

Influence of brand name as a label feature of ready to eat meal food product on consumer buying

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■ **ABSTRACT :** Today brand name as a part of label feature plays an integral part in marketing strategy in capturing consumer attention because brand name is not only important marketing component to the manufacturer but also a rich source of information for consumer. Brand name can also reduce the risk consumers' face when buying something that they know little about". The purpose of this paper is to create a deeper thought of what influence a brand name can have on consumer when they go for buying, choosing the products between different brands of ready to eat meal food products. One hundred and twenty consumers of different age groups, income and occupation who frequently purchased ready to eat meal food products formed the sample for investigation. Moreover, this paper also tried to explore the association between brand name and the independent variables that influencing consumer buying using Chi square test. From the study it was revealed that when consumer purchases ready to eat meal food products, brand names as a label feature do influence his/her choice and also have a great place in consumer mind and when customers go for purchasing these products, they prefer to purchase a well known branded ready to eat meal food products. Consumers who were seeking quality of the product were found to be purchasing the product by seeing the brand name.

■ **KEY WORDS:** Brand name, Ready to eat meal food products, Consumer buying

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A product is something that is made in a factory, a brand is something that is bought by a customer (Kotler and Armstrong, 2007). Brand is a combination of name, symbol and design that represents the customer's perceptions and opinion about performance of the product. Today brands play an integral part in marketing strategy in capturing consumer attention. This is because brands have become an important marketing component to the manufacturer and a rich source of information for consumer. Furthermore, brands signal quality levels to consumer and can be effectively used to gain competitive advantage, derive satisfaction from product consumption and secure financial returns. To the consumer, a brand identifies the source of the product, which in turn, assigns responsibility to the product maker and provides a promise or bond with the maker of the product (Keller, 2008). Brands differ in the amount of power and worth they have in the market place. Some

brands are usually unknown to the customers in the marketplace while on the other hand, some brands show very high degree of awareness. The brands with high awareness have a high level of acceptability and customers do not refuse to buy such brands as they enjoy the brand performance. The powerful brand is which resides in the mind of the consumer.

Brands play a very important role in the consumer decision making processes, which has to be identified by the manufacturers to satisfy the consumers (Usha, 2007). Consumers follow the sequence of steps in decision process to purchase a specific product. They start realizing a requirement of product, get information, identify and evaluate alternative products and finally decide to purchase a product from a specific brand. When customer purchases particular brand frequently, he or she uses his or her past experience about that brand product regarding performance, quality and aesthetic appeal (Solomon, 2006). Manufacturers develop

brand names as a way to attract and keep customers by promoting value, image, prestige, or lifestyle. By using a particular brand, a consumer can cement a positive image. Brands also have a symbolic value, which helps the people to choose the best product according to their need and satisfaction (Hansen and Christensen, 2003).

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this paper is to create a deeper thought of what influence, a brand name can have on consumer when they go for buying, choosing the products between different brands of ready to eat meal food products. The twin cities of Andhra Pradesh *i.e.* Hyderabad and Secunderabad were selected purposively as a study area, as consumers with various levels of income, education and occupations reside in these metropolitan cities. Exploratory research design was followed and 120 sample of consumers were selected from the very popular supermarkets located in the study area. Keeping in mind the objective of the study, an interview schedule was developed to collect the data. The independent variables selected for the study were age, gender, occupation, marital status, occupation, income, knowledge about the label and purchasing decisions of consumers. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the profile of the respondents on the variables. Chi square analysis was done to find out the association between independent and dependent variables of the study.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study as well as relevant discussions have been presented under following sub heads:

Demographic information of the respondents:

Table 1 provides the age and gender information where the mean age estimated was 26 years with standard deviation 5.08. Comparatively larger proportion (65.83%) of the sample who was in the age group of 22 to 31 years, was found to be young consumers and were purchasing the ready to eat meal food products (Hirekenchanagoudar, 2008). The female consumers were found to be slightly higher in proportion (56.66%) when compared to male consumers (43.33%). This may be because traditionally women were considered to be the first buyers of foodstuffs (Usha, 2007), but however with change in time men almost equal to women involved in food purchasing.

Further, the marital status of the respondents was explained. The higher proportion (70.83%) of consumers who were unmarried were found to be buying ready to eat meal food products than 27.50 per cent of the consumers who were married. It was evident from the findings that unmarried youth, who may not have the full-fledged kitchen and desire to eat varieties of food, might be depending more

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

Variables	Measuring group	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18 – 21 years	22	18.33
	22 – 31 years	79	65.83
	32 – 45 years	19	15.83
Gender	Male	52	43.33
	Female	68	56.66
Marital status	Married	33	27.50
	Unmarried	85	70.83
	Divorced	1	0.83
	Widowed	1	0.83
Occupation	Students	48	40.00
	Private employees	37	30.83
	MNC employees	23	19.16
	House wife	8	6.66
	Govt. employees	4	3.33
Income per month	Above Rs. 50,000	51	42.5
	Between Rs. 20,000 to 50,000	69	57.50
Knowledge about label	Score < 6	12	10.00
	Score between 7 and 9	46	38.33
	Score > 10	62	51.66

on ready to eat meal food products (Bae *et al.*, 2010; Brown *et al.*, 2000).

Table 1 also explains the occupation and income levels of the respondents. The higher proportion (40%) of the sample who was buying ready to eat meal food products was found to be students, followed by the Private employees (30.83%), MNC employees (19.16%) and housewives (6.66%). The monthly income detail of the respondents was gathered. The data showed that 42.5 per cent of respondents monthly income was above Rs. 50,000 and between 57.50 per cent of respondents income was between Rs. 20,000 to 50,000. This shows that with increase in income level, consumers affordability increased and they were in a position to purchase ready to eat meal food products and consumers with relatively less income were not spending money on these foods, as these are not necessities of life. Higher income groups consume more ready to eat meal food products compared to low and middle income groups (Srinivasan, 2000).

Table 1 also explains the consumers knowledge about label features and regulations. The mean score was found to be 9.16 with a standard deviation of 1.56. Only half (51.66%) of the sample chosen for the study had possessed good amount of knowledge regarding the label features and regulations. Almost half of the sample did not possess adequate knowledge regarding label features and regulations, which is evident that consumers lacked appropriate knowledge on label features and regulations. Lack of

knowledge regarding the label features and regulations among consumers was a cause of concern as that may lead to lack of understanding the information (Jacobs *et al.*, 2010).

Frequency of purchase of different types of ready to eat meal food products:

Market survey was done to explore the availability of various ready to eat meal food products (Table 2). The respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of purchase of four types of ready to eat meal food products in terms of always, sometimes and never and score 3,2,1 were assigned, respectively. Higher the frequency of purchase, higher the score. From the mean scores it is evident that more often consumers purchased vegetarian items. However, the consumer's choice differed among different types of products. The consumers who never purchased particular type of ready to eat meal food products existed in all the categories. Almost one fifth of the sample (19.16%) was purchasing vegetarian items always. Highest proportion of the sample (62.5%) was purchasing the

same sometimes and remaining 18.33 per cent never bought vegetarian items. The same trend was observed in case of non-vegetarian items and rice items. However, in case of frozen snack items, nearly closed to three fourth of the sample were purchasing always and the remaining slightly more than one fourth of the sample never purchased them. The result indicated that the consumers' frequency of purchase of ready to eat meal food products followed the same trend with respect to vegetarian, non-vegetarian snack items and frozen snack items irrespective of type, comparatively more number of consumers were purchasing them sometimes. Consumers' frequency of purchase ready to eat meal food products was neither always nor never and it was sometimes.

Consumer preferences for ready to eat meal food product brands:

The data (Table 3) regarding the frequency of purchase of different brands available in market under each category of ready to eat meal food products was explored. It was

Table 2: Distribution of sample by frequency of purchase of different types of ready to eat meal food products (n=120)

Frequency of purchase	Types of ready to eat meal food products							
	Vegetarian items		Non-vegetarian items		Rice items		Frozen snack items	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Always	23	19.16	22	18.33	22	18.33	85	70.83
Sometimes	75	62.50	65	54.16	65	53.33	0	0
Never	22	18.33	33	27.50	29	28.5	35	29.16
Total	120	99.99	120	99.99	120	99.99	120	99.99
Mean	53.22		14.10		14.92		19.36	
S.D.	14.17		6.02		6.48		8.45	

Table 3: Distribution of sample by consumer preferences for ready to eat meal food product brands (n=120)

Types of ready to eat meal food products	Types of brands	Consumer preferences for ready to eat meal food product brands							
		Always		Sometimes		Rare		Never	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Vegetarian ready to eat meal food products	MTR	96	80	12	10.00	12	10.00	-	-
	Aashirvaad	75	62.50	26	21.66	2	1.66	17	14.16
	Priya	58	44.33	14	11.66	6	5.00	4	3.33
	Ashoka	13	10.83	36	30.00	18	15.00	53	44.16
	Kohinoor	14	11.66	25	20.83	13	10.83	51	42.50
Non-vegetarian ready to eat meal food products	Al kabeer	70	58.33	6	5.00	2	1.66	42	35.00
	Venky's	67	53.33	9	7.50	4	3.33	40	33.33
	Summeru	33	27.50	16	13.33	14	11.66	17	14.16
	Mc'cams	31	25.83	20	16.66	11	9.16	58	48.33
Ready to eat meal rice items	MTR	90	75	3	2.50	1	0.83	25	20.83
	Aashirvaad	31	25.83	13	10.83	9	7.50	67	55.83
	Priya	35	29.16	14	11.66	6	5.00	65	54.16
	Kohinoor	4	3.33	4	3.33	11	9.16	101	84.16
	Ashoka	8	6.66	10	8.33	12	10.00	90	75.00
Ready to eat meal frozen snack items	Summeru	66	55.00	5	4.16	-	-	49	40.83
	Mc'cams	37	30.83	9	7.50	-	-	74	61.66
	Al kabeer	14	11.66	18	15.00	4	3.33	84	70.00
	Venky's	19	15.83	24	20.00	3	2.50	74	61.66
	Godrej yummy's	37	30.83	5	4.16	6	5.00	72	60.00

observed that among the various brands selling, the vegetarian ready to eat meal food products, MTR was preferred by majority of the consumers always. Next to MTR, Ashirvaad vegetarian brand product was preferred always by 62.50 per cent of the sample. Ashoka and Kohinoor were the brands which were comparatively never preferred by more number of consumers. Among non-vegetarian ready to eat meal food products, the Alkabeer brand was always preferred by 58.33 per cent of sample and the same brand was never preferred by 35 per cent of the sample. The same trend was observed in case of Venky's non-vegetarian products also. But in case of Summeru non-vegetarian brands, only 27.5 per cent of the sample preferred them always. More or less equal proportion of sample preferred them either sometimes, rare or never. Mcams non-vegetarian brand products were never preferred by almost equal to half of the study sample. In ready to eat meal rice items, it was observed that more number of consumers again preferred MTR brand always compared to others. Among the ready to eat frozen snack items, 55 per cent of the sample preferred Summeru brand always and more or less equal per cent of the sample (60 – 61%) never preferred Mcams and Venky's and Godrej. Similarly more than half of the sample never preferred Alkabeer brand in ready to eat frozen snack items. It was evident from the findings that MTR brand vegetarian ready to eat meal food products were purchased by consumers more frequently followed by Ashirvaad and Priya Among non-vegetarian food products, Alkabeer and Venky's were the brands purchased by consumers more frequently. Sumeeru brand ready to eat frozen products were purchased by half of the respondents always. The other brands like Mcams, Alkabeer, Venky's and Godrej yummy's were found to be not very popular among consumers (Table 3).

Influence of brand name as a label feature of ready to eat meal food product on consumer buying and selected variables of the study:

Association between influence of brand name as label feature on consumer buying and selected independent variables of the study was tested statistically using Chi square analysis. The independent variables were selected viz., age, gender, marital status, occupation, income, knowledge about label regulations, frequency of purchasing ready to eat meal food products and purchase decisions while selecting ready to eat meal food products.

From the analysis of the data (Table 4) the findings stated that, except purchasing decision based on quality of the product, it was found that there was no significant association between influence of brand name as label feature on consumer buying and selected variables of the study. However, brand name of the product was not a factor that influenced the different age groups of consumers to purchase the product. The results stated that, consumers who were

seeking quality of the product were found to be purchasing the product by seeing the brand name. Consumers who bought the product based on price were not influenced by any of the label features. This states that consumers who were seeking quality of the product were found to be purchasing the product by seeing the brand name.

Table 4 : Association between influence of brand name as a label feature on ready to eat meal food product on consumer buying and selected variables of the study (n=120)

Independent variable	Influence of brand name as a label feature on consumer buying	
	² value	Prob
Age	2.1182	0.3468
Gender	1.6290	0.2018
Marital status	1.1113	0.7743
Occupation	1.8038	0.7718
Income	0.5570	0.4555
Knowledge on label features and regulations	2.0003	0.3678
Purchasing decision based on need	1.4107	0.2349
Purchasing decision based on price	4.838	0.089
Purchasing decision based on quality	14.3525	0.0008**
Purchasing decision based on attraction for product	2.4198	0.2982

** indicate significance of value at P=0.01

Influence of brand name as a label feature on consumer buying and types ready to eat meal food products:

The different ready to eat meal food products were classified into four types as vegetarian, non - vegetarian, rice items and frozen snack items. The association between influence of brand name as a label feature on consumer buying and purchase of each type of ready to eat meal food products was studied. The analysis of the data (Table 5) revealed that there was significant association between influence of brand name as a label feature on consumer buying and rice items of ready to eat meal food products. This states that consumers were found to be more cautious regarding the brands while purchasing rice items of ready to eat meal food products.

Table 5 : Association between influence of brand name as a label feature on consumer buying and types ready to eat meal food products

Purchase of types of ready to eat meal food products (Independent variable)	Brand name as a label feature influencing consumer buying	
	² value	Prob
Vegetarian	2.0674	0.3557
Non-vegetarian	2.3385	0.3106
Rice items	7.1311	0.0283*
Frozen snack items	0.121	0.7279

* indicate significance of value at P=0.05

Conclusion:

The purpose of this paper was to create a deeper consideration about the influence of brand name as a label feature of ready to eat meal food product on consumer buying. In order to comply with this, a questionnaire administered survey was conducted among 120 respondents and data revealed that brand name has influence on purchase decision.

The young male and female were the major consumers for ready to eat meal food products. With increase in income level, consumers' affordability increased and they were in a position to purchase ready to eat meal food product where as relatively less income were not spending money on these foods, as these were not necessities of life. Quality, price and the attraction were the factors that influenced consumers to purchase the ready to eat meal food products. MTR brand among vegetarian ready to eat meal food products were more preferred by the consumers followed by Aashirvaad and Priya. Among non-vegetarian food products, Alkabeer and Venky's were the brands which influenced the consumers. Consumers who were seeking quality of the product were found to be purchasing the product by seeing the brand name. From the study, it is clear that well known brands of ready to eat meal food products are very famous among the people because consumers trust the brand name.

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