

Consumers Satisfaction Towards Consuming Convenience Foods With Reference To Coimbatore City

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How to cite this article: S.Nirmala, S.J Sembakalakshmi (2024). Consumers Satisfaction Towards Consuming Convenience Foods With Reference To Coimbatore City. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 21829-21836.

Abstract

This study investigates consumer satisfaction with convenience foods in Coimbatore city, focusing on the factors that influence purchasing decisions and overall satisfaction levels. The research explores demographic variables, preferences, and the perceived benefits of convenience foods, such as time-saving and ease of preparation. Through a structured questionnaire and data analysis, the study reveals key insights into consumer behavior, including satisfaction trends across different age groups and income levels. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the convenience food market in Coimbatore, offering valuable implications for manufacturers and retailers aiming to enhance customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Consumer satisfaction, Convenience foods, Consumer behavior, Purchasing decisions, and Market trends.

INTRODUCTION:

The rapid pace of modern life has significantly altered consumer eating habits, leading to a growing reliance on convenience foods. These ready-to-eat or easy-to-prepare food products have become an integral part of daily diets, particularly in urban areas where time constraints and busy lifestyles prevail. Convenience foods are designed to offer quick solutions for meal preparation, catering to the needs of consumers who seek efficiency without compromising on taste or quality.

In recent years, Coimbatore city, a major urban center in Tamil Nadu, has witnessed a notable shift towards convenience foods. As the city's population becomes increasingly urbanized and time-pressed, the demand for convenience foods has surged, driven by changing demographics, lifestyle patterns, and rising disposable incomes. However, consumer satisfaction with these products varies widely based on factors such as taste, nutritional value, price, and availability.

Understanding consumer satisfaction is crucial for both manufacturers and retailers to align their offerings with consumer expectations and preferences. This study aims to explore the level of satisfaction among consumers in Coimbatore city towards convenience foods, identifying the key factors that influence their purchasing decisions. By analyzing consumer behavior and satisfaction trends, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of the convenience food market, offering implications for future product development and marketing strategies.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

The convenience food market has expanded significantly in recent decades, driven by urbanization, busy lifestyles, and the need for quick meal solutions. According to Euromonitor International (2018), the global convenience food market has seen steady growth, with a particular surge in urban areas where time constraints influence consumer choices. This trend is evident in Indian cities like Coimbatore, where convenience foods are becoming a staple in households.

Consumer satisfaction with convenience foods is multifaceted, involving factors such as taste, price, quality, and nutritional content. A study by Buckley, Cowan, and McCarthy (2007) found that taste and quality are primary determinants of consumer satisfaction, while price and nutritional value also play significant roles. The balance between these factors often determines repeat purchases and brand loyalty.

Demographic variables, including age, income, and education level, significantly impact consumer preferences for convenience foods. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), younger consumers and those with higher

income levels are more inclined towards convenience foods due to their fast-paced lifestyles and higher purchasing power. This trend is also reflected in the preferences of Coimbatore's urban population.

Health consciousness is increasingly influencing consumer choices in the convenience food sector. Research by Wandel (1997) suggests that while convenience is a major appeal, consumers are becoming more concerned about the nutritional value of these foods. This shift has led manufacturers to introduce healthier options to cater to the evolving demands of health-conscious consumers.

Perceived quality is a crucial factor in consumer satisfaction with convenience foods. Zeithaml (1988) emphasizes that consumer perceptions of quality are subjective and influenced by expectations, brand reputation, and previous experiences. In the context of Coimbatore, the perceived quality of convenience foods varies based on brand recognition and product consistency.

Marketing and branding strategies play a pivotal role in shaping consumer attitudes towards convenience foods. Kotler and Keller (2012) highlight that effective branding can enhance perceived value and satisfaction, leading to greater consumer loyalty. In Coimbatore, local brands have increasingly adopted targeted marketing campaigns to attract specific consumer segments.

Cultural factors also significantly impact consumer preferences for convenience foods. Steenkamp (1997) argues that cultural norms and traditions influence food choices, with consumers often seeking products that align with their cultural identity. In Coimbatore, traditional South Indian cuisine influences the types of convenience foods that are popular, with consumers favoring products that reflect their culinary heritage.

With growing awareness of sustainability, consumers are increasingly considering the ethical implications of their food choices. According to Vermeir and Verbeke (2006), consumers are more likely to choose convenience foods that are sustainably sourced and ethically produced. This trend is gaining traction in Coimbatore as consumers become more environmentally conscious.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing prevalence of convenience foods in the daily diets of urban consumers has raised important questions about the factors influencing their satisfaction with these products. In Coimbatore city, where the demand for quick and easy meal solutions is growing, understanding consumer satisfaction levels is essential for manufacturers and retailers. Despite the popularity of convenience foods, there is a need to investigate whether these products meet consumer expectations in terms of quality, taste, nutritional value, and overall satisfaction. This study addresses the problem of identifying and analyzing the key factors that affect consumer satisfaction with convenience foods in Coimbatore, aiming to provide insights that can guide product improvements and marketing strategies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To determine how satisfied consumers in Coimbatore are with convenience foods.
- To find out what factors, such as taste and price, affect consumer satisfaction with convenience foods.
- To understand how different demographics, like age and income, influence consumer preferences for convenience foods.
- To provide recommendations for improving convenience food products based on consumer feedback.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study encompasses an in-depth analysis of consumer satisfaction with convenience foods within Coimbatore city. It focuses on identifying the key factors that influence purchasing decisions and satisfaction levels, such as taste, quality, nutritional value, price, and ease of access. The study includes a diverse demographic range, considering various age groups, income levels, and lifestyle patterns to ensure a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior. By analyzing these aspects, the study aims to provide actionable insights for manufacturers and retailers to enhance their offerings, ultimately improving consumer satisfaction in the convenience food market.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Type of Research:

The research is descriptive in nature, aimed at providing a comprehensive analysis of consumer satisfaction towards convenience foods in Coimbatore city. This approach will help in understanding the various factors that influence consumer satisfaction and preferences.

Source of Data Collection:

Primary Data: Data will be collected through a structured questionnaire designed to capture consumer opinions, preferences, and satisfaction levels related to convenience foods. The questionnaire will be distributed to respondents in Coimbatore city.

Secondary Data: Secondary data will be sourced from websites, academic journals, and industry reports to provide context and support for the primary data findings. This will include information on market trends, consumer behavior studies, and relevant statistics.

Type of Sampling:

The study will employ simple random sampling to ensure that every individual in the target population has an equal chance of being selected. This method will help in obtaining a representative sample of the population in Coimbatore city.

Sample Size:

The sample size for the study will be 150 respondents. This sample size is deemed sufficient to provide meaningful insights into consumer satisfaction with convenience foods.

Tools used for the study:

Percentage Analysis: To determine the proportion of respondents expressing various levels of satisfaction and preferences.

Descriptive Statistics: To summarize and describe the basic features of the data collected, including mean, median, mode, and standard deviation.

One-Way ANOVA: To analyze the differences in consumer satisfaction levels across different demographic groups or categories.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

- A sample size of 150 respondents may not fully represent the diverse population of Coimbatore city, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings.
- The study relies on self-reported data from questionnaires, which may be subject to biases such as exaggeration or social desirability, affecting the accuracy of the results.
- The quality of secondary data from websites and journals may vary, and the information may become outdated or lack relevance, impacting the robustness of the contextual analysis.
- Despite using simple random sampling, there is always a possibility of sampling error, where the selected sample may not perfectly represent the entire population, leading to potential inaccuracies in the findings.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**Table 1: Demographic variables of the respondents**

Demographic variables	Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	67	44.7
	Female	83	55.3
Age	Below 20 Years	34	22.7
	21-30 Years	48	32
	31-40 Years	21	14
	41-50 Years	30	20
	Above 50 years	17	11.3
Educational Qualification	School Level	28	18.7
	Undergraduate degree	75	50
	Postgraduate degree	18	12
	Other	29	19.3

Occupation	Student	36	24
	Employed (Private Sector)	43	28.7
	Employed (Government Sector)	40	26.7
	Self-employed	21	14
	Other	10	6.7
Monthly Income	Less than 20,000	15	10
	Rs. 20,000 – Rs.40,000	36	24
	Rs. 40,001 – Rs.60,000	31	20.7
	Rs. 60,001 – Rs.80,000	33	22
	More than 80,000	35	23.3
Residential Area	Urban	92	61.3
	Rural	58	38.7
Marital Status	Married	52	34.7
	Unmarried	98	65.3
Frequency of consuming convenience foods	Daily	10	6.7
	Weekly	35	23.3
	Monthly	48	32
	Rarely	57	38
Total		150	100

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals a balanced gender distribution, with 44.7% male and 55.3% female participants. The majority of respondents are between 21-30 years of age (32%), followed by those below 20 years (22.7%). Most respondents hold an undergraduate degree (50%), while 24% are students, and 28.7% are employed in the private sector. In terms of income, 24% earn between Rs. 20,000 – Rs. 40,000, and 23.3% earn more than Rs. 80,000 monthly. The majority reside in urban areas (61.3%) and are unmarried (65.3%). When it comes to the frequency of consuming convenience foods, 38% of respondents consume them rarely, while 32% do so monthly.

Descriptive Statistics for Product Quality

	N	Mean	SD
The quality of convenience foods available in Coimbatore meets my expectations.	150	3.24	1.408
The taste of convenience foods is generally satisfactory.	150	3.33	1.413
The texture and freshness of convenience foods are consistently good.	150	3.65	1.301
Valid N (listwise)	150		

The descriptive statistics for product quality among consumers in Coimbatore reveal that respondents generally have moderate satisfaction with convenience foods. The mean scores for the statements indicate that the texture and freshness of convenience foods received the highest satisfaction (Mean = 3.65, SD = 1.301), followed by the taste (Mean = 3.33, SD = 1.413). The quality of convenience foods meeting expectations scored slightly lower (Mean = 3.24, SD = 1.408).

Comparison between gender and dimensions related to satisfaction towards consuming convenience foods

H₀₁: No relationship exists between gender and dimensions related to satisfaction towards consuming convenience foods

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
Product Quality	Male	67	74.01	0.144	0.705
	Female	83	76.70		
	Total	150			
Packaging	Male	67	71.23	1.204	0.272
	Female	83	78.95		
	Total	150			
Price	Male	67	73.35	0.309	0.578
	Female	83	77.23		
	Total	150			
Convenience	Male	67	70.20	1.824	0.177
	Female	83	79.78		
	Total	150			
Health and Nutrition	Male	67	74.40	0.079	0.779
	Female	83	76.39		
	Total	150			
Overall Satisfaction	Male	67	73.16	0.354	0.552
	Female	83	77.39		
	Total	150			

• **Product Quality:** The mean ranks for males (74.01) and females (76.70) are similar, with a Chi-Square value of 0.144 and a p-value of 0.705, indicating no statistically significant difference between genders in their satisfaction with product quality.

• **Packaging:** The mean rank for males is 71.23, while for females, it is 78.95. The Chi-Square value is 1.204 with a p-value of 0.272, suggesting that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents regarding their satisfaction with packaging.

• **Price:** Males have a mean rank of 73.35, and females have a mean rank of 77.23. The Chi-Square value of 0.309 with a p-value of 0.578 shows no significant gender difference in satisfaction with the price of convenience foods.

• **Convenience:** The mean rank for males is 70.20, and for females, it is 79.78. Although the mean ranks differ slightly more here, the Chi-Square value of 1.824 with a p-value of 0.177 indicates that this difference is not statistically significant.

• **Health and Nutrition:** Males have a mean rank of 74.40, and females have a mean rank of 76.39. The Chi-Square value is 0.079 with a p-value of 0.779, showing no significant difference in satisfaction with health and nutrition aspects of convenience foods between genders.

• **Overall Satisfaction:** The mean ranks for overall satisfaction are 73.16 for males and 77.39 for females. The Chi-Square value is 0.354 with a p-value of 0.552, indicating no significant difference in overall satisfaction between male and female respondents.

Comparison between frequency of consuming convenience foods and dimensions related to satisfaction towards consuming convenience foods

Ho2: Difference exists between frequency of consuming convenience foods and dimensions related to satisfaction

towards consuming convenience foods

		N	Mean	SD	F	Sig
Product Quality	Daily	10	3.20	1.408	.400	.753
	Weekly	35	3.29	1.180		
	Monthly	48	3.42	1.127		
	Rarely	57	3.51	1.060		
	Total	150	3.41	1.127		
Packaging	Daily	10	3.57	1.524	.033	.992
	Weekly	35	3.54	1.175		
	Monthly	48	3.63	1.196		
	Rarely	57	3.57	1.215		
	Total	150	3.58	1.209		
Price	Daily	10	3.70	1.494	.120	.948
	Weekly	35	3.57	1.313		
	Monthly	48	3.69	1.299		
	Rarely	57	3.55	1.263		
	Total	150	3.61	1.290		
Convenience	Daily	10	3.47	1.156	2.195	.040
	Weekly	35	3.21	1.266		
	Monthly	48	3.33	1.156		
	Rarely	57	3.39	1.261		
	Total	150	3.33	1.213		
Health and Nutrition	Daily	10	3.80	1.220	.713	.546
	Weekly	35	3.31	1.263		
	Monthly	48	3.21	1.089		
	Rarely	57	3.40	1.279		
	Total	150	3.34	1.210		
Overall Satisfaction	Daily	10	3.58	1.297	.135	.939
	Weekly	35	3.31	1.237		
	Monthly	48	3.40	1.151		
	Rarely	57	3.42	1.222		
	Total	150	3.40	1.197		

Product Quality:

Respondents who consume convenience foods rarely have the highest mean satisfaction (Mean = 3.51, SD = 1.060), while those who consume them daily have the lowest (Mean = 3.20, SD = 1.408). However, the F-value of 0.400 and a p-value of 0.753 indicate no statistically significant difference in product quality satisfaction based on consumption frequency.

Packaging:

Satisfaction with packaging is consistent across all consumption frequencies, with means ranging from 3.54 to 3.63. The F-value of 0.033 and a p-value of 0.992 suggest no significant difference in satisfaction with packaging, regardless of how often respondents consume convenience foods.

Price:

Satisfaction with the price of convenience foods is also consistent across different consumption frequencies, with the highest mean (3.70) among daily consumers. The F-value of 0.120 and a p-value of 0.948 indicate no significant difference in price satisfaction based on consumption frequency.

Convenience:

There is a slight variation in satisfaction with the convenience of convenience foods, with daily consumers reporting the highest mean satisfaction (Mean = 3.47, SD = 1.156) and weekly consumers the lowest (Mean = 3.21, SD = 1.266). The F-value of 2.195 and a p-value of 0.040 indicate a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with convenience based on the frequency of consumption. This suggests that those who consume convenience foods more frequently may find them more convenient.

Health and Nutrition:

Satisfaction with the health and nutrition aspects of convenience foods shows some variability, with daily consumers reporting the highest mean (Mean = 3.80, SD = 1.220) and monthly consumers the lowest (Mean = 3.21, SD = 1.089). However, the F-value of 0.713 and a p-value of 0.546 indicate no significant difference in satisfaction with health and nutrition based on consumption frequency.

Overall Satisfaction:

Overall satisfaction is fairly consistent across all consumption frequencies, with mean scores ranging from 3.31 to 3.58. The F-value of 0.135 and a p-value of 0.939 suggest no significant difference in overall satisfaction with convenience foods based on how often respondents consume them.

FINDINGS

- The demographic analysis indicates that the majority of respondents are female (55.3%) and fall within the 21-30 years age group (32%).
- Most have attained an undergraduate degree (50%) and reside in urban areas (61.3%).
- In terms of occupation, the largest segment is employed in the private sector (28.7%), with a significant portion of respondents earning more than Rs. 80,000 monthly (23.3%).
- A majority are unmarried (65.3%). Regarding the consumption of convenience foods, most respondents consume them rarely (38%), followed by those who consume them monthly (32%).
- Overall, while consumers find convenience foods to be satisfactory, there is some variability in their perceptions, as reflected in the standard deviations.
- No statistically significant difference between genders in their satisfaction with product quality.
- There is no significant difference between male and female respondents regarding their satisfaction with packaging
- No significant gender difference in satisfaction with the price of convenience foods.
- No significant difference in satisfaction with health and nutrition aspects of convenience foods between genders.
- No significant difference in overall satisfaction between male and female respondents.
- No statistically significant difference in product quality satisfaction based on consumption frequency.

- No significant difference in satisfaction with packaging, regardless of how often respondents consume convenience foods
- No significant difference in price satisfaction based on consumption frequency.
- Significant difference in satisfaction with convenience based on the frequency of consumption. This suggests that those who consume convenience foods more frequently may find them more convenient.
- No significant difference in satisfaction with health and nutrition based on consumption frequency.
- No significant difference in overall satisfaction with convenience foods based on how often respondents consume them

SUGGESTIONS

- Based on the findings, it is suggested that convenience food providers in Coimbatore should focus on enhancing the convenience aspect of their products, as this is where significant differences in satisfaction were observed based on consumption frequency.
- Efforts to improve convenience could help increase satisfaction among less frequent consumers, potentially encouraging more regular consumption.
- Additionally, since no significant differences were found in satisfaction across gender or other demographic factors, marketing strategies should target a broad audience without focusing on specific demographic segments.
- However, emphasizing convenience in both product offerings and marketing messages may yield better consumer engagement and satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that consumers in Coimbatore generally find convenience foods satisfactory, with some variations in perception. The majority of respondents are young, educated, and urban-based, with a significant portion employed in the private sector. While gender and frequency of consumption do not significantly impact satisfaction with aspects like product quality, packaging, price, or health and nutrition, there is a notable difference in perceived convenience based on how often consumers use these products. Frequent consumers tend to find convenience foods more convenient, suggesting that product accessibility and ease of use are key factors in driving satisfaction among regular users.

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