
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Factors Influencing Consumers' Preference for Purchasing of Ready to Eat Food Products:
A Study in Shahr – e-Now of Kabul City**

Abdul Kafil Bidar¹ ✉ and Zabihullah Farkhari²

^{1,2}Associated Professor, Department of Agribusiness Management, Agriculture Faculty of Kunduz University, Afghanistan

Corresponding Author: Abdul Kafil Bidar, **E-mail:** abdulkafil1392@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

Ready to eat products are any products that have gone through chemical, mechanical or physical processing in the processing industries or at home and which has been altered from their natural state to a new state. These products include frozen, pasteurized, fried, condensed, dried, dehydrated, canned and homogenized food. The food processing industry has an important role in linking the farmers to the final consumers in the domestic and international markets. The consumer preference for ready to eat products at Shahr-e- Now of Kabul city is influenced by physiological, psychological and sociological factors. The present study attempted to analyze the factors influencing the purchase of ready to eat products from Shahr-e- Now of Kabul city markets; the primary data was collected from 90 consumers in Shahr -e- Now of Kabul city. The study revealed that 47.78 per cent of the respondents preferred ready to eat products. Nearly one-third of the consumers purchase ready-to-eat products once a week. Easy availability, taste, convenience, and quality were the main factors influencing consumers' purchase of ready-to-eat products in Shahr -e- Now of Kabul city markets. The study clearly indicated that there is a wide scope for food processing industries in Kabul city since consumers' preference for ready to eat products is increasing. Hence the study clearly reveals that manufacturers need to ensure that their products meet the requirements of consumers in terms of meeting the requirements of easy availability, taste, quality and convenience in the usage of ready to eat products.

| KEYWORDS

Factors, Purchasing, Consumers, Ready to Eat, Food Products, Kabul City

| ARTICLE DOI: [10.32996/jbms.2022.4.1.9](https://doi.org/10.32996/jbms.2022.4.1.9)

1. Introduction

Food is an essential part of human life for a human being. Food provides energy and nutrients to grow, be healthy, and have an active life. Food is any substance consumed to provide nutritional support for the body. It is generally of plant or animal origin and contains essential nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals. Food is needed to produce energy, maintain life, or stimulate growth. The evolutionary history of humans is characterized by significant dietary changes, which include the introduction of meat-eating, cooking, and the changes associated with plant and animal domestication. For about 190,000 years, Homo sapiens followed a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Their diet consisted of meat, fruits, vegetables and nuts. The agricultural revolution 10,000 years ago marked a significant change in primate nutrition due to the domestication of wild grains. Cultivation of these grain crops allowed cities and cultures to develop. (Solayappan & Jayakrishnan, 2003.)

Food processing mainly involves converting raw food, and other farms produce into an edible, usable and palatable form. It converts clean, harvested, butchered or slaughtered components into marketable food products with value addition to improve their quality, reliability and shelf life. Further, Food processing is about the preservation of food, providing greater potential for the market. Food processing is one of the largest sectors, which includes many industries that use agriculture, horticulture, plantation, animal husbandry and fisheries inputs for the manufacturing of final products. (Thkumar, 2003)

Ready to eat products are any food that has gone through chemical, mechanical or physical processing in the processing industries or at home and which has been altered from its natural state to a new state. These foods include frozen, pasteurized, fried, condensed, dried, dehydrated, canned and homogenized food. (PURI, R. et al., 1989)

Food processing involves any type of value addition to agricultural or horticultural produce and also includes processes such as grading, sorting and packaging, which enhance the shelf-life of food products. The food processing industry provides vital linkages and synergies between industry and agriculture. (Siri, A. N. G, 2012).

2. Sampling Design and Data Collection

The present study is confined to a detailed enquiry of consumers' preference for ready-to-eat food products by different categories of sample respondents in Shahr-e- Now of Kabul city. For the study, the respondents belonged to four categories, namely, working men, housewives, and students. A sample of 30 respondents was drawn purposively from each category, resulting in a total sample size of 90 respondents.

To accomplish the objectives, the required data were collected from the respondents by personal interview method with the help of a pre-tested structured schedule. The sample respondents were interviewed at modern retail formats, departmental stores, bakeries, college campuses, and homes.

Preliminary discussions were held with consumers and retailers of ready-to-eat food products about the brands available, the brands preferred and consumed in the study area to arrive at the categories, as well as the products within each category of ready-to-eat food products to be selected for the study. Based on the interactions, the most commonly available and used products in the study area were selected for the study.

The categories, as well as the products within each category of ready-to-eat food products selected for the study, were as follows:

Table1: The Ready to eat food products preferred by consumers in the Shahr-e- Now of Kabul city

SI. No.	Categories	Products
1	Natural snacks	Crispy items, biscuits and chips
2	Bakery	Bolani, Samosa and pizza
3	Milk and milk-based products	Milk / flavoured milk, curds/buttermilk, sweets and ice creams

Source: Primary data

3. Materials and Methods

The data collected for the study were processed and analyzed by using suitable statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics and Garrett's ranking technique were used to analyse the primary data. A detailed description of the analytical tools employed in the study is presented below.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Percentage analysis was used to study consumers' preference of ready to eat products and frequency of purchase and visiting the Shahr -e- Now of Kabul Markets.

3.2 Garrett's Ranking Technique

Garrett's ranking technique was adopted for ranking the factors influencing the consumer preference for the preference of ready to eat products in the market in Shahr -e- Now of Kabul metropolitan and to analyze the constraints faced by retail outlets in the marketing of fruits and vegetables. As per this method, respondents were asked to assign the rank for all the factors, after which the assigned ranks were counted into per cent position value by using the formula.

Garrett's formula for converting the ranks into per cent is given by per cent position

$$= 100*(R_{ij}-0.50)/N_j$$

Where R_{ij} = Rank given for the i th item by the j th individual

N_j = Number of items ranked by the j th individual

With the help of Garrett's Table, the per cent position estimated was converted into scores. Then for each factor, the scores of each individual respondent were added and divided by the total number of respondents for whom the scores were gathered. The mean

scores for all the factors were ranked, following the decision criterion that the higher the value, the more important the factor was in the order of the preference by the consumers. The overall ranking was obtained by assigning the ranks 1, 2, 3 ...etc. in the descending order of the mean score.

4. Results and Discussion

Preference for ready to eat & non-ready to eat products by consumers is presented in Table 2. It is clear from the Table that nearly 47.78 per cent preferred ready to eat products, and nearly 22.22 per cent preferred non – ready to eat products. However, the remaining (30 %) respondents preferred both ready and non – ready to eat products.

It is clear from the table and figure (1) that the Ready to eat products is already accepted by the majority of the consumers due to changes in lifestyles, rapid urbanization and an increase in per capita income. Further, the emergence of organized retail stores indirectly promotes sales of ready to eat products, particularly in cities like Shahr -e- Now of Kabul.

Table 2: Preference for Ready & non read to eat products by the consumers at Shahr -e- Now of Kabul city

Source: Primary data

n = 90

Sl. No.	Preference of food products	Number	Percentage to the total
1.	Ready to eat products	43	47.78
2.	Non-Ready to eat products	20	22.22
3.	Both	27	30
Total		90	100.00

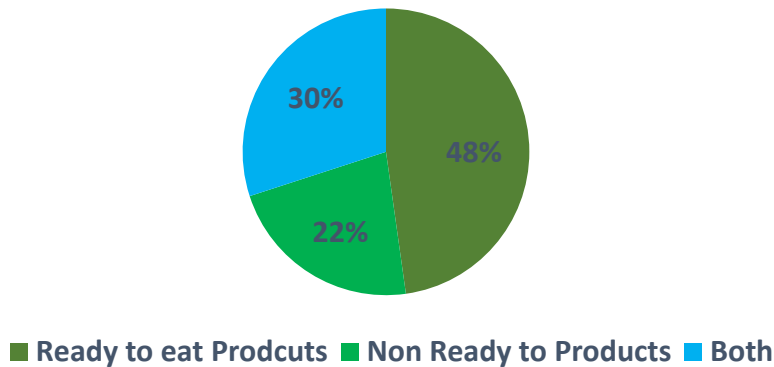


Fig. 1: Preference for Ready & non-ready to eat products by the consumers

4.1 Frequency of visits to Retail Market and Shops by consumers for purchasing of ready to eat food products in Shahr-e-Now of Kabul City

Consumers' frequency of visits in purchasing ready-to-eat products from Retail Markets in Table2. It is clear from the Table that 33.33 per cent of respondents were purchasing ready to eat products from Retail Markets of Shahr-e- Now once a week, followed by twice a week (27.77 %). However, 16.66 per cent of respondents were purchasing almost regularly. The consumers who are purchasing once in fortnightly are very marginal (13.33 %). It is also clear from the Table that a negligible percentage (8.91 %) of respondents are purchasing once a month.

It is clear from the Table that the consumers who are purchasing ready to eat food products daily, once in a week and twice in a week, are mainly using ready to eat food products in their day-to-day consumption. In fact, a vast majority (84.90 %) comes under this category, indicating the dependence of consumers on ready to eat food products in Shahr-e- Now of Kabul City.

Table 3: Frequency of visit to Retail Markets for purchasing of ready to eat food products in Shahr -e- Now of Kabul City.

n = 90

Sl. No.	Frequency of visit	Number	Percentage to the total
1.	Daily	15	16.66
2.	Once in a week	30	33.33
3.	Two times in a week	25	27.77
4.	Fortnightly	12	13.33
5.	Monthly	8	8.91
	Total	90	100.00

Source: Primary data

4.2 Factors influencing the purchase of ready to eat food products by consumers in Shahr-e- Now of Kabul city

The rank matrix of common factors influencing the purchase of ready to eat products by consumers from the Retail Market in Shahr -e- Now of Kabul city is furnished in Table 4. It is clear from the Table that taste and flavour were considered the most important factor (mean score of 68.67) influencing the purchase of ready-to-eat food products. The second important factor is easy availability with (a mean score of 68.2). Convenience and good for health were ranked as the third and fourth factors (mean score of 53.92 & 53.88). The quality of the ready to eat food products was ranked fifth ranks (mean score of 53.37). The price was also another important factor (mean score of 51.13). The freshness and brand image were also considered as other factors (mean score of 46.27 and 42.68, respectively). No time to prepare at home and colour were also other factors (mean score of 39.38 and 31.92 respectively). The Discount sales were ranked as the eleventh factor (mean score of 31.75). The study was conducted on an elite group of respondents, who were the residents of Shahr -e- Now of Kabul city. The easy taste and flavour, availability, and convenience of the product will definitely be the prime factors for purchasing ready-to-eat food products. It does not mean that all other factors like quality, advertisements, price, brand image, colour and offers would not influence preference. These factors, coupled with the above three prime factors, would influence the preference of ready to eat food products.

Table 4: Factors influencing the purchase of ready to eat products in Retail Market in Shahr-e- Now of Kabul city

n = 90

Sl. No.	Factors	Garrett's score	Garrett's ranking
1.	Taste & flavour	68.67	I
2.	Easy availability	68.2	II
3.	Convenience	53.92	III
4.	Good for health	53.88	IV
5.	Better quality	53.37	V
6.	Price	51.13	VI
7.	Freshness	46.27	VII
8.	Brand image	42.68	VIII
9.	No time to prepare at home	39.38	IX
10.	Colour	31.92	X
11.	Discount sales	31.75	XI

Source: Primary data

5. Conclusion

Ready-to-eat food products, also called Convenience Food or Tertiary Processed Food, are commercially prepared (often through processing) to optimize the ease of consumption and are easily portable with good shelf-life. Types of ready to eat food products can vary by country and geographic region. These products are often sold as hot, ready-to-eat dishes, room-temperature, shelf-stable products, or refrigerated or frozen food products requiring minimal preparation (typically just heating). Ready to eat food products have also been described as foods that have been created to "make them more appealing to the consumer.

Food processing involves any type of value addition to agricultural or horticultural produce and also includes processes such as grading, sorting and packaging, which enhance the shelf-life of food products. The food processing industry provides vital linkages and synergies between industry and agriculture.

The current study provides an understanding of the research trends about factors influencing consumers preference for purchasing ready to eat food products in Shahr-e- Now of Kabul city. The study reveals that the preference for ready to eat products is highest among the consumers. Besides, nearly one-fourth of the consumers are using both ready and non-ready to eat products.

In the case of factors influencing the consumer's preferences for ready to eat food products in Shar-e- Now of Kabul city, the major finding of the study considered the taste and flavour as the most important factor (mean score of 68.67) influencing the purchase of ready to eat food products.

The researcher recommends that a growing population, rapid urbanization, changing consumer preferences, etc., will keep the demand increasing in the future for ready to eat food products. With a well-integrated supply chain and a good marketing strategy, a tremendous opportunity lies for the snack food industry in Kabul city.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest during the course of this study.

References

- [1] ANNAMALAI S and JOTHI J. (2003). Customer Preference for Branded Computers with special reference to Post Graduate Students. *Department of Business Administration*, Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu, 47-49.
- [2] Caleguer, V. F., Minim, V. P. R., & Benassi, M. T. (2007). Impact of package on the consumer purchase intention for a powdered orange flavoured soft drink. *Braz. J. Food Technol*, 10, 159-168.
- [3] Dhillon, M. K., Miglani, S. S., & Singh, M. K. B. (1995). Preference of place and factors associated with purchase of food items and durable goods by rural and urban consumers. *J. Res. Punjab Agric. Univ*, 32(1), 112-120.
- [4] Nandagopal, R., & Chinnaiyan, P. (2003). Brand preference of soft drinks in rural Tamil Nadu. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 33(1), 14-17.
- [5] JOSHI, M.S., (1993). Food purchase habits and consumer awareness of rural and urban housewives in Dharwad. *M.H.Sc. Thesis (Unpub.)*, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad.
- [6] Kulkarni, M. S., & Murali, D. (1996). Study on purchasing practices of consumers of Parbhani Town. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 26(1), 3-7.
- [7] SIRI, A. N. G., (2012). Consumers' preference for ready-to-eat food product brands- A study in Bengaluru city. MBA (ABM) Project report (*Unpublished*), University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru.
- [8] SAMPATHKUMAR, (2003). Brand preferences of soft drink market. *Journal of Agricultural Marketing*, 23 (2): 64-67.
- [9] PRELL, H., BERG, C. and JONSSON, L., (2002). Why don't adolescents eat fish? Factors influencing fish consumption in school. *Scandinavian Journal of Nutrition*, 46 (4): 184-191.
- [10] SRINIVASAN, N. and ELANGO VAN, D., (2000). Consumer perception towards processed fruits and vegetable products. *Indian Journal of Marketing*. 30 (11) 22-25.