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Are We Nodding for the Noodles? – An Empirical Evidence among the Bengaluru Youth

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Abstract

Noodles available in numerous brands and variants have become popular nowadays in the Indian markets. However, there were setbacks for this industry owing to the blacklist of a few brands by the state authorities and the consequent boycott of those brands by the general public. In this context, this study intends to investigate the factors which affect the purchase decision of consumers of Packaged Foods, especially the Ready-To-Cook noodles. The consumption patterns of the consumers in terms of taste, convenience and availability are also examined. This exploratory research has been done among the Bengaluru youth in the age group of 20-30 years, and the influence of five major players in this segment - Maggi, Yippee, Ching's, Top Ramen and Knorr are explored. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to understand the differences and variations among the brands. The paper concludes that Ready-To-Cook noodles has not yet got the acknowledgement and acceptance among the youth, though there is an immense potential

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for growth in this segment in the future. Critical factors that influence the buying decision of consumers are convenience, taste and availability. Consumers believe that noodles category should include more variety at reasonable and affordable prices, which will cater to the demand of this product in future. However, the brands in this study perform satisfactorily on the factors selected. And Maggi is perceived to be the best brand of noodle in terms of price, and Knorr in terms of its variety.

Keywords: Packaged food, Ready to cook, Noodle, Brand, Consumer.

Introduction

In one stroke, the noodles controversy of one of the popular brands in mid-2015 dragged the entire packaged foods (PF) category down in the June quarter as wary consumers drastically reduced purchases. According to data from IMRB Kantar Worldpanel, which studies the consumption patterns through volume sales, the Ready-To-Cook (RTC) foods, including noodles, oats and soups sales reduced by 9% during the quarter compared to a 5% increase an year-ago. However, people associate consumption-related behaviours with the affective state they are experiencing (Garg, Wansink and Inman, 2007). Today, people do not just consider vegetables or snacks as the only food products available to them, but also packaged food (PF) products.

The PF industry is considered to have soaring price-cost margins, aggressive introduction of novel products and huge advertising-to-sales ratios (Nevo, 1999). This industry has seen intense price competition, which is approximately cooperative, and rivalry is channelled into advertising and new product introduction (Scherer, 1982). Nevertheless, we have remarkable difficulty in discerning one taste from another with just our taste buds (Elder and Krishna, 2010). This choice has become even more difficult after the introduction of varieties in PF products. With rapid urbanisation and change in socio-economic status of the population in India, there has been an increase in the demand for RTC food products.

Life in big cities of India has changed rapidly with an increase in the disposable income. People often cohort consumption related behaviours with the affective state (sad versus happy) they are experiencing. This has motivated many supermarkets to introduce a variety of PF items in India. Some of the typical RTC Indian meals include Indian breads, cereals, vegetables, lentils (dals), dosas, idlis, non-veg items like fish and chicken. Indian consumers are looking for high quality PF products that are safe and healthy to use. With different brands of RTC noodles available in its markets like Maggi, Top Ramen, Yippee, Knorr, Ching's to name a few, there exists an intense and growing competition.

The amount of money India spends on PF snacks and food is US$ 5 billion in a year. The packaged food industry is estimated to be over US $ 1 billion (i.e. Rs. 4000 crores) and it continues to grow at the rate of 20% per annum (Euro monitor International, 2009). A couple of years ago, products under this segment of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) was staring at the prospect of more challenges than sales, but PF Indian meals and main course dishes since then have moved from shelves to shopping carts. While it is still a small market, manufacturers have firmly established it as a consumption category, and are trying to develop it further.

During the second quarter of 2015, the consumers had too many variables to deal with in the choice of RTC food items. It includes the price changes, regulatory norm changes, and even the credibility of an established lead brand being questioned. In this paper, how consumer's diverse affective tastes influence consumption of RTC food products in India is examined and, also, whether this relationship is satisfied by the brands and product types on hand in Indian markets. This research makes five significant contributions in this broad context. First, identify the factors among Indians that influence the purchase decision of PF products. Second, ascertain the awareness of consumers towards PF products. Third, find the consumption patterns through their preferences for different brands available. Fourth, establish an empirical framework underlying the brand choices judging brand awareness, and purchase decision influencing factors. Fifth, offer useful suggestions for officials of public policy, market researchers, tradesmen and consumers interested in the PF products in Indian markets.

In a nutshell, this paper is structurally designed as follows: Summarize existing research findings, familiarise the RTC food products in the Indian markets, describe the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) measures and later indicate and report these findings. In the final section, the implications of the findings of this research to managers and researchers are also put forth.

Review of Literature

The objective is to understand consumer's buying behaviour of various PF products, and to identify the factors that influence their purchase decision in the Indian markets. An excerpt of the existing findings is, therefore, first listed.

Existing research

With changing lifestyles across the globe, most consumers don't have sufficient time to prepare meals on their own. Consumers prefer to purchase PF products from the place they usually buy which enhances their frequency of purchase. The quality of food such as flavour, texture, odour and appearance; socio-economic factors such as availability, price and culture; biological factors such as nutrient requirements and energy; and psychological factors including behaviour, moods and eating attitudes influence food choice among consumers (Blades, 2001). However the consumption patterns of the population can be formulated in different groups such as young, educated, etc. The marketing of PF should not only consider the attitudes and factors of the product itself. Other factors like packaging play a crucial role in determining the quality and sales of the product itself (Margretts, 1998). The most common occasion among consumers across countries for eating PF meals is dinner, but for breakfast is least likely (AC Nielson, 2006).

However the brand of the PF product influences the purchase decisions of the consumer. In products, especially such as soaps, brand awareness provides a sense of familiarity, a sense of presence or commitment and it was very essential to recall at the purchasing process time. Awareness is created by conventional mass media, publicity, event promotions, sampling and other attention grabing process (Aaker, 2000).

Its deemed to be profitable to extend brands both within and beyond the original product category because, it is assumed that brands that are recognised and popular require lower new product launch expenses, such as price promotions, trade deals, or advertising (Collins-Dodd and Louviere 1999; Tauber 1988). And such brand extensions signifies one of the branding strategies that is frequently used (Völckner and Sattler, 2006). Nevertheless, there always is an uncertainity in such brand extensions. Success rates of brand extensions in many such fast-moving consumer good (FMCG) product categories are approximately 20% (Ernst & Young and ACNielsen 1999; *Marketing* 2003). Therefore, judging the potential determinants of brand extension's success have emerged as a spotlight of research that would help and provide the managers with insights to minimise the failure rates of such extensions (e.g., Aaker and Keller 1990; Bottomley and Doyle 1996; Dacin and Smith 1994; Swaminathan, Fox, and Reddy 2001).

A lions share of research focus on what managers and scholars attach to emphasize on the importance to package design (e.g., Rettie and Bruwer 2000; Bloch 1995; Hertenstein, Platt, and Veryzer 2005; Garber, Burke, and Jones 2000; Schoormans and Robben 1997). The design of package elicits various responses. The influence of packaging in purchase of PF has tremendously increased, especially in the Indian context. It has been observed that different types of PF require different types of packaging. Most researches are to find the changing trends in the consumption pattern of foods in India. However, it is the convenience, growing working culture of consumers, more working people moving away from homes, improved tastes of the PF products that have made Indians prefer to go in for PF (Bhanga, 2009).

The 'snacking and grazing' consumption behaviour is credited to the modern and urban lifestyle. Snack foods that are more portable and hygienic have thus become a ready substitute for the hot-snacks. And Indian consumers have thus increasingly moved to a more cosmopolitan lifestyle. TechnoPak (2009) in its annual report identified the trends in the Indian food market. Its observed that a majority of people (99%) consider nutrition and health in their purchase decisions. Increasing number of people are moving towards the convenience and change that PF provides. 35 - 40% of housewives regularly shop packaged and convenience foods items like pasta, noodles, and soup powders, and 'ready to cook' items from companies like Maggi and Yippee, irrespective of their shopping from a modern format grocery store or traditional shop. Consumers are showing growing preferences for foods to be eaten on the move, like snacks.

Referring to the market tracker Nielsen data, the food segment outpaced the FMCG market with 9%, though the market grew 7% during March when the financial year ended. Also during the March quarter, the impulse food segment witnessed 14%, considered to be the highest ever growth rates. And specifically based on the reviews, there are two major research gaps in the literature. First, very little research has been done on consumption habits related to the youth and working class. Moreover, market segmentation on the basis of manufacturers and retailers has not been extensively studied. Underlying factors that influence the purchase decision of selecting a particular PF product among Indian consumers has also not yet been researched. Therefore the second knowledge gap relates to the brands of PF availability in Indian markets.

In order to address the outlined research gap, this research paper begins by identifying the important factors used by the customers in differentiating one PF product brand from another in the Indian market. Further the consumption (nutritional value, price, taste, availability and variety) and decision regarding purchase by the Indian consumers towards PF products market is studied. It is anticipated that the availability of PF products is attractive for the youth (both students and professionals) in the age group of 20-30 years in India. Specifically, with top five competitive PF brands (Maggi, Yippee, Ching's, Top Ramen and Knorr) in Bengaluru city have been selected to understand if there is a significant difference in the diverse factors between and within the selected brands by applying the statistical technique of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Method

a) Design and procedure

Though this research is initiated during a turbulent period to the RTC industry segment, the main objective of the survey is to assess the consumers' predilection of a particular brand of PF items in Indian markets despite these setbacks. In this study, exploratory research technique was adopted. Keeping in view the subject matter of research, easy accessibility and convenience of the researcher; non-probability convenient sampling technique was used to collect primary data. The study period was 3 months (August 2015 – October 2015). Sample units, i.e. the customers were approached using Survey Monkey (online survey), with a request to complete the questionnaire within a stipulated time frame. Questionnaires were circulated only in Bengaluru city. And the target population was youth either working or studying in various colleges at Bengaluru, and in the age group of 20 to 30. A survey design was employed, and a sample of five Indian RTC brand of noodles were selected, namely Maggi, Yippee, Ching's, Top Ramen and Knorr. After review and editing the filled in questionnaires, unsuitable or partial responses were discarded; and the final analysis included 127 responses chosen from a total of 165 responses. The questionnaire probed areas of the consumer profile like the consumer demographic information, generic factors related to PF, and brand preferences. On the substructure of different dimensions mentioned in the questionnaire, the collected data was later categorized, tabulated and interpreted.

b) Estimating Measures

In order to determine the most consequential and the least paramount factor (taste, price, nutritional value, availability and variety) that influence the purchase decision of the respondents to buy a particular brand of PF (Maggi, Yippee, Ching's, Top Ramen and Knorr) food products, one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. The researchers conducted five one-way ANOVA with respect to the different factors. The null and alternative hypothesis for the study has been formulated as:

Null hypothesis: Mean effect of the factor is not significantly different from zero.

Alternative *hypothesis*: Mean effect of the factor is significantly different from zero.

The ANOVA model assumes that the data within a treatment mechanism are independent and normally distributed and that data across the population have homogeneous variance. The data is analysed by using SPSS, version – 20.

Discussion and Results

a) Demographic profile of the consumers using PF products

The results of the demographic profile of the consumer's predelictions for PF products are presented in **Table 1**. The respondents (85.04%) represented an array of age groups and had maximum age of 20-25 years. Around 66.4 per cent of the respondents were male. Majority of the respondents were students and working professionals. And the respondents were mostly vegetarian (75.64%). A fair majority of 36.22% currently consume PF very infrequently, and very few consume RTC products every day. This indicates that RTC has not yet been readily accepted by the Indian market and there is an immense market potential.

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of the respondents

Gender (n = 127)	**%**	**Age group (years)**	**%**	**Food habit**	**%**
Male Female	66.4 33.6	Less than 20 20-25 26-30 31-35	02.37 85.04 11.02 01.57	Vegetarian Non- Vegetarian Both	75.64 15.7 8.66

In order to understand other priorities of the consumer's that incentivize them to buy RTC products, different questions were asked to the respondents. Around 50 per cent of the respondents prefer to purchase PF items because of their taste and convenience. The other factors are availability, price, variety and nutrition. The improvement in the socio-economic situation in the Indian economy prompts its citizens to buy PF products. Packaging and

Special schemes offered with RTC products also influence the customer's buying decision to a small extent. Consumers preferred to purchase RTC products because they are fast to cook, easily available and provide convenient taste change for a particular meal.

However, most consumers bought RTC products for consumption at home (36.5%) followed by consumers staying at hostels, workplace or while travelling. The reason assumed for this is that the RTC inevitably requires a little amount of preparation which might not be possible during travelling or at the workplace. Majority of people prefer to have snacks like Pastas and Pizzas. There is an equal preference for fast food, sweets and main Indian meals. Indian consumers are pragmatic and want variety in their selection process of PF items, along with reduction in prices and availability in different packaging styles and sizes. It is also intriguing to find that in case of PF, people overwhelmingly preferred vegetarian dishes. The respondents that prefer non-vegetarian food also are inclined to buy vegetarian PF items.

b) PF consumer awareness and preferences

Top five popular brands of PF products (noodles) available in Bengaluru, included Yippee, Ching's, Maggi, Knorr, and Top Ramen. Among those, based on the survey responses, Maggi (around 30%) is the most popular, and preferred brand of RTC product. It is followed by Knorr (24%), Top Ramen (21%), Yippee (14%) and Ching's (11%). These statistics are graphically depicted in the figure below (**Figure 1**)

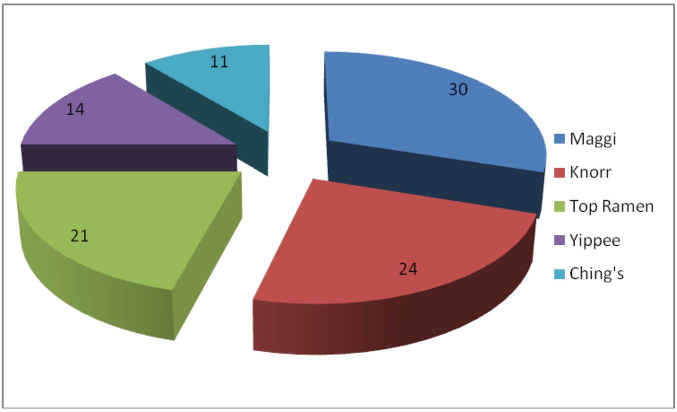

Fig1: Respondents awareness and preferences among the brands of PF

c) PF brand preference factors in Indian markets

The design of a package of a particular brand elicits various responses from consumers (Bloch, 1995). Studies have focused on specific design elements, including size (Folkes and Matta, 2004); shape (Folkes and Matta, 2004); unity and prototype (Veryzer and Hutchinson, 1998), imagery (Underwood and Klein, 2002), colour (Garber, Hyatt, and Starr, 2000, Yang and Raghubir, 2005, Wansink, 1996), proportions (Raghubir and Greenleaf, 2006); but they do not establish link to generic design and preferred brand factors. Indian PF products have variety of brands, namely Veetee, Gits, Kohinoor, Secrets of Sea, Shakti Bhog, Yippee, Ching's, Maggi, Knorr, and Top Ramen, which have different taste, sizes, and shapes, colour, proportions and the like. This increases intense competition among the available PF items brands in the Indian market. Consumers prefer different brands because of their unique taste.

Among the choices given, the respondents ranked Knorr as the number one RTC brand categorically in terms of taste, followed by Top Ramen. These respondents additionally rate Maggi as a good brand among PF products. In terms of price, Knorr, Top Ramen and Maggi are perceived to be affordable. Yippee and Ching's are considered to be expensive PF products. In terms of nutrition, all the brands are perceived equal. The respondents do not differentiate with respect to the nutritional value of the RTC item selected. In terms of variety, the respondents have rated Top Ramen to be significantly better than Knorr. The other three brands are perceived to provide a similar amount of variety. In terms of availability, Yippee, Top Ramen and Knorr brands are perceived to be best in terms of availability in Indian markets. Ching's brand of PF is perceived to be the least easily available. From the initial observations it was found that Top Ramen is the most preferred brand in spite of Knorr being rated ahead of it in most attributes.

d) Empirical Analysis

In order to find which brand is preferred by Indian consumers, one-way analysis of variance (one way ANOVA) was used. ANOVA is a statistical/experimental method used for studying the cause-and-effect of one or more factors on a single dependent variable. One-way ANOVA is used when the independent variables are of nominal scale (categorical) and the dependent variable is metric (continuous), or at least interval scaled. The respondents result for one-way ANOVA [table 1(a) to table 5 (c)] was extracted by the Completely Randomised Design using single factor. The mean values of the selected five different brands were compared to relate the purchase preferences of RTC packaged food products by the respondents in terms of taste, price, nutritional value, availability and variety.

Taste

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run on the different brand choice made by the respondents as a categorical scale or independent variable and the ratings given by the respondents for the taste preference of the PF as a continuous variable or dependent variable. Table 2(a) – 2(c) a one-way ANOVA on taste ratings revealed a significant difference among brands of PF in Bengaluru [$F(4,660) = 18.176$, $p < .05$). Significant differences were observed between Maggi and Ching's, Maggi and Top Ramen and Maggi and Knorr. There was no significant difference between Maggi and Yippee. Therefore on Taste, Top Ramen is rated no. 1, Knorr is no. 2, Maggi and Yippee are a joint no.3 and Ching's is no.4.

Table 2(a) : Respondents brand choice on the different Taste among the brands of PF

Brands of PF	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Maggi	2.6316	1.36778	.11860
Yippee	2.5789	1.35518	.11751
Ching's	2.1203	1.46183	.12676
Top Ramen	3.4662	1.54992	.13440
Knorr	3.2406	1.58664	.13758

Table 2 (b): One-way Analysis of Variance for the Taste among PF brands

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	156.520	4	39.130	18.176	.000
Within Groups	1420.842	660	2.153		
Total	1577.362	664			

Table 2 (c) : Post-Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for Taste among PF brands: Significant results

Brand_PF (I)	Brand_PF (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Maggi	Ching's	.51128*	.17992	.037
	Top Ramen	-.83459*	.17992	.000
	Knorr	-.60902*	.17992	.007
Yippee	Top Ramen	-.88722*	.17992	.000
	Knorr	-.66165*	.17992	.002
Ching's	Top Ramen	-1.34586*	.17992	.000
	Knorr	-1.12030*	.17992	.000
Top Ramen	Maggi	.83459*	.17992	.000
	Yippee	.88722*	.17992	.000
	Ching's	1.34586*	.17992	.000
Knorr	Maggi	.60902*	.17992	.007
	Yippee	.66165*	.17992	.002
	Ching's	1.12030*	.17992	.000

Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Price

Table 3(a) - 3(c) a one-way ANOVA on price ratings revealed a significant difference among brands of PF in Bengaluru [F(4,660) = 13.222, p < .05). Significant differences have been observed between Maggi and Ching's, Yippee and Ching's, Top Ramen and Ching's and Knorr and Ching's. When comparing the mean value of these brands we find that Ching's is significantly different in terms of its price from other brands and thus respondents prefer less of this brand. There is no significant difference between Maggi and Yippee and also between Knorr and Maggi on this parameter. Therefore, the ratings of brands on this parameter are Top Ramen and Knorr a joint no.1, Maggi and Yipee a joint no.2 and Ching's is no.3.

Table 3 (a) : Respondents brand choice on different **Price** among the brands of PF

Brands of PF	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Maggi	2.8271	1.44343	.12516
Yippee	2.7444	1.44942	.12568
Ching's	2.0451	1.34764	.11686
Top Ramen	3.1128	1.41236	.12247
Knorr	3.1955	1.54948	.13436

Table 3 (b): One way Analysis of Variance for the Price among PF brands

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	109.964	4	27.491	13.222	.000
Within Groups	1372.286	660	2.079		
Total	1482.250	664			

Table 3 (c) : Post-Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for the Price among PF brands: Significant results

Brand_PF (I)	Brand_PF (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Maggi	Ching's	.78195*	.17682	.000
Yippee	Ching's	.69925*	.17682	.001
Ching's	Maggi	-.78195*	.17682	.000
	Yippee	-.69925*	.17682	.001

	Top Ramen Knorr	-1.06767* -1.15038*	.17682 .17682	.000 .000
Top Ramen	Ching's	1.06767*	.17682	.000
Knorr	Ching's	1.15038*	.17682	.000

* Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Nutritional Value

Table 4(a) - 4(c) a one-way ANOVA on nutritional value ratings revealed a significant difference among brands of PF in Bengaluru [F(4,660) = 11.137, p < .05). A significant difference has been observed between Maggi and Top Ramen, Maggi and Knorr. When comparing the mean value of these brands we find that Maggi is significantly different in terms of its nutritional value among other brands. There is no significant difference between Maggi and Yippee and Top Ramen and Knorr. Therefore, rankings of the brands on this parameter are Knorr is no. 1, Top Ramen is no.2, Maggi and Yippee is a joint no. 3, and Ching's is no.4.

Table 4 (a) : Respondents brand choice on the different Nutritional Value among the brands of PF

Brands of PF	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Maggi	2.3158	1.26352	.10956
Yippee	2.4586	1.40082	.12147
Ching's	2.0752	1.30049	.11277
Top Ramen	2.8346	1.36615	.11846
Knorr	3.0827	1.62390	.14081

Table 4 (b) : One-way Analysis of Variance for the Nutritional Value among PF brands

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	86.896	4	21.724	11.137	.000
Within Groups	1287.459	660	1.951		
Total	1374.355	664			

Table 4 (c): Post-Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for the Nutritional Value among PF brands: Significant results

Brand_PF (I)	Brand_PF (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Maggi	Top Ramen	-.51880*	.17127	.021
	Knorr	-.76692*	.17127	.000
Yippee	Knorr	-.62406*	.17127	.003
Ching's	Top Ramen	-.75940*	.17127	.000
	Knorr	-1.00752*	.17127	.000
Top Ramen	Maggi	.51880*	.17127	.021
	Ching's	.75940*	.17127	.000
Knorr	Maggi	.76692*	.17127	.000
	Yippee	.62406*	.17127	.003
	Ching's	1.00752*	.17127	.000

* Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Availability

Table 5(a) - 5(c) a one-way ANOVA on availability ratings revealed a significant difference among brands of PF in Bengaluru [$F(4,660) = 11.263$, $p < .05$]. A significant difference has been observed between Ching's and all other brands of PF available in the market. While comparing the means we can say that the availability of Ching's is the lowest, indicating that this brand is less available in Bengaluru. There was no significant difference between Maggi, Yippee, Top Ramen and Knorr. Therefore, on Availability Top Ramen and Knorr is a joint no.1, Maggi and Yippee is a joint no.2, and Ching's is no.3.

Table 5 (a) : Respondents brand choice on the different Availability among the brands of PF

Brands of PF	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Maggi	3.0451	1.57087	.13621
Yippee	2.9098	1.56408	.13562
Ching's	2.2556	1.42305	.12339
Top Ramen	3.3534	1.48322	.12861
Knorr	3.3233	1.59330	.13816

Table 5 (b) : One way Analysis of Variance for Availability among PF brands

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	105.218	4	26.305	11.263	.000
Within Groups	1541.444	660	2.336		
Total	1646.662	664			

Table 5 (c) : Post- Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for the Availability among PF brands: Significant results

Brand_PF (I)	Brand_PF (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Maggi	Ching's	.78947*	.18740	.000
Yippee	Ching's	.65414*	.18740	.005
Ching's	Maggi	-.78947*	.18740	.000
	Yippee	-.65414*	.18740	.005
	Top Ramen	-1.09774*	.18740	.000
	Knorr	-1.06767*	.18740	.000
Top Ramen	Ching's	1.09774*	.18740	.000
Knorr	Ching's	1.06767*	.18740	.000

* Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Variety

Table 6 (a) - 6 (c) showed that one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicates that there is a significant difference among the variety of different PF food brands available in Bengaluru. An ANOVA on the choice of the variety revealed a significant effect of brand preferred [$F(4,660) = 12.830$, $p < .05$]. The post-hoc comparison test revealed that the significant difference in terms of variety ratings by the respondents is seen among Maggi and Ching's and Top Ramen. There is no significant difference between Maggi and Knorr on this parameter. Therefore, rankings of brands on the variety parameter are Top Ramen no.1, Knorr is no.2, Maggi and Yippee are a joint no.3 and Ching's is no.4.

Table 6 (a) : Respondents brand choice on the different variety among the brands of PF

Brands of PF	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Maggi	2.2481	1.06177	.09207
Yippee	2.2105	1.05925	.09185
Ching's	1.8571	1.05272	.09128
Top Ramen	2.7519	1.14419	.09921
Knorr	2.5113	1.10520	.09583

Table 6 (b) : One way Analysis of Variance for the variety among PF brands

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	60.436	4	15.109	12.830	.000
Within Groups	777.248	660	1.178		
Total	837.684	664			

Table 6 (c) : Post-Hoc Multiple comparison test (Tukey's HSD test) for the variety among PF brands: Significant results

Brand_PF (I)	Brand_PF (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Maggi	Ching's	.39098*	.13308	.028
	Top Ramen	-.50376*	.13308	.002
Yippee	Top Ramen	-.54135*	.13308	.001
Ching's	Maggi	-.39098*	.13308	.028
	Top Ramen	-.89474*	.13308	.000
	Knorr	-.65414*	.13308	.000
Top Ramen	Maggi	.50376*	.13308	.002
	Yippee	.54135*	.13308	.001
	Ching's	.89474*	.13308	.000

* Mean difference values are significant at 5% level of significance

Thus, to summarise, we can say that the respondents prefer Top Ramen items more than Knorr and other brands available in Bengaluru. We compare the mean values of the same characteristics of two different brands and try to relate the purchase preference of two brands of RTC packaged foods (*specifically noodles*) by the respondents.

1. ***Taste****:*Top Ramen and Knorr brand have a common taste preference among the respondents. However, Top Ramen brand of PF products is perceived to be a more tastier choice commonly used by the respondents.
2. ***Nutrition value:*** Top Ramen brand of PF is more or less akin to that of Yippee and Maggi with respect to nutritious values in the RTC items. The respondents perceive Knorr brand as more nutritious and Ching's as least nutritious PF brand available in Bengaluru.
3. ***Variety:*** Top Ramen is the most preferred brand among its competitors in terms of selection choice that it provides its customers.
4. ***Availability:*** Top Ramen brand not only has variety, but also its availability makes it number one brand of PF product available in Bengaluru. Equipollently competent are Yippee, Maggi and Knorr brands though only Ching's has lower availability out of the brand in the markets.
5. ***Price:*** Top Ramen price rating is significantly different from that of Knorr (More affordable) and Ching's (More expensive). Top Ramen price is similar to that of Maggi's and Yippee.

Since Maggi, Yippee and Ching's are not rated no.1 on any single factor, we may conclude that people prefer to buy these brands because of non-availability of Knorr or Top Ramen. We also observed that there is no particular preference for a single kind of PF (fast food, sweets, snacks and main meal) in any region. As such, the need may be influential on brand, quality, contents and type.

Managerial Implications

According to market tracker Nielsen's data, during the quarter ended in March, the impulse food segment witnessed one of the highest growth rates of 14%. But as explained earlier, the June quarter numbers altogether had a different scenario that seems contrary to the period before. As the study captures various perceptions of the respondents in this context, it will be helpful for a manufacturer to gain insights to customise products, for ease/convenience of usage, or place at an affordable price. This strategy is particularly consequential as the number of respondents who would like to invest in value for money food products that offers taste, nutrition and affordability at the same time is found to be more. It would also be beneficial for retailers, located in regions where the density of the youth population is high, to stock those products and brands, which are preferred, and create more brand awareness. Not everyone eats the same food and there are a lot of differences in the food habits of people. There are various socio-cultural factors that affect the consumption of food. Considering those factors would enable the RTC food segment to strategise for business consistency and sustainability.

Conclusions and further research

Gobal and local food companies put out confidential advisories within their organisations urging their executives to revisit their strategies with their brand products and devise plans to ensure that every element - from ingredients, labelling, packaging, product testing, differentiation, segmentation to seasonings - meets regulatory requirements as they were staggered by the sudden downfall of Nestlé's Maggi noodles. This research has a background set in this context, and due care is ensured to avoid biases in the findings and conclusions.

The set research parameters explore and conclude that the RTC packaged foods has not yet been readily accepted by the Bengaluru youth during the time frame of this research. However, there is an immense market potential for this variety of foods. Moreover, major factors that influence buying decision of consumers are convenience, taste and availability. Despite the controversies, the brands in the study, perform satisfactorily on the factors selected. Consumers believe that PF category should include more variety at reasonably affordable prices which will cater the demand for this product category in the future.

Regardless of controversies, Maggi is still perceived as the best brand of PF products in terms of consumer awareness (popularity), consumer choice (preference) and price; and Knorr in terms of variety. However, based on these research insights, companies have to strategise for brand activation; strategise on assuring consumers that their products meet all quality standards, as consumer sentiment regarding RTC packaged foods across categories has been negatively impacted in the quarter. During January-March 2015, the Nielsen data numbers were positive for RTC with a growth of 11% and a slight decline of 3% for ready-to-eat in comparison with 2014 in the same period. However, during the June quarter the numbers declined by 14%. The research findings are therefore an eye-opener.

The results of this research make it arduous to segment the market on the basis of demographic factors as no demographic factor plays a satisfying role in determining the frequency of buying PF products by its consumers. However segmenting the market based on behavioural factors such as occasions, benefits, user's status or usage rate can be more rewarding. In particular, people of older age group segments also need to be studied. With respect to the competition among the major players, they still hold a major share in the Indian market. More effort should be devoted to educate customers about the PF category, so that the overall market size can be expanded. Price wars will not help any of the players; but providing variety and availability can play an important role in capturing the market. Availability can be improved by widening and strengthening the distribution network.

In a nutshell, this research speaks far and wide to the community involved in PF products in Bengaluru markets, its execution and consumption. Although the findings are not fully exclusive, it raises a new set of questions, to which meaningful answers have been provided, benefiting future marketers to devise, design, strategise and research. Above all, it is recommended that the regulatory bodies should learn to appreciate food processing industry as a major determinant of macroeconomic stability and not just as a consumer goods sector. Considering the popularity and reach of RTC foods, rather than exclusion, inclusiveness through suggestive reformatory measures can bring in consistency and sustainability to this business segment.

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