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Original Research

Consumer Preferences and Marketing of Ready-To-Eat Meat Products in Thrissur City of Kerala

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Abstract

A study was carried out in Thrissur city of Kerala state to analyse the market potential and consumers preferred attributes towards ready-to-eat meat products, so as to formulate an effective marketing mix. A well-structured questionnaire consisting of 21 questions was applied among 112 randomly selected respondents and their responses were recorded. The study on consumer preferences was based on 17 product attributes and 12 brand attributes. The significant product attribute and brand attributes were found to be almost similar. A correlation study was performed to elucidate the relationship between the consumption of meat and meat products and the respondent's attributes such as age, gender, income and education. A functional analysis disclosed a statistically significant relationship between the consumption of meat and meat products and the respondent's age, gender, income and education. The analysis on the perception of respondents about ready-to- eat meat products revealed huge market potential owing to rising income and changing lifestyle. But effective market permeation has to be achieved through appropriate marketing mix of products and brand attributes. Consumer awareness and sales promotion through mass media has to be taken up on a large scale to carve a niche for ready-to-eat meat products among the consumers.

Keywords: Brand Attributes, Market Mix, Meat and Meat Products, Ready-to-eat Meat Products

Introduction

The meat production industry in India is mostly in the hands of unorganized sector. With the rapid urbanisation, higher income levels and changing lifestyles of the people, the demand for the scientifically produced and hygienically packed meat and meat products are expanding rapidly. Today, there is increasing demand for the Indian meat and meat products in the domestic and other markets, particularly in the Gulf, West Asia and our neighboring countries.

India is at present the fourth largest poultry producer in terms of volume. It is estimated that during 2019, about 3.8 million tones of poultry meat was consumed in the country, which was valued at about Rs.85, 000 crores (Jaganmohan, 2020). According to Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), the export of buffalo meat increased from 483478 MT (Rs. 3549.70 crore) in 2009-10 to 1152547.32 MT (Rs. 22668.47 crores) in 2019-20. The export of sheep/goat meat increased from 8908 MT (Rs.134.09 crore) in 2009-10 to 14128.84 MT (Rs. 646.69 crores) in 2019-20. The processed meat export increased from 1245 MT (Rs.7.63 crore) in 2009-10 to 439.60MT (Rs.14.72 crores) in 2019-20 and the export of poultry products increased from 135524.6 MT (Rs. 401.08 crore) in 2009-10 to 350817.79MT (Rs. 574.58 crores) in 2019-20 (DGCIS, 2021).

Among the states in India, Kerala is the most ideally suited one for the development of meat sector. Over 95 per cent of Keralites are non-vegetarians, having no taboos or sentiments regarding the type of meat they eat. The high literacy rate, improved socio-economic status and increased awareness about the nutritional requirement for healthy living are some of the reasons for increased consumptions of meat and meat products in Kerala. The per capita consumption of meat was the highest in Kerala, compared to other states in India.

Ready-to-eat products are value added processed meat products which are cooked, packed and preserved in such a manner that the consumer can readily eat it without cooking. But they have a relatively short shelf life. E.g., readymade cutlets, sausages, salamis, nuggets, etc., except retort packed meat preparations. These processed and packed meat products are a welcome change for consumers, from the unhygienic raw meat market. There is a growing demand for such products in the wake of rising socio-economic status and purchasing power of the society. There is a huge market potential for these items especially in the urban areas. New meat processing enterprises are emerging in this sector.

Taking into consideration of the huge investments needed for the establishment of processing plants and the perishability of the products, these products cannot be launched and marketed without precise market analysis. In this context, the present study was carried out to analyse the consumer awareness and their preferences and the market potential of the emerging ready-to-eat meat products in and around Thrissur city.

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out, by using the questionnaire method of data collection, among 112 respondents in Thrissur City, having a homogenous matrix of various religious groups. A well-structured questionnaire consisting of 21 questions was distributed among the respondents. Data pertaining to personal attributes of the respondents such as occupation, income, age, educational qualification and product attributes such as perception about branded products, packing, product appearance, shelf life, cost, satisfied/unsatisfied attributes and expectations were collected. In the first phase, 61 households and in the second phase 51 households were selected randomly in and around Thrissur city. Garett's ranking technique (Garret, 2005) was adopted to analyse the factors responsible for preference of the brand among consumers and desired features of an ideal products. The respondents were asked to rank the given factors/features. The order of merit by the respondents was converted into ranks by using the following formula-

$$Percent\ Position = \frac{100\ (Rij - 0.5)}{Nj}$$

Where, Rij = Rank given for the i^{th} factor by the j^{th} individual; Nj= Number of factors ranked by the j^{th} individual.

Functional analysis was carried out to trace the relationship between the (consumption of processed meat products) dependent variable and a set of specified independent variables influencing it (age, gender, education, income and food habits). A linear multiple regression analysis was used for the study with the model Y = f (X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, U).

Results and Discussion

Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

Age

Out of the 112 respondents, 10.71 per cent were in the age group of 15-25, 22.32 per cent in the age group of 25-35, 29.46 per cent in the age group of 35-45, 27.67 per cent in the age group of 45-55, while 9.82 per cent were in the age group of 55-65. More than 60 per cent were below 45 years of age. Functional analysis of the relationship between age group and monthly house hold consumption of meat and meat products showed a negative correlation (correlation coefficient = 0.08866). This finding was in agreement with Philip and Keller (2007) and Samsinar *et al.* (2008).

Gender

Among the respondents 53.57 per cent were male while 46.42 per cent were female. Functional analysis of the relationship between gender and monthly consumption of meat and meat products revealed a positive correlation. (Correlation coefficient = 0.04469). Similar result was also reported by Alvarez and Caielles (2008).

Income

The distribution of respondents based on their income is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on monthly income

Income Category	Percentage (%)
<10,000	9.82
10,001 - 20,000	16.1
20,001 - 30,000	21.03
30,001 - 40,000	24.1
40,001 - 50,000	19.6
50,001 - 60, 000	6.25
>60,000	3.1

Functional analysis of the relationship between monthly income and consumption of meat and meat products showed a positive relationship (Correlation coefficient = 0.2859). Alverz and Caielles (2008) had also reported similar findings.

Consumption Pattern of Meat on Daily Basis

The consumption pattern of meat revealed that 41 per cent of the respondents consumed meat only on Sundays, 38 per cent on Saturday and Sundays. 13 per cent consumed meat at least three days per week and 8 per cent consumed meat on all days.

Seasonal Influence on the Consumption Pattern of Meat

This study revealed that meat consumption was higher during the festival season *Viz;* Christmas (December) Onam (September) and Ramzan (August). Vyas (2005) had also reported similar consumption pattern.

Consumption of Meat Products

The results of the percentage consumption of various meat products are depicted in Fig. 1

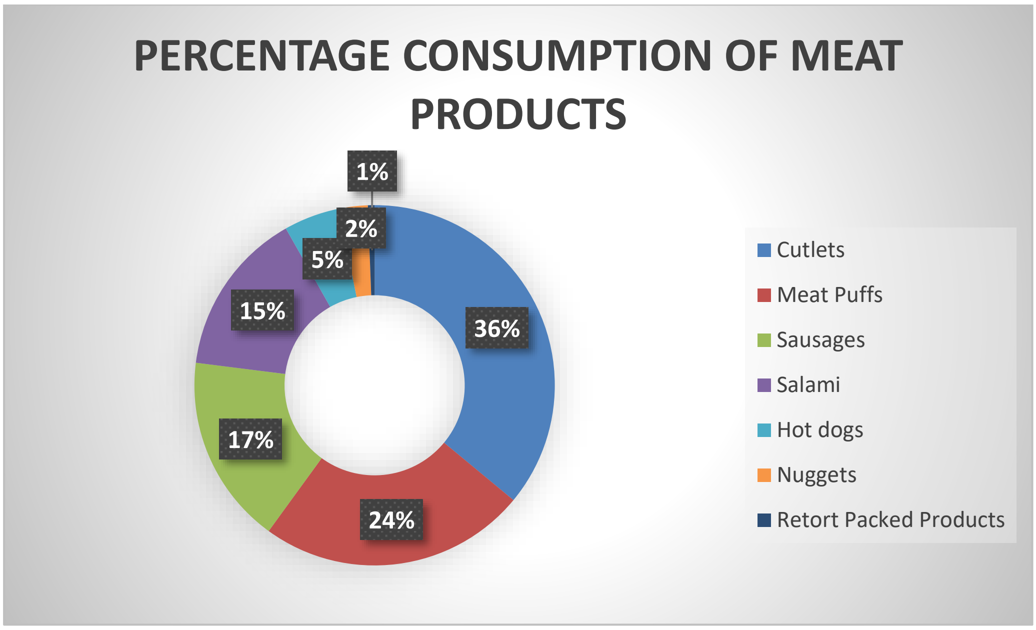

Figure 1: Consumption of various meat products

The highest consumed meat product was cutlets followed by meat puffs and sausage. Retort packed products were not still consumed. Similar trends were observed by Hazral and Sirohi (2009).

Awareness About Ready-to-Eat Meat Products

92.85 per cent of the respondents were non-vegetarians and 7.15 per cent were strict vegetarians. Out of the non-vegetarians, only 52 per cent were consciously aware of the ready-to-eat meat products. Only 21 per cent had previously used it. But when explained about the ease and benefits of the products, 78.8 per cent were ready to try it. This demonstrates a huge market potential for the ready-to-eat meat products.

Product Attributes

Seventeen product attributes of the ready-to-eat meat products were described and the respondents were asked to score it based on their importance. The mean scores for each attribute were calculated and the mean of means were calculated and significance worked out. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Perceived product attributes of ready-to-eat meat products

S. No.	Perceived Product Attributes	Mean Score
1	Taste	0.68*
2	Smell	0.72*
3	Quality	0.87*
4	Availability	0.18
5	Cheap	0.26
6	Packet attractiveness	0.02
7	Shelf life	0.43*
8	Good for use as a snack	0.1
9	Appearance	0.56*
10	Hygienic	0.54*
11	Time saving	0.26
12	Brand Good-Will	0.11
13	Texture	0.08
14	*Easy to transport*	0.06
15	*Advertisement*	0.03
16	*Easiness to use during travel*	0.24
17	*Others*	0.02

Quality, smell and taste were the important perceived product attributes followed by appearance, hygiene and shelf life in that order. This is in agreement with Britt (2009).

Brand Attributes

Twelve brand preferences attributes as per Table 3 were ranked by the respondents and these attributes were analysed by Garret's ranking method (Garret, 2005).

Table 3: Brand preference attributes of ready-to-eat meat products

Brand Preference Attributes		
S. No.	**Attribute**	**Mean**
1	Quality	3.11*
2	Appearance	3.55*
3	Smell	3.61*
4	Taste	3.94*
5	Texture	4.88*
6	Hygienic	6.27*
7	Shelf life	7.11
8	Availability	7.33
9	Packing quality	8.11
10	Worth for money	8.38
11	Brand name	9.27
12	Packet attractiveness	10.44

Most significant brand equity attributes as per the Garett's ranking technique were smell, taste, texture, hygiene, shelf life and availability. This is in agreement with Deodhar and Vijay (2001).

Problems Encountered with the Available Ready-To-Eat Products

Various problems encountered with the available ready-to-eat meat products were assessed. The common complaints were: Not fresh, not hot, smell, texture and taste difference. Around forty per cent of the respondents had some sort of complaint about the available ready-to-eat meat products.

Problems in Market Penetration

The major problems identified were:

Majority of the consumers, consume more meat and meat products during festival seasons only and 81 per cent of consumers eat meat and meat products only on Sundays. 48 per cent of the non-vegetarians were not aware of the availability of ready-to-eat products. Traditional non-vegetarian households were not ready to switch over to the ready-to-eat products. 28 per cent of meat eaters feel that ready-to-eat meat products were not fresh. Majority of consumers bought meat products from their nearby shop only.

Influences on the Purchase of Meat Products

Analysis of the influences on the purchase of meat and meat products revealed that 78 per cent were habitual in purchase (not influenced by any). Media had 10 per cent influence, shop displays had 6 per cent influence, friends influenced 4 per cent and shop owners influenced for the purchase of meat products was only 2 per cent.

Conclusion

This study revealed that though the demand for ready-to-eat meat product was high (32.35 tonnes per month), the adoption level of ready-to-eat meat products was low, as consumers feel that the products were not fresh. The consumers were not convinced of its merits and not accustomed to its taste. However, 52.9 per cent of the households were willing to pay more for ready-to-eat products, if their taste were satisfactory. The study indicated that though there was a huge market potential for ready-to-eat meat products, there is a dire need for producers to convince the consumers about its merits through appropriate marketing strategies and consumer education. Advertisements in mass media, spreading awareness through social media, organising shows and eating competition could be undertaken to promote the usage of ready-to-eat meat products

Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest.

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