Changes With More And More People Demanding Value For Money , Time And Quality.

This Industry Is On A Growing Stage In These Markets And Understanding The Market As Well As Customers' Demand Is Very Important For A Marketer In This Field. Thus It Requires An In-Depth Analysis To Understand The Reasons Behind Such A Huge Demand For Ready-To-Eat Food Especially In Tier 2 Cities, And To Know The Expectations Of The Consumers Towards These Ready-To-Eat Products.

There Is Only A Very Limited Research Conducted In The Tier 2 Cities On The Consumer Behavior Towards Ready-To-Eat Food. Hence This Study Is Done To Reduce The Gap In Research In This Area. Therefore The Objectives Of The Study Is To Identify The Factors That Influence The Consumers To Purchase Ready-To-Eat Food, And Also To Segment The Consumers On The Basis Of This Ready-To-Eat Food Lifestyle.

2. Review Of Literature:

An Increasing Share Of Indian Consumers Wallet Is Going Towards Food Purchases. The Recent Trend Is More Inclined Towards Upgrading Their Consumption Basket By Allocating More To Beverages And Processed Foods. Consumers In Today's Scenario Are Spoilt For Choice. They Want Tasty And Quality Food. Another Aspect Of Today's Consumer Is That He Is Becoming More And More Health Conscious. Tea That Makes You Slim, Or Calms Your Mind, Cooling Oils That Are Good For Your Heart - Products Like These Are A Result Of This Perception. Modern Consumer Evaluates The Effect Of Technology On The Nutritional Aspects Of The Food He Consumes. (A.C Koek, D. Pearson, S.W.James, M.A.Lawrence ,S.Friel , 2017)

Jabir Ali, Sanjeev Kapoor And Janakiraman Moorthy (2006) In Their Study About The Buying Behavior Of Consumers For Food Products In An Emerging Economy Say That There Is A Need To Develop A Marketing Strategy For A Modern Food/Grocery Market Based On Consumer Preferences Which Includes Their Priority For Cleanliness, Freshness, Price, Quality, Variety, Packaging And Non-Seasonal Availability. An Empirical Study Conducted By *Kriti Bardhan Gupta* (2009) On The Consumer Behavior For Food Products In India

Explored Different Perspectives Like Cleanliness Of The Product, Free From Pesticides, Freshness And Its Quality, Good Health And Clean Place Of Sale, Good Display Of The Products, Nearby Availability And Good Ambience Are Some Of The Most Important Attributes Which Are Rated Highly By The People While Buying Food Products. A Study Conducted By *Estiri* (2010) Et Al. Examined The Relationship Between Packaging And The Consumer Behavior On Food Products In Refah Chain Stores In Iran. Results Showed That Informational Elements Of A Food Package Are The Most Important Element At Pre Purchase Stage. The Food Product Buyers Mostly Pay Attention To Information Written On The Food Package, Technology Of Package Etc., When They Make Purchase Decisions At The Stores.

Stavros Vlachos And Nikolaos Georgantzis(2016) Concluded In Their Study That Demand For Rte Meals Has Gained Significant Ground Especially Nowadays Where Modern Life Has Tightened Peoples' Spare Time And Time Spent In The Kitchen. This Is Also Confirmed By Vijayabaskar.M And Sundaram (2012) In Their Study Which Shows That The Ready-To-Eat Market Segment Is Defined By High Growth In Middle Income Group Due To Their Life Style Changes And Job Factors. Some Sections Of The People Especially-Youngsters, Agreed Availability Of Product Choices Is Also Helping Them To Buy Such Products Impulsively.

Hyun-Joo Bae, Mi-Jin Chae And Kisang Ryu (2010) Through Their Study Suggested That Ready-To-Eat Food Market Can Be Segmented Based On Food-Related Lifestyles Into Tradition Seekers And Conveniences Seekers. Leticia Vidal, Gastón Ares , Ana Giménez (2012) Reported That Ready-To-Eat-Salads Are Perceived As Convenience Products, I.E. Requiring Little Or No Time And Effort For Its Preparation And Consumption. This Motivational Aspect Is Vital When Deciding Whether To Purchase Them Or Not.

Gesa Maschkowski, Monika Hartmann And Julia Hoffmann (2014) Mention In Their Study That Improvements In The Rte Segment Should Also Consider The Provision Of A Simple Nutritional Labelling Scheme On The Front Of The Packaging, Standardized Serving Sizes, Accurate Product Names, And Clearly Defined Whole Grain Claims. Janine Empen Jens-Peter Loy Christoph Weiss (2015) Studied The Relationship Between Loyalty And Price Promotional Strategies For The Ready-To-Eat Breakfast Cereal Market In Europe (Germany). They Found Strong Evidence That Loyal Segment Size Has A Positive Impact On Promotional Measures, Whereas The Strength Of Consumer Loyalty Negatively Impacts The Depth And The Frequency Of Sales.

Timothy J. Richards And Stephen F. Hamilton (2015) Found Evidence In The Los Angeles Ready-To-Eat Breakfast Cereal Market That Retailers Respond To Increased Prices For Wholesale Goods By Significantly Decreasing The Number Of Products They Stock In The Category. Alina Silberbauer And· Markus Schmid (2017) Concluded That The Packaging Has A Big Influence On Consumer Choice And The Willingness To Pay For A Food Product. With Rte Meals, Both The Food And The Packaging Must Be Considered As A Whole In Order To Meet Consumer Demands For High Quality Food In Bio-Wrapped Packaging.

The Literature Shows That The Consumers Are Generally Influenced By Major Factors Like Taste, Variety, Nutrition, Freshness, Cleanliness Of The Store Etc. While Making Their Rte Food Purchases. However Not Much Of Efforts Were Taken To Explore The Attitude Of Consumers Of Tier Ii And Tier Iii Cities Towards These Products. Hence This Study Is Proposed To Fill This Research Gap. The Objective Of The Study Is To Explore The Factors Considered By Consumers In Tier Ii Cities While Making Rte Food Purchase Decisions. This Will Throw Light On Various Aspects Of Rte Food Lifestyle Of The Consumers In These Areas And Help The Marketers Develop Proper Strategies To Design The Appropriate Marketing Mix.

3. Research Methodology:

The Present Study Is Descriptive In Nature And Describes Consumer's Perception Towards Ready-To-Eat Food Products. The Primary Data Is Collected From 600 Sample Respondents In Salem City In The State Of Tamilnadu. The Respondents Were Selected Using Systematic Sampling Plan Covering The Various Segments Of The Population. Respondents Provided Their Responses On A 5 Point Likert Scale Ranging From Strongly Agree To Strongly Disagree, Where In They Marked Their Level Of Agreement Or Disagreement With Statements Showing The Attributes Of Ready-To-Eat Food Products. Factor Analysis Is Used For Data Redundancy And To Find The Factors That Affect Their Perception. Regression Analysis Was Applied To Design The Impact Of These Factors.

4. Data Analysis And Results:

Principal Component Method Of Factor Analysis Is Used To Find The Factors Which Influences The Consumer's Attitude Towards Ready-To-Eat Food Products. Kmo Value Obtained Is 0.755, Which Supports The Sample Adequacy Is Very High. (Table 1). Bartlett's Test Sphericity Shows The Chi –Square Value As 1173.8 At 15 Significance Level.

Table 1- Factor Analysis - Kmo And Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure Of Sampling Adequacy.		0.755
Bartlett's Test Of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1,173.18
	Df	66
	Sig.	0.000

The Rotated Component Matrix Of All Components Are Shown In Table 2. The Factor Loadings Shows That 4 Major Factors Are Extracted.

Table 2 Rotated Component Matrix

Variables	Component			
	1	2	3	4
I Find That The Information On The Labels Of Rte Food Products Are Sufficient Enough To Know Their Value And Quality (X_{10})	**0.828**	0.067	-0.032	-0.066
Rte Food Products Are Of Equal Quality When Compared To Home Cooked Food (X_{11})	**0.794**	0.080	0.100	-0.081
I Will Surely Recommend Rtefood Products To My Friends And Relatives (X_{12})	**0.729**	0.060	0.253	-0.022
Rte Food Products Are Useful For Dishes Which I Do Not Know To Make Or Which Is Difficult To Prepare(X_7)	0.104	**0.851**	0.059	0.453
My Entire Family Is Excited When The Ready-To-Eat Food Is Served. (X_9)	0.123	**0.838**	0.133	-0.077
Rte Food Products Give Me Pride For Cooking Tasty Food ($X8$)	0.153	**0.770**	0.128	0.018
Rte Food Products Are Cheaper Compared To Restaurants ($X4$)	-0.045	0.770	**0.875**	0.241
I Feel That Rte Food Products Available Have Affordable Price ($X5$)	0.462	0.471	**0.798**	0.265
Rte Food Products Are Costlier Compared To Food Cooked From Scratch ($X6$	0.092	0.069	**0.727**	0.010
Rte Food Products Reduces The Time Taken For Cooking ($X1$)	0.106	-0.010	0.798	**0.871**
Rte Is Preferred As Home Cooking Is Difficult (X_3)	0.041	0.140	0.727	**0.645**
Rte Food Products Saves Time Without Going To Restaurants ($X2$)	-0.065	0.124	0.212	**0.568**

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

Table 3- Consolidated Factor Output

Statements / Variables Included	Factor Loadings	Factor Number	Factor Title
I Find That The Information On The Labels Of Rte Food Products Are Sufficient Enough To Know Their Value And Quality.	0.828	F1	Quality
Rte Food Products Are Of Equal Quality When Compared To Home Cooked Food.	0.794		
I Will Surely Recommend Rte Food Products To My Friends And Relatives.	0.729		
Rte Food Products Are Useful For Dishes Which I Do Not Know To Make Or Which Is Difficult To Prepare.	0.851	F2	Diverse Cuisine
My Entire Family Is Excited When The Ready-To-Eat Food Is Served.	0.838		
Rte Food Products Give Me Pride For Cooking Tasty Food.	0.770		
Rte Food Products Are Cheaper Compared To Restaurants.	0.875	F3	Economy
I Feel That Rte Food Products Available Have Affordable Price.	0.798		

Rte Food Products Are Costlier Compared To Food Cooked From Scratch	0.727		
Rte Food Products Reduces The Time Taken For Cooking (X1)	0.871	F4	Convenience
Rte Is Preferred As Home Cooking Is Difficult (X_3)	0.645		
Rte Food Products Saves Time Without Going To Restaurants (X2)	0.568		

Table 3 Shows The Consolidated Factor Output And Indicates The Major Factor Loadings.

Quality Is Found To Be The Major Factor Influencing The Perception Of Consumers. They Gave More Importance To The Information On Labels (Nutrition Labels) Which Helps Them To Know The Value And The Ingredients. They Agreed To The Statement That 'Ready- To -Eat Food Are Of Equal Quality As Home Cooked Food'. And Since They Are Confident About The Quality They Agreed That They Will Surely Recommend These To Friends And Relatives.

Second Major Factor Which Emerged Is "Diverse Cuisine". The Consumer Feels That Ready- To –Eat Helps Them To Prepare Dishes Which They Do Not Know To Prepare. It Also Helps Them To Get A Moment Of Pride As The Entire Family Is Excited When Ready- To –Eat Food Variety Is Served.

As For The 3rd Factor It Is Evident That Consumers Agree That When Compared To Restaurants Ready-To-Eat Food Options Are Cheaper And They Are Of Different Prices. However They Agree That When Compared To Home Food Ready-To-Eat Food Is Costlier. Hence Here The Factor Can Be Termed As 'Economy". This Results Corroborates With The Study Conducted By Sateesh Baskaran (2017) Who Found That Perceived Price Is A Major Extrinsic Motivating Factor Influencing The Purchase Intentions Of Ready-To-Eat Food Among Malaysian Urbanites. This Is Also Reinforced By Shruthi Kanchan(2010) In Her Study Which Reveals That The Disposable Income In The Hands Of Young Consumers Creates An Interest For Novel Products In Them And They Are Ready To Try Rte Food.

Figure 1

Scree Plot
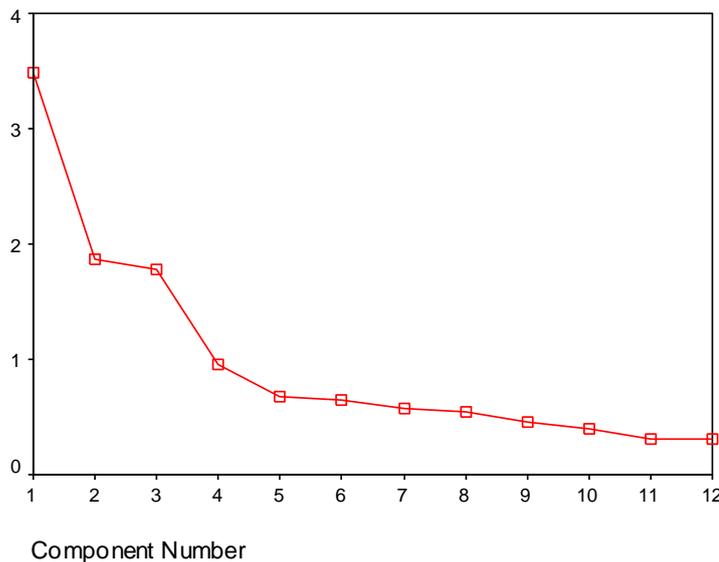
The Last Factor Is Termed As "Convenience" As Respondents Strongly Agreed That Ready-To-Eat Food Reduces The Time Taken For Cooking And It Also Saves Time Without Going To Hotels. Some Of Them Also Agreed That Rte Is Easier To Prepare That Home Cooking. Hence These Statements Shows The Contribution Of "Convenience" In Making Purchase Decision About Ready-To-Eat Food. The Results Are Supported By Leonardo Casini (2019) In Their Article About Heterogeneous Preferences With Respect To Food Preparation Time. The Study Made Clear That Latent Class Analysis Shows Three Segments And The Major One Is "Quickies" Who Are Willing To Pay A Premium Price For Saving Time. Mainly Italians And Youngsters Belong To This Segment.

Eigen Values Of Various Statement In Factor Analysis Is Shown In Scree Plot – Figure 1

The Total Variance Is Explained In Table 4. The Factors Which Has An Eigen Value Of Above 1 Alone Is Extracted Using Principal Component Method. Thus 4 Factors Account For Around 67 Percent Of The Total Variance.

Table 4 Total Variance Explained

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

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Regression Model:

Regression Model Is Used To Determine The Influences Of These Major Factors On Consumer Perception Towards Ready-To-Eat Food. The Regression Equation Is Framed With The Help Of 'T' And 'P' Values. The Results Are Shown In Table 5.

The Regression Model Developed Is Given As:

$$Cp = A + B_1 Q + B_2 Dc + B_3 E + B_4 C$$

Where Cp Is Customer Perception, A Is Constant And B_1 To B_4 Are Slopes Of Various Independent Factors Emerged From Factor Analysis.

Table 5- Results Of Regressions On Various Independent Variables

Independent Variable	T Value	R^2	T Value	R^2	T Value	R^2	T Value	R^2
Convenience	6.258	0.331	6.898	0.545	7.315	0.623	7.161	0.678
	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	
Diverse Cuisine			4.558		5.481		5.213	
			0.000		0.000		0.000	
Quality					3.584		3.764	
					0.000		0.000	
Economy							3.423	
							0.034	

The Factors Convenience, Diverse Cuisine And Quality Has Significant Impact On The Satisfaction Level Of Consumers For Ready-To-Eat Food. (P Values Are 0.000).Convenience Has The Strongest Influence With T

Value 7.315.This Is Also Corroborated By Many Studies. Leticia And Ana (2012) Found That Ready-To-Eat Salads Are Perceived As Convenience Foods. Another Study Segmented Ready-To-Eat Food Market Based On Lifestyle And Found Convenience Seekers As A Major Segment. (Hyun-Joo Bac, Mi-Jin Chae, Kisang Ryuon, 2010).

Factors Diverse Cuisine And Quality Has In The Next Importance With T Values 5.481 And 3.584 Respectively. This Finding Is Also Supported By Starvos And Nikolas, 2016 In Their Study Which Says That Variety And Quality Is Considered By Consumers While Purchasing Organic Ready-To-Eat Meals And By Koek Et. Al (2017) Who Found That Consumers Are More Inclined To Healthy Eating And There Is More Preference For Healthy And Environment Friendly Food. Both These Factors Have A P Value Of 0.000 And This Shows That Consumers Buy Ready-To-Eat Food For Its Variety And Nutrition Plays A Major Role. The Last Factor Economy Has A Very Low Significance As The P Value Is 0.034. The 4 Major Factors Shows Around 67.8% Of The Variance In Customer Perception.

Cluster Analysis:

Cluster Analysis Is Used To Segment The Respondents According To Their Ready-To-Eat Food Lifestyle And Effective Factors In Each Cluster Is Identified. Hierarchical And Non –Hierarchical Clustering Techniques Are Used And The Results Were Given In Table 6. The 4 Factors Which Emerged Out From Factor Analysis Are Considered For Clustering.

Table 6 Agglomeration Schedule

Stage	Cluster Combined		Coefficients	Stage Cluster First Appears		Next Stage
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		Cluster 1	Cluster 2	
566	4	126	11.080	550	537	573
567	39	112	11.159	541	338	572
568	2	19	11.322	558	563	571
569	1	56	11.474	539	557	576
570	152	410	12.000	513	0	581
571	2	9	12.176	568	553	576
572	39	574	12.370	567	529	574
573	4	15	12.789	566	544	587
574	31	39	12.829	545	572	577
575	12	269	13.453	559	556	583
576	1	2	13.670	569	571	580
577	31	48	14.304	574	547	584
578	380	461	14.333	0	554	596
579	20	161	14.667	560	535	587
580	1	24	14.798	576	564	583
581	6	152	15.000	561	570	588
582	40	93	15.227	565	531	586
583	1	12	15.812	580	575	588
584	31	233	15.933	577	509	593
585	139	427	16.167	562	530	591
586	35	40	16.542	325	582	589
587	4	20	16.653	573	579	593
588	1	6	17.471	583	581	590
589	21	35	17.987	549	586	598
590	1	317	18.576	588	522	591
591	1	139	19.133	590	585	594
592	114	507	20.667	555	0	595
593	4	31	20.838	587	584	594
594	1	4	22.943	591	593	595

595	1	114	25.822	594	592	597
596	376	380	26.417	542	578	597
597	1	376	27.983	595	596	599
598	21	108	36.406	589	0	599
599	1	21	38.238	597	598	0

Cluster Method: Average Linkage Between Groups Method (Hierarchical Clustering Method) Distance Method: Squared Euclidean Distance Measure

Non-Hierarchical K Means Clustering Is Used To Find The Food Orientation Effective In Each Cluster. The Final Cluster Centers Are Shown In Table 7.

Table 7 Final Cluster Centers

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

The Mean Values For Each Variable Is Shown And The Variables For Which The Mean Values Are Greater Than 3 Are Selected In Each Cluster Which Is Evaluated To The Moderate Level Of Orientation Factors.

Table 8 Cluster Formations With Orientations

Cluster			
1	2	3	4
Quality Orientation		Quality Orientation	
Diverse Cuisine Orientation		Diverse Cuisine Orientation	
Economy Orientation			Economy Orientation
Convenience Orientation			Convenience Orientation

In The First Cluster All The Variables Are Significant. This Segment More Inclined Towards Ready-To-Eat Food And They Consider The Convenience Factor In Purchases And Consumption Of These Products. Hence This Segment Can Be Termed As – "Ready Foodie". Since Cluster 2 Does Not Have Any Factors Prominent In Them, This Segment Is Indifferent Towards Ready-To-Eat Food .They Prefer Traditional Food Than Innovative Ones. And Hence Can Be Termed As "Traditional Foodie". Cluster 3 Are Quality Conscious And Lovers Of Variety Cuisine As These Two Factors Are Prominent Here. This Segment Is Termed As "Quality Seekers". Lastly Cluster 4 Is More Inclined Towards Convenience And They Are Termed As "Convenience Seekers".

Table 9 Anova

Lifestyle Orientation	Cluster		Error		F	P
	Mean Square	Df	Mean Square	Df		
Quality Orientation	91.28	3	0.72	596	125.91	0.000
Diverse Cuisine Orientation	85.57	3	1.00	596	85.53	0.000
Economy Orientation	162.51	3	0.75	596	215.62	0.000
Convenience Orientation	163.68	3	0.64	596	255.08	0.000

Finally The Anova Shows That All The Variables Are Significant As The P Values Are Less Than 0.01. Hence The Orientation In These Clusters Are Found To Be Prominent.

5. Discussion And Conclusions:

The Changes In The Lifestyle And The Lack Of Time For Cooking With The Entry Of More Women In The Workplace Have Significantly Influenced The Consumption Of Ready-To-Eat Food In Tier Ii Cities. This Study Corroborates With The Research Conducted In Thailand (Nitjawan Khoola, 2006) In The Aspect That Consumers Look For Convenience When They Buy These Products. The Results Also Clearly Indicate That Consumers Consider Diverse Cuisine, Quality And Economy When They Make Ready-To-Eat Food Purchase Decisions. These Findings Were Also Supported By Other Researchers (Shathees Baskaran Et Al., 2016) Who Found That Extrinsic Factors Like Perceived Safety (Quality), Convenience And Brand Image Have Significant Relation With Purchase Intention Of These Products In Malaysia. Supimmas Thienhirun And Sulin Chung, 2017, In Their Study In Thailand And Japan About Cross Cultural Ready-To-Eat Food Preferences Found That Both The Group Of Consumers Preferred The Adapted Taste. Though The Study About Consumer Perception Towards Healthy And Environment Friendly Food, Conducted By Hoek Et.Al In 2017 Contradicts With These Views , They Mentioned That Consumers Showed Most Positive Attitude And Great Motivation For Eating Less Processed Food And They Have A Negative Attitude Towards Packed Food.

The Orientation Factors Found From The Study Is Used To Segment The Ready-To-Eat Food Market Into 4 Clusters Namely; Ready-To-Eat Foodie, Traditional Foodie, Quality Seekers, Convenience Seekers. This Findings Is Corroborated With The Study Conducted By Leonardo Casini Et.Al, 2018, Which Found That Time Scarcity Is An Important Driver For Food Choices. This Study Also Segmented The Consumers Into 3 Segments- Quickies –Who Are Ready To Pay Premium Price For Saving Time, Foodies-Who Looks For Utility While Cooking And Indifferent For Whom The Time Is Not A Choice Factor.

6. Implications:

This Research Study Is Conducted In Salem, A Tier Ii City In Tamilnadu To Extract The Perception Of Consumers About The Ready-To-Eat Food. Though Ready-To-Eat Food Is Popular In The Tier I And Metros These Food Products Are Gaining Inroads Into Tier Ii And Iii Cities. Changes In The Lifestyle Of These Cities Is One Of The Reason Behind This Trend. While The Availability Of Time For Cooking Is Reducing, The Preference For Healthy And Nutritious Food Is Going Up. At The Same Time These Consumers Are More Variety And Price Conscious. So The Question To Ponder Is That What Factors Are Perceived As Influential In Drawing Them Towards Ready-To-Eat Food.

What Makes Ready-To-Eat Food Popular Is Its Versatility Of Adding A Surprise Element On The Dining Table. These Products Of Course Satisfy The Immediate Need Of Time Conscious Consumer. But There Is Also An Emotional Aspect Attached To It In Terms Of Health And Quality. Since Variety Offered Is A Vital Element, Innovation In Product Variety Gains More Prominence Here. Consumers Opted For Spinach Soup And More Healthy Option In Future. This Will Entice The 'Ready Foodie' Segment Of Consumers. Celebrities And Chefs Can Be Roped In To Catch Their Minds. 'Traditional Foodie' Segment Take Pride In Home Cooked Food From Scratch. Ready-To-Eat Can Be Positioned In A Way With A Touch Of Home Cooking And Customizing And Having It Their Own Way. 'Quality Seekers' Can Be Targeted Using More Healthy And Organic Options And 'Convenience Seekers' With Wide Availability And Easy Usage.

Thus Consumers' Food Choice Is Definitely Influenced By Product Features And The Lifestyle Changes And When Ready-To-Eat Food Is Considered, The Most Vital Factors Considered Are Convenience, Diverse Cuisine, Quality And Economy. These Factors Needs To Be Considered While Manufacturing And Marketing Ready-To-Eat Food In Tier Ii Cities.

7. Limitations And Scope For Further Research:

The Study Is Mainly Carried On In Salem, Hence Results Cannot Be Generalized. The Study Is Mainly Done Only In Salem. It Can Also Be Carried Out In Other Tier Ii Cities As Well. Since The Major Part Of The Decisions Are Made By Women Consumers, An Exclusive Study Can Be Made To Know Their Perceptions. A Comparative Study Of Working Women And Home Makers About The Consumer Behavior Towards Ready-To-Eat Food Can Provide Insights Into Changing Consumer Lifestyle And Purchasing Patterns.

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