

## Ready-to-Eat Products: Perspective of Working Women

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### Abstract

Women were earlier confined to their homes and had a definite role as a home maker but with the change in society they started to venture out in search of jobs. Due to the rise in working couples who are busy in their jobs and have limited time to spend in household activities there has been a rise in the ready-to-eat food industry. Women in particular were left with limited time to manage household activities and strike a balance. Therefore, there was a need to study the buying preferences of working women and the factors affecting their choice of ready-to-eat products. The study included 205 working women who were asked to give their preferences through a questionnaire. The data was analysed using SPSS version 23. The study showed that majority of the women were aware of ready to eat food products. The factors which influenced the negative aspects, usefulness, ease of use, sales promotion, familiarity, fondness, price influence and time taken.

**Keywords:** Ready-to-eat food, working women, buying behaviour.

## 1. Introduction

Any nutritious or chemical substance taken into the body in order to maintain the body in a fit and energetic situation is known as 'food'. Food is required for the development, restore as well as alternate of exhausted tissues of the body. So, the purpose of food is not only meeting the fattening necessities similar to carbohydrates, proteins, fats etc. Food has to supply the essential raw material, power and other adaptable substances, like vitamins for smooth performance of the body. Ready-to-eat food refers to a food that is in a type which is suitable for eating with no further preparation or is a raw or partially cooked food. Ready-to-eat food refers to a food which is already prepared with no requirement of mixing ingredients or other cooking beyond heating up the food. This type of food is stored on pantry shelf or in the refrigerator or freezer, until the time of consumption. These food products are convenient when you don't want to cook or need a quick snack or you don't want to spend time in kitchen. Although ready-to-eat food is convenient and are less time consuming but still some food requires special handling to ensure food safety. Ready-to-eat food products include dehydrated foods, convenience foods, frozen foods, instant foods, quick foods, conserved foods and canned foods. Under these foods, different varieties of processed foods can be included such as biscuits, breads, pies, rolls, sandwiches, dairy products like milk, cheese, prepared salads and vegetables and fruits. This list can be extremely long and with the new products introduced in the market nearly every day, the list is getting longer and longer.

In India, everyone wants the touch of mother's hand in food preparation as it makes the food tastier. A mother has the perfect knowledge and perfect blend of ingredients in food preparation and she know about likes and dislikes of each family member. She spends all her time in kitchen for preparation of food for her family and do cutting, mixing, grinding and blending. People consume food at their homes and avoid consuming outside food but over the past two decades there are a lot of changes in Indian lifestyle and an unexpected rise in the number of working women which leads to urbanization, rise in per capita income, shortage of time, change in lifestyle and tremendous increase in the level of middle-income group. These all reasons change the buying behavior of working women and turned them towards ready-to-eat food products. Now-a-days the work of a mother is not restricted only to kitchen in preparation of food at home but they also work for achievement of their career. Now mothers want to contribute in family expenses and they find a way to go away from their homes and kitchens to chase the trail of their victory. They would like to be autonomous but still many of these women need to stay at home for preparation of breakfast, lunch or dinner for their family. This forced them to skip their jobs and to stay at home for preparing food. This is the most important cause for

increasing preference of ready-to-eat food products by working women because of busy schedule of working women they don't have enough time for food preparation. Other reasons which increase the demand of ready-to-eat food products are shift from joint family system to nuclear family system, desire for quality and convenience. From 1981 to 2001, participation of working women had augmented from 19.7 per cent to 25.7 per cent i.e.; rise by 6 per cent. At present in India, ready-to-eat food products or convenience food products covers a main portion of shelf space in stores and super markets. This has been done through media, particularly electronic and print media, as it creates understanding of the goods contrived and sold out in the markets. Emergence of ready-to-eat food products changed the people lifestyle as well as provides a high and new quality of convenience food products to them which saves their time as well as energy. It can also be analyzed by the entry of Indian companies in markets with varieties of ready-to-eat food products. With this now parents can send their children to school on time can go to their office on time and get more time to involve in other activities. Ready-to-eat food products also help urban women to achieve their goals because they can prepare food with less labour, time and energy. Mostly urban women had a desire to attain a status in the society as they have higher education, good exposure to environment and better employment opportunities and this result in more demand for ready-to-eat food products.

The main reason in the change of food pattern and consumption habits in Indian urban area is the influence of western culture as well as increased knowledge of customers towards ready-to-eat food products. During 1990's, customer's inclination towards outside food increased and they start eating at restaurants and are ready to try a wider variety of food items available in the market from different places of the world. The growth of outside food rise with the emergence of multinational companies in India. These multinational companies adopt the food requirements of Indian customer's and make changes in their food according to the preference of customers like by including vegetarian food and by excluding non-vegetarian food in their menu. Today, most of the women are employed and they want to save their time in food preparation and yet maintain a natural taste in food. In this modern era, ready-to-eat food products play an important role in satisfying this attitude or behavior of modern working women. These ready-to-eat products changed the lifestyle of the population of India and results in mass communication and advertisement. Indian culture still follows their traditional pattern of eating at home which is cooked fresh on a daily basis even if the demand and consumption of processed food products increased. Indian women prepare fresh food for their family and they do not believe in preparing and storing it for a week as they believe that daily cooked food is better than the stored one in terms of taste as well as for health.

Due to busy schedule of women they devote less time for cooking than before. But this is not same in case of homes in western world because they store food for a week and do not believe in preparing it on a daily basis. So, this study focused on finding out the affect of occupational status of women on their food buying behavior. As a result, Indian food industry will face a rising demand for convenience food products. Convenience foods or ready-to-eat food products are those foods which can be benefitted to the customer during different stages of food preparation and utilization. Various stages are included in this such as plan, purchase, stored, preparing, eating and disposed off stage. These convenience products are easy to store, easy to prepare, easy to serve and easy to be eaten. These products save customer's time as well as their energy i.e., physical and mental energy and results as a convenient food product to customers.

The food consumption behavior of each working women varies not only on the basis of socio-economic characteristics and income structure but also on the basis of value of homemaker's time. Today, ready-to-eat foods are mostly used in the functions and hold a major place in the life of Indian customers as it becomes easy to cook these products. This increased demand of convenience food products leads to more competition for industries which manufacture these products. Main aim of marketers is to attract customers towards their product by providing a wide variety of ready-to-eat products at lower price than their competitors. But main problem faced by marketers is to understand the buying behavior of their customers. Marketers are trying to adopt innovative ways to attract customers who prefer convenience products. It can be done by bringing new flavors to the product according to needs of the customers. They tried to understand the regional differences in India.

## 2. Literature Review

### *Customer perception and preference of Ready-to-Eat products*

**Patel and Rathod (2017)** examined the link among perception about food, its preference and choices of food. The objective of the study was to recognize and spot out the reasons that have an effect on perception of food, its preference. The study also discussed about the variation of factors that affect the preference of ready-to-eat food. It also provided a brief discussion of relationship between food preferences and food choice. The results showed that further insight was needed in areas like cultural, historical and demographic factors. **Shanmugapriya and Srivarshini (2018)** tried to analyze the consumer's level of satisfaction on using instant food products. The result showed that family income, non-earning members in the family, total number of family and period of using instant food products were associated with consumer's level of satisfaction on instant food products.

**Garg et al. (2016)** studied about the three aspects of ready-to-cook foods i.e., satisfaction of consumer, convenient usage and usefulness. The result showed that easiness in cooking and time saving were the main characteristics of ready-to-cook foods that affect the buying decision of consumers. The study also revealed that price has relatively lower effect while product name, wrapping, availability and commercial was an extrinsic factor and health was intrinsic factor that had greater impact on purchase intention of consumers.

**Gisha and Ramya (2016)** studied about the purchase decision of rural women consumers regarding convenience foods in Palakkad. A sample of 205 females across diverse groups was taken. The result showed that there was a complete awareness of instant food products among rural women consumers. The study also revealed that television was the most familiar source that provided information about instant food products to female consumers.

**Srinivasan and Shende (2015)** studied regarding the various uses derived from these ready-to-eat foods as well as about different types of these foods preferred by the working women in place of cooking. The findings of this study indicated main factor that influenced the preference of working women towards ready-to-eat foods and that factor was non – availability of some ingredients which were used in the preparation of food. The study also revealed that these products were more helpful to women when they had to prepare an off seasonal food.

**Murdia (2015)** studied different uses of ready-to-eat foods by working women, reasons for the preference of these products as well as to study about various benefits derived from these products. There was an incredible increase in the segment of working women as well as in the manufacturing sector in India in the last decade. The result of the study revealed that working women are managing their family along with their jobs. They are not only job seekers to build their career but they also prepare food for their families.

**Vijayeta Priyadarshini (2015)** examined the awareness of consumers regarding convenience food products as well as ready-to-cook foods along with the reasons that affect the purchase decision of consumers towards convenience foods. The objective of the study was to create a complete approach for the purchase decision of consumer regarding convenience food as well as ready-to-cook foods. A sample of 110 respondents was taken from Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Convenient sampling technique was used for this. The result revealed that a greater number of consumers purchase convenience foods in a planned manner. This study also revealed that television is the main source that provides information to consumers about ready-to-eat foods.

**Salehuddin and Zahari (2015)** studied about relationship between working mother and their food preparation during working days. The results showed that working time, busy together with distance of the office positively influence the routine of family dinner cooking especially during weekdays among paid job mother. This showed that working women should adopt combination of both convenience food product as well as home -

made product. **Anand (2011)** focused on preparing a model for choice of food due to changing habits of food and eating in India. The main objective was to investigate about the demographic as well as psychographic factors that affect the choice of fast food by Indian consumers. The major factors that affect the consumer's choice regarding food are zeal of eating out, to meet people, to live a luxurious life, taste as important factor for school and college students and convenience as the main factor for families where both husband and wife are earning. The results of this study revealed that for fast food companies in India are not only to provide convenience in food preparation but that product must be healthy for consumer's health as well. **Botonaki *et al.* (2007)** examined the consequence of a number of socio demographic as well as psychographic variables regarding the usage of ready-to-eat products. Greek consumers were taken for sample. The results showed that the deficiency of important consequences of variables such as income and perceived money budget are the main variables that affect the behavior of consumers. They also agree that ready-to-eat food products are mostly used by the women who are employed on a full-time basis. **Devine and Jabs (2006)** examined the effect of scarcity of time on the pattern of food consumption of consumers. These patterns show a rise in demand for fast foods and a fall in cooking at home, fall in food cooked at home and a rise in demand for ready-to-eat foods. This study also examined about the trends like socio cultural which affect the perception or feelings of consumers regarding scarcity of time, how to measure time usage and about differing trends for food choice and nutrition. **Carrigan *et al.* (2006)** studied about the link that exist between mother and their family's food and tried to explore the meaning of ready-to-eat foods for U.K. mothers. The results showed that convenience food had multiple meanings for U.K. women and incorporated as the reinterpreted version of food prepared at home. A list of satisfactory ready-to-eat food products was prepared by the mothers who manage their difficult family routines by finding out some convenience solutions. Although there has been an evolution in the rules of eating but still control over food is in the hands of mother when it comes about nutrition. The study revealed that changed lifestyles required convenience foods as it becomes a part of the equation. **Keng and Lin (2005)** examined the link between wife's value for time and expenditure done on food away from home (FAFH). The sample was taken from Taiwan. The results showed that the amount spent on food away from home (FAFH) affected by various factors such as wife's value for time, household income, presence of younger children and grandparents and wife's educational level. The study also revealed that spending on food away from home (FAFH) had also increased over the time. **Park and Capps (1996)** estimated the demand for ready-to-eat food products by U.S. households. This was done by using a Heckman two stage procedure i.e., 1987-88 NFCS. The results showed that households who are more educated, younger and manage

time are more likely to purchase convenience foods and also indicated food away from home and ready-to-eat food as substitutes. The study revealed that there is a positive relationship between teenagers and expenditure done on ready-to-eat food products which means teenagers increase the demand of these convenience food products. **Redman (1980)** studied about the impact of time allocation done by working women and expenditure done on food away from home or on cooked foods. The result of the study revealed that characteristics that affect the time allocation of working women on food prepared at home and on food away from home along with factors that influence their expenditure on food prepared at home that require less time in preparation. This study also revealed that working wives buy relatively more food away from home and decrease the demand for food prepared at home.

#### ***Buying behavior towards Ready-to-Eat food products***

**Solanki and Jain (2017)** studied about the purchase behavior of consumer regarding convenience food industry in northern India. The main objective was to perceive the consumption pattern of convenience food products. The result revealed that consumers are aware about the ready-to-eat food industry but are not able to completely rely on it. **Jayakrishnan and Kumar (2015)** tried to analyze various aspects related to the buying behavior of rural consumer towards packed food products. The objective of the study was to find out the factors that affect the buying decision of consumers towards packed foods in Tiruvellore district, Tamil Nadu. The sample of 400 respondents was taken. Questionnaire sampling method was used. The result showed that the respondents were influenced by healthiness, price, convenience and frame of mind, brand name, positive appeal and close relationship. **Siddiqui Aaliyah (2014)** studied about the buying behavior of working women and non-working women regarding packed food and non-packed food. The main objective of this study was to understand the reasons for preference of packed and non-packed food by working women and to find out the relationship between packed food and working women. The result of the study revealed that there exists a strong relationship between working women and packed food products. **Muktawat and Varma (2013)** tried to analyze the eating behavior and predilection of single living male and female towards convenience food products. 300 single living male and female were taken as a sample which might include widow, bachelor, separated, divorcee etc. aged from 25 – 45 years. This sample was taken from the chosen areas of Bhopal town. The result of the study revealed that a greater number of single living male and female preferred to take different types of convenience food products due to their own reasons. **Karuppusamy and Arjunan (2012)** tried to understand the purchase behavior of individual households towards convenience foods and tried to analyze the demand pattern for these convenience



foods in Coimbatore. The result revealed that all consumers were well conscious about the pickles and sambhar masala but a very few percentages of consumers were conscious about dosa and idli mix. This study also revealed that many consumers prepare these convenience products by themselves at a reasonable cost and with better taste which leads to non-consumption of these convenience foods. **Joo Bae *et al.* (2010)** examined about the consumer behavior towards convenience food products and to build up market segmentation for convenience food in Korea. A sample of 410 consumers was taken from Korea. The results showed that consumers who are traditional in nature buy convenience foods mostly from discount stores due to cost factor and consume these products between meals whereas modern consumers who seek for convenience due to time factor buy convenience foods from convenience stores and consume these products as meals. So, this result revealed that in order to create a proper marketing strategy, market segmentation of convenience foods should be done on the basis of food related lifestyles. **Grunert (2002)** applied food-related lifestyles instrument developed by Grunert, Brunso & Bisp (1993) to understand and track changes in consumer's food related attitude and behaviors. The results of the study revealed that the food related lifestyles instrument will be helpful for the marketer to build a better knowledge of Australian food consumers. As the Australian food manufacturers looked ahead to improve their marketing related decisions. Marketers need an instrument that will help them to understand consumers and customers. **Rose *et al.* (1995)** studied the attitude and behavior of working women and non-working women. The main objective of this study was to analyze the preference of working women between convenience, ease of preparation, frequency of food she ate away from home, areas of her judgment direction and price. The result of the study revealed that both demographic and psychographic variables, long-established values, service status, income of family and children at home. These all factors revealed a main insight about the judgment direction as well as about working women behavior towards food. **Glanz *et al.* (1998)** studied about the importance of various factors such as taste, nourishment, price, easiness and weight management on individual food choices and how these factors are different from demographic groups which are related with the choice of lifestyle related to health. This study also examined the eating behavior of consumers. The result revealed that taste is the most important factor that influence the choice of food and second important factor is price. The other factors like nourishment and weight management are more important in membership of healthy lifestyle cluster. The study revealed that taste and cost are more relevant to most people than nutrition concerns. **Jackson *et al.* (1985)** studied about the buying behavior of working women towards food shopping and cooking. The result of the study revealed that working women dislike food shopping and cooking in comparison of non-working women due to time consideration. The study also revealed



that working women are not so concerned about the side effects of their food shopping and cooking towards the health of other family members as compared to the non-working women. **Roberts and Wortzel (1979)** studied about the level of participation of women in workforce as well as about the lifestyle changes and different food consumption patterns. The main objective was to understand the attitude and behavior of working women towards food shopping and its preparation which is a part of their traditional role. The result of the study revealed that earlier women are more concerned about the health of their families instead of time utilized in food preparation which means they preferred to cook high quality food at a reasonable cost. It is not same in the case of modern women as they are more concerned about time utilization and less concerned about cost of food.

#### ***Factors affecting buying behavior towards Ready-to-Eat products***

**Nirmalraj (2012)** studied about the factors affecting consumer buying behavior towards convenience foods in India. The main objective was to understand all negative and positive perceptions of consumers about ready-to-eat foods. The result revealed that Indian companies should focus on creating customer awareness regarding convenience foods with the motive to increase the growth of future market in India. **Hawa et al. (2014)** studied about the factors that affect the decision of buying and not buying of convenience products as an alternate to every day meal. To reduce the area for the meaning of convenience products, diverse secondary resources were used and a pilot test for primary data was implemented because everyone has different meaning of these convenience foods. Quota sampling method was used for this study. The results revealed that easiness in usage and time saving is the main factors that affect the buying decision of potential as well as present customers regarding convenience food products. **Srinivasan and Nirmala (2014)** studied about the factors that influence the selection of convenience foods. The main objective of this study was to understand the level of awareness about convenience products in kanchipuram town, to evaluate the purchasing frequency of convenience foods, to know the media for selection of convenience food and to find out the factors influencing convenience food products. The results revealed that all the respondents are aware about various convenience products. Easy availability and time saving are the reasons for consumption of convenience food products. **Gupta and Singh (2016)** studied the factors that influence the attitude of working women regarding convenience foods. The area of Punjab (India) was taken for the samples. The results showed that 'convenience' in meal preparation is one of the major factors that influence the attitude of working women towards ready-to-eat food products due to their hectic and busy work schedule. Other major factors that affect the attitude of working women includes 'sensory variables', 'mood', 'health issues', 'price influence' and 'familiarity'.

**Baskaran *et al.* (2017)** studied about the extrinsic reasons that affect the buying intention of metropolitan residents in Malaysia. Various proportions of extrinsic reasons were studied in this study such as recognized cost, recognized protection, recognized wrapping, product representation and easiness. The result showed that expectations from planned theoretical structure is to through some light on future experimental analysis so as to offer more insights about consumer research in common and decision in particular.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the extent of awareness of working women towards ready-to-eat food products.
2. To know the buying preferences of working women towards ready-to-eat food products.
3. To identify the factors determining the attitudes/buying behavior of working women towards ready-to-eat food products.

### **4. Research Methodology**

In this study, non-probability sampling i.e., convenience and judgmental sampling was used. The sampling universe included every working woman in Sonepat. A total of 205 respondents were taken for purpose of analysis and interpretation. Majority of the working women in the sample belonged to the age group of 26-35 years (46 per cent) and 42 per cent belonged to the teaching profession. Responses were taken on 5-point Likert scale and reliability of the scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha with a value of 0.825 which suggested consistency among the items of the scale.

### **5. Data Analysis and Discussion**

#### ***Awareness***

In order to assess the extent of awareness regarding ready to eat products the women were asked to rate their awareness level on a three-point scale ranging from no awareness to highly aware. It was found that 66 per cent of the women were moderately aware of the ready to eat food items and only 2 per cent were not aware.

#### ***Buying preferences***

Buying preferences of working women for ready to eat food products in comparison to street food revealed that 58 per cent of the women preferred street food which suggests the popularity of these food items among the working group.

*Factor Analysis***Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of Sampling Adequacy		.864
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3665.532
	Df	496
	Sig.	.000

Source: Survey by authors

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is used in order to test whether variables are correlated to each other or not. The KMO value is 0.864 which is above the minimum requirement of 0.5, so the sample is adequate for factor analysis. Eight factors had been extracted by using Principal Component Analysis and by using Varimax rotation. The results obtained through Varimax rotation helped to retain the factor loadings greater than 0.50.

**Table 2. Factor Analysis**

Factor	Statement	Factor loadings	% of Variance	Reliability
Negative aspect	Harder to control fat, salt & sugar levels	0.853	17.066	0.907
	Low in nutrients	0.836		
	High in calories	0.800		
	Promotes aging	0.786		
	Lack of freshness	0.765		
	Additives	0.69		
	High cost	0.611		
	Lack of awareness	0.571		
Usefulness	Usefulness	0.798	10.609	0.831
	Safe Consumption	0.666		
	Less of nutritional depreciation	0.643		
	Habitual	0.596		
	Overall Satisfaction	0.572		
	Product Quality	0.554		
Ease of use	Easy to cook	0.815	10.026	0.841
	Easy availability	0.754		
	Less time for preparation	0.741		
	Convenience	0.737		
Sales promotion	Advertisement	0.806	8.511	0.796
	Attractive Offers	0.730		
	Packaging	0.653		
	Influence of Friends/ Relatives	0.547		
Familiarity	Brand	0.675	6.673	0.722
	Price	0.663		

	Variety of items	0.515		
More time	High Baking time	0.65	5.849	0.631
	Non-availability	0.582		
Fondness	Your family members like that product	0.635	5.297	0.617
	Taste	0.611		
Price influence	High cost	0.654	5.215	0.652
	Low cost of home preparation	0.641		
	Disliked by family members	0.600		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

The names of factors, factor loadings, variance and reliability are summarized in table 18.

The paper examined the factors which influence the working women to change their preference towards ready-to-eat products. The result showed that there are thirty-two variables converged into eight factors. Item had to be excluded as the factor loading was more than 0.5. The reliability of all obtained factors was above 0.6 which showed that the scale chosen was reliable for measuring the chosen factor. These factors are discussed below:

#### **Factor – 1: Negative Aspect**

The analysis has revealed that respondents have considered this factor to be the most important factor with the highest explained variance of 17.066 per cent and the reliability obtained was 0.907. Eight statements out of thirty-two load on this factor. Negative aspect includes Harder to control fat, salt & sugar levels, low in nutrients, high in calories, promotes ageing, lack of freshness, additives, high cost and lack of awareness.

#### **Factor – 2: Usefulness**

The respondents have considered this factor to be second most important as it explained variance of 10.609 per cent and the reliability obtained was 0.831. Six statements out of thirty-two load on this factor. Usefulness includes usefulness, safe consumption, less of nutritional depreciation, habitual, overall satisfaction and product quality.

#### **Factor – 3: Ease of use**

The respondents have considered this factor to be third most important as it explained variance of 10.026 per cent and the reliability obtained was 0.841. Four statements out of thirty-two load on this factor. Ease of use includes easy to cook, easy availability, less time for preparation and convenience.

**Factor – 4: Sales Promotion**

The respondents have considered this factor to be fourth most important as it explained variance of 8.511 per cent and the reliability obtained was 0.796. Four statements out of thirty-two load on this factor. Sales promotion includes advertisement, attractive offers, packaging and influence of friends/ relatives.

**Factor – 5: Familiarity**

The respondents have considered this factor to be fifth most important as it explained variance of 6.673 per cent and the reliability obtained was 0.722. Three statements out of thirty-two load on this factor. Familiarity includes brand, price and variety of items.

**Factor – 6: More Time**

The respondents have considered this factor to be sixth most important as it explained variance of 5.849 per cent and the reliability obtained was 0.631. Two statements out of thirty-two load on this factor. More time includes high-baking time and non- availability.

**Factor – 7: Fondness**

The respondents have considered this factor to be seventh most important as it explained variance of 5.297 per cent and the reliability obtained was 0.617. Two statements out of thirty-two load on this factor. Fondness includes your family members like that product and taste.

**Factor – 8: Price Influence**

The respondents have considered this factor to be as last most important as it explained variance of 5.215 per cent and the reliability obtained was 0.652. Three statements out of thirty-two load on this factor. Price influence includes high cost, low cost of home preparation and disliked by family members.

## **6. Conclusion**

As number of working women has increased day by day so there is a need to do research on how occupational status of working women affect their food buying behavior. The objective of this research is to study the extent of awareness, factors influencing the attitude of working women towards ready-to-eat food products, their buying preferences, impact of working schedule on cooking pattern and time devoted by women on cooking daily. For this a descriptive study was undertaken with a sample size of 205 respondents from area of Sonapat city.

The results of the study showed that working women were not so aware about these products or were moderately aware and very few women were highly aware about ready-to-eat foods. The working schedule of working women highly or moderately influence their cooking pattern as they have busy work schedule at their jobs. The study revealed that mostly women spend 1-2 hours on cooking daily and cook 2 times or more per day according to their working schedule.

The 'negative aspect' was the most important factor which influence the attitude of working women towards ready-to-eat food products as this factor explains the 17.066 per cent of total variance. This is followed by another seven factors such as 'usefulness', 'easiness', 'sales promotion', 'familiarity', 'more time', 'fondness' and 'price influence'.

Still Indian working women prefer to prepare food at their home instead of buying it because of negative aspect of ready-to-eat food products i.e., low in nutrients, high in calories, lack of freshness, high cost and harder to control fat, salt and sugar levels. The respondents had stated that they buy ready-to-eat food products due to lack of time i.e., working women do not have enough time to prepare a meal. So, they prefer to buy ready-to-eat food products. Sometimes women do not want to cook which force them to purchase ready-to-eat foods.

By understanding the attitude of working women, food manufacturers might better estimate the successful entry in new markets.

## 7. Suggestions

The following suggestions are recommended for increasing the preference of ready-to-eat food products by working women:

- Marketers can increase the demand of ready-to-eat foods by focusing on the major importance of these products i.e., less time in preparation which is suitable to working women due to their hectic schedule. Marketers can also attract potential consumers by reducing the cost of ready-to-eat food products and by providing variety of items or traditional Indian food as ready-to-eat foods.
- Many respondents avoid the consumption of these products because of high calories, so marketers should provide healthy products. Marketers should create awareness among consumers about the ready-to-eat food products which help them in taking purchase decision and results in a positive attitude towards ready-to-eat foods. By increasing the nutritional level of ready-to-eat foods, marketers can increase their preference by working women.

- These products are suitable to sick and old people who are unable to cook their food, so marketers should focus on this consumer segment. These products are more useful for travelers especially in case of remote areas as these products are available at every place. Marketers should provide a quality which is acceptable by the food safety and standards authority of India (FSSAI). A proper survey of the market and the tastes and needs of the consumers of various age groups should be done in order to focus on the product development and marketing.

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