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Ready to Cook/Eat Food and its Adaptability in Kitchens; Study of Perspectives and Concerns

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Abstract: ***Rise of Double Income families, aspiration to get elevated in careers across the genders, challenges of modern jobs, Time constraints, Diminishing Work Life Balance, lack of availability of affordable and quality service help like (maids, cooks etc.) are some of the major factors, inducing aspiring working population particularly in metro cities of India to adapt to the modern instant food alternatives. There is intense competition in Instant Food like Ready to Cook / Ready To Eat marketers. This promising area of convenient food catering is getting turbulent with introduction of new techniques and innovations. In the series of RTC and RTE, the new offerings by some of the competitors is H.T.E ie Heat To Eat Food alternatives. H.T.E is over simplification of Ready To Eat varieties. As novel and Modern ready to eat food techniques are at nascent stage, such option options seeking target audience is sceptical as well as curious about it. Modern Life Style is very complicated and energy sucking, do desperately need such convenience offerings for Mundane routines. Food is such domain, that is very essential but investing chunk of time in it on day to day basis and that to from Breakfast, Lunch, Snacks, Dinner intervals is considered as CRIMINAL WASTAGE of opportune time, in today's ambitious career oriented age. Scepticism about taste, quality, content, preservatives etc is obvious but the Energy Saving Super Convenience and notion of Quality Time at disposal is also irresistible. This EXPLORATORY RESEARCH STUDY throws light on Perspectives and Concerns of representative working/employed members/ families pertaining to adaptability of Ready To Cook and Ready To Eat food in the market.***
Keywords: H.T.E: Heat To Eat Food, Ready To Eat food, Ready To Cook Food, Instant Food, Super Convenient Food

I. INTRODUCTION

Food is life. One of the most important determinant of Quality of Human Life is Food Consumption standards. Nutritious, hygienic and tasty food is dream of every family. The working/employed members of the families struggle day in and day out to earn decent livelihood and spend it on fulfilling fundamental needs. 'रोटी, कपडा और मकान' are eternal basic needs of human life. Even amongst "रोटी, कपडा और मकान", utmost priority is for रोटी ie FOOD. So interesting and appealing the appetite for food to everyone, becomes boring, mundane, monotonous if one engages in cooking day to day. Conventionally, kitchen is den and domain of the women since ages. In Indian patriarchal society, role of women, house makers are largely revolves around kitchen preparations and management. In olden times, ladies of the house used to engage themselves in preparing food and serving it according to whims and moods of the family members. They used to do it untiringly and assuming it as fundamental duties. But in those olden days, ladies of the families were strictly remain bound to the homes only. They were never motivated or in many cases not allowed to go out for earning activities. Due to such restrictions, women used to confine themselves into kitchens. This has resulted into development of rich food culture originating from Indian kitchens.

As time progressed, things have changed drastically. Indian Women, who were confined to kitchens only, started coming out, taking higher education, climbing the ladders of success. In metro cities, the pace of change was rapid due to urbane life compulsions. The revolution began in metro cities, slowly trickled down to tier 2 cities and took place. Women taking education and engaging in jobs/employment has become common thing. Moreover, such 'Breaking Glass Ceiling' movements further propelled ambitious race in educated women to gain power and stake in social hierarchy. Gender Neutrality and Gender Equality have become buzz words in progressive societies. Though, this role changing revolution helped women to move out of homes and become aspirant to claim stake in the society on the basis of professional skills, educational merits and so on, did not decoupled them from Kitchen or sense of Fundamental Duties inherited as legacy. So even today, in India, Kitchen is dominion of ladies only.

But the times have been tasting for Multi Tasking women. As the modern families are reducing in size; popularly known as Nuclear Families, conventional support system is diminishing. And thereby, women face lots of extreme challenges in meeting the expectations of family members in areas of Food Preparation as per the varied mood and desires of different family members and keeping the professional esteems.

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Markets have recognised the problems of such emerging nuclear/micro families wherein both the counterparts are engaged in employment/occupational activities and simultaneously struggling to manage daily routine. In daily routine, the most of the precious time of lady of the house gets consumed in kitchen, with very little or no help from spouse.

In recent past, many marketers have tried to give solution to save the precious time of families and specially ladies of the house by offering Semi or fully Processed food. Such food items, popularly known as Ready To Cook and Ready To Eat foods, have come as saviour to families to meet the two fold expectations. These foods come in different varieties and covering all the food intervals like Breakfast, Working Lunch, Snacks and wholesome dinner. Moreover, to win the competition, many brands and local marketers have introduced the authentic regional taste as USP in their offerings.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This Research initiative is to gather FIRST HAND information/inputs from the actual users of Ready To Cook and Ready To Eat Food Products, there by amounts to Exploratory Initiative. Researcher has visited web sites of the popular brands like MTR Foods, ChitaleBandhu Mithaiwale, Nestle, Godrej, ITC etc to get the information on Product offerings. The same information is used to frame Open Ended Interview Questionnaire for respondents to response.

III.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is EXPLORATORY Study and open ended Questionnaire Based Interviews were held of the respondents (40 in Numbers) consisting of 30 employed Females and 10 employed Males. They were contacted online/off line and provided Open Ended Questions. Some of them had detailed conversation with the Research Scholar in addition to the answers replied through Google Form/ Email attachment. All the answers and views expressed by the respondents to the open ended questions were analysed and compiled data/ pointers are framed to accommodate the reflections of common view points, concerns and expectations as well as suggestions. The key words are then encapsulated as Pointers and accordingly analysis is prepared. The following table summarises the Ready To Cook and Ready To Eat offerings by various **brands** and local marketers, suitable to food interval needs.

Table I: (Information compiled from Websites of the Brands mentioned below)

Sr.NO	Brands	Popular Ready To Cook Products in Demand	Popular Ready To Eat Products in Demand
1	MTR	Uttappa, Dosa, Idli, Sambar, Chutney	Cup Poha, Cup Upma, Sambar Rice, Chana Masala, Dal Makhani, Veg Pulav, Rajma Masala, Pongal, Pav Bhaji and other wide range…
2	Chitale	Dhokla(Khaman), Medu Wada, Idli, Gulab Jamun	-
3	ITC		Murgh Methi, Paneer Malai, Yellow Dal Tadka, Veg Pulav, Mughalai Paneer, Pongal, Pav Bhaji, Aloo Mutter and wide range.
4	Godrej	Yummiez Parathas, Tikkas, Chiken nuggets	
5	Nestle	Maggi	
6	Kellogs	Oats, Upma	
	FEW LOCAL & relatively Nascent Brands/ Marketers in MUMBAI and Maharashtra/Gujrath		
1	Talod	Khaman, Handwa, Khichu	
2	Ruchir	Upma, Dhokala, Idli and range	Pav Bhaji, Biryanis, Dal, Grevies
3	Ruchi Vividha	Upma, Dhokla, Misal, Khir, Idli	Pineapple Shira, Upma
4	Gokhale Foods	Dhokla, Idli	
	Source: Web Sites, Product Pamphlets, Brochures, Packet Info		

The Following table summarises product varieties and their convenience at different hunger intervals

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Table: II

Sr.No	Food Intervals	Ready To Cook (Semi Processed)	Ready To Eat/Make (Almost Processed)
1	Breakfast	Dhokla, Khaman, Idli, Dosa, Appe, Wada, Mung Bhaji, Thalipeeth, Sabudana Khichadi etc	Poha, Upma, Shira, Khir
2	Snacks	Misal, PavBhaji,	Cuppa Misal, RTE(Semi Processed) Pav Bhaji,
3	Meal, Lunch	Rice Varieties like Biryani, Pulav, Bisibilli (anna Huna Rice), Chinese etc. Gravies of different sorts like Punjabi Gravies with dried ingredients Soups, Rasam powder	Biryanis, Curries, Sambar Rice, Masale Bhaat etc.
4	Deserts	Gulab Jamun, Payasam, Khir	Pineapple Shira, Mung Daal Shira

The following Table summarises, the procedural details of Ready To Cook and Ready To Eat/Make Product offerings. It also reveals, the differences between RTC and RTE offerings.

Table: III

Procedures of Preparation	Ready To Cook	Ready To Eat/ Make
## Average Time to prepare and serve the Dish at dining Table	20 to 25 Minutes	10 to 15 Minutes
$$ Efforts involved in Kitchen and processing activities.	Moderate Efforts and processing activities: Cutting, Chopping, Giving Tadaka, Garnishing, Steaming,Boiling etc..	Minimal Efforts and residual activities: Steaming, Boiling, Garnishing, Dressing, adding some elements etc.

The following Table summaries the limitations and constraints faced by consumers in using the RTC/RTE products. [Source: Interview/Discussion of Research Author with consumers(Open Ended Questions), who frequently use the RTC/RTE products. This may be Construed as FINDINGS of limitations or Constraints

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Table : IV

Sr.No	Pointers Limitations/Constraint/Issues	Ready To Cook	Ready To Eat/Make
1	How To Cook or Prepare? Information/Procedure mentioned in the packs.	Procedure mentioned is found to be inadequate as steps are many and packaging size limits elaborate explanation. Font size is also small and many a times it becomes illegible. Utensils shown in pictures are different than what is used in an average Indian Homes.	Appears to be legible as steps involved are few.
2	Measurements mentioned are not candid or clear.	Measurement in Litres/Mili litres are difficult to follow by most home makers.	Proportion mentioned is difficult to match up as it is too scientific or formal.
3	Preservatives and artificial content	Many a times, preservatives/ colors and artificial content spoils the taste.	Found to be too oily. Mild in taste. Preservatives out do the homely taste, being claimed but not found in most of the cases. Appears to be compromised food.
4	Appliance specific procedures are missing like How to Prepare In MICRO OVEN/AIR Friers/ Electric Gas is usually not mentioned.	As procedure differs significantly on different appliances, Trial and Error diminishes the interest of users.	Procedure is mostly limited to Boiling or heating, less complex and therefore more suitable.
5	Claims of Instant Preparations or Quick Serve food	Such Claims as 'INSTANT or Quick' do not Hold True as RTC to make it on table dish an average time required is 20 to 25 Minutes	Not very instant as minimal procedure is still left and thereby it is EASY FOOD than Quick. Average Time to get it on Table served is 10 to 15 Minutes.
6	Price	Appears to be affordable compare to Hotel Food or any other	Felt to be costly and in some offering as inflated.
7	Servings	Found to be customised and appropriate. Most brands are offering it in varied packs.	Relatively rigid in size offerings.
8	Health and Hygiene	Mostly the products are in Dry Format and thereby Health and Hygiene concerns are less.	Health and Hygiene concerns are high as use of Oil, Ghee and Preservatives are much more.
9	Availability	Big Brands are mostly available at various places. But local brands are not very constant in Supply Chain.	Few popular Brands are in this space. Local Brands do not sustain in this segment.
10	Shelf Life	Satisfactory and no concerns	Being laden with oil or ghee, have concerns and scepticism.

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IV. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Respondents have major concerns in Disclosure of Information pertaining to PROCEDURE to Prepare. It is opined by most of the respondents that Procedure is not mentioned clearly and thereby experience of Ready To Cook and Ready To Eat preparation is not pleasant. This issue must be addressed by the Marketers genuinely. Marketers may provide QR Code Based YOU TUBE (Do it Yourself step by step video) in addition to clear and candid instructions on packets.

B. Measurements/Proportion instructions should be in two forms ie In unit precision format(Litre/Mililitre) as well as localised terms like one half of VAATI (Bowl), Half of Tea Spoon etc.

C. Marketers may put in all efforts to maintain the Preservatives and Artificial Content at minimum level. As people now have become more health conscious.

D. Generic instructions assuming LPG Gas Burner as mainstream appliance is essential but at the same time appropriate content must be created and uploaded either on web site or You tube channels pertaining to modern equipment like Electric Plate, Micro Ovens, Air Friers etc.

E. This foods may be promoted as Convenient Food or Fast Service foods than Instant or Quick. As it sounds more exaggerated to the respondents.

F. Price of Ready To Eat Food products is restrictive to the many interested prospects. Marketers must try to provide attention to this concern, if they want to expand in RTE segment, which is more appealing than RTC.

G. Health and Hygiene is most concerned domain. Marketers must try to make evident the efforts they are taking in improving health and hygiene standards of the RTC/RTE food. Promising evidences must be released in literature or video form to the public at large to douse the concerns.

H. Constant availability is Supply Chain Challenge for Local Marketers. Local marketers should take all efforts to maintain constant supply of their popular products at different sites.

I. Surprisingly, majority of the respondents expected marketers to maintain the Shelf Life moderate than extended. The logic they gave is to reduce the Preservatives and Chemical Contents.

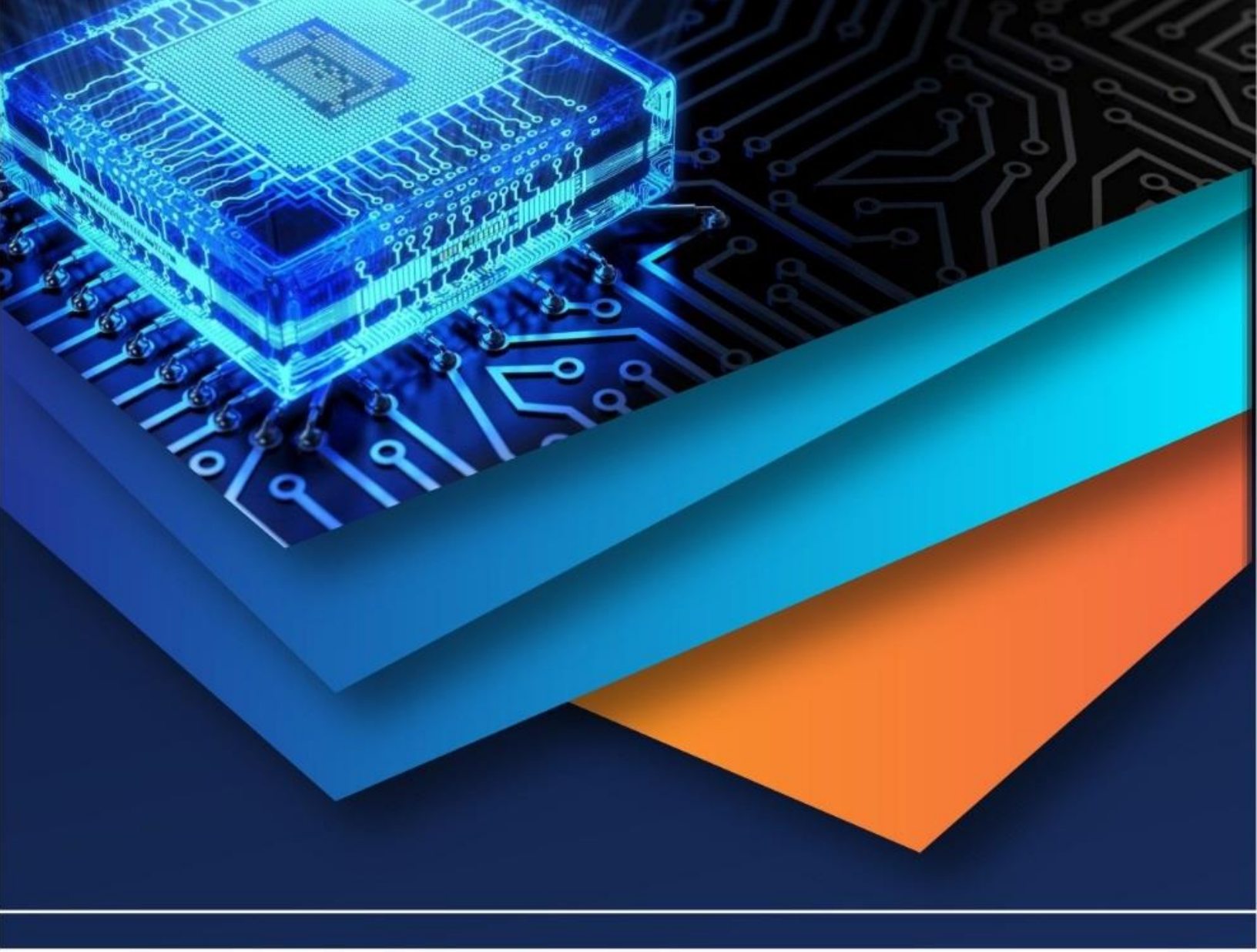
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