

A Study on Preference of Convenience Foods by Working Segments of the Information Technology Companies, Pune City

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Abstract

Pune city was known as a pensioner's paradise as well as Oxford of the East. It was also known as the hub of automobile industry of India. In the last couple of decades Pune city has witnessed a boom in the information technology industry and it has been growing ever since at a steady pace. At the same time India was also witnessing a tremendous amount of change happening in the convenience food industry. A lot of players were joining into this particular industry and were spreading wings throughout the country. These companies were using every possible media to reach out to people to accept their particular convenience food. Today the supermarkets and hypermarkets are filled with such convenience foods enticing customers towards it. The professionals of IT industry who have odd work timings find themselves in a fix when it comes to cooking food at home. They are look in lookout for ways that can help them keep the kitchen mess away, and at this juncture they are choosing convenience foods as an option wherein they feel that it will help them in varied ways to plug the gap of home cooking food at home.

Keywords: Convenience Food, Processed Food, Information Technology Industry

INTRODUCTION

The city of Pune has seen a tremendous growth of varied industries in the past couple of decades. There has been a steady growth in all the sectors of the industry's most of which were the manufacturing sector, automobile sector, etc. The presence of Information Technology and it Enabled Services (IT-ES) made their presence felt in the early 2000's. The IT industry of Pune brought in the

revolution that has been one of the tectonic changes of Pune city in the last two decades. The city has more than 800 IT companies which provide employment to more than 5 lakh people. The majority of the IT companies in Pune deal in service sector with banking and financial technology reining supreme.

Mr Pramod Chaudhari, President of Maratha Chamber of Commerce Agriculture and Industries (MCCIA), Pune said that one of the most interesting changes that Pune has seen over the last few years was the emergence of digitization of industries. He also said that it has been around for quite some time and now the other players are adapting to it, continuing its uses and giving rise to industry 4.0 the next generation of industrial growth. (*The Indian express, 10th July 2017*)

Erstwhile known as retiree's paradise and also Oxford of East, Pune city was the choice of youth for higher education and jobs alike. It had dominant educational center's like Pune University, Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Fergusson College, Deccan College and National Defence Academy (NDA). It was also known to be automobile hub of India. (*Outlook Money, Monday 24th October 2017*).

The huge number of IT industry people that are present in Pune also sees the increase in demand for convenience foods. Due to their varied work timings, lifestyle, etc. their choices of food are also being varied. People who come home late from work find it difficult to prepare food right from scratch rather they prefer to get something that is quick and easy and need not be wasted time upon. There has been a splurge in the number of supermarkets and hypermarkets opening in and around Pune city. So, the preference of going to such places and picking up convenience food has become simple and easy.

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The trend of purchasing convenience food has become very popular with the kind of products which are available in a lot of variety, range and affordable prices. The advertising media also pushes for products in the supermarket and hypermarket where in people get easily attracted to such products. The IT working professionals also feel that their weekends have to be freer since they have had a very hectic schedule during the weekdays. They do not want to waste their time in the cooking processes rather have a quick bite and enjoy their free time.

DEFINITION

Convenience food: A food, typically a complete meal that has been pre-prepared commercially and so requires minimum further preparation by the consumer. (Source: www.google.com)

Processed food: Alteration brought about in foods by using certain methods such as freezing, baking, drying etc. during preparation for safety and convenience purposes.

Packaged food: A package provides protection, tampering resistance, and special physical, chemical, or biological needs. It may bear a nutrition facts label and other information about food being offered for sale. Basically Food packaging is packaging for food.

(Source: www.wikipedia.org)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Alan Warde (1999) “*Convenience food: space and timing*”, state that people tend to consume processed food due to time constraints through their day to day life. The modern form of convenience foods has drawn people towards it due to an array of factors. This is a response due to movement of people and finding themselves at the wrong place and forming a compulsion to incline towards such foods. It is also said that shortage of time also leads to such consumption.

Anita Goyal and N P Singh (2007) in their research paper “*Consumer perception about fast food in India: an exploratory study*” emphasize that the younger generation today are very inquisitive and have a tendency to like to go out to fast food outlets just to enjoy the new taste of foods, but they always prefer home food to be on their top list. They have a better judgment of the food that they

consume in their home has better values than the ones had outside.

Bernard Cova, Stefano Pace, (2006) “*Brand community of convenience products: new forms of customer empowerment – the case “my Nutella the Community”*”, opined that in the modern era people have access to a lot of details of convenient products and this gives rise to a new generation of customers. It is more on self-exhibition on front of other consumers and rituals linked to the brand. The company should not disturb these personal expressions, reducing its control over the brand’s meanings.

Dixon, Hinde, and Banwell, (2006) “*Obesity, convenience and “phood”*” have stated that Australia has seen an increase in the obesity of people owing to the consumption of convenience foods over a period of time. Consumers are today being led to willingly try out various food solutions by the functional food sector. There is also a growing concern of the nutritional contents of such foods

Gray, Armstrong, and Farley, (2003) “*Opportunities and constraints in the functional food market*” review that peoples choices of food are constantly changing and this has also been affecting the functional food market. The demand for such foods has risen which has added a stress on development market which is still not potentially grown. There are various research activities that have been carried out previously in this field and with the current technology being adapted may lead to products that will satisfy the consumers through convenience, health and sensory pleasure.

Jabir A, Sanjeev K and Janakiraman M (2010) in their study “*Buying behaviour of consumers for food products in an emerging economy*” emphasize the consumers today have become very challenging and sensitive and have the knowledge of what they are looking for in their food which may include factors like price, quantity, quality, variety, packaging etc. Consumers also look out for added factors which may include additional services, attraction and affordability.

Janaina Costa, Rafael Claro, Ana Paula, Renata Levy (2013) “*Food Purchasing Sites: Repercussions For Healthy Eating*” have stressed that there has been a surge in convenience food market where consumers buy products without completely understanding its contents especially the ones with less nutrition. Data from Instituto Brasileiro

de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE - Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) Household Budget Survey (HBS) in 2002-03 revealed that many sites promote food purchase online and this has been a major contributor to the people's diet. All the sites were mentioned were grouped into categories, according to the nature of availability. Super and Hyper markets accounted for almost half (49%) the acquisitions and were the main source of maximum food groups. Street markets and grocery accounted for nearly 40% of this market. It was suggested that healthy eating habits needs a lot of promotion.

Joglekar A and Kundle S (2013) "*Consumer awareness about convenience food among working and non-working women*" in their research state that modern technology has brought in modern techniques. This has also led to companies doing research on various new additives that can be used in food for better preservation. Their research has also enabled them to improvise their processing and preserving techniques. These foods have reduced the work on cooking of food traditionally. But it does not save us from consuming additional sodium, hydrogenated fats and high preservatives.

Kara, Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu (1997) state in their study "*Marketing strategies for fast-food restaurants: a customer view*" that; People have started to venture out of their homes more often as compared to a few years back. They do not want to cook food at their homes but prefer to eat food at a variety of places. They have also sighted this trend will move upwards resulting greater growth opportunities for fast food markets.

Ritu Anand (2011), "*A study of determinants impacting consumers food choice with reference to the fast food consumption in India*", indicates that people's choice of fast food depends on various factors which may include certain ones like income level, friend circle, taste likes and dislikes etc. The younger generations are especially leaning towards such foods. Food companies in India need to look into the pros and cons of their products on consumers' health. Manufacturing a convenience food that is attractive and up selling should not be their aim or motto.

Sunder S and Kiran S (2016) in their research paper "*A Study on the Benefits of Convenience Foods to Non-Working Women*" have emphasized that the working women are not far behind in checking out what's new in

the convenience food market. In fact they surely try to give a try to some products a a change in their daily routine. They would not prefer to use convenience products as a regular food in their household. They surely stress on fresh homemade food.

Sunder S and Kiran S (2015) in their research paper "*A Study on the Benefits of Convenience Foods to Working Women*" feel that the working women play various roles in their life and tend to find ways to reduce their work time in the kitchen. Very often they would like to put their hands on convenience foods as they are time and energy saving. They also realize what kind of convenience products they should be choosing for their family.

Tiwari P and Verma H (2008) in their research paper "*Consumer Perception about Fast Food in India: An Empirical Study of Dehradun City*" in their research have mentioned that convenience food industry is considered to be growing at a rapid pace throughout the world.

It continues to expand in more and more countries. However the developed countries are seeing a radical change in the eating pattern of the consumers and hence resulting in the market for fast food. The cost factor of these foods also plays an important part in consumer getting attracted to such foods.

According to the article featured on www.fnbnews.com, 11th October 2011 Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) mentions that in India people from the metro cities are tending to prefer instant foods and this count stands at a high of 86%. There is a steep rise in dual income level and standards of living. This has brought about a shift in food habits also and influence of western culture too.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify various categories of convenience food.
- To study the factors influencing the use of convenience foods by working segments of IT industry.
- To study the category of convenience foods preferred by working segments of IT industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection: The following techniques were used for primary data collection for the research:

Personal interviews: Personal interview was conducted with working segments of Information Technology industry in Pune city.

Questionnaire: A soft format of questionnaire was prepared in Google forms which the respondents filled up using the link provided.

Sample Technique: This study was conducted on more than 100 samples of information technology companies of which included male and female respondents between the age group of 25 to 50 years. These samples were working at various information technology companies of Pune city.

Secondary data was collected from other sources which include journals, books and internet.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Today's supermarkets and hypermarkets are packed with convenience food which is available in a range of products with a variety of packaging sizes and forms. The convenience food market of India has seen a manifold growth in the recent years. Dynamic marketing and advertisements are being done by convenience food manufacturers so that people are attracted towards their products. IT professionals are aware of what they are trying to purchase for their household use. They are also aware of various brands that are available with the choices within. They look for products that they have consumed previously since they believe that the quality would remain the same. The following list indicates the various categories of convenience foods that one would generally find in supermarkets or hypermarkets:

- Frozen – Non vegetarian products (chicken, fish, etc).
- Frozen – Vegetarian products (paneer, vegetables, etc).
- Frozen – Snack products (pizza, samosa, French fries, smily, etc).
- Ready to serve products – (dal makhni, paneer makhni, palak paneer, etc).
- Fresh cut vegetables – (carrot, cauliflower, etc.).
- Pre-processed products – (soups, gravy mixes, rawa idli mix, etc).
- Ready to eat snacks – (chips, farsan, sev, biscuits, etc).

- Canned products – (coconut milk, fruits, milkmaid, etc).
- Bottled products – (jams, sauces, syrups, mayonnaise, spreads, etc).
- Refrigerated products – (tofu, paneer, etc).

The above mentioned list was utilized into the questionnaire to obtain the preferences of working woman on their choice of categories during their purchases.

Most of the people working in the IT industry find that they are very stressed with the kind of work they do and the time they need to spend on the job and comparatively less time that they spend at home full stop this does not allow them to cook their own meal every day and hence have to rely on other sources for satisfying their hunger. Here the convenience foods step in and these are the type of audiences towards it. So, a lot of factors go into deciding whether to use a convenience food or not and also to decide what type of convenience food should be consumed or not. These IT professionals do agree that convenience food helps them save a lot of time in pre-preparation steps like cutting of food, grinding, mixing etc. Convenience food also helps them over a lot of mess that happens around while cooking food like cutting, waste that remains, washing of vegetables or the cereals and pulses, cleaning before and after cooking etc. They also find use of convenience food to be easy since they do not have to do much of work on it. Convenience food has eased off a lot of complicated processes that these IT professionals generally have to follow while cooking regular food. They also do not find the time to go to the market and purchase raw material for cooking food hence they rely on convenient products which they can stack up in their kitchen shelves and use it up as and when necessary. They do not have to bother if the product is going to spoil within a day or two since the shelf life of convenience food is pretty good. IT professionals feel that they are able to explore a variety of preparations by using convenience food which they might not be able to do otherwise. Some also mentioned that they have developed a liking for certain products as the taste, texture and color are found to be consistent over the years. Many IT professionals have also spoken of not knowing the recipe of preparing certain dishes hence they rely on convenience products to satisfy such kind of requirement.

The IT professionals prefer to buy convenience foods that are ready to serve which means they just need to heat up

and serve the products. This means that they require only a few minutes to get their food ready to eat which ends of saving a lot of time. They also tend to prefer bottled and ready to eat snacks food as compared to certain preprocess foods canned foods. Most IT professionals do not prefer buying of frozen non vegetarian products.

It has been seen and observed that around 71% of the respondents spend anywhere between 10% to 25% of the income on convenience foods whereas 25% of them spend less than 10% of the income on convenience food full stop a very few percentage of people believe in spending more than 25% of the income on convenience food full stop this goes to show that people are tilting towards purchase of convenience food today full stop the vast industry of convenience food in India is ensuring the supply of such food does not stop full stop.

FINDINGS

Analysis of data is done from results obtained from more than 100 IT working professionals from various companies of Pune city. The result obtained from this is represented graphically.

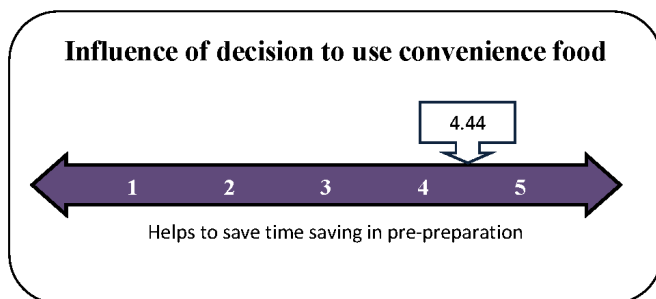


Fig. 1

Fig. 1 shows that these professionals find convenience food helping them save time in the pre-preparation process of cooking like cutting, chopping, grinding etc.

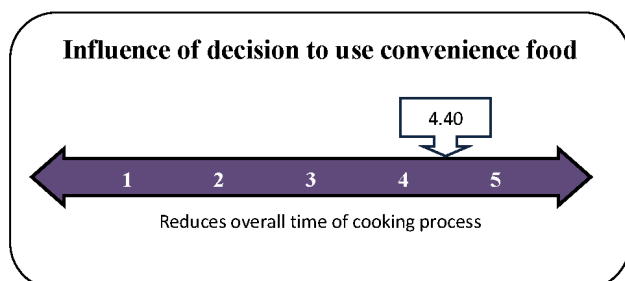


Fig. 2

Fig. 2 states that they prefer to buy convenience food as it helps them save a lot of time than their routine cooking process

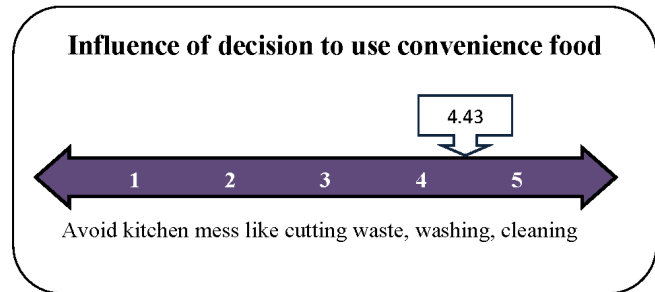


Fig. 3

Fig. 3 shows that they prefer to buy convenience food as a lot of kitchen mess that occurs before and during the cooking process is avoided or rather eradicated.

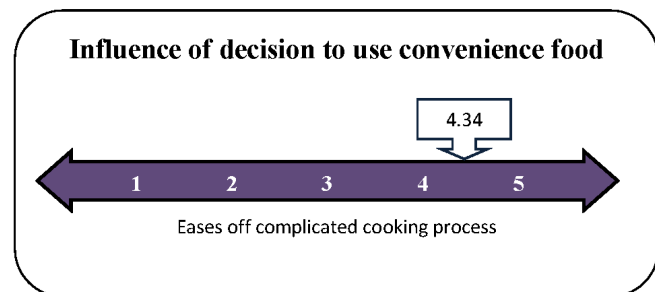


Fig. 4

Fig. 4 states that most of these working professionals do not indulge in complicated cooking process and hence buy convenience to avoid such situation

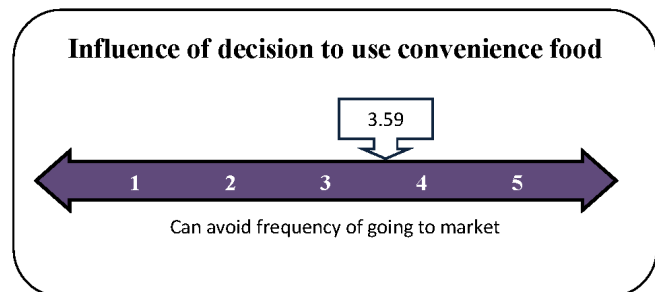


Fig. 5

Fig. 5 show that the preference to buy convenience also reduces their visits to the local markets as it consumes a lot of time.

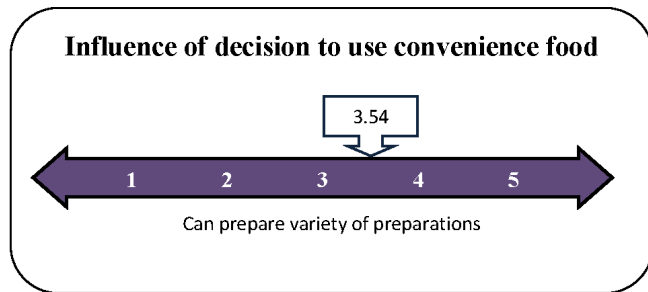


Fig. 6

Fig. 6 illustrates that by buying convenience foods they are able to prepare a variety of products without actually knowing the recipe of he same.

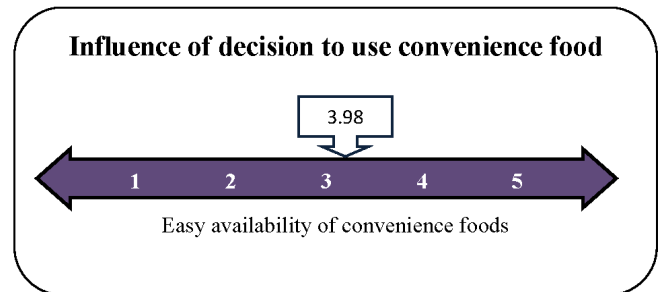


Fig. 9

Fig. 9 show that most of the IT working professionals feel that convenience food is easily available in the markets today hence they would prefer to buy them.

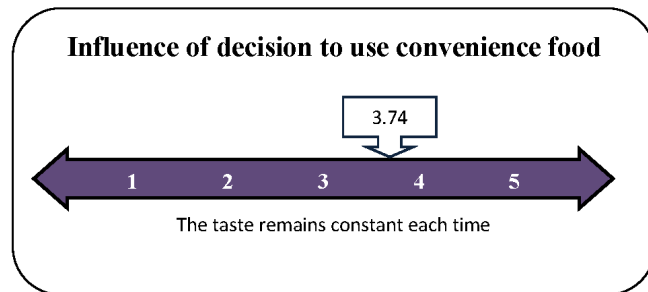


Fig. 7

Fig. 7 explains that the preference to buy convenience also matters where taste is constant of the product each time consumed.

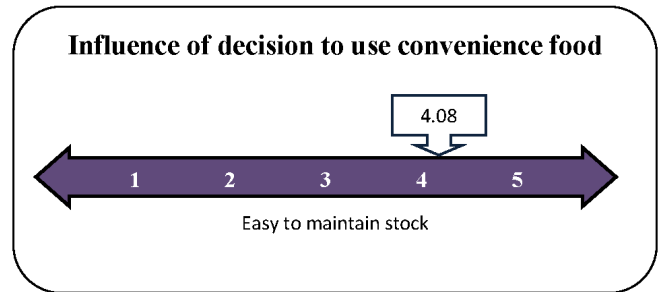


Fig. 10

Fig. 10 explains that IT professionals find it easy to maintain a stock of such convenience products that would come in handy during certain situations in their homes and also when they have certain guests dropping in un-announced

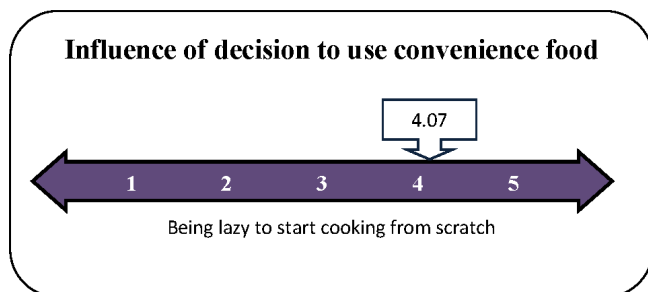


Fig. 8

Fig. 8 gives us an idea that most IT professionals feel that they are lazy to start the cooking process from start and hence prefer to buy convenience food products.

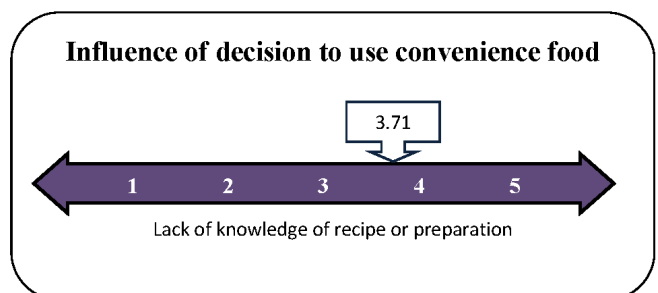


Fig. 11

Fig. 11 gives us an idea that most IT professionals lack idea or knowledge on the recipe of their like preparations and hence would look up to convenience products that would be easy to handle

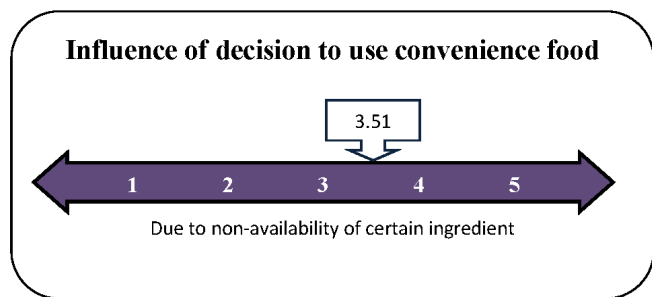


Fig. 12

Fig. 12 shows that many IT professionals feel that they do not find certain type of raw material in their local market and hence look for an alternative in convenience food products.

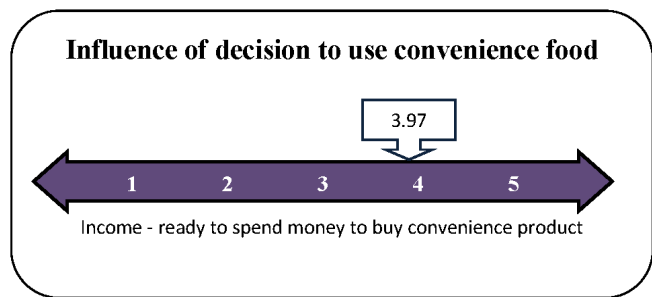


Fig. 13

Fig. 13 gives us an idea that most IT professionals are willing to spend money on purchase of convenience food which the food suitable as per their convenience.

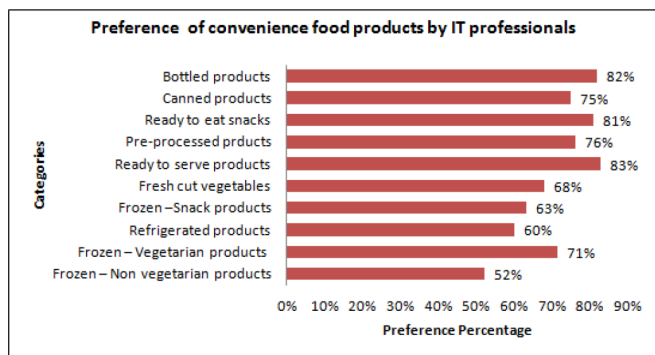


Fig. 14

Fig. 14 indicates that IT professionals prefer to buy bottled products, ready to eat snacks and ready to serve products the most followed by canned products, pre-processed products and frozen vegetarian products. Frozen non-vegetarian products choice is less.

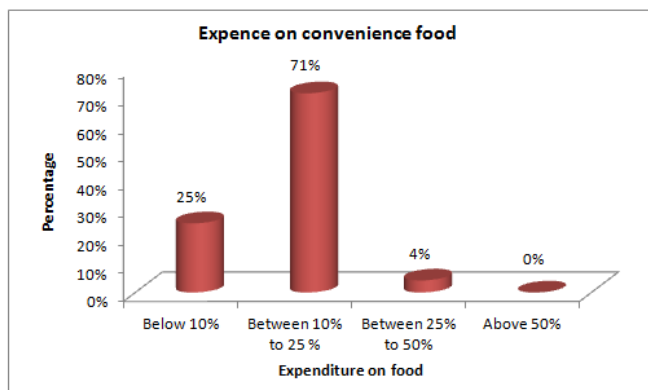


Fig. 15

Fig. 15 illustrates that 71% IT professionals are spending anywhere between 10% to 15% of their income on purchase of convenience foods and 25% of IT professionals spend below 10% of their income where as 4% IT professionals spend between 25% to 50% of their income on purchase of convenience foods.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTION

1. It is suggested that while one purchases convenience food one must also keep in mind to go through the packaging label of the manufacturer where details of nutrition and contents are mentioned. They should also gauge these facts before procurement.
2. The consumer should also realize that they need to store the foods as it is mentioned by the manufacturer on the packaging material. By altering these conditions the food might get affected for its quality and can affect the health of the consumer itself.
3. The outcome of this study is based on the responses from samples of information technology companies in Pune city. The outcomes might vary with respondents of other fields within Pune city or other cities based on various factors thereby giving scope for further research.

CONCLUSION

Pune city has seen a boom in information technology companies in the last couple of decades. Along with this boom we also saw the requirement of convenience food increasing in the market. The convenience food industry

also has seen a lot of technological advances which is bringing a lot of variety and taste into packaged food industry.

The working professionals of the IT industry have varied work timings and hence find themselves in a tight position to prepare food right from scratch after they return home. Hence they look for easy and quicker methods and that's where they prefer convenience food. Convenience food helps them to save a lot of time in the regular cooking and also helps them to bring variety in their day-to-day food. These professionals are also aware of what kind of convenience foods they are purchasing from the market and are also aware of the brands and varieties that they choose. We do find a slight inclination of IT working professionals towards convenience foods today. They are ready to spend money on convenience food to ease out operations in their homes.

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