

Comparative analysis about consumer rights regarding convenience food among working and non-working women

S. KUNDLE, A. JOGLEKAR AND S. BANERJEE

Convenience food is multi-faceted and will continue to evolve and converge with other trends to meet the food needs and demands of society. Convenience food means more than single serve, easy-to-prepare, and easy-to-take-away products. Women consumers constitute 50 per cent of the total consumer population and approximately 80 per cent of them take decisions while purchasing products for their family. In an era of consumerism every woman prefers convenient products with additional attributes, such as foods that are healthy, ethical and comforting. The present study aimed to assess the women's knowledge about consumer's rights regarding all aspects of convenience food. The present study was carried out on 100 women (50 working and 50 non-working). A self-designed interview schedule including demographic data and knowledge about consumer's rights regarding convenience food was used to collect the data. The results of present study revealed that 68 per cent working and 52 per cent non-working women had knowledge about the consumer act, 54 per cent working and 66 per cent non-working women were agreed on production and advertisement of unhealthy convenience food should be banned by the government. The study recommends that as consumers we have the right to purchase product of our choice but while selecting products, proper care should be taken by consumers. They must ensure the nutrient content, weight, quality and manufacturing date of the products. The study also recommend awareness programme at school, college level for young consumers.

Key Words : Convenience food, Working women, Non-working women, Consumer right

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INTRODUCTION

The description convenience is applied to the way in which a food can be bought, stored, prepared and cooked. Modern methods of quick canning, freezing and drying processes have little effect upon the nutrients. Convenience has an immense impact on the food choices of today's consumer. It has been argued for many individuals that

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convenience food is a barrier to achieving proper nutrition using adequate serving of fruits and vegetables. The ever-increasing market for convenience foods is tinned, canned, chilled, frozen, or preserved, presents a whole array of complex operations in food processing. This weaning away from the traditional fare of yesteryears provides tremendous and urgent challenges to the food industry: serving safe, attractive and nutritious food that is wholesome and bacteriologically safe and conforms with quality standards (Roday, 2007). Women consumers constitute 50 per cent of the total consumer population and 80 per cent of them take all purchase decisions. Women play the dual role of family-makers and professionals. As a result, they have less time for house hold activities including cooking. Increased work pressures and several working hours decrease the stamina of women, as a result

they are slowly being de-linked from their traditional knowledge bank of cooking. The market took advantage of this situation by offering instant food, instant food delivery services in the form of fast-food, 'two-minute' snacks, and refrigerators and washing machines with supposedly better technologies. Women consumers have the responsibility of choosing products that are not just convenient but also safe to use. They must evaluate the nutrition content of food products before buying them and weight their quality with traditional foods that are less-expensive, have better nutritional scores and consume less resources like packaging and transportation. Kubendran and Vanniarajan (2005) studied that the change in consumption pattern was due to changes in food habits. If income and urbanization increase among consumers, the percentage of income spent on consumption increased. The urban consumers preferred mostly branded products compared to rural consumers. The most significant factors influencing buying decisions were accessibility, quality, regular supply, door delivery and the mode of payment.

The objective of the present study was to examine the attitudinal consumer characteristics influencing the consumption of convenience foods. The study also aimed to assess the awareness towards the consumer's rights in working and non-working women.

METHODOLOGY

Selection of area and sample :

This study was conducted on 100 women (50 working and 50 non-working) between the age group of 25 to above 60 years. All the samples were selected randomly from the various areas of Raipur city. Raipur city was categorised in 5 zones *i.e.* East, West, North, South and Central zone. Care was taken while selecting samples. It was ensured that samples should be selected in equal number from each zone.

Data collection :

The samples were heterogeneous group from different occupation and economic status. The criteria for selecting samples for participating were willing to share their own

experiences. Based on the preliminary discussion with the women, a structured interview schedule was developed. Taking permission before starting any work is an essential part of the research. So, the researchers took written consent before starting interview. After taking permission questionnaire was distributed to the subjects with an assurance that their response will be used only for research purpose and it will be kept confidential.

The pre-tested interview schedule had 30 open and closed ended questions. These questions covered main themes *viz.*, Consumer awareness.

Statistical analysis :

All the results were statistically analysed by using percentage, frequency and cumulative frequency.

OBSERVATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

All the results were focused on theme that emerged from the data :

Consumer awareness regarding consumer rights :

Fig. 1 depicts the expenditure on food by working and non-working women. 20 per cent working and 8 per cent non-working women were having their monthly expenditure up to Rs. 2,000-4,000 on food. While 34 per cent working and 24 per cent non-working women were having their monthly expenditure up to Rs. 5,000-7,000 on food. Similarly 28 per cent working and 42 per cent non-working women were having their monthly expenditure up to Rs. 8,000-10,000 on food and 18 per cent working and 26 per cent non-working women were having their expenditure above Rs. 10,000 on food.

Table 1 shows the convenience food companies give more importance to their profit instead of consumers health. 74 per cent working and 72 per cent non-working women said that all convenience food companies give more importance to their profit instead of consumers health. While 26 per cent working and 28 per cent non-working women said that the company doesn't do this. This table concludes that the companies that

Table 1 : Companies give more importance to their profit instead of consumer's health

Sr. No.	Working women			Non - working women		
	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	37	74	37	36	72	36
2.	13	26	50	14	28	50

Table 2 : Consumers view on production of convenience food

Sr. No.	Working women			Non - working women		
	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	27	54	27	33	66	33
2.	23	46	50	17	34	50

produce convenience food give more importance in their product marketing. Because it gives them profit.

Table 2 shows the women opinion on banning the production of convenience food. 54 per cent working and 66 per cent non-working women said that company should stop the production of convenience food. Whereas, 46 per cent working and 34 per cent non-working women said convenience food makes their life more easy and convenient. This results that even non-working women also depend on convenient food. They don't want to do any effort.

Table 3 shows the awareness of consumer act among women. 68 per cent working and 52 per cent non - working women were aware about the consumers act. Whereas, 32 per cent working and 48 per cent non-working women were not aware of it. This result showed that education is also a factor that affects the unawareness of women. Because of low education they didn't know about the consumers rights or act.

Table 4 and Fig. 2 show the factors that affect the consumers choice while choosing the convenience food. 14 per cent working and 6 per cent non - working women said

that cost effect their choice while choosing the convenience food. 8 per cent working and 12 per cent non-working women said that appearance affects their choice while choosing the convenience food. 16 per cent working and 10 per cent non-working women said that nutritional value affects their choice while choosing the convenience food. 36 per cent working and 54 per cent non-working women said that taste affects their choice while choosing the convenience food. 6 per cent working and 2 per cent non-working women said that packaging affects their choice while choosing the convenience food. 12 per cent working and non-working women said that cooking time affects their choice while choosing the convenience food. 8 per cent working and 4 per cent non-working women both said that readymade items effect their choice while choosing the convenience food. The results indicated that women preferred taste while choosing the convenience food. Other factors did not matter the choice of women.

Table 5 and Fig. 3 show the nutrients that affect the consumers choice while choosing the convenience food. 26 per cent working and 22 per cent non-working women said that fat affects their choice while choosing the convenience food. While 48 per cent working and 46 per cent non-working women said that protein affects their choice while choosing the convenience food. 8 per cent working and 10 per cent non-working women said that sodium affects their choice while choosing the convenience food. 18 per cent working and 22 per cent non-working women said that calcium affects their choice while choosing the convenience food. This result showed that women gave more importance to protein on choosing the convenience food. While fat and sodium content did not affect the women choice. Only working women preferred to see the fat content because of health. Calcium is also important factor because women know

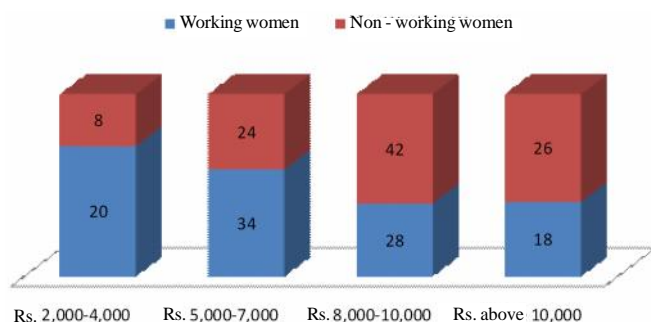


Fig. 1 : Distribution according to expenditure on food

Table 3 : Awareness of consumer's rights

Sr. No.	Working women			Non - working women		
	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	34	68	34	26	52	26
2.	16	32	50	24	48	50

Table 4 : Factors that affect most to women on buying convenience food

Sr. No.	Particular	Working women			Non - working women		
		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	Cost	7	14	7	3	6	3
2.	Appearance	4	8	11	6	12	9
3.	Nutritional value	8	16	19	5	10	14
4.	Taste	18	36	37	27	54	41
5.	Packing	3	6	40	1	2	42
6.	Cooking time	6	12	46	6	12	48
7.	Readymade item	4	8	50	2	4	50

that it causes bone problem.

Table 6 shows the consumers awareness regarding the spoilage of food. 70 per cent working and 86 per cent non-working said that they returned the food item if they found any spoilage in the food to the seller. While 30 per cent working and 14 per cent non-working women said that they didn't do this. Because of limitation of time, they simply disposed the product.

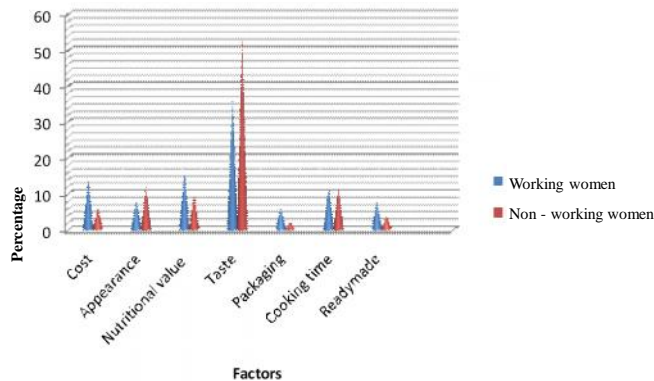


Fig. 2 : Factors affecting buying of convenience food

Table 7 shows the women awareness regarding the consumer forum. 24 per cent working and 18 per cent non-working women knew about the consumer forum and if the product is under expiry date or spoiled then they complained to consumer forum. While 76 per cent working and 82 per cent non-working women didn't do this. It revealed that because of lack of time or ignorance, women did not do the complaint, Although they were knowing about the consumer

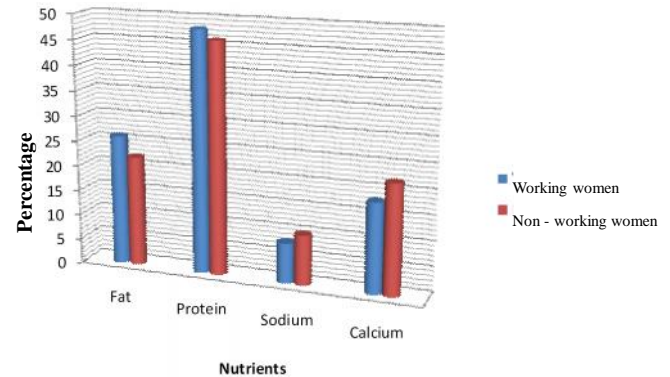


Fig. 3 : Consumers choice on purchasing convenience food

Table 5 : Nutrients affecting consumers choice on purchasing convenience food

Sr. No.	Particular	Working women			Non-working women		
		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	Fat	13	26	13	11	22	11
2.	Protein	24	48	37	23	46	34
3.	Sodium	4	8	41	5	10	39
4.	Calcium	9	18	50	11	22	50

Table 6 : Awareness about spoilage of food

Sr. No.	Working women			Non - working women		
	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	35	70	35	43	86	43
2.	15	30	50	7	14	50

Table 7 : Awareness about consumer forum

Sr. No.	Working women			Non - working women		
	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	12	24	12	9	18	9
2.	38	76	50	41	82	50

Table 8 : Discussion of product with other consumers

Sr. No.	Working women			Non - working women		
	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	36	72	36	40	80	40
2.	14	28	50	10	20	50

Table 9 : Knowledge of consumer act against the seller

Sr. No.	Working women			Non - working women		
	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	48	96	48	47	94	47
2.	2	4	50	3	6	50

forum.

Table 8 shows the women's discussion about the food product with other consumer. 72 per cent working and 80 per cent non-working women discussed with other consumers about the spoiled food. While 28 per cent working and 20 per cent non-working women didn't do this. This result revealed that mostly women were aware about the spoilage of food and they wanted to make aware to other people. So they want to discuss about it.

Table 9 represents the awareness of women regarding the consumer act against seller or purchaser. 96 per cent working and 94 per cent non-working women were knowing about this act. While 4 per cent working and 6 per cent non-working women were not aware of it. This shows that mostly women knew about the consumer act against retailer. Berghofer (2005); Buckleya *et al.* (2007); Chang *et al.* (2002); Jang *et al.* (2009) Olsen *et al.* (2012) and Aloia *et al.* (2013) had also made some contributions related to the present investigation.

Conclusion :

Current study was aimed to explore the factors responsible for the inclination towards convenience food among women from Raipur city. It can be concluded that about 74 per cent working and 54 per cent non-working women were highly qualified. Out of 100 women, 36 per cent working women were having their monthly income up to Rs.20,000. 46 per cent and 68 per cent non-working women spent more than Rs. 8,000 on food. The overall result revealed that 84 per cent working and 82 per cent non-working women were belonging to nuclear family. 74 per cent working women and 72 per cent non-working women said that all convenience food companies give more importance to their profit instead of consumers health. In this study it was found that women were in favour to stop the production of convenience food because it can give adverse effect on health. 96 per cent working women and 94 per cent non-working women knew about the consumer act against seller or purchaser. This percentage showed that due to women's higher education, it is possible for women to be aware about the consumer's right

and nutritive value of convenience food.

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