

A Study on the Preference of Working Women towards Readymade Food in Tirunelveli District

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Abstract: *Food is very important for the survival of human being. Food provides the necessary nutrition for the human being that is indispensable. Due to the differences in culture, geographic locations, environment and climate, food items vary from society to society. People who are living in the city have high tendency to consume readymade food compared to the people living in the rural areas. The reason for the change is the time factor. They do not have much time to prepare food at their home especially the working women. As society develops the economic activities also expand. Therefore, working women become busy and that discourages them to prepare food at their home. As such, the only alternative is to consume food that is prepared by others and is preferably light in nature. While working women select readymade food, a number of factors are considered by them. The objectives of the study are to study the preference of working women towards readymade food, analyze the factors influencing the working women to purchase readymade food and study the relationship between preference of readymade food and socio economic conditions of working women in Tirunelveli district.*

Keywords: *Health consciousness, Preference, Readymade food, Working women,*

I. Introduction

In the modern days, where the life is at fast pace with the time very valuable to every person, “Readymade foods” play an important role in everyone’s day-to-day life. The term ‘Readymade food’ means simple, fast and convenient food, which is easy and fast to prepare besides being hygienic, free from microbial contamination and also convenient to eat. Unlike olden days where man used to have his food lavishly and slowly, the present trend changed the habits to foods. Hence, the existence of these foods fulfilled all the needs of modern human being. Preparing food with instant mixes has become a way of life and no doubt they are going to be an integral part of food habit in future.

The food habits in India have changed due to the western influence and the usage of these foods is also on the rise. These foods are widely used in catering industries as well as at homes. There are varieties of ready to eat foods available in the market to choose from and they have become a part of everyday life. It is a food revolution that’s been a long time coming. The readymade foods are very useful to many people in various situations. In fact the safe and useful method of storing, packing and consuming these foods is helpful for those who are working as they do not need to worry about making food. Similarly it is easy for people to carry these packed ready-made foods while they travel as it is easy for them to eat on the move.

Significance of the Study

Readymade food is an important item of the people as it is readymade in nature and easy to eat. Food is very important for the survival of human being. Food provides the necessary nutrition for the human being that is indispensable. Due to the differences in culture, geographic locations, environment and climate, food items vary from society to society. In Tirunelveli district, the habit of taking readymade food is changing very fast. People who are living in the city have high tendency to consume readymade food compared to the people living in the rural areas. The reason for the change is the time factor. They do not have much time to prepare food at their home especially the working women. As society develops the economic activities also expand. Therefore, working women become busy and that discourages them to prepare food at their home. As such, the only alternative is to consume food that is prepared by others and preferably light in nature. While working women select readymade food, a number of factors are considered by them. Hence, this study was designed to identify the factors related to the preferences of the consumers of readymade food in Tirunelveli district. This study includes only the working women who are consumers of readymade food.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- i) To study the preference of working women towards readymade food in Tirunelveli district.
- ii) To analyze the factors influencing the working women to purchase readymade food.
- iii) To study the relationship between preference of readymade food and socio economic conditions of working women in Tirunelveli district.
- iv) To offer suitable suggestions based on the findings of the study.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to the extent of assessing the preference of working women towards readymade food in Tirunelveli district. The sample for the study consists of one hundred respondents. The respondents were asked questions about their preferences and the reasons for their preference and the opinion given by them were classified and analyzed. The main aim of the study is to find out the level of preference of readymade food among women in Tirunelveli district.

II. Methodology

Primary and secondary data were collected from different sources and were used for analysis. Secondary data required for the study were collected from the various publications. Primary data were collected through a well structured questionnaire.

Sampling Design

A random sampling method was adopted to draw the sample respondents for the study. Random sampling means each individual element in the universe has an equal chance of being chosen. This method is suitable when the universe is homogeneous and is large. Each item in the universe has an equal chance of representation. Selection of sample units in this method is free from bias. As the study attempts to measure the preference of working women towards readymade food in Tirunelveli district, 100 sample respondents for the study were drawn from the working women in Tirunelveli district.

Limitations of the Study

This study was based on primary data collected from sample working women by survey method. As many of the working women furnished the required information from their memory and experience, the collected data would be subjected to recall bias. The study area was limited to Tirunelveli district and the findings of the study may not be applicable to other areas as vast differences exist among the consumers with regard to demographic and psychographic characteristics. Hence the findings of the study may be considered appropriate for the situations similar to the study area and extra care should be taken while generalizing the results.

Analysis

Age

The following table 1 shows the age wise classification of the respondents in Tirunelveli district.

Table 1
Age wise classification of Respondents

Sl. No	Age	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 20 years	12	12
2	20 to 30 years	68	68
3	30 to 40 years	14	14
4	Above 40 years	06	06
	Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

It is clear from table 1 that 68 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of 20 to 30 years, 14 per cent of the respondents in the ages between 30 to 40 years, 12 per cent of the respondents in the age group of below 20 years and 6 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of above 40 years. It is evident from table that majority of the respondents are in the age group of 20 to 30 years.

Number of Family Members

The following table 2 shows the number of family members of respondents in Tirunelveli district.

Table 2
Number of Family Members of Respondents

Sl. No	Number of Family Members	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	1 to 3	18	18
2	4 to 6	72	72
3	7 to 9	10	10
Total		100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 2 reveals that 72 per cent of the respondents have 4 to 6 members in their family, 18 per cent of the respondents with 1 to 3 members in the family and 10 per cent of the respondents are with 7 to 9 members in the family. It is clear from table that majority of the respondents have 4 to 6 members in the family.

Type of Family

The following table 3 shows the family type of respondents.

Table 3
Type of Family of Respondents

Sl. No	Nature of Family	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Joint Family	30	30
2	Nuclear Family	70	70
Total		100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 3 exhibits that 70 per cent of the respondents belong to nuclear family and 30 per cent of the respondents belong to joint family. Majority of the respondents belong to nuclear family. Thus joint family system is gradually getting abolished and nuclear family system is highly appealing among the generation in the present era.

Marital Status

The following table 4 shows the marital status of respondents in Tirunelveli district.

Table 4
Marital Status of Respondents

Sl. No	Marital Status	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Married	32	32
2	Unmarried	68	68
Total		100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4 shows that 68 per cent of the respondents are unmarried and 32 per cent of the respondents are married. It is evident from table that majority of the respondents are unmarried. It is clear from the study that majority of unmarried respondents prefer readymade food in the study area.

Occupation

The following table 5 depicts the occupation wise classification of respondents in Tirunelveli district.

Table 5
Occupation wise classification of Respondents

Sl. No	Occupation	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Government	14	14
2	Private	54	54
3	Profession	10	10
4	Business	08	08
5	Others	14	14
Total		100	100

Source: Primary data

It is clear from table 5 that 54 percent of the respondents work in the private companies, 14 per cent of the respondents in government organisations, 10 percent of the respondents are professionals and 8 percent of the respondents are engaged in business and the rest 14 per cent of the respondents are in other occupations. It is

evident from the study that majority of the respondents working in private organizations prefer readymade food at higher level.

Monthly Income

The following table 6 exhibits the monthly income of respondents in Tirunelveli district.

Table 6
Monthly Income of Respondents

Sl. No	Monthly Income	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below Rs.5000	17	17
2	Rs. 5000-Rs.10000	20	20
3	Rs. 10000-Rs.15000	28	28
4	Above Rs.15000	31	31
	Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 6 clearly exhibits that 31 per cent of the respondents earn monthly income of above Rs. 15000, 28 per cent of the respondents earn monthly income of Rs. 10000 to Rs. 15000, 20 per cent of the respondents earn monthly income of Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10000 and 17 per cent of the respondents earn monthly income of below Rs. 5000. It is evident from the table that majority of the respondents earning monthly income of above Rs. 15000 prefer readymade food at a higher level.

Sources of Information

The following table 7 shows the sources through which the working women came to know about the readymade food in Tirunelveli district.

Table 7
Sources of Information

Sl. No	Sources of Information	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Friends	35	35
2	Relatives	29	29
3	Advertisement	26	26
4	Colleagues	08	08
5	Any other	02	02
	Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 7 shows that 35 per cent of the respondents came to know about the readymade food through friends, 29 per cent of the respondents came to know about the readymade food through relatives, 26 per cent of the respondents came to know about the readymade food through advertisement, 8 per cent of the respondents came to know about the readymade food through colleagues and 2 per cent of the respondents came to know about the readymade food through other sources.

Amount Spent for Readymade food

The following table 8 shows the amount spent per month for readymade food in Tirunelveli district.

Table 8
Amount Spent for Readymade food

Sl. No	Amount Spent per month for Readymade food	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below Rs.100	32	32
2	Rs. 100-Rs.300	37	37
3	Rs. 300-Rs.500	15	15
4	Above Rs.500	16	16
	Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 8 reveals that 37 per cent of the respondents spend Rs. 100 to Rs. 300 per month, 32 per cent of the respondents spend below Rs. 100 per month, 16 per cent of the respondents spend above Rs. 500 per month and 15 per cent of the respondents spend Rs. 300 to Rs. 500 per month. It is evident from the table that majority of the respondents spend Rs. 100 to Rs. 300 per month for readymade food.

Time saving

The following table shows the time saving by buying readymade food in Tirunelveli district.

Table 9
Time saved by buying readymade food

Sl. No	Time Saving	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 30 minutes	35	35
2	30 to 40 minutes	38	38
3	40 to 60 minutes	21	21
4	Above 60 minutes	06	06
	Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 9 clearly shows that 38 per cent of the respondents save 30 to 40 minutes by using readymade food, 35 per cent of the respondents save below 30 minutes by using readymade food, 21 per cent of the respondents save 40 to 60 minutes by using readymade food and 6 per cent of the respondents save above 60 minutes by using readymade food. It is clear from the table that majority of the respondents save 30 to 40 minutes by consuming readymade food.

Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Age groups of Working Women

In order to find out the level of preference towards readymade food among different age groups of the working women, the data have been collected and presented in the table 10.

Table 10
Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Age groups of Working Women

Age	Level of Preference			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
Below 20 years	5(5)	7(7)	-	12(12)
20 to 30	21(21)	37(37)	10(10)	68(68)
30 to 40	-	10(10)	4(4)	14(14)
Above 40	-	2(2)	4(4)	6(6)
Total	26(26)	56(56)	18(18)	100(100)

Source: Primary data

It is clear from table 10 that out of 100 respondents, 37 per cent of the respondents in the age group of 20 to 30 have moderate level of preference, 21 per cent of the respondents in the age group of 20 to 30 have low level of preference and 10 per cent of the respondents in the age group of 20 to 30 have high level of preference. It is evident from table that majority of the respondents in the age group of 20 to 30 have high level of preference.

Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Number of Family Members of Working Women

In order to find out the level of preference towards readymade food among different number of family members of the working women, the data have been collected and presented in the table 11.

Table 11
Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Number of Family Members of Working Women

Number of family members	Level of Preference			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
1 to 3	7(7)	9(9)	2(2)	18(18)
4 to 6	18(18)	40(40)	14(14)	72(72)
7 to 9	1(1)	7(7)	2(2)	10(10)
Total	26(26)	56(56)	18(18)	100(100)

Source: Primary data

Table 11 reveals that out of 100 respondents, 40 per cent of the respondents in the family with 4 to 6 members have moderate level of preference, 18 per cent of the respondents in the family with 4 to 6 members have low level of preference and only 14 per cent of the respondents in the family with 4 to 6 members have high level of preference. It is evident from table that majority of the respondents in the family with 4 to 6 members have high level of preference for readymade food.

Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Types of Family of Working Women

The level of preference towards readymade food among different types of family of working women in Tirunelveli district is presented in the table 12.

Table 12
Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different types of Family of Working Women

Family type	Level of Preference			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
Joint family	10(10)	16(16)	4(4)	30(30)
Nuclear family	16(16)	40(40)	14(14)	70(70)
Total	26(26)	56(56)	18(18)	100(100)

Source: Primary data

Table 12 exhibits that 40 per cent of the respondents belonging to nuclear family have moderate level of preference, 16 per cent of the respondents belonging to nuclear family have low level of preference and 14 per cent of the respondents belonging to nuclear family have high level of preference. Majority of the respondents belonging to nuclear family have high level of preference for readymade food.

Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Marital Status of Working Women

The level of preference towards readymade food among different marital status of working women is presented in the table 13.

Table 13
Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Marital Status of Working Women

Marital status	Level of Preference			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
Married	2(2)	26(26)	4(4)	32(32)
Unmarried	24(24)	30(30)	14(14)	68(68)
Total	26(26)	56(56)	18(18)	100(100)

Source: Primary data

Table 13 shows that 30 per cent of the respondents who are unmarried have moderate level of preference, 26 per cent of the respondents who are married have moderate level of preference, 24 per cent of the respondents who are unmarried have low level of preference and 14 per cent of the respondents who are unmarried have high level of preference. It is evident from table that majority of the respondents who are unmarried have high level of preference for readymade food.

Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Occupation of Working Women

The level of preference towards readymade food among different occupations of working women is presented in the table 14.

Table 14
Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Occupation of Working Women

Occupation	Level of Preference			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
Government	6(6)	6(6)	2(2)	12(12)
Private	14(14)	26(26)	14(14)	68(68)
Profession	3(3)	5(5)	2(2)	10(10)
Business	2(2)	6(6)	-	8(8)
Others	1(1)	13(13)	-	14(14)
Total	26(26)	56(56)	18(18)	100(100)

Source: Primary data

Table 14 shows that 26 per cent of the respondents working in private organization have moderate level of preference, 14 per cent of the respondents working in private organization have high level of preference and 14 per cent of the respondents working in private organization have low level of preference. It is clear from table that majority of the respondents working in private organizations have high level of preference towards readymade food.

Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among Working Women with different Monthly Income

The level of preference towards readymade food among different monthly income of working women is presented in the table 15.

Table 15
Level of Preference towards Readymade Food among different Monthly Income of Working Women

Monthly income	Level of Preference			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
BelowRs.5000	4(4)	25(25)	16(16)	45(45)
Rs5000-10000	6(6)	14(14)	-	20(20)
Rs10000-15000	12(12)	14(14)	2(2)	28(28)
AboveRs.15000	4(4)	3(3)	-	7(7)
Total	26(26)	56(56)	18(18)	100(100)

Source: Primary data

Table 15 reveals that 25 per cent of the respondents earning monthly income of below Rs. 5000 have moderate level of preference, 16 per cent of the respondents earning monthly income of below Rs. 5000 have high level of preference and 14 per cent of the respondents earning monthly income of Rs. 5000 to 10000 have moderate level of preference. It is evident from the table that majority of the respondents earning monthly income of below Rs. 5000 have high level of preference towards readymade food.

Preference of working women towards readymade food among different socio economic variables-ANOVA

Preference of working women towards readymade food in Tirunelveli district has relationship with many socio-economic variables. These variables have influence on preference towards readymade food. Hence preference of working women towards readymade food is analyzed in terms of these variables.

Age and Preference towards Readymade food

In order to study the relationship between preference towards readymade food and age groups, ‘Anova’ test is attempted with the null hypothesis as, “there is no significant difference in preference towards readymade food among different age group of working women in Tirunelveli district”. The result of ‘ANOVA’ test is presented in table 16.

Table 16
Preference towards Readymade food among different age group of working women-ANOVA

Age	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	317.359	03	105.786	3.619	0.016
Within in groups	2776.661	95	29.228		
Total	3094.020	98			

Table 16 reveals that preference towards readymade food among different age groups of working women in Tirunelveli district, since the ‘p’ value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that age wise there is a significant difference in preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district. It is further clear from the table that age is a significant variable influencing preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district.

Number of Family members and Preference towards Readymade food

In order to study the relationship between preference towards readymade food and number of family members, ‘ANOVA’ test is attempted with the null hypothesis as, “there is no significant difference in preference towards readymade food among different sizes of family of working women in Tirunelveli district”. The result of ‘ANOVA’ test is presented in table 17.

Table 17
Preference towards Readymade food among different number of family members of working women-ANOVA

Number of family members	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	11.260	02	5.630	.175	.839
Within in groups	3082.760	96	32.112		
Total	3094.020	98			

Table 17 reveals that preference towards readymade food among different family sizes of working women in Tirunelveli district. Since the ‘p’ value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. It shows that there is no significant difference in preference towards readymade food among different family sizes of working women in Tirunelveli district. It is further clear from the table that number of family members is not a significant variable influencing preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district.

Family Type and Preference towards Readymade food

In order to study the relationship between preference towards readymade food and family type, ‘t’ test is attempted with the null hypothesis as, “there is no significant difference in preference towards readymade food among different types of family of working women in Tirunelveli district”. The result of ‘t’ test is presented in table 18.

Table 18
Preference towards Readymade food among different types of family of working women-‘T’ test

Particulars	Levene’s Test for Equality of variances	t-test for Equality of means

	F	Sig	t	df	Sig(2-tailed)
Family type	0.454	0.502	.469	98	0.640

Table 18 reveals that preference towards readymade food among different types of family of working women in Tirunelveli district. Since the 'p' value is higher than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. It shows that family type wise there is no significant difference in preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district. It is further clear from the table that type of family is not a significant variable influencing preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district.

Marital Status and Preference towards Readymade food

In order to study the relationship between preference towards readymade food and marital status, 't' test is attempted with the null hypothesis as, "there is no significant difference in preference towards readymade food among different marital status of working women in Tirunelveli district". The result of 't' test is presented in table 19.

Table 19
Preference towards Readymade food among different marital status of working women-'T' test

Particulars	Levene's Test for Equality of variances		t-test for Equality of means		
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig(2-tailed)
Marital status	5.872	0.017	2.030	94	0.045

Table 19 reveals that preference towards readymade food among different marital status of working women in Tirunelveli district. Since the 'p' value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that marital status wise there is a significant difference in preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district. It is further clear from the table that marital status is a significant variable influencing preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district.

Occupation and Preference towards Readymade food

In order to study the relationship between preference towards readymade food and occupation, 'ANOVA' test is attempted with the null hypothesis as, "there is no significant difference in preference towards readymade food among different occupations of working women in Tirunelveli district". The result of 'ANOVA' test is presented in table 20.

Table 20
Preference towards Readymade food among different occupation of working women-ANOVA

Occupation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	181.943	04	45.486	1.468	0.218
Within in groups	2912.077	94	30.980		
Total	3094.020	98			

Table 20 shows the preference towards readymade food among different occupation of working women in Tirunelveli district, since the 'p' value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. It shows that occupation wise there is no significant difference in preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district. It is further clear from the table that occupation is not a significant variable influencing preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district.

Monthly Income and Preference towards Readymade food

In order to study the relationship between preference towards readymade food and monthly income, 'ANOVA' test is attempted with the null hypothesis as, "there is no significant difference in preference towards readymade food among different monthly income of working women in Tirunelveli district". The result of 'ANOVA' test is presented in the following table 21.

Table 21
Preference towards Readymade food among different monthly income of working women-ANOVA

Monthly income	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	475.769	03	158.590	5.754	.001
Within in groups	2618.252	95	27.561		
Total	3094.020	98			

Table 21 reveals that preference towards readymade food among different monthly income of working women in Tirunelveli district, since the 'p' value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. It shows that monthly income wise there is a significant difference in preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district. It is further clear from the table that monthly income is a significant variable influencing preference towards readymade food among working women in Tirunelveli district.

Kinds of Readymade food used mostly by the working women-Garrett Ranking Technique

Working women have been using different kinds of readymade food such as breakfast items, meals, dinner items and snacks including soft drinks, ice cream powder. In order to find out the kind of readymade food mostly used by the working women, Garrett ranking technique has been applied and presented in table 22.

Table 22
Kind of Readymade food mostly used by the working women -Garrett Rank

Sl.No	Kinds of Readymade Food	Ranks	1	2	3	4	Total score	Order of importance
		Scale Value(x)	73	56	43	27		
1	Breakfast Items	f	18	41	25	16	3916	III
		fx	1314	1095	1075	432		
2	Meals	f	15	10	32	43	3719	IV
		fx	1095	560	1376	688		
3	Dinner Items	f	16	23	31	30	4599	II
		fx	1168	1288	1333	810		
4	Snacks	f	51	18	10	11	5458	I
		fx	3723	1008	430	297		

It is clear from table 22 that majority of the working women gave top rank to the snacks as the kind of readymade food mostly used in Tirunelveli district. Table further reveals that the working women gave second rank to the dinner items. It is evident from the table that the working women gave third rank for breakfast items. It is further clear from table that the working women gave last rank to the meals as the kind of readymade food mostly used in Tirunelveli district.

Suggestions

Suggestions for readymade food companies are as follows

- ❖ It is found that preference of readymade food is low among the working women. Hence the readymade food companies should take necessary steps to increase the awareness towards readymade food and towards delicious taste of the readymade food.
- ❖ The companies should increase the visibility of these products in organized retail outlets. Hence the working women and other customers can buy the readymade food in organized retail outlets.
- ❖ The readymade food companies should organize some awareness programmes so that the working women could know about these products.
- ❖ The readymade food companies should increase the varieties of the readymade products in readymade food sections in Tirunelveli district.
- ❖ The companies should take efforts to ensure that readymade products reaches every locality.
- ❖ The companies should organize some workshops in schools and offices, so that the children and the working women may be able to know about these products.
- ❖ The companies may also expend towards advertisement for readymade food, so that it attracts the attention of the public.
- ❖ The companies may also launch new product range for price conscious customers.

III. Conclusion

The readymade food segment in India is currently at a very emerging stage. Volatility on the demand as well as on the supply side is increasing day by day. Need for convenience, health consciousness, increased penetration of organized retail, improved cold chain infrastructure and entry of international players are key drivers that result in significant growth in the market. Growing health consciousness has opened up the market for health focused readymade food categories.

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