Biological Forum
an International Journal 17(7): 60-72(2025)
ISSN No. (Print): 0975-1130
ISSN No. (Online): 2249-3239

Consumer Behavior Towards Ready-to-Eat Food Products in Hyderabad

Y. Purnachandu*, Kiran Lakshmikant Kadam and Vaijanatha
School of Agricultural Sciences Mallaredy University Hyderabad (Telangana), India.

(Corresponding author: Y. Purnachandu)*
(Received: 16 April 2025; Revised: 25 May 2025; Accepted: 21 June 2025; Published online: 08 July 2025)
(Published by Research Trend)

DOI: https://doi.org/10.65041/BiologicalForum.2025.17.7.11

ABSTRACT: The study examined consumer behavior regarding Ready-To-Eat food products in Hyderabad. The selected focus of this research was Hyderabad, India, a swiftly advancing metropolitan area that was renowned for its urbanization and ethnic variety. Challenges and concerns in RTE food products are like Obesity, High blood Pressure, Diabetes, and heart diseases. Quality Control and Food Safety are the most important concerns for RTE food products. The study's target demographic consisted of individuals who acquired prepared foods within the city. The study had a sample size of 180 respondents, with 30 individuals chosen from each of the six localities in Hyderabad: Gachibowli, Jubilee Hills, Banjara Hills, HITEC City, Shaikpet, and Kokapet. The exploratory component sought to ascertain the fundamental motivations, attitudes, and emerging trends in consumer behavior, analyzing the factors that contributed to the rising consumption of RTE food products. The research utilized a descriptive and exploratory methodology to obtain an in-depth understanding of client preferences, attitudes, and purchasing behavior. Data was gathered with a standardized questionnaire that included both primary and secondary data sources. The data analyzed the use of statistical tools, specifically MS Excel and SPSS. Correlation and regression analysis were utilized to determine the relationship between variables. The data was synthesized, revealing patterns in customer behavior through descriptive statistics, regression analysis, correlations, and further approaches.

Keywords: Convenience Foods, Urban consumption patterns, Brand preference, Food retail sector, Health consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

Ready-to-eat (RTE) foods are a category of food items that are pre-cleaned, pre-cooked, mostly packed, and prepared for immediate consumption without the need for further preparation or cooking. The 2009 US Food Code (FDA, 2009) stipulates that ready-to-eat (RTE) foods must be in a consumable state without requiring further preparation for safety. "Eggs, fish, meat, poultry, and ratites" are examples of animal-based ingredients commonly found in these foods. In order to prevent the spread of harmful microbes, they must be cooked to a certain minimum internal temperature for a set amount of time. Industrial settings often employ thermal processing techniques like steam, hot water, microwaves, or infrared to carry out the cooking phase.

Taste, Brand, and Health Awareness influencing the RTE food market. RTE food intake is determined by taste, brand image, and health factors. Product categories have different taste characteristics, with some like salad and pasta receiving higher liking scores than others like beans and meatballs. Sensory product attributes of flavor and texture can replace unfavorable attitudes towards packaged RTE meals. Ethnic and cultural food is increasing in RTE foods, where manufacturers find more means to offer a multinational flavor. Branding plays a role in creating consumer confidence and expectations in designing, with strong brand identities and reminiscence for homemade food being a positive influence on consumer sentiment for RTE products. Industry leaders Nestlé, General Mills, and McCain Foods use brand equity to roll out new product lines, which include international cuisines and vegan choices.

Health consciousness is compelling demand for more wholesome RTE foods, with processors reformulating foods by lowering sodium, sugar, and fat content and adding whole grains and organics. Traditional RTE meals are richer in fat, sugar, and salt, and hence are seeing a move toward "better-for-you" items that offer convenience and nutritional values. Packaging technologies focus on sustainability and nutritional transparency, appealing to eco-friendly consumers while ensuring freshness. The global RTE food market is expected to rise from “USD 422.80 billion in 2025 to USD 538.08 billion by 2030 at a CAGR of 4.94%”, fueled by convenience and changing lifestyles. Health-oriented segments are growing enormously, with consumers looking for protein-rich, allergen-free, and organic products. Successful players invest in product development, sustainable development, and omnichannel distribution strategies to address shifting consumer trends (Laguna *et al.*, 2020).

The RTE food industry has been growing at a fast pace in recent years, and this growth has been fueled by a number of factors, with taste, brand, and health consciousness being some of the most powerful drivers of consumer behavior. With busy lifestyles increasingly requiring convenient and quick meal options, RTE foods provide a solution that is both time-saving and convenient to prepare. Taste is also the key to pushing consumer decision-making because food is ingested for enjoyment, and a pleasurable sensory experience is paramount. Consumers anticipate that RTE foods will taste good, have good texture, and be satisfying overall; hence, manufacturers innovate consistently to enhance the taste profile of their foods. An RTE product's success is usually established by whether or not it is able to recreate the taste and quality of homemade food, if not even improve on them, with high-quality ingredients and innovative cooking methods (Laguna *et al*., 2020).

Other than taste, brand is crucial in the world of RTE foods as well. A credible, well-established brand can engender consumer confidence, which is important when people are making quick food decisions, often with minimal time or inclination to undertake a lot of research. Established brands with a quality and consistency record will be the market leaders, as consumers can be sure of the reliability and safety of products. Branding also creates emotional connotations with the consumers. Premium brands, for instance, create a perception of indulgence and exclusivity, while value brands are branded as being reasonably priced, daily products. Branding is shown in the power not just of packaging and promotion but also because the product can deliver on taste and convenience expectations of the consumers (Hecht *et al.,* 2020).

Consciousness about health is today the major force driving change in the RTE food market, with food consumers increasingly showing interest in food nutritional value when purchasing. More and more food consumers are in search of a healthier alternative to traditional ready meals due to the increasing awareness about the negative impact of unhealthy food. They are likely to choose products that are low in preservatives, free from artificial additives, and rich in essential nutrients. This trend in consumers has provided a boost to demand for organic, gluten-free, and plant-based RTE foods, which address the growing population of health-conscious consumers. Producers have been compelled to improvise due to these changes by reframing products in a way to replicate these trends in health, thus ensuring that they are meeting emerging needs for their target markets (Hillier-Brown *et al.,* 2016).

The addition of health-conscious considerations in the RTE food market is also being prompted by global trends such as the rise of wellness culture, fitness, and well-being living. With an increasing number of consumers realizing the importance of well-balanced diets and the part that food has to play in obtaining overall health and well-being, RTE food producers are increasingly likely to add functional foods such as probiotics, superfoods, and supplemented vitamins to satisfy these health-aware purchasers. Second, RTE brands are also more transparent in terms of the origin of their ingredients and what they have to offer in terms of nutrients, which is an important consideration for consumers in the selection of food products. Clean labeling and transparency are now buzzwords, and companies that can easily tell people the health benefits of their products are a step ahead of their competitors in this increasingly competitive market (Gurce and Friedman 2020).

As for health and flavor, convenience also remains a big driver in the growth of the market for RTE food. Busy modern lifestyles ensure that consumers are always searching for products providing quick preparation convenience to consume while on the go without compromising convenience or flavor. Food processors of RTE have also responded to the challenge of innovation with an array of products meeting different needs, such as ready-to-eat single-serve meals, pre-portioned snacks, and meals prepared for easy reheating. In addition, innovations in packaging technologies like microwaveable and environmentally friendly containers have facilitated the ready consumption of RTE food without sacrificing convenience and environmental acceptability (Glanz *et al*., 2020).

Furthermore, health consciousness is not just a fad but a long-standing cultural change that keeps gaining traction. Specifically, millennial and Gen Z consumers, who are strongly committed to sustainability and socially responsible consumption, are driving forces in creating the marketplace. They seek brands that, in addition to offering products that reflect their health values, are also making promises to planetary sustainability and social responsibility. Those brands that embrace sustainable sourcing, green packaging, and ethical manufacturing will be most likely to attract increasingly intensely to these young consumers. As they mature and continue to drive demand, the intersection of taste, brand reputation, and health consciousness will be rewritten, creating still more innovation and growth in the ready-to-eat food market (Anusha *et al.,* 2020).

Mandelkar (2019) examined that the Various factors, including convenience, health consciousness, product flavor, and quality, as well as price, advertising, and availability, impacted the intention to purchase RTE food among consumers in Bangkok and the surrounding areas. In order to gather information, 250 clients in and around Bangkok were given closed-end questionnaires. According to the findings, the majority of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 40, and both sexes were represented equally. Among the extrinsic factors affecting consumers' propensity to buy, the study found that product advertising and product availability were the most influential, followed by convenience as the most important intrinsic factor. The remaining parameters, such as "price, product quality, health consciousness, and flavor, did not influence the purchase intention of customers in Bangkok for RTE food".

Raina *et al*. (2019) examined consumption trends for RTE meals in the Phagwara area of Punjab. The study aimed to examine the food-related lifestyle & behaviors

of individuals regarding RTE food goods that were accessible on the market. The study's defined objectives were achieved through the collection of primary data using questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Primary data had been gathered from 184 respondents using 18 closed-ended questions. Data had been analyzed using statistical algorithms to assess the consumption of RTE items in designated places. The survey indicated that a significant portion of consumers of RTE food goods purchased these items at discounted prices from local supermarkets, while another swiftly growing sector favored these products for their ease in lifestyle. The findings from the descriptive statistics indicated that consumer ratings were the most influential element in determining the kind and brand of ready-to-use food products. The influence of gender on the selection of RTE goods was assessed by analyzing the data provided by respondents using an independent samples t-test. The t-test results indicated a disparity in gender concerning evaluations of consuming patterns. The study's findings facilitated the establishment of a suitable RTE food product market in rural and distant regions of the targeted area.

Patel (2019) examined the influence of brand name on customer purchasing decisions for ready-to-eat food products. The study objective was to emphasize that the brand influenced the customer decision-making process. The study acquired primary data from 400 respondents through a questionnaire. The primary study was undertaken in several regions of Anand city, Gujarat, India. A validated questionnaire had been pilot tested and subsequently amended before its implementation. The chi-square test was employed as the statistical approach. Two hypotheses were created on the relationship between respondents' age and their purchase of branded ready-to-eat food goods, as well as their brand choice. Researchers discovered that the acquisition of branded RTE food products and the desire for goods of the same brand origin were influenced by the customers' age.

Rathee *et al.* (2018) explored that women had been restricted to domestic spheres and assigned the position of homemakers; nevertheless, societal transformations had prompted them to seek employment opportunities beyond the house. The increase in dual-income households with constrained time for domestic tasks led to growth in the RTE food sector. Women, in particular, had been afforded less time to oversee domestic responsibilities and achieve equilibrium. Consequently, it became necessary to examine the purchasing preferences of employed women and the determinants that influenced their selection of ready-to-eat items. The study involved 205 employed women who had provided their preferences via a questionnaire. The analysis had been conducted with SPSS version 23. It indicated that the majority of women had been cognizant of RTE food options. The elements that impacted the negative features included utility, convenience of use, sales promotion, familiarity, affection, price influence, and time required.

Thienhirun and Chung (2018) examined consumer attitudes and preferences regarding cross-cultural ready-to-eat (RTE) food in Thailand and Japan. This research employed interviews, descriptive statistics, t-tests, and conjoint analysis. The findings indicated that Thai and Japanese participants exhibited unfavorable perceptions regarding the taste and freshness of cross-cultural ready-to-eat food. Furthermore, these two factors were the primary considerations in their decision to purchase RTE food. The representation of Thai/Japanese RTE cuisine can be encapsulated by its distinctive characteristics and renowned culinary names. Furthermore, the outcomes of the conjoint analysis indicated that Thai consumers favored a hybrid flavor profile combining Japanese and Thai tastes. Food packaging design should feature a transparent container lid with a label, allowing consumers to view the contents within. Conversely, Japanese consumers favored an authentic Thai flavor, and the design should feature a vibrant image on the food container lid.

Patel and Rathod (2017) explored that food constituted one of the fundamental necessities of human existence. It was essential for the proper functioning of bodily systems and healthy development. Consumer interest in RTE snacks and ready-to-serve (RTS) foods increased due to their convenience, value, appealing presentation, flavor, and texture. It examined the correlation among food perception, preferences, and meal selection. Initially, researchers sought to discover and elucidate the aspects that influenced food perception and preferences, attempting to clarify the many causes for divergent food choices and preferences. It aimed to comprehensively understand the multifaceted underlying factors, which may have originated from several sources. The study demonstrated the variability of factors that influenced the choices for RTE foods. Secondly, researchers aimed to provide a comprehensive review of the factors that influenced the selection of RTE foods & the decision-making processes involved in food preferences and choices. The study provided a concise analysis of the relationship between food preferences and dietary choices. In conclusion, researchers asserted that further information was required about cultural, historical, and demographic aspects.

Upadhyaya *et al.* (2017) examined that street foods significantly influenced individuals' daily dietary choices, as their increasingly hectic schedules diminished the potential for consuming cooked meals, thereby impacting their normal nutritional needs. Numerous foodborne illnesses were documented over the years as a result of consuming tainted nonhomemade food. The study evaluated the microbiological quality of meals sold on the street. Five frequently eaten food products (“samosa, chole, panipuri, sandwich, and momos”) from street vendors in Lucknow City were analyzed. Pathogenic organisms such as Escherichia coli, Pseudomonas aeruginosa, Klebsiella, and Staphylococcus aureus were identified in the five food products that had been examined. An antibiotic sensitivity test was conducted, revealing that E. coli had exhibited resistance to Itraconazole and Rifampicin. Klebsiella demonstrated resistance to Rifampicin. Staphylococcus aureus demonstrated sensitivity to all tested antibiotics, including Rifampicin, Vancomycin, Tetracycline, and

Streptomycin. The study emphasized the extent of microbial contamination that was present in widely accessible street meals. The microbial load was highest in sandwiches, followed by panipuri, then momos, with comparably lower levels in chole and samosas.

Silberbauer and Schmid (2017) assessed the current state and recent advancements in this domain. It is critical to have a firm grasp of the elements that are absolutely necessary for the packaging of ready-to-eat (RTE) foods, particularly those that pertain to food quality and safety. The demand for quick and easy meals has skyrocketed in the last several years. Due to the time and effort savings, more and more people are opting for ready-to-eat (RTE) products. Demand for healthy, high-quality ready meals is driven by people's increasing concern for their health. The packaging industry is always coming up with new and improved packaging solutions because of technological advancements. Environmental concerns, regulatory frameworks, and customer expectations are driving this. However, there has been a dearth of research on novel ideas for ready-to-eat food packaging. The prevention of food poisoning has prompted packaging ideas to center on limiting the growth of microorganisms. The mechanical properties of bio-based packaging materials are limited. These materials include chitosan and polylactic acid. One possible solution to this problem is to use natural essential oils or nanomaterials instead of synthetic additives. Improvements and longer shelf life were seen with the use of modified atmosphere packaging.

Contini *et al*. (2016) examined the propensity to consume ready-to-eat and easy-to-prepare (RTE and ETP) foods through a literature review of studies on consumer behavior. The review emphasizes several critical factors related to individuals' values and beliefs, including the curiosity to explore novel dietary practices, individualistic food behaviors, and time constraints, which serve as catalysts in the selection of RTE and ETP foods. The significance of qualitative product characteristics and their market penetration arises from the supply perspective, facilitating the relaxation of normative consumption barriers. The concluding section suggests a discourse on the explanatory factors regarding the roles of RTE and ETP foods within the context of consumption, considering potential shifts in demand.

Jain and Jain (2013) examined consumer behavior towards ready-to-eat items, enabling companies to formulate more effective plans and accurately assess their brand equity regarding diverse market offerings. The study encompassed answers from diverse customers across various segments of the domestic market, facilitating an understanding of product availability and brand loyalty. It examined the correlation between consumer behavior, which included awareness, perception, and adoption processes, and personal variables such as gender, marital status, and employment. This investigation demonstrated a substantial link between the two criteria. This study facilitated the company's execution of a SWOT analysis for its goods. It provided many suggestions and recommendations to the processed food industry that might have assisted in its expansion strategies and connected with end consumers and their perceptions of the product.

Gupta *et al.* (2013) examined that Effective packaging played a crucial role in capturing consumers' attention & influencing purchasing decisions, particularly for packaged goods. Nevertheless, while it had been a well-examined issue within marketing, study specifically including package features to evaluate their influence on purchasing behavior were few. The study addressed the gap and sought to enhance the current literature by analyzing customers' preferences for packaging qualities, levels of engagement, and readiness to purchase in the context of RTE food items. The study employed a questionnaire and utilized statistical techniques, including ANOVA, Regression Analysis, and Conjoint Analysis, to offer valuable insights into consumers' perceptions and the significance of four packaging attributes—size, form, color, and imagery—in affecting their willingness to purchase RTE food. The findings suggested that 'shape' and 'size' were more significant factors influencing customers' product selection, whereas 'color' accounted for the greatest diversity in purchase intention. The study categorized two customer categories based on their level of participation and elucidated the diversity in their preferred combinations of packaging qualities. It concluded with implications for marketers and recommendations for future study in that domain.

Olsen *et al.* (2010) examined how well the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model predicts the intention to consume ready-to-eat (RTE) meals when moral attitude is included. A total of 134 respondents from three nations filled out questionnaires in the spring of 2009: 122 from Norway, 99 from the Netherlands, and 134 from Finland. Moral attitude is a strong predictor of RTE meal consumption, according to a sequential hierarchical regression. In all three nations studied, people's intentions to eat ready-made meals were negatively affected by the feeling of moral obligation, which is defined as a negative sensation of guilt. Adding moral factors as explanatory variables to the Theory of Planned Behavior increased the explained variance (R2). Incorporating moral attitude into the TPB model yielded non-significant results for the effect of subjective norm in the Netherlands and Norway, indicating cultural differences in social pressure related to ready-meal consumption, even though the test showed significant outcomes regarding the influence of attitude towards behavior and morality across all countries.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Objectives

(i) To analyze the factors influencing consumer preferences for RTE food products in Hyderabad.

(ii) To evaluate the impact of price, convenience, taste, and nutritional value on consumer purchasing decisions.

Study Area: The area of study is a specific geographical area and environment where research is conducted, including its physical, social, and cultural context. It is

used to identify the focus and applicability of the study. The chosen area of study for the current study is Hyderabad, India, which is a rapidly developing metropolitan city that is widely known for its urbanization and ethnic diversity. With an increased number of working professionals and busy lifestyles, Hyderabad has seen an increased demand for convenience foods, especially RTE foods. This shift in consumer behavior is a reflection of altered food habits driven by time constraints, evolving dietary patterns, and cost factors. The blend of new and old influences in the city provides an ideal setting to study consumer behavior towards RTE food products as a reflection of the determinants of food choice in the dynamic city market.

Targeted Population: The target population is a certain group that is the main target in a study, determined by specific characteristics that match the study's purpose. The target population that participates in the study is those who buy and consume RTE foods in Hyderabad, India. The target population refers to the working executives, students who are predominantly getting refreshments from the canteens, and busy professionals who do it because of their busy life schedules. The study aims to uncover their preferences, shopping patterns, and the drivers of their decision to buy RTE foods. The plan is to specify the group of individuals, which would eventually make it possible to understand consumer choices by way of convenience, taste, health concerns, and prices. Opinions on the upcoming trend of the consumption of RTE products with the present-day lifestyle and compact and populous areas, using Hyderabad as an example.

Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling is a method through which a population is separated into dissimilar smaller groups, that is called strata, based on unique characteristics, and then random samples are chosen from each stratum. Stratified Random Sampling is a means to ensure that all the corresponding sections of the populace are included, which, as a result, makes the findings more precise and fitting. For consumer behavior of RTE food products in Hyderabad, stratified random sampling is most appropriate to capture the heterogeneity of the population. Consumers in the city can be divided into strata based on age, income, occupation, and lifestyle. By canvassing all of these segments, the research can gain a deeper understanding of how different demographic segments drive demand and taste for RTE items in Hyderabad's fast-moving market.

Sample Size: The sample size for the study is 180 respondents, and 30 respondents are selected from six localities in Hyderabad, *i.e.,* "Gachibowli, Jubilee Hills, Banjara Hills, HITEC City, Shaikpet, and Kokapet". This technique makes the sample representative of a large group of consumers from various localities with unique socio-economic profiles. By selecting equal numbers from these areas, the research can regulate variation in demographics, living styles, and shopping behaviours toward read-to-eat food items in various neighbourhoods. This sample size allows for a comprehensive understanding of consumers' preferences and for the findings to be statistically significant and representative of the cosmopolitan citizens of Hyderabad.

Research Design: The study's research design is descriptive and exploratory, intended to present an extensive overview of consumer attitudes towards RTE food items in Hyderabad. The descriptive scope of the study aims to elaborate on consumer traits, tastes, and buying behaviour, analysing factors such as purchase frequency, product choice, and the decision-making process. The exploratory component attempts to identify the underlying motivations, attitudes, and new trends in consumer behaviour, examining reasons for the increasing consumption of RTE food items. The study, through the integration of these two strategies, not only offers a definitive picture of present-day consumer behaviour but also ventures into the causes of the increased consumption of RTE foods in an urban, fast-paced setting such as Hyderabad.

Data Collection: "A mix of primary and secondary data collection methods" is used in the present study. These methods are designed to provide a broad view of RTE food product customers' behavior in Hyderabad. The primary data is acquired through surveys and questionnaires from the city's consumers at different sites, learning about their preferences, buying habits, and factors that influence their choices firsthand. This face-to-face interaction with consumers gives accurate, real-time information. Secondary data are collected from easily accessible sources such as market reports, scholarly articles, and trade journals, and include background information on trends, market influences, and existing research on ready-to-eat foods. Through a fusion of primary and secondary data, the research attempts to provide a well-rounded understanding of what drives consumer behavior within Hyderabad's ready-to-eat food sector.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding consumer preferences, attitudes, and purchasing behavior is an area of study that is under scrutiny by marketers, with the target group being individuals who regularly buy RTE food in various areas of Hyderabad. Through the use of stratified random sampling, the study will provide a sample of 180 participating subjects representing one or more of the localities mentioned, *i.e.*, Gachibowli, Jubilee Hills, Banjara Hills, HITEC City, Shaikpet, and Kokapet—30 participants from each locality. This will ensure that the size is a good representation of the city. The data will be collected via a carefully planned questionnaire that will encompass both primary and secondary sources and will be structured to cover a wide range of factors. Independent variables like price, convenience, taste, nutritional value, and brand awareness will be investigated with regard to the dependent variable, which is the actual purchasing decision. Utilizing software tools such as MS Excel and SPSS, the data is going to be analyzed in detail by using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis.

This method of analysis will enable the uncovering of trends, relationships, and patterns in consumer behavior. The study, which is descriptive yet

exploratory, is one that informs us about the current state of consumer preferences but also about the in-depth understanding of the subject, making it very significant for businesses to adapt their strategies to the new needs of consumers. In the end, the results of the study will act as the silent protagonists that are instrumental in stakeholders' decision-making, thus nurturing innovation, moving the sector in the direction of customer-driven success, and not to forget, speedy and strategic planning about the dynamic food landscape of Hyderabad.

A. Demographic profile of the respondents

Table 1: Age of the respondent.

Age					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	18-25 Years	12	6.7	6.7	6.7
	25-30 Years	28	15.6	15.6	22.2
	30-35 Years	56	31.1	31.1	53.3
	35-40 Years	41	22.8	22.8	76.1
	Above 40 Years	43	23.9	23.9	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

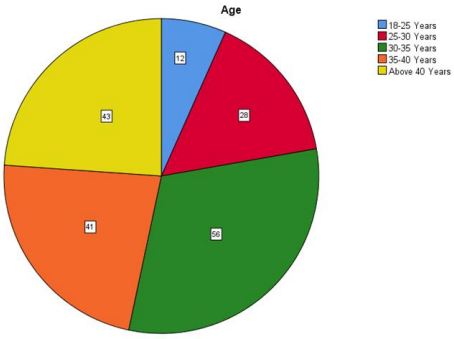

Fig. 1. Age of the respondent.

Interpretation - The age distribution of the respondents indicates that the majority fall within the 30–35 years range, making up 31.1% of the entire sample. The group above 40 years follows closely with 23.9% and the 35–40 years group with 22.8%, thereby giving a clear signal of sufficient presence in the mid to older age groups. The 25–30 years segment holds 15.6%, while the youngest age bracket (18–25 years) is the least represented group at 6.7%. The finding suggests that the sample is mainly people aged 30 and over, hence a quite mature demographic.

Table 2: Gender of the respondent.

Gender					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Female	81	45.0	45.0	45.0
	Male	99	55.0	55.0	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

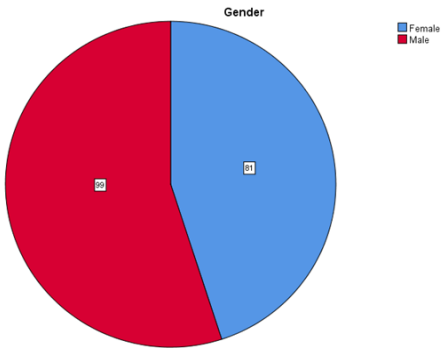

Fig. 2. Gender of the respondent.

Interpretation - According to the gender analysis of the participants, there is a minimal male majority, with 55% indicating themselves as male and 45% as female. Among the 180 subjects, 99 them are male and 81 are female, having a nearly equal distribution but with a male predominance sample. Hence, the representation of both genders is almost equal, and one can assume that the derived information will hold for both males and females, albeit with a tad male representation.

Table 3: Educational Qualifications of the respondents.

Educational qualification					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Higher secondary	8	4.4	4.4	4.4
	Undergraduate degree	14	7.8	7.8	12.2
	Diploma	56	31.1	31.1	43.3
	Postgraduate degree	35	19.4	19.4	62.8
	Doctorate	67	37.2	37.2	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

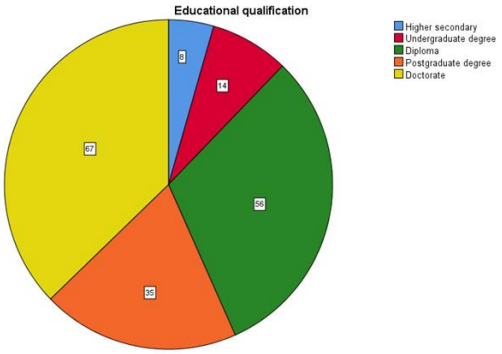

Fig. 3. Educational qualification of the respondent.

Interpretation - The educational qualifications of the respondents show that it is a highly educated sample of people. The doctorate is the largest group (37.2%), next are those with the diploma (31.1%), and then the postgraduate degree (19.4%). A smaller number of participants have a bachelor's degree (7.8%) or have only completed their higher secondary education (4.4%). This division indicates that an overwhelming majority (over 85%) of the participants have reached the level of higher education beyond the undergraduate one, and that this may be a factor that has had an influence on the points of view and the data.

Table 4: Monthly income of respondents.

Monthly Income					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	15,001 – 30,000	29	16.1	16.1	16.1
	30,001 – 50,000	29	16.1	16.1	32.2
	50,001 – 75,000	43	23.9	23.9	56.1
	Above 75,000	25	13.9	13.9	70.0
	Below 15000	54	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

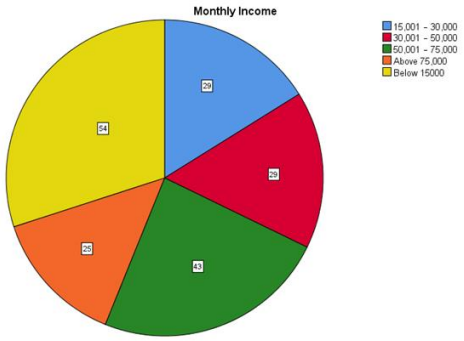

Fig. 4. Monthly income of the respondent.

Interpretation - The data on the distribution of the monthly income of the respondents provides information that the largest segment (30%) earns below ₹15,000, so it is quite obvious that the survey is mainly representative of the lower-income group. Following this, there are the people who make within the ₹50,001-75,000 range (23.9%), and at the same level of income are the ones that earn within ₹15,001–30,000 and ₹30,001–50,000, respectively (16.1% each). Another portion of the sample (13.9%) has higher-than-₹75,000 earnings. Somehow, the data matches a mix of income spectrums but is slightly tilted towards the low-income sector, which seems to have an impact on the financial behavior and spending power of the members in the group.

Table 5: Marital status of the respondent.

Marital Status					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Divorce	36	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Married	63	35.0	35.0	55.0
	Single	45	25.0	25.0	80.0
	Widowed	36	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

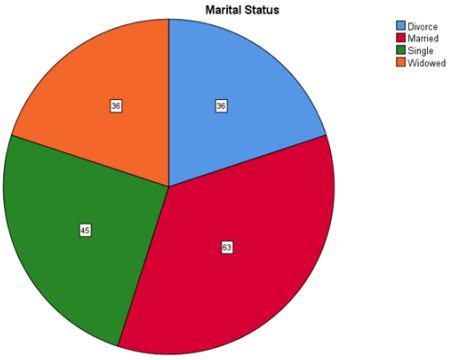

Fig. 5. Marital status of the respondent.

Interpretation - The data on marital status shows that 35% (63 people) are married out of a total of 180 individuals; it is then the most general status among the group. 25% (45 people) are single individuals, and 20% each are those who are divorced and widowed (36 people each). This distribution represents a fairly even breakdown of marital statuses, with married individuals having the advantage slightly.

Table 6: Area of resistance of respondents.

Area of Residence					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Banjara Hi	30	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Gachibowli	30	16.7	16.7	33.3
	HITEC City	30	16.7	16.7	50.0
	Jubilee Hi	30	16.7	16.7	66.7
	Kokapet	30	16.7	16.7	83.3
	Shaikpet	30	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

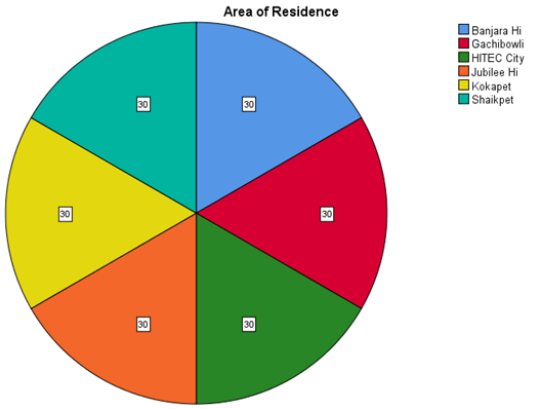

Fig. 6. Area of resistance of respondents.

Interpretation - The data about where people live shows that there is a nearly equal share of the participants in each location. In every one of the six districts: Banjara Hills, Gachibowli, HITEC City, Jubilee Hills, Kokapet, and Shaikpet, each has 30 residents and is 16.7% of the total of 180 people, so the total for each of the areas is 90 persons. Such an even distribution carries a message that people from each area have had a common fair chance of giving their responses, and this, in turn, brings out the point of agreement of the local inhabitants.

Table 7: Monthly income of the respondents.

Monthly Income					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15,001 – 30,0	39	21.7	21.7	21.7
	30,001 – 50,0	51	28.3	28.3	50.0
	50,001 – 75,0	26	14.4	14.4	64.4
	Above 75,000	28	15.6	15.6	80.0
	Below 15000	36	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

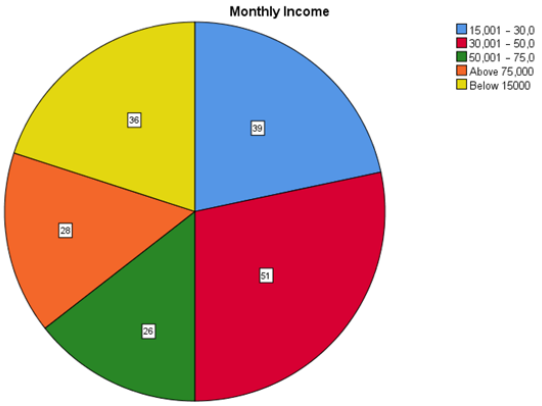

Fig. 7. Monthly income of the respondents.

Interpretation - The data available for the monthly income data shows a pretty well-off distribution among the respondents. 28.3% of people are the highest group of people who are earning between 30,001 and 50,000, and 21.7% of the people were at the same time in the 15,001 to 30,000 group. Another 20% of the respondents make less than 15,000, and 15.6% are in the group of more than 75,000. A smaller group, which is 14.4% is in the 50,001 to 75,000 range. This is a distribution that makes it clear that many income levels are covered, and a vast majority of the respondents earn salaries in the range of 15,001 to 50,000.

Table 8: Frequency of consuming ready-to-eat products among the respondents.

Frequency of Consuming					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	40	22.2	22.2	22.2
	Occasi	50	27.8	27.8	50.0
	Once a	60	33.3	33.3	83.3
	Rarely	30	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

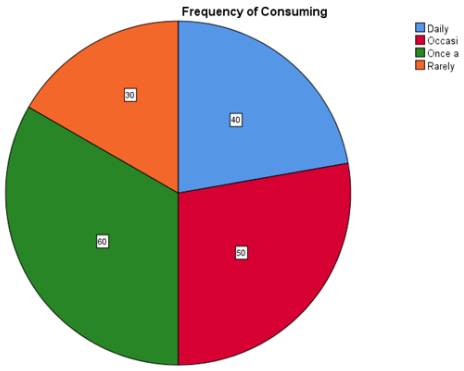

Fig. 8. Frequency of consuming ready-to-eat products among the respondents.

Interpretation - The data collected on the frequency of product consumption shows that the majority of the participants seldom eat it. The category that 27.8% (50 individuals) of people are in is the one that represents occasional consumption, and it is a sizeable number. Slightly more than 33.3% (60 individuals) eat it once a week, while 22.2% (40 people) eat it every day. The rest of the 16.7% (30 individuals) who are surveyed take it only on rare occasions. This distribution of preference for moderate consumption is quite evident, with a good number of people belonging to the regular but not daily consumption group.

Table 9: Dietary preference of the respondents.

Dietary Preference					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Non-Vegeta	70	38.9	38.9	38.9
	Vegetarian	110	61.1	61.1	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

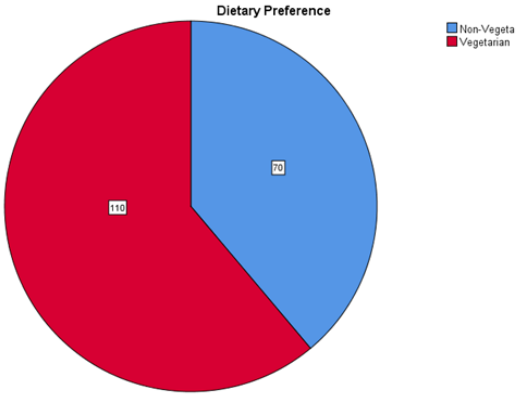

Fig. 9. Dietary preference of the respondents.

Interpretation - The data on dietary preferences has made it clear that the subject of the sentence is vegetarians, with 61.1% (110 individuals) falling into this category. It is understood that the remaining 38.9% (70 individuals) chose a non-vegetarian lifestyle. Such results prove that the greater part of the community is an avid follower of a vegetable diet, whereas a significant part goes for non-vegetarian food.

Table 10: preferred type of RTE product of the respondents.

Preferred Type of RTE Product					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Frozen meals	36	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Instant noodles	32	17.8	17.8	37.8
	Other	16	8.9	8.9	46.7
	Packaged snacks	26	14.4	14.4	61.1
	Ready-to-cook meal kits	32	17.8	17.8	78.9
	Soups	38	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

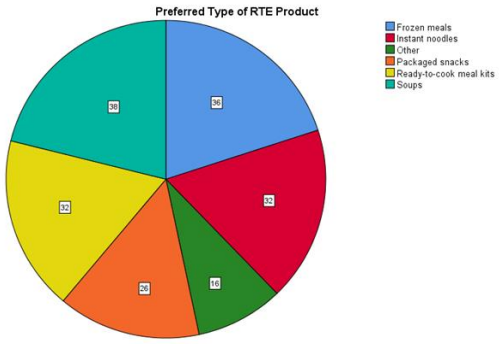

Fig. 10. Preferred type of RTE product of the respondents.

Interpretation - The data on the preferred type of Ready-to-Eat (RTE) products indicates that respondents have different choices in the area of RTE. The most sought-after products are soups, with 21.1% (38 individuals) who like them. Frozen Meal comes next at 20% (36 individuals), while the third and fourth are instant noodles and ready-to-cook meal kits, respectively, both of which have been chosen by 17.8% (32 individuals each). Packaged snacks are opted for by 14.4% (26 individuals), with other foods accounting for 8.9% (16 individuals). Therefore, there is a possibility that soups and frozen meals are the leading products, but it is undeniable that other ready-to-eat options are really attractive as well.

RESULTS BASED ON THE HYPOTHESIS

Objective 1: To evaluate the impact of price, convenience, taste, and nutritional value on consumer purchasing decisions.

H1a: There is a significant relationship between factors such as price, convenience, taste, & nutritional value and consumer preferences for RTE food products.

H0a: There is no significant relationship between factors such as price, convenience, taste, & nutritional value and consumer preferences for RTE food products.

Table 11: Descriptive statistics.

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
Factors	14.4611	3.16292	180
consumer preferences	13.2889	3.70488	180

Interpretation - Descriptive statistics associated with two factors unfold like this: The average for the "Factors" variable is 14.46, with a standard deviation is 3.16, obtained from 180 respondents. The "Consumer Preferences" variable is slightly lower at 13.29 on average, with a larger standard deviation of 3.70, also derived from 180 respondents. These outcomes imply that the "Factors" variable is, in general, the one that slightly takes the lead over "Consumer Preferences," and from the standpoint of the latter, there is more variability in the responses, as evidenced by its larger standard deviation.

Table 12: Correlation.

Correlations			
		Factors	**consumer preferences**
Factors	Pearson Correlation	1	.237**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	180	180
consumer preferences	Pearson Correlation	.237**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	180	180
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Interpretation - Based on the Pearson correlation coefficient, the connection between the "Factors" and the "Consumer Preferences" variables is positively marked at 0.237. This, in turn, implies that the two variables are in the category of weak to moderately positively related. The correlation is statistically significant because the p-value (0.001) is less than 0.01, proving that the relationship between those two is most probably not by accident. In other words, a positive but not so strong connection between the factors and consumer preferences exists. A significant relationship exists between price, convenience, taste, and nutritional value and consumer preferences for RTE foods, supported by Rani *et al.* (2024); Saxena (2021).

Objective 2: To analyze the factors influencing consumer preferences for RTE food products in Hyderabad.

H2c: Consumer purchasing decisions of RTE food products are significantly influenced by marketing strategies such as advertising, promotions, and packaging.

H0c: Consumer purchasing decisions of RTE food products are not significantly influenced by marketing strategies such as advertising, promotions, and packaging.

Table 13: Model summary.

Model Summary				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	.536[a]	.288	.284	2.67718
a. Predictors: (Constant), marketing strategies				

Interpretation - The model summary represents the findings of a regression analysis that used "marketing strategies" as the independent variable. A moderate positive correlation between the dependent and predictor variables is indicated by the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.536. The marketing strategies explain 28.8% of the variation in the dependent variable, according to the R-squared value of 0.288. Despite having a small number of predictors and a relatively high variance, the model still managed to produce a respectable adjusted R-squared value of 0.284. The model's performance can be inferred from the root mean square error value, which, at 2.67718, indicates the average distance between the observed and predicted values.

Table 14: ANOVA.

ANOVA[a]						
Model		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	515.533	1	515.533	71.929	.000[b]
	Residual	1275.778	178	7.167		
	Total	1791.311	179			
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchasing						
b. Predictors: (Constant), marketing strategies						

Interpretation - The ANOVA table of the regression model illustrates that the regression sum of squares is 515.533 at 1 degree of freedom, which therefore has a mean square of 515.533. An F-value of 71.929 is highly significant ($p < 0.001$) to support the idea that the model is a meaningful factor in the variation in consumer purchasing behavior. The residual sum of squares is 1275.778 with 178 degrees of freedom, which in turn provides a mean square of 7.167. The total sum of squares is 1791.311 with 179 degrees of freedom. The independent variable is marketing strategies, while the dependent variable is consumer purchasing.

Table 15: Coefficients.

Coefficients[a]						
Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.632	.740		8.960	.000
	marketing strategies	.591	.070	.536	8.481	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer purchasing						

Interpretation - In the coefficients table, it can be shown that the constant term reveals a numeric value of 6.632, from which originates a standard error of the value 0.740, and hence it is statistically significant ($t = 8.960$, $p < 0.001$). The coefficient for marketing strategies is 0.591 with a standard error of 0.070. This is still statistically significant ($t = 8.481$, $p < 0.001$). The Beta of the standardized coefficient for marketing strategies is 0.536, from which we can infer that marketing strategies have a moderate positive relationship to consumer purchasing behavior. The subject of the sentence is consumer purchasing. Marketing strategies significantly influence purchasing decisions, with Goel & Smigic (2023); Pandey *et al.* (2024) affirming the role of promotions and social media in shaping consumer behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

The study titled "Consumer Behavior towards Ready-To-Eat Food Products in Hyderabad" delineates the diverse facets of consumer preferences, attitudes, motivations, and purchasing behavior regarding RTE food products in one of India's most vibrant urban locales. Hyderabad's growing population of working professionals, students, and small families renders it an exemplary subject for examining the effects of modernization, convenience culture, and lifestyle alterations on dietary practices. Thus, with the help of both questionnaires and the existing literature, the author of this study has shed light on how consumer behavior is changing, recognizing the most significant trends, the influencing forces, and the firm's responses to the market.

One of the key points to emerge from the study is that convenience is deemed the most important motivator of RTE food consumption. In a city that is known for its fast-paced lifestyle and the lack of time, a ready-to-eat meal is a good idea for people who are looking to save on cooking time without giving up the taste and nutrition. The introduction of ready-to-eat meal formats in the form of single-serve packs, microwaveable containers, and delivery-friendly packaging items indicates a shift in consumer preferences towards time-saving and easy-to-use innovations. As evidenced by the survey findings, a large number of customers, especially those between the ages of 20 to 40, have a preference for RTE meals at their work, in the evenings, or while traveling, and this reveals the deep involvement of these products in people's daily lives.

The study further demonstrates that the preference for taste and brand reputation is very key in the purchase of RTE products. People in Hyderabad are particularly fond of traditional and regional varieties of food. Apart from the distinct flavors, dishes like Hyderabadi biryani, kebabs, and curries are singled out as the most preferred RTE that people consume regularly. Local companies, therefore, that are committed to sharing the same flavors and ingredients with the original dish are very successful, especially when they are powered by marketing and packing operations. Besides, in this particular case, the identity of a company is displayed by its brand, and in addition, it is also a reflection of trust and consistency. Emotional connections that customers have with brands, whether they are for nostalgic, cultural, or habitual reasons, still play a significant part in fostering consumer loyalty.

FUTURE SCOPE

A few recommendations that need to be fulfilled -

• Develop products featuring popular Hyderabadi tastes (e.g., biryani, haleem, kebabs, mirchi ka salan) to connect with local consumers.

•Promote authenticity in ingredients and preparation styles.
•Introduce single-serve, microwaveable packs for working professionals and students.
•Include family-size options for group or family consumption.
•Introduce low-calorie, low-oil, high-protein, and preservative-free options.
•Highlight nutritional info clearly on packaging—especially for diet-conscious and fitness-oriented consumers.
•Collaborate with Swiggy, Zomato, Blinkit, and Dunzo for instant delivery.
•Offer discounts and loyalty programs through food delivery apps.
•Distribute through kirana stores, supermarkets, and local vending machines.
•Tailor pricing and product sizes to meet varying income groups.
•Set up in-store tastings and promotional events in popular malls and grocery chains.
•Use eye-catching displays that focus on ease, taste, and time-saving.
•Use eco-friendly packaging to attract environmentally conscious buyers.
•Highlight sustainability efforts in branding.
•Encourage consumer feedback via QR codes on packs or WhatsApp support.
•Use data to refine flavors, packaging, and marketing strategies.
• Communicate safety standards and storage instructions.
•Emphasize shelf stability and hygiene certifications (like FSSAI, ISO).

Author contributions. Use this form to specify the contribution of each author of your manuscript. A distinction is made between five types of contributions: Conceived and designed the analysis, Collected the data, Contributed data or analysis tools, Performed the analysis, Wrote the paper.

Acknowledgement. I extend my sincere thanks to Professor (Dr.) Kiran Lakshmikant Kadam (major advisor) and to my advisory committee members for giving me proper guidance throughout the course of study.
Conflict of Interest. None.

REFERENCES

Anusha, A. C. S., Tunung, R., Kavita, C., Ribka, A. and Chandrika, M. (2020). Ready-to-eat food consumption practices, food safety knowledge and relation to gender and education level of consumers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. *Food Research*, *4*(5), 1537-1544.

Contini, C., Romano, C., Scozzafava, G. and Casini, L. (2016). Food habits and the increase in ready-to-eat and easy-to-prepare products. In *Food hygiene and toxicology in ready-to-eat foods*. (pp. 3-14). Academic Press.

Goel, G. and Smigic, N. (2023). Consumer attitudes and perceptions towards chilled ready-to-eat foods: a multi-national study.

Gurce, M. Y. and Friedman, B. A. (2020). Ready-to-Eat food consumption behavior. *Juniper Publishers.com*, *8*(1), 24-36.

Gupta, G., Jaiswal, A., and Chandak, R. (2013). Consumers' preference for package attributes and willingness to buy Ready-to-Eat food. *Envision Journal of Commerce Department of ACFA*, *7*.

Glanz, K., Chung, A., Morales, K. H., Kwong, P. L., Wiebe, D., Giordano, D. P., Brensinger, C. M. and Karpyn, A. (2020). The healthy food marketing strategies study: design, baseline characteristics, and supermarket compliance. *PubMed*, *10*(6), 1266–1276.

Hecht, A. A., Perez, C. L., Polascek, M., Thorndike, A. N., Franckle, R. L. and Moran, A. J. (2020). Influence of food and beverage companies on retailer marketing strategies and consumer behavior. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(20), 7381.

Hillier-Brown, F. C., Summerbell, C. D., Moore, H. J., Routen, A., Lake, A. A., Adams, J., White, M., Araujo-Soares, V., Abraham, C., Adamson, A. J. and Brown, T. J. (2016). The impact of interventions to promote healthier ready-to-eat meals (to eat in, to take away, or to be delivered) sold by specific food outlets open to the general public: a systematic review. *Obesity Reviews*, *18*(2), 227–246.

Jain, R. and Jain, P. J. (2013). Discover the Relationship Between Consumer Behaviour and Consumers towards Ready-To-Eat Products. *International Journal of Techno Management Research*, *1*(1), 1-15.

Laguna, L., Gómez, B., Garrido, M. D., Fiszman, S., Tarrega, A. and Linares, M. B. (2020). Do consumers change their perception of liking, expected satiety, and healthiness of a product if they know it is a ready-to-eat meal? *Foods*, *9*(9), 1257.

Mandelkar, P. (2019). Intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting consumer purchase intention for ready-to-eat food in Bangkok and its vicinity.

Olsen, N. V., Sijtsema, S. J. and Hall, G. (2010). Predicting consumers' intention to consume ready-to-eat meals. The role of moral attitude. *Appetite*, *55*(3), 534-539.

Pandey, S., Bhushan, K., Kocher, G. S. and Sahota, P. P. (2024). Microbiological assessment of ready-to-eat foods and drinking water sources as a potential vehicle of bacterial pathogens in northern India. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, *196*(6), 547.

Patel, D. (2019). Impact of Brand on Consumer Behavior concerning Ready-to-Eat Food. *Available at SSRN 5028373*.

Patel, D. and Rathod, R. (2017). Ready to eat food perception, food preferences, and food choice: a theoretical discussion. *WWJMRD*, *3*(8), 198-205.

Raina, A., Pathak, D., Rana, V. S. and Bathla, G. (2019). Consumption Patterns for Ready-to-Eat Food Items in Phagwara District of Punjab (India). *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering (IJITEE)*, *8*(9), 483-486.

Rathee, R., Rajain, P. and Kuchhal, A. (2018). Ready-to-eat products: Perspective of working women. *Int. J. Manag. Technol. Eng*., *8*(7), 5985-6000.

Rani, R., Karmakar, P., Kaur, S. and Davis, C. (2024). Nutrition and Other Associated Benefits of Ready-to-Eat Foods. In *Recent Advances in Ready-to-Eat Food Technology* (pp. 162-183). CRC Press.

Saxena, Bhavya (2021). A Study on Consumer Buying Behaviour Towards Instant Food Products.

Silberbauer, A. and Schmid, M. (2017). Packaging concepts for ready-to-eat food: recent progress. *Journal of Packaging Technology and Research*, *1*, 113-126.

Thienhirun, S. and Chung, S. (2018). Consumer attitudes and preferences toward cross-cultural ready-to-eat (RTE) food. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, *24*(1), 56-79.

Upadhyaya, S., Srivastava, P., Chandra, R. and Arora, N. (2017). Microbiological assessment and hazardous effects of ready-to-eat foods presented for sale in Lucknow City, India. *African Journal of Food Science*, *11*(10), 346-352.

How to cite this article: Y. Purnachandu, Kiran Lakshmikant Kadam and Vaijanatha (2025). Consumer Behavior Towards Ready-to-Eat Food Products in Hyderabad. *Biological Forum, 17*(7): 60-72.