

INSTANT FOOD CONSUMPTION AMONG YOUTH: WITH SPECIAL REFERANCE TO COCHIN CITY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the project titled "**Instant food consumption among youth: with special reference to cochin city**" submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Bachelors of Arts in Economics to **St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) (Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam)** is a bonafide record of the work done by the project group under my supervision and guidance.

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DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the project "**Instant food consumption among youth with special reference to cochin city**" submitted by us for the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Economics is our original work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Instant food consumption among youth represents a complex interplay of socioeconomic, cultural, and individual factors. While offering convenience and practicality, its excessive consumption poses significant challenges to public health, environmental sustainability, and societal well-being. By understanding the underlying drivers and adopting holistic strategies, we can navigate towards a future where instant food remains a convenient option without compromising the health and welfare of our youth. Instant food consumption among youth has been on the rise due to factors like convenience, busy lifestyles, and aggressive marketing. However, it's important to balance these with healthy eating habits to avoid potential health issues in the long run.

Instant foods, characterized by their quick preparation and easy accessibility, often lack the essential nutrients found in fresh, whole foods. Loaded with preservatives, artificial flavour, and excessive amounts of salt and sugar, these convenient options can contribute to poor dietary habits and increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases among young consumers.

For example, a report by the WHO highlighted that globally, the consumption of instant foods high in unhealthy fats, sugars, and salt is increasing among adolescents, contributing to the rise in obesity and other diet-related health issues. These reports emphasize the importance of promoting healthier eating habits among young people to mitigate the negative impacts of excessive instant food consumption. Moreover, the widespread availability and aggressive marketing of instant foods target impressionable youth, further perpetuating unhealthy eating habits.

Rise of instant food market: In the Ready-to-Eat Meals market, volume is expected to amount to 21.89bn kg by 2028. The Ready-to-Eat Meals market is expected to show a volume growth of 6.9% in 2025. The average volume per person in the Ready-to-Eat Meals market is expected to amount to 12.5kg in 2024.

The Global Instant Food Market is anticipated to rise at a considerable rate during the forecast period, between 2024 and 2031. In 2022, the market is growing at a steady rate and with the rising adoption of strategies by key players, the market is expected to rise over the projected horizon.

According to the latest research, the global Instant Food market size was valued at USD million in 2022 and is expected to expand at a CAGR of % during the forecast

period, reaching USD million by 2028. This report elaborates on the market size, market characteristics, and market growth of the Instant Food industry between the year 2018 to 2028, and breaks down according to the product type, downstream application, and consumption area of Instant Food. The report also introduces players in the industry from the perspective of the value chain and looks into the leading companies.

Instant food consumption among youth represents a complex interplay of socioeconomic, cultural, and individual factors. While offering convenience and practicality, its excessive consumption poses significant challenges to public health, environmental sustainability, and societal well-being. By understanding the underlying drivers and adopting holistic strategies, we can navigate towards a future where instant food remains a convenient option without compromising the health and welfare of our youth.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review on instant food consumption also investigates the effects of globalization, urbanization, and changing lifestyles on the demand for instant food products. It examines how these macroeconomic and societal trends have reshaped food preferences and consumption habits worldwide. Furthermore, the review explores the role of food packaging, branding, and advertising in influencing consumer perceptions and purchase decisions within the instant food market.

Moreover, the review scrutinizes the nutritional content and quality of instant food products, addressing concerns about their potential impact on public health,

particularly regarding issues such as obesity, diabetes, and dietary imbalances. It evaluates efforts by manufacturers to enhance the nutritional profile of instant foods through fortification, reduction of additives, and introduction of healthier ingredients.

Additionally, the literature review discusses sustainability considerations within the instant food industry, including the environmental implications of packaging materials, transportation, and production processes. It examines initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable practices and reducing the carbon footprint associated with the manufacturing and distribution of instant food products.

Overall, this literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the multidimensional aspects of instant food consumption, shedding light on both the opportunities and challenges facing stakeholders in the industry.

Malaveni and Nirmala (2000) found in their article “Consumer Behaviour in Instant Food Products” that both housewives and working women largely agreed on the factors influencing their purchase of instant food products. The study also noted that variables such as age, occupation, education, family size, and annual income had significant effects on these purchasing decisions.¹

Verma and Surender Munjal (2003) highlight in their article “Brand Loyalty Correlates: Study of FMCGs” that key factors influencing brand choice include quality, quantity, price, availability, packaging, and advertisement. They argue that brand loyalty stems from customer behaviour and learning patterns, with age and demographic variables primarily shaping these patterns. Interestingly, gender or marital status have minimal impact on customer behaviour and learning patterns. Overall, the study underscores the significance of these factors in understanding consumer behaviour and brand loyalty within the fast-moving consumer goods sector.²

Peter and Jerry (1979) in their article “Brand Knowledge among Consumers Relates to the Cognitive Representation of the Brand Consumers” assert that brand knowledge can be categorized as the personal experiences individuals hold about a brand, comprising all descriptive and evaluative information related to the brand stored in consumer’s minds. This understanding highlights the importance of consumer’s cognitive representations of brands, emphasizing the role of personal experiences in shaping brand perceptions and consumer behaviour.³

In his 2006 article “A Study on Branded Foods,” Arang observes that consumers exhibit brand versatility in food purchases, preferring a variety of brands rather than adhering to one. Repetitive advertising emerges as a crucial tactic to enhance brand recognition, facilitating easier brand recall. Arang suggests that product design should align with current trends and fashion to appeal to the younger demographic, particularly teenagers and young adults. Furthermore, he advocates for the implementation of diverse promotional strategies, including discounts, offers, coupons, and freebies, aiming to boost sales and attract a broader consumer base. Arang’s insights underscore the significance of adaptable marketing approaches in catering to the evolving preferences of consumers within the food industry.⁴

In their 2013 study, “Consumer Awareness about Convenience Food among Working and Nonworking Women,” Joglekar A and Kundle S argue that convenience food arises from contemporary technological progress in food processing, preservation methods, and the development of new food additives. While these products reduce cooking time, they fail to address concerns about excessive preservatives, sodium, and hydrogenated fats in consumers’ diets. Despite their time-saving benefits, convenience foods do not eliminate the health risks associated with these additives, underscoring the importance of informed consumer choices regarding nutritional content and potential health consequences.⁵

Linda Klabacha emphasizes the dominance of taste in consumer choices, noting that six out of ten shoppers prioritize food and beverages based on taste alone. Surprisingly, nearly half of shoppers associate healthy foods with better taste. However, only a quarter of shoppers prioritize health benefits over taste or convenience. Meanwhile, Margot Sanger Katz highlights a significant shift in consumer behaviour over the past two decades, indicating a drastic 25 percent decline in sales of full-calorie soda in the United States. This decline marks a notable departure from the previous trend of increasing soda consumption from the 1960s to the 1990s.⁶

In her 2011 study, “A Study of Determinants Impacting Consumers’ Food Choice with Reference to Fast Food Consumption in India,” Ritu Anand highlights key factors influencing food choices such as a passion for eating and socializing. The findings suggest that fast-food companies in India cannot solely rely on convenience as a unique selling proposition (USP) anymore. Instead, they must prioritize the implications of fast food on consumers’ health. This indicates a shifting landscape where health considerations are becoming increasingly important alongside

convenience, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to marketing and promoting fast food in the Indian market.⁷

Indumathi et al (2007) in their study have revealed that occupation of the women, income of the family and saving time while cooking are the most influencing factors of spicy products. The authors say that most of the consumers have purchase 200 gm pack of powders and masala, while small numbers of consumers prefer 100 gm packets.⁸

Nagaraja (2004) stated that, buying behavior of a consumer is mainly influenced by their own experience, experience of their own family& friends and experience of their neighbor consumer. The involvements of his own family members have maximum influence on his purchases. Above all, the quality of the product and its easy availability were the primary determinants of his buying behaviour.⁹

Rajarashmi and Sudarsana (2004) revealed that, almost all the sample respondents preferred to purchase branded products and if their favorite brand is not available in one shop, they go to another shop to purchase their favorite brand. If their favorite brand is not available in the market, they are ready to postpone their purchase.¹⁰

Rees (1992), in his study mentioned that taste, quality, quantity, packaging, advertisement about the product, awareness, decrease in the traditional way of cooking, different views of family members, increase in “snacking” time are some of the important factors which influences the consumer’s choice of food. There was a strong increase in sale of chilled and other prepared foods as it helps single people, hostlers and working women to save their time.¹¹

Kumar (1987) in his study observed the factors influencing the buying decision making of 200 respondents for various food products. Country of origin and brand of the products were cross- tabulated (conversion of a list of words into a table of numbers) against age, gender and income. According to the results revealed the main factors taken into consideration were age, education and income. As consumers are attracted by the brands the image of a brand seemed to be more important than the introduction of the product.¹²

1.3Research problem

The problem identification for the project “Instant food consumption among youth” is to find out the consumption level of instant food among the age group of 18-35. The Main objective is to know about the interest among youth to pay for Instant foods.

The increasing prevalence of instant food consumption poses potential health risks and nutritional concerns among urban populations. This research aims to investigate the patterns, determinants, and implications of instant food consumption within the youth population. In this research we try to find the preferences for instant foods among youth, exploring the factors influencing their choices.

Main Aim:

The study aims to provide insights into the factors driving instant food consumption patterns in youth and inform the development of targeted interventions and policies to promote healthier eating habits and overall well-being.

1.4Objective of the study

To identify the factors influencing consumption of instant food

To identify the health and environment aspects associated with instant food consumption.

1.5Theoretical framework

Instant food consumption among youth from an economic perspective, can be analyzed using the theoretical framework of microeconomics .Microeconomics is a sub-discipline of economics that studies the decisions of individuals and forms to allocate services of production exchange and consumption.

In case of instant food consumption among youth economic factors such as income of the consumers, taste and preferences and time constraints affect the instant food consumption

One theoretical approach that could be used to analyze the economic impact of instant food consumption among youth is Theory of consumer behavior

Theory of Consumer Behavior

Consumer theory is a concept that deals with how people choose to spend their money, provide their tendency and budget restrictions. As a part of microeconomics, consumer theory manifests how people make choices, provide restraints, their income, and the prices of commodities and services.

Theory of consumption behavior can be used in this study in such a way that how income of the consumer, tastes and preferences, price of instant food, advertising and other factors associated with consumption behavior affect the instant food consumption.

The theoretical framework of micro economics provides a useful lens for analyzing the economic impact on instant food consumption among youth and results

1.6Methodology

Study is based on both primary and secondary data and further systematic and theoretical analysis is done from the data collected. For the primary data collection, data was collected via Google forms survey method. Sample was youth in Cochin city.

Questionnaires are circulated through Google forms to the selected samples. So we intend to collect 30 samples from selected youth population. The questionnaire is designed in such a manner to gather information regarding the general information, income, factors influencing instant food consumption, environment impact, health aspects etc. For secondary data collection, we rely on articles, newspaper reports, research papers.

1.7Limitations of the study

- It's very difficult and has lots of hazards to get samples from large population of people from the age group 20 to 35.
- Most of the population are jobless therefore it was very difficult to get samples.
- Even though population of age group 20 to 35 are youths, they are still financially unsettled.
- Most of the youths are preferring instant food due to the insufficient time.
- According to survey some of the youths are health conscious but still they are depending on instant food but some of the foods are healthy because some apps provide instant healthy foods.

1.8Chapter scheme

The scheme of the study was organized in the following way:

Chapter1–Introduction

The first chapter deal with introduction, review of literature, concepts and definitions, Significance of the study, problem identification, methodology, objectives, period of Study and limitations.

Chapter2–Overview

The second chapter deals with the overview of the instant food consumption, types of instant food, health and environment.

Chapter3–Analysis and Interpretation

The third chapter deals with analysis on the instant food consumption among youth.

Chapter4-Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

The fourth chapter presents finding, suggestions and conclusions drawn from the Analysis of primary data.

CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW ABOUT INSTANT FOOD CONSUMPTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO INSTANT FOOD: DEFINITION AND ROLE

In today's fast-paced world, the demand for instant solutions permeates every aspect of life, including food. Instant food, characterized by its swift preparation and easy accessibility, has become an integral part of modern lifestyles. This chapter explores the definition of instant food and deep into its multifaceted roles in contemporary society.

Instant food refers to any culinary product put together for rapid preparation and consumption. It encompasses a wide array of items, ranging from dehydrated soups and instant noodles to ready-to-eat meals. What distinguishes instant food is its convenience factor; it offers consumers a shortcut to satiating hunger without the time-consuming processes involved in traditional meal preparation.

One of the primary roles of instant food is to satisfy the needs of individuals leading hectic lives. In a world where time is a precious commodity, many people find themselves trouble in cope up with multiple responsibilities, leaving little room for elaborate cooking routines. Instant food steps in as a lifesaver, offering a quick and hassle-free alternative to traditional meals. Whether it's a microwave dinner after a long day at work or instant oatmeal for a rushed breakfast, these products provide a convenient solution to time constraints.

Moreover, instant food plays a crucial role in emergency situations and disaster relief efforts. When natural disasters strike or humanitarian crises unfold, access to fresh food becomes scarce. In such circumstances, instant food products, such as ready-to-eat meals and energy bars, serve as lifelines, providing essential nutrition to those in need. Their long shelf life and easy storage make them invaluable assets in emergency preparedness initiatives worldwide.

The versatility of instant food extends beyond daily convenience and emergency provisions. It caters to the needs of travelers, outdoor enthusiasts, and adventurers alike. Lightweight and compact, instant food items are ideal companions for individuals embarking on journeys where traditional cooking facilities are unavailable.

Whether trekking through remote wilderness or exploring foreign lands, travelers rely on instant food to sustain their energy levels and stave off hunger pangs.

In addition to serving as a quick fix for hunger, instant food has infiltrated workplace environments, offering employees convenient meal options during busy workdays. Microwavable meals, instant soups, and snack bars provide office-goers with hassle-free alternatives to traditional lunches, promoting productivity and efficiency in the workplace.

However, the prevalence of instant food raises concerns about nutritional implications. While some instant food products boast convenience, they may also contain high levels of sodium, sugar, or preservatives, contributing to dietary imbalances and health issues. It's essential for consumers to make informed choices, opting for healthier instant food alternatives that prioritize nutritional value without compromising convenience.

2.2Types of instant food

Instant food encompasses a diverse range of products tailored to meet the varying needs and preferences of consumers. Here are some of the most common types of instant food:

1. **Instant Noodles:** Perhaps one of the most iconic and widely consumed forms of instant food, instant noodles are pre-cooked noodles that require minimal preparation. Typically sold in dried or precooked formats, instant noodles are often accompanied by flavoring packets containing seasoning, oil, and dehydrated vegetables or proteins.
2. **Ready-to-Eat Meals:** Ready-to-eat meals, also known as convenience meals or heat-and-eat meals, are fully cooked dishes that are packaged and prepared for immediate consumption. These meals come in a variety of formats, including canned and vacuum-sealed pouches, and encompass a wide range of cuisines and flavors.
3. **Powdered Soups and Sauces:** Powdered soups and sauces offer a convenient way to prepare flavorful dishes with minimal effort. These products typically come in powdered form and can be reconstituted with hot water to create soups, gravies, and

saucers. They often come in a variety of flavors and are packaged in single-serving sachets or larger containers.

4. Instant Breakfast Foods: Instant breakfast foods provide a quick and convenient option for the most important meal of the day. This category includes items such as instant oatmeal, breakfast cereal bars, and pre-packaged breakfast sandwiches or burritos. These products are designed to be easily prepared and consumed on the go.

5. Instant Snacks: Instant snacks offer quick and easy options for satisfying hunger between meals or as a convenient treat. This category includes items such as instant popcorn, potato chips, crackers, and snack mixes. These products are typically packaged in single-serving portions for portability and convenience.

These are just a few examples of the types of instant food available in the market today. The variety and availability of instant food products continue to expand, driven by consumer demand for convenience, portability, and quick meal solutions.

2.3 Benefits of instant food

Benefits of instant food is one of its most appealing aspects, making it a popular choice for individuals with busy lifestyles, limited cooking skills, or constrained access to traditional cooking facilities. Here are some key reasons why instant food is considered convenient:

1. Quick Preparation: Instant food typically requires minimal preparation time, often just a few minutes, making it an ideal option for individuals who need a quick meal or snack on the go. Whether it's adding hot water to instant noodles or microwaving a ready-to-eat meal, the simplicity of preparation is a major convenience factor.

2. Portability: Many instant food products come in convenient, portable packaging, such as cups, pouches, or single-serving packets. This makes it easy to take instant food with you wherever you go, whether it's to work, school, or while traveling.

3. Long Shelf Life: Instant food products are often designed to have a long shelf life, thanks to various preservation techniques and packaging methods. This means that they can be stored for extended periods without refrigeration, providing a convenient option for stocking up on pantry essentials or emergency food supplies.

4. Versatility: Instant food comes in a wide variety of options, including noodles, soups, beverages, snacks, and complete meals. This versatility allows individuals to

choose from a range of flavors, cuisines, and dietary preferences, catering to diverse tastes and cravings.

5. **No Cooking Skills Required:** Unlike traditional cooking, which may require culinary skills and time-consuming preparation, instant food products are designed to be easy and accessible for anyone to enjoy. With simple instructions and minimal cooking equipment needed, even people with no limited cooking experience can quickly prepare and enjoy a satisfying meal.

6. **Convenient Packaging:** Instant food products often come in convenient packaging that is easy to open, resalable, and disposable. This reduces the need for additional cooking utensils or cleanup, further saving time and effort.

Overall, the convenience of instant food lies in its ability to provide quick, easy, and satisfying meal options for individuals seeking a convenient and hassle-free way to enjoy food amidst their busy lifestyles. Whether it's a quick lunch at the office, a late-night snack, or a meal while traveling, instant food offers a convenient solution to the time constraints and demands of modern life.

2.4 Factors Influencing Instant food

Several factors influence the popularity and consumption of instant food. Here are some key factors:

1. **Convenience:** Convenience is perhaps the most significant factor driving the popularity of instant food. In today's fast-paced world, where time is often limited, instant food offers a quick and easy meal solution that requires minimal preparation.

2. **Busy Lifestyles:** Busy work schedules, academic commitments, and social activities leave many individuals with little time or energy to cook elaborate meals. Instant food provides a convenient alternative for those seeking quick and hassle-free meal options.

3. **Urbanization:** The rise of urban centers has led to smaller living spaces and an increase in single-person households. As a result, many people rely on instant food as a convenient and practical way to satisfy their dietary needs without the need for extensive cooking facilities or storage space.

4. **Globalization:** Increased globalization has exposed consumers to a wide range of cuisines and food cultures from around the world. Instant food products often draw inspiration from diverse culinary traditions, offering consumers the opportunity to

enjoy flavors and dishes from different regions without the need for extensive cooking skills or ingredients.

5. **Technological Advancements:** Advances in food processing and packaging technology have contributed to the growth of the instant food industry. These advancements allow for the development of shelf-stable products with extended shelf lives, as well as innovative packaging formats that enhance convenience and portability.

6. **Marketing and Advertising:** Effective marketing and advertising campaigns play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences for instant food products. Clever branding, product placement, and promotional strategies can influence consumer purchasing decisions and drive demand for specific instant food brands and products.

7. **Cost:** Instant food products are often more affordable than fresh or restaurant-prepared meals, making them an attractive option for budget-conscious consumers. The low cost per serving and the ability to buy in bulk further enhance the appeal of instant food as a cost-effective meal solution.

8. **Health Consciousness:** While convenience is a primary driver of instant food consumption, an increasing number of consumers are also becoming more health-conscious. As a result, there is a growing demand for healthier instant food options, such as low-sodium, organic, or gluten-free products, which cater to specific dietary preferences and restrictions.

9. **Accessibility:** Instant food products are distributed through various channels, including supermarket, convenience stores, online retailers, and specialty food stores. The widespread availability of these distribution channels ensures that consumers can easily access instant food products in their local area or through online platforms.

10. **Demographic Trends:** Demographic factors such as age, income, and household composition also influence instant food consumption patterns. For example, young adults and students may prioritize convenience and affordability, while families with children may seek out healthier instant food options that are quick and easy to prepare.

Overall, a combination of convenience, changing lifestyles, technological advancements, and marketing strategies contribute to the popularity and consumption of instant food products in today's society.

2.5 Nutrient Content

The nutritional content of instant food can vary widely depending on the specific product and brand. While some instant food products may offer relatively balanced nutrition, others may be high in sodium, saturated fats, sugars, and artificial additives. Here are some common nutritional components found in instant food:

1. **Calories:** Instant food products can vary in calorie content depending on factors such as portion size, ingredients, and preparation method. Some instant meals may be relatively low in calories, while others may be higher in energy due to added fats, sugars, or larger serving sizes.
2. **Protein:** Protein content can vary among different types of instant food products. Instant noodles, for example, may contain small amounts of protein from sources such as wheat, soy, or added meat or tofu pieces. Ready-to-eat meals may contain more significant amounts of protein from meat, poultry, fish, legumes, or dairy products.
3. **Carbohydrates:** Carbohydrates are a primary energy source found in instant food products, primarily from ingredients such as wheat flour, rice, corn, or potatoes. Instant noodles, for example, are predominantly composed of carbohydrates from wheat flour, while instant rice dishes may contain carbohydrates from rice or other grains.
4. **Fat:** Instant food products may contain varying amounts of fat, including both saturated and unsaturated fats. Fats are often added for flavor, texture, and to enhance satiety. Ready-to-eat meals may contain added fats from cooking oils, sauces, or meat sources, while instant snacks such as chips or crackers may be higher in fat content.
5. **Sodium:** Sodium content is a significant concern in many instant food products, particularly instant noodles and soups. Flavoring packets and seasoning blends often contain high levels of sodium in the form of salt, monosodium glutamate (MSG), or other sodium-based additives. Excessive sodium intake has been linked to health issues such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.
6. **Added Sugars:** Some instant food products may contain added sugars to enhance flavor or sweetness. This is particularly common in instant beverages, powdered drink mixes, and sweetened snacks. Consuming excessive amounts of added sugars can contribute to weight gain, tooth decay, and other health problems.
7. **Fiber:** Fiber content varies among instant food products, with some containing little to no dietary fiber and others containing significant amounts from sources such as

whole grains, vegetables, or legumes. Fiber is important for digestive health, satiety, and maintaining stable blood sugar levels.

8. Micro-nutrients: Instant food products may contain varying amounts of vitamins and minerals, depending on the ingredients used and any fortification added during processing. Some instant meals may be fortified with vitamins and minerals to enhance their nutritional value, while others may provide minimal micro nutrient content.

It's essential for consumers to read nutrition labels and ingredient lists carefully when selecting instant food products to make informed choices about their nutritional content and overall dietary quality. Opting for instant food options that are lower in sodium, saturated fats, added sugars, and artificial additives, while higher in protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals, can help support a balanced and nutritious diet.

2.5.1 Preservatives

Preservatives are commonly used in instant food products to extend shelf life, prevent spoilage, and maintain freshness. There are several types of preservatives used in instant food, each with its specific function and properties. Here are some common types of preservatives found in instant food:

1. Antioxidants: Antioxidants are preservatives that prevent or slow down the oxidation of fats and oils, which can lead to rancidity and off-flavors in food products. Common antioxidants used in instant food include tocopherol (vitamin E), ascorbic acid (vitamin C), and synthetic antioxidants such as butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) and butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT).

2. Antimicrobial: Antimicrobial preservatives inhibit the growth of bacteria, yeast, and molds in food products, thereby preventing spoilage and food borne illness. Common antimicrobial preservatives used in instant food include sorbic acid, benzoic acid, propionic acid, and their salts (e.g., sodium benzoate, potassium sorbate).

3. Sulfates: Sulfates are a group of preservatives that inhibit the growth of microorganisms and prevent enzymatic browning in certain foods. They are commonly used in dried fruits, wines, and processed foods to maintain color and extend shelf life. Examples of sulfates include sulfur dioxide, sodium sulfate, and potassium metabisulfite.

4. Nitrites and Nitrates: Nitrites and nitrates are preservatives used primarily in cured meats and processed meat products to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria such as *Clostridium botulinum* and to impart a pink color and characteristic flavor. However, excessive consumption of nitrites and nitrates has been associated with health risks, including the formation of nitrosamines, which are potential carcinogens.

5. Acids: Organic acids such as citric acid, acetic acid (vinegar), and lactic acid are often used as preservatives in instant food products to inhibit the growth of bacteria and fungi. These acids create an acidic environment that is inhospitable to microbial growth, thereby extending the shelf life of the food product.

6. Chelating Agents: Chelating agents are preservatives that bind to metal ions in food, such as iron and copper, which can catalyze oxidative reactions and accelerate spoilage. Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) and citric acid are common chelating agents used in instant food to prevent metal-mediated oxidation and maintain product quality.

7. Natural Preservatives: Some instant food products may use natural preservatives derived from plant extracts, herbs, spices, or essential oils. Examples include rosemary extract, grapefruit seed extract, and oregano oil, which have antimicrobial and antioxidant properties.

It's important to note that while preservatives can help extend the shelf life of instant food and ensure product safety, excessive consumption of certain preservatives may have health implications. As such, it's essential for consumers to read ingredient labels and be mindful of their intake of preservatives, opting for products with minimal additives whenever possible.

2.6 Health aspects

While instant food can offer convenience and quick meal solutions, relying heavily on it as a primary dietary source can contribute to the development of several lifestyle diseases. Here are some lifestyle diseases that may be exacerbated or directly linked to the consumption of instant food:

1. Obesity: Instant food products are often high in calories, unhealthy fats, sugars, and sodium, while being low in essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Regular consumption of calorie-dense instant food, combined with sedentary

lifestyles, can lead to weight gain and obesity, increasing the risk of other obesity-related conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

2. Type 2 Diabetes: Instant food products, particularly those high in refined carbohydrates and added sugars, can cause rapid spikes in blood sugar levels. Over time, repeated consumption of these foods can contribute to insulin resistance, a precursor to type 2 diabetes. Additionally, obesity, which is often associated with excessive instant food consumption, is a significant risk factor for type 2 diabetes.

3. Cardiovascular Diseases: The high sodium content in many instant food products can lead to hypertension (high blood pressure), a major risk factor for cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks and strokes. Additionally, the unhealthy fats found in fried and processed instant food can contribute to elevated cholesterol levels and plaque buildup in the arteries, further increasing the risk of heart disease.

4. Digestive Disorders: Instant food products often contain artificial additives, preservatives, and flavor enhancers, which can irritate the digestive system and lead to gastrointestinal issues such as indigestion, bloating, gas, and diarrhea. Consuming large quantities of processed instant food can disrupt the balance of gut bacteria and contribute to digestive disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

5. Nutritional Deficiencies: Instant food products are typically low in essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber, while being high in empty calories and unhealthy additives. Relying heavily on instant food as a primary source of nutrition can lead to nutrient deficiencies and related health issues, including weakened immune function, fatigue, poor cognitive function, and impaired growth and development in children.

6. Mental Health Disorders: Poor dietary habits, including the consumption of highly processed instant food, have been linked to an increased risk of mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety. Nutrient-poor diets can negatively impact brain function and mood regulation, while excessive intake of sugary and fatty foods may contribute to inflammation and oxidative stress, both of which are associated with mental health disorders.

7. Cancer: While the direct link between instant food consumption and cancer is not fully understood, diets high in processed and ultra-processed foods have been associated with an increased risk of certain types of cancer, including colorectal cancer. Many instant food products contain additives, preservatives, and chemical compounds that may have carcinogenic properties or promote cancer development through mechanisms such as inflammation and oxidative stress.

Overall, while instant food can offer convenience and practicality in today's fast-paced world, it's essential to consume it in moderation and as part of a balanced diet that includes a variety of whole, minimally processed foods. Making healthier food choices and adopting lifestyle habits that prioritize nutrition, physical activity, and overall well-being can help reduce the risk of lifestyle diseases associated with excessive instant food consumption.

2.7 Consumer trends and market analysis

Consumer trends and market analysis of instant food reveal insights into the evolving preferences, behaviors, and dynamics driving the industry. Here are some key trends and analyses:

1. **Growing Demand for Convenience:** The primary driver of the instant food market is the increasing demand for convenience among consumers with busy lifestyles. Time-pressed individuals, including working professionals, students, and busy parents, seek quick and easy meal solutions that require minimal preparation time.
2. **Rising Popularity of Ready-to-Eat Meals:** Ready-to-eat meals, such as microwavable dinners and prepackaged meals, are experiencing significant growth as consumers prioritize convenience and time-saving options. These meals offer a convenient alternative to cooking from scratch while providing a variety of cuisines and flavors to suit diverse tastes.
3. **Expansion of Instant Noodles Market:** Instant noodles remain a staple in the instant food market, with continued growth driven by their affordability, versatility, and wide availability. Manufacturers are innovating with new flavors, healthier ingredients, and packaging formats to appeal to health-conscious consumers and expand market reach.
4. **Health and Wellness Trends:** Health and wellness considerations are influencing consumer preferences in the instant food market. There is a growing demand for healthier instant food options, including low-sodium, organic, gluten-free, and plant-based alternatives. Manufacturers are responding by reformulating products to meet these preferences and tapping into the functional food trend by adding ingredients such as vitamins, minerals, and super-foods.
5. **Focus on Natural and Clean Label Products:** Consumers are increasingly seeking instant food products with transparent ingredient lists and minimal additives. Clean label products, which contain natural, recognizable ingredients with no artificial additives or preservatives, are gaining popularity as consumers prioritize health, transparency, and sustainability.

6. **Digital and E-commerce Growth:** The rise of e-commerce platforms and online grocery delivery services has expanded access to instant food products, allowing consumers to purchase their favorite brands and varieties from the comfort of their homes. Digital marketing and social media platforms play a crucial role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions and driving brand engagement in the instant food market.

7. **Globalization and Ethnic Cuisine:** The globalization of food culture has led to an increased demand for instant food products inspired by ethnic cuisines from around the world. Consumers seek authentic flavors and experiences, driving growth in international instant food categories such as Asian noodles, Indian curries, and Mediterranean dishes.

8. **Environmental Sustainability:** Sustainability concerns are influencing consumer choices in the instant food market, with a growing emphasis on eco-friendly packaging, ethical sourcing, and sustainable production practices. Manufacturers are exploring recyclable, compostable, and biodegradable packaging options to reduce environmental impact and meet consumer expectations for sustainability.

In summary, consumer trends and market analysis of instant food reflect a shifting landscape shaped by convenience, health consciousness, digitization, globalization, and sustainability. Manufacturers and brands that can adapt to these trends, innovate with new products and technologies, and meet evolving consumer needs are well-positioned to succeed in the dynamic instant food market.

2.8 Future

In the future, the instant food industry is likely to continue evolving to meet the changing needs and preferences of consumers while addressing emerging challenges and opportunities. Here are some potential future outlooks and concluding thoughts on instant food:

1. **Innovation in Product Development:** Manufacturers will continue to innovate with new technologies and ingredients to create healthier, more sustainable, and convenient instant food options. This may include advancements in packaging, formulation, and

production processes to enhance nutritional quality, reduce environmental impact, and improve consumer convenience.

2. **Expansion of Health-Conscious Offerings:** With increasing consumer awareness of health and wellness, there will be a greater demand for instant food products that prioritize natural, organic, and clean label ingredients. Manufacturers will respond by offering a wider range of health-conscious options, including reduced sodium, lower sugar, and plant-based alternatives to cater to diverse dietary preferences and restrictions.

3. **Focus on Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility:** The instant food industry will face pressure to adopt more sustainable practices throughout the supply chain, from sourcing and production to packaging and distribution. Brands that prioritize environmental responsibility, transparency, and ethical sourcing will gain favor among consumers who value sustainability and Eco-consciousness.

4. **Regulatory Changes and Consumer Education:** Governments may implement stricter regulations and labeling requirements to improve transparency, safety, and nutritional standards in the instant food industry. Consumer education campaigns will also play a vital role in raising awareness about healthy eating habits, reading nutrition labels, and making informed dietary choices to promote overall health and well-being.

In conclusion, while instant food offers convenience and practicality in today's fast-paced world, it is essential to balance convenience with nutritional considerations and environmental sustainability. By prioritizing innovation, health-consciousness, sustainability, and cultural diversity, the instant food industry can continue to meet the evolving needs and expectations of consumers while contributing to a healthier, more sustainable food system for future generations.

2.8.1 Environment

When considering the environmental aspect of instant food consumption, eco-friendly products offer a promising solution to mitigate some of the negative impacts associated with traditional instant food production and consumption of instant food production can have significant environmental implications. Here are a few:

Packaging Waste: Instant foods often come in single-use packaging, leading to increased waste generation, especially if the packaging isn't recyclable.

Energy Consumption: The production process of instant foods, including manufacturing, packaging, and transportation, requires energy, contributing to carbon emissions and environmental degradation.

Resource Depletion: Ingredients for instant foods may require intensive farming practices, leading to soil degradation, water pollution, and habitat destruction.

Sustainable Sourcing: Eco-friendly instant food products often prioritize ingredients sourced from sustainable and ethical suppliers. This may involve using organic farming practices, supporting local farmers, and promoting biodiversity conservation to reduce the environmental footprint of agriculture.

Minimal Packaging: Eco-friendly instant food products typically use minimal and eco-friendly packaging materials, such as compostable or recyclable packaging. This helps reduce waste generation and minimize the environmental impact of packaging disposal.

Biodegradable Materials: Some eco-friendly instant food products utilize biodegradable materials for packaging, such as compostable plant-based plastics or paper-based materials. These materials break down naturally over time, reducing the accumulation of plastic waste in the environment.

Reduced Carbon Footprint: Eco-friendly instant food products often prioritize energy-efficient manufacturing processes and transportation methods to minimize carbon emissions. This may include sourcing ingredients locally, optimizing production processes, and using renewable energy sources.

Certifications and Labels: Eco-friendly instant food products may carry certifications and labels, such as organic, Fair Trade, or Rainforest Alliance, indicating adherence to environmentally friendly practices. These certifications provide assurance to consumers that the product meets certain environmental standards.

Support for Sustainable Practices: Purchasing eco-friendly instant food products supports companies that prioritize sustainability and environmental stewardship. This encourages the food industry to adopt more sustainable practices and reduces the demand for conventional instant food products with higher environmental impacts.

By choosing eco-friendly instant food products, consumers can contribute to environmental conservation and promote more sustainable food systems. Additionally,

supporting companies that prioritize sustainability encourages innovation and drives positive change across the food industry.

Chapter 3

**Data interpretation and analysis of instant food
consumption among youth with special reference to
Cochin city**

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF INSTANT FOOD CONSUMPTION AMONG YOUTH

This section provides the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the youth in general.

Initially, online survey was conducted the questions thus prepared covered their personal and work profile.

3.1 AGE DISTRIBUTION

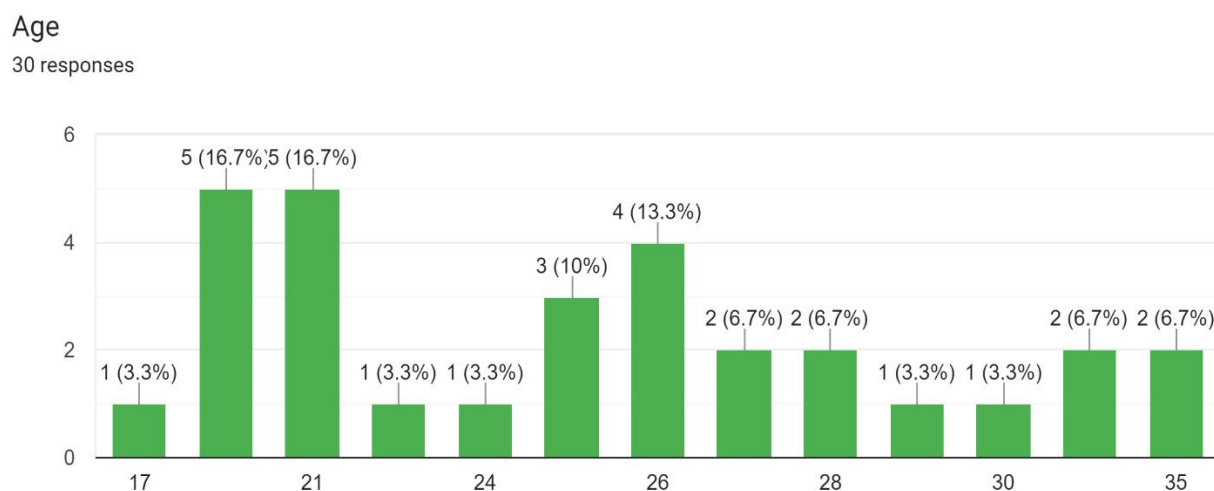


Fig 3.1 age of the respondents

Source: primary data

Majority of the respondents of the survey are from the age group of 18-21 years old.

Characteristic of the respondents are :

- They are youth
- They are financially independent.

3.2 GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Gender

30 responses

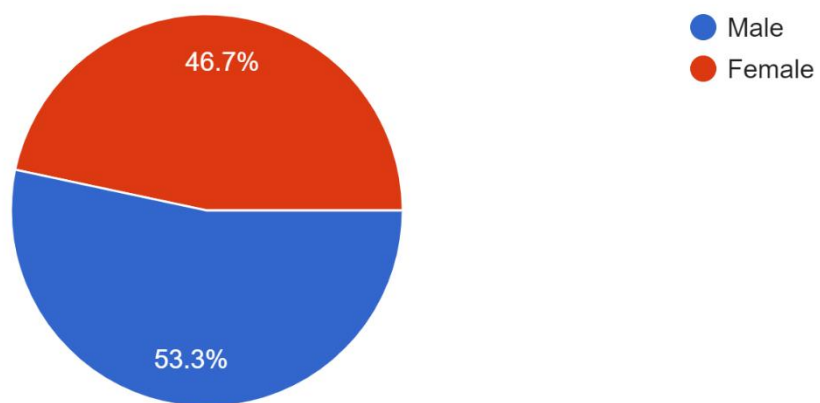


Fig 3.2 gender distribution

Source: primary data

46.7% are female and rest 53.3% computed the gender distribution of the sample. Most of the respondents were male. The youth in general were corporative of the study sharing their valuable responses.

3.3 INCOME

Income

30 responses

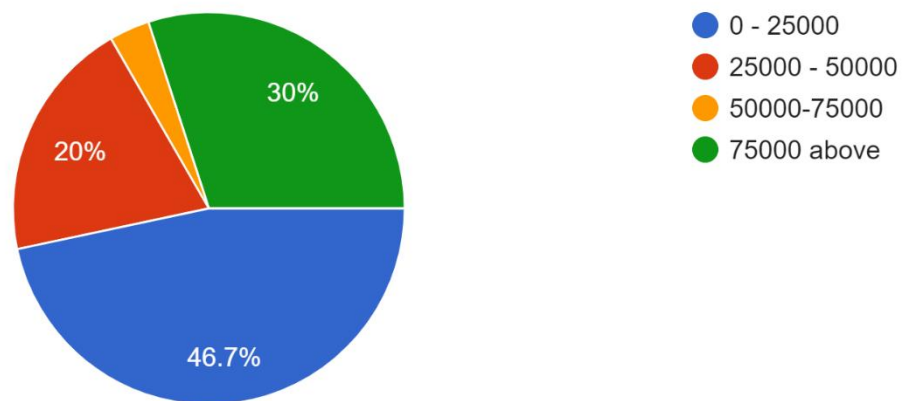


Fig 3.3 Income

Source: primary data

Out of the respondents the majority of the sole earners earn a monthly income of 0-25000 and 46.7% of the total population. 30% earn above 75000 a month. 20% earn between 25000 and 50000. 3.3% earn between 50000 to 75000 a month. The level of income was recorded on the basis of their responses.

3.4 AWARENESS ABOUT INSTANT FOOD

Are you aware about instant foods ?

30 responses

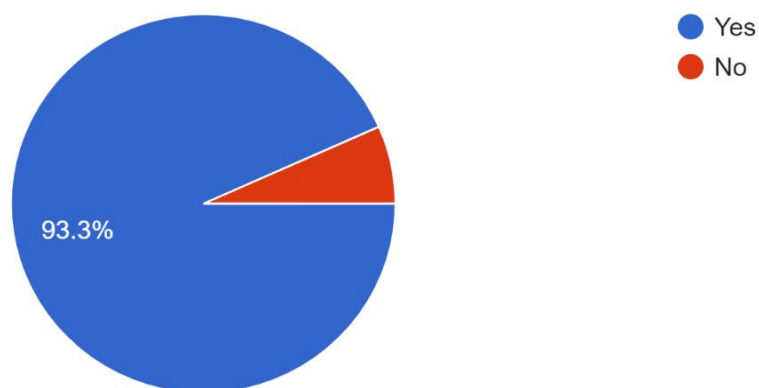


Fig 3.4 awareness about instant food

Source: primary data

From the above response it is clear that 93.3% of the sample are aware about instant food and 6.7% are not aware about instant food. This is due to wide advertising, awareness from social media, recommendation from peers is the reasons youth aware about instant food.

3.5 AWARENESS ABOUT DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSTANT FOOD

Are you aware about different types of instant food?

30 responses

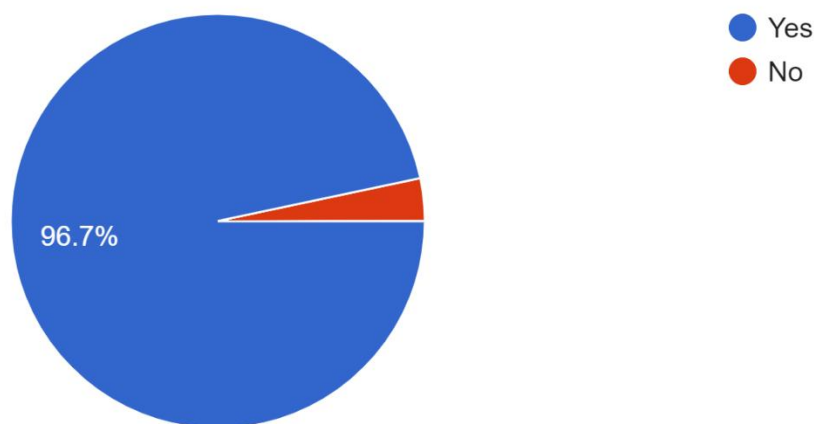


Fig 3.5 awareness about different types of instant food

Source: primary data

Majority of the youth i.e. according to the response 96.7% are aware of the different type of instant food that are available in the market. Only 3.3% are unaware of the different types of instant food available in the market. Easy availability of wide variety of instant food in the market advertising techniques used are make youth aware of the different instant foods available in the market.

3.6 INSTANT FOOD PREFERENCE

Which instant food you prefer?

30 responses

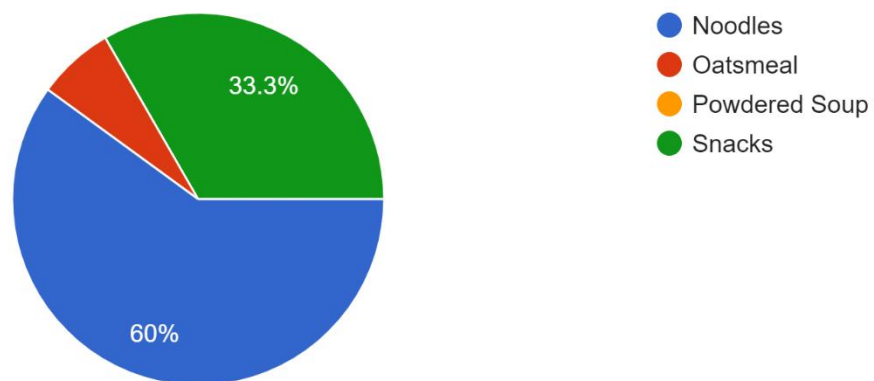


Fig 3.6 instant food preference

Source: primary data

There are different instant foods available in the market. Among this food the foods which we have taken for our study are noodles, oatmeal, powdered soup and snacks. According to the responses 60% of the youth prefer noodles. 30% of the youth prefer snacks and 6.7% of them prefer oatmeal. And none of the respondents prefer powdered soup. Noodles are preferred by youth more because they are the most convenient food compared to other instant food to prepare and can be prepared within minutes. Powdered soup is as convenient as noodles to prepare but are not widely chosen like noodles is because of its low availability in market and do not have a wide variety of powdered soup flavors to choose from. Noodles are a quick and tasty meal.

3.7 REASON BEHIND CHOOSING INSTANT FOOD

What made you choose instant food over traditional meals?

30 responses

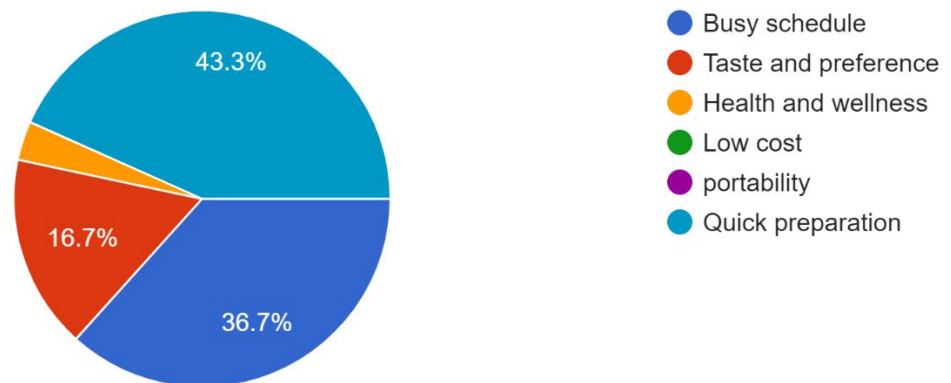


Fig 3.7 reason behind choosing instant food

Source: primary data

43.3% of the respondents choose instant food because they can be prepared quickly and is easy to prepare. 36.7% of them prefer due to their busy schedule and lack of time. 16.7% of them consume instant food because they prefer instant food over traditional meals. And the remaining 3.3% prefer due to health and wellness. None of the respondents prefer instant food due to their low cost and portability. Most of the youth lead a busy life due to their working patterns and they do not care about the price of instant food items this is mainly due to the change in work pattern of jobs the youth are involved in and their income have risen significantly. Instant food are made to be prepared quickly and easily and is very convenient to prepare without taking much time which is very helpful to youth who don't have time to prepare a healthy meal at home.

3.8 SMOOTH RUNNING OF LIFE

Does instant food make your life easy?

30 responses

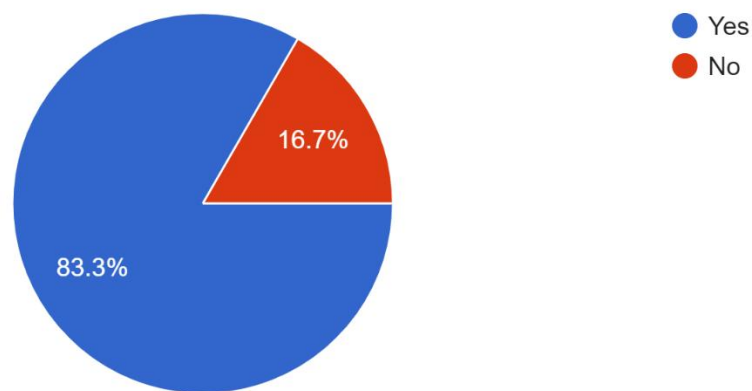


Fig 3.8 ease of life

Source: primary data

Majority of the respondents prefer instant food because instant foods make their life easier. And only remaining 16% prefer instant food for other reasons. Instant foods really make the life of youth easier in their busy lifestyle. Instant foods are food that can be easily prepared by just following the instruction on the packet of the food. It takes very low time to prepare it and is very convenient to prepare. Thus, it makes life of youth easier.

3.9 FREQUENCY OF CONSUMPTION OF INSTANT FOOD

How often you consume instant food?

30 responses

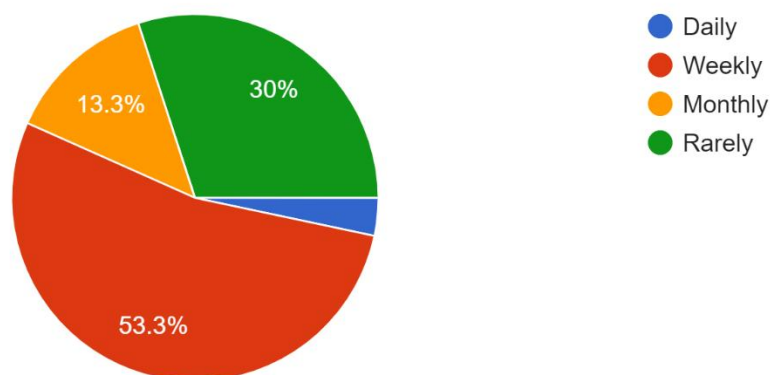


Fig 3.9 frequency of instant food consumption

Source: primary data

Majority of the respondents consume instant food weekly with a percentage share of 53.3% and 30 % of the respondents consumes rarely , around 13.3 % respondents consume instant foods monthly .

From this we can interpret most of the people consume instant food weekly rather than daily basis because they are aware of the fact that daily consumption of instant food consumption can lead to serious health issues. And awareness that instant food consumption can cause lifestyle diseases at a very early age. Youth who consume instant food rarely are people who take care of their health and are who try to be healthy as long as possible.

3.10 SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON INSTANT FOOD CONSUMPTION

Do you think social media influence your instant food consumption behaviour?

30 responses

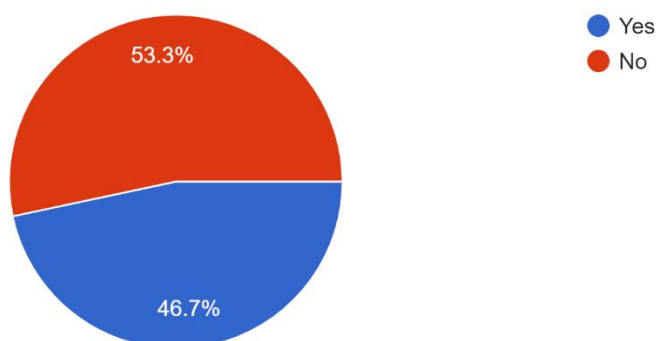


Fig 3.10 social media influence on instant food consumption

Source: primary data

According to the data collected majority of the respondents are of the view that social media doesn't influence their instant food consumption. 53.3% respondents agreed on the impact of social media whereas 46.7% doesn't. Social media is a platform which can highly influence lifestyle of the people. The youth are more involved in social media nowadays. Social media portrays a trend of instant food consumption. Although majority of the youth's instant food consumption are not influenced by social media a relatively huge group is influenced by social media. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook etc. showcase visually appealing, easy to prepare meals, encouraging people to try them out for themselves. Quick preparation videos and food trends spread rapidly, shaping taste and preferences of the youth.

3.11 NUTRITIONAL CONTENT

Do you look into nutritional labels carefully while selecting instant food?

30 responses

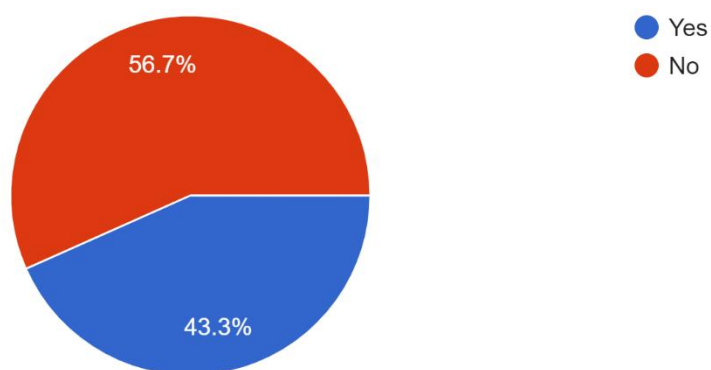


Fig 3.11 nutritional content

Source: primary data

As per the data collected majority i.e. 56.7 % do not read the nutritional labels carefully before consuming instant food and 43.3% do look into the labels.

People may be accustomed to certain instant food products and choose them out of habit without considering their nutritional value. Some people may not fully understand the importance of nutritional labels. Taste and flavor may be the primary factors driving choice of instant food, overshadowing concerns about nutritional value.

3.12 AWARENESS ABOUT PRESENCE OF ADDITIVES AND PRESERVATIVE IN INSTANT FOOD

Are you aware about the presence of additives and preservatives in instant food?

30 responses

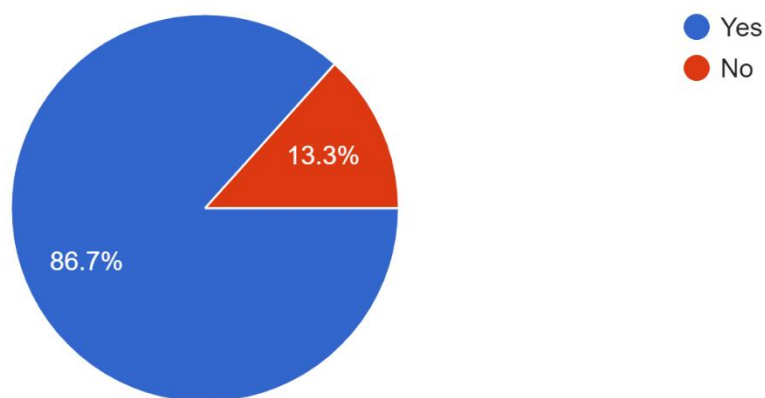


Fig 3.12 awareness about presence of additives and preservative in instant food

Source: primary data

86.7% that is, majority of the instant food consumers are aware of the presence of additives and preservatives in the instant food they consume and the remaining 13.3% are unaware of this fact. A combination of factors including increased health consciousness, access to information, media coverage, educational initiatives and health campaigns has contributed to the awareness of young people about additives and preservatives in instant food. They are aware and still decide to consume instant food due to their busy life.

3.13 HEALTH PROBLEMS ARISING FROM EXCESS USE OF INSTANT FOOD

Do you think health problems may arise from excess use of instant food?

30 responses

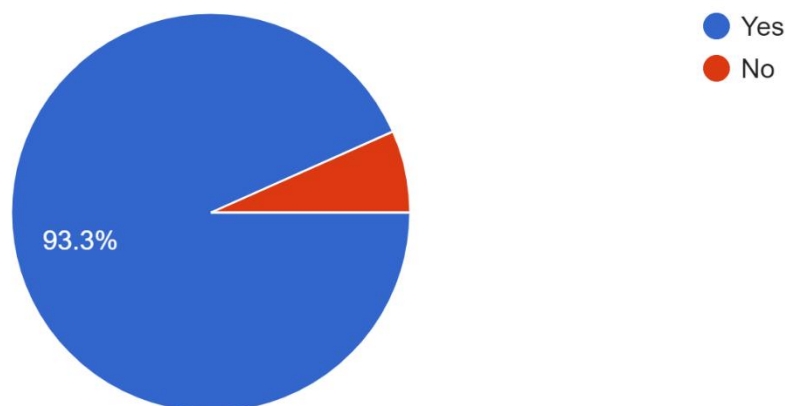


Fig 3.13 health problems arising from excess use of instant food

Source: primary data

93.3% youth thinks that health problems arise from excess consumption of instant food. 6.7% do not believe that health problems arise due to healthy food consumption.

The widespread belief that health problems can arise from the excess use of instant food is supported by evidence linking these products to poor nutritional quality, high levels of additives and preservatives used to increase shelf life, and the promotion of convenience over nutrition.

3.14 HEALTH ISSUE SUFFERED FROM INSTANT FOOD CONSUMPTION

Do you suffer or suffered from any health issues due to instant food consumption?

30 responses

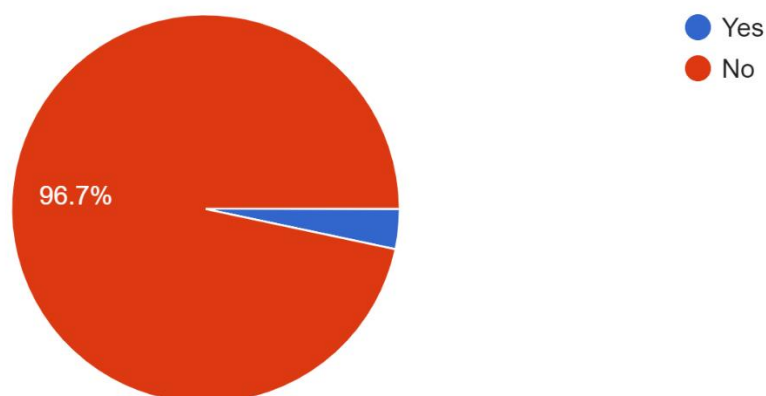


Fig 3.14 health issue suffered from instant food consumption

Source: primary data

Majority of the youth i.e. is 96.7% do not or have not ever suffered from any kind of health issues due to the instant food consumption. 3.3% suffer from health issues. This is due to controlled consumption of instant food by youth. They do not consume instant food on a daily basis, majority consume these on a weekly basis or rarely consume.

3.15 NEGATIVE IMPACT OF INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTION ON ENVIRONMENTAL STABILITY

Do you think instant food production have negative impact on environmental sustainability?

30 responses

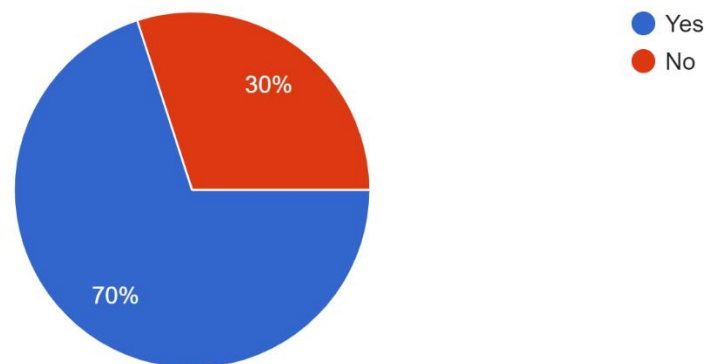


Fig 3.15 negative impact of instant food production on environmental stability

Source: primary data

70% of the youth responded that there is a negative impact on environment sustainability. And 30% do not think that there is a negative impact. This is due to the increasing plastic waste, which is used for packing instant food. Lack of recycling units and measures taken to address this situation is really few.

3.16 ECO FRIENDLY AND ORGANIC INSTANT FOOD PRODUCTS

Do you wish to have more instant food products in market that are eco friendly and organic in nature?

30 responses

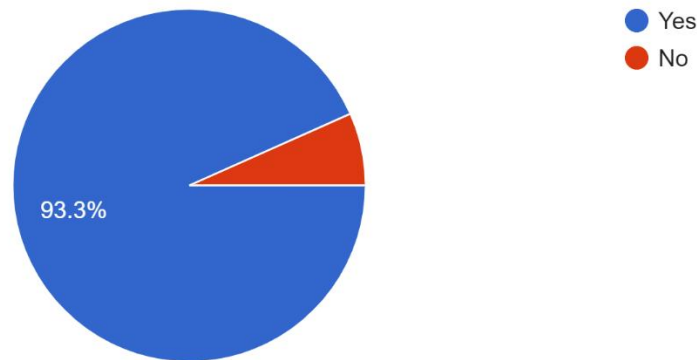


Fig 3.16 ecofriendly and organic instant food products

Source: primary data

93.3% wish there are more eco-friendly and organic instant food products in the marker and 6.7% do not wish to have eco-friendly and organic instant food in the market. From the data we can understand 93.3% are concerned with their health. The mentality of sustainability among youth has triggered this thought. The desire for eco-friendly and organic instant food reflects evolving consumer preferences towards healthier, more environmentally sustainable, and ethically produced food options.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will give ideas about major findings and conclusions of this study and give suitable suggestions and recommendations based on study on instant food consumption among youth.

Findings

- Most of the respondents were between 18 to 35 years of age.
- Highest share of the respondents were male with percentage of 53.3.
- Out of the respondents majority of the sole earners earn a monthly income of 0 - 25000 and 46.7% of the total population.
- Majority of the samples are aware about instant food.
- According to the response 96.7% are aware of the different type of instant food that are available in the market.
- Majority of the response prefer noodles over oats meal, powdered soup and snacks.
- Majority of the respondents choose instant food over traditional meal because of their busy schedule and the quick preparation nature of instant food.
- As instant foods are easy prepare and are called ready to eat meal, majority of respondents claim that instant food make their life easier.
- Even though majority of the population claim that instant food make their life easy instead of daily base consumption they consume instant food in weekly bases with a percentage of 53.3 and 30% claim they rarely consume instant food.
- Even though Social media plays a crucial role in advertisement and marketing for instant food 53.3% of the population claim that social media doesn't influence them to choose instant food.
- From the study we came to find that majority of the population who consume instant food do not read the nutritional labels and are not aware about the nutritional content in them.
- From the study we find that the instant food consumers are aware about the presence of additives and preservatives in them.
- Even though they are aware about the health problems that may cause due to frequent consumption of instant food still that prefer instant food to satisfy hunger.
- Majority believe that instant food consumption cause health issues 96.7% claim that they never suffered from any health issue caused by it.
- Above nutrition supply majority of the population prefer instant food to satisfy their hunger.

- Majority of the population believe that production and packaging of instant food have negative impact on environmental sustainability.
- 93.3% of the population wish to have more instant food products in market that are organic in nature.

Recommendations

There's a clear need for eco-friendly instant food products that are also rich in protein and fiber. Here's why:

Environmental Concerns: As awareness of environmental issues grows, consumers are increasingly seeking sustainable food options. Eco-friendly instant foods would address this demand by utilizing renewable resources, minimizing packaging waste, and reducing carbon emissions throughout the production and distribution process.

The market for healthier and sustainable food options is growing rapidly as consumers become more health-conscious and environmentally aware. Introducing innovative instant food products that combine nutrition, convenience, and sustainability can tap into this expanding market demand and drive industry growth. Developing and promoting eco-friendly instant food products that are rich in protein and fiber would not only address consumer needs but also contribute to a more sustainable and nutritious food system. This would require collaboration across the food industry, from sourcing and production to packaging and marketing, to ensure that these products meet high standards of sustainability and nutritional quality.

CONCLUSION

From our study we came to a conclusion that Instant food had a great impact on youth. While taking into consideration the youth who are in the age group of 18 to 35 in this fast going world instant food products became an indispensable element in their lifestyle. Due to its quick preparation, convenience and hunger satiating nature,

instant food became so popular in the dietary habits of youth. There is no doubt that including instant food products consumption made our life easy but it's unhealthy. As per our study we came to understand that more than half of the youth prefer its consumption on a weekly basis rather than daily. Even though most of the people are aware about the severe impacts on health arising from the excess consumption of poor quality instant foods, they still opt for it. Majority of the youth are aware about the additives and preservatives included in them and most of the youth don't even care about nutritional contents included in it. When it comes to its severe impact on environment from production to packaging the youth are aware about it and wish to have more Eco-friendly instant food alternatives. Also, in future we believe youth may opt for more healthy instant food alternatives.

APPENDIX

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QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Gender:
4. Are you aware of instant food? (Yes/ no)
5. Are are aware about different type of instant food? (Yes/no)
6. Which instant food you prefer?
 - noodles
 - oats meal
 - Soup (powdered soup)
 - snacks
 - others
7. What made you choose instant food over traditional meals?
 - busy schedule
 - taste and preference
 - health and wellness
 - low cost
 - portability
 - quick preparation
 - other
8. Does instant food make your life easy? (Yes/ no)
9. How often you consume instant food?
 - daily
 - weekly
 - monthly
 - rarely
10. Do you think social media influence your instant food consumption behavior?
(Yes/no)
11. Do you look into nutritional labels carefully while selecting instant food?
(yes /no)
12. Are you aware about the presence of additives and preservatives in instant food?
(yes/no)

13. Do you think health problems may arise from excess use of instant food?

(yes /no)

14. Do you suffer or suffered from any health issues due to instant food consumption?

(Yes/ no)

15. Do you think instant food production have negative impact on environmental sustainability?

(yes/ no)

16. Do you wish to have more instant food products in the market that are ecofriendly and organic in nature?

(yes /no)