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CONSUMER PREFERENCES FOR READY-TO-EAT FOOD IN CHENNAI: A STUDY OF DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Ready-to-eat (RTE) food has become an increasingly important component of urban food consumption due to changing lifestyles and time constraints. The growing demand for convenience-oriented products has significantly influenced consumer purchasing patterns in metropolitan cities. This study examines consumer preferences and buying behaviour for ready-to-eat food in Chennai, with a focus on both demographic profiling and the determinants of purchase behaviour. The study is guided by two objectives: (i) to profile RTE food consumers based on demographic and behavioural characteristics, and (ii) to identify key factors influencing buying behaviour using an econometric framework. Primary data were collected from 120 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and percentage analysis were used to analyse consumer characteristics and behavioural patterns, while a binary logit model was employed to estimate the probability of purchase behaviour as a function of demographic, behavioural, and product-related variables. The findings indicate that consumers are moderately diverse in demographic terms but exhibit strong behavioural engagement, with high levels of purchase participation and recurring consumption patterns. Although the recoded income variable shows a positive association with buying behaviour, its effect is not statistically significant. In the full model, taste emerges as a key positive determinant, while the reduced model identifies frequency of purchase as a significant positive factor, and ingredient base and time of consumption as negative influences. The model demonstrates moderate predictive ability, with an AUC of 0.76. Overall, the study highlights that RTE food consumption is driven primarily by consumer experience, habitual behaviour, and product perceptions, offering important implications for marketing strategy and product development.

KEYWORDS: Ready-to-eat food, consumer behaviour, binary logit model, urban consumption, Chennai

1. INTRODUCTION

Ready-to-eat (RTE) food has developed as an important part of the modern urban food consumption due to the fast socio-economic and lifestyle changes. Work demands, extended work commute, and development of nuclear families have decreased the time people have to prepare meals, thus creating a developing dependence on convenience-based food items (Jabs & Devine, 2006; Jeffery et al., 2006). Consumption behaviour will be affected by a consumer's perceptions of the functional and emotional value associated with food consumption (Sheth et al., 1999). Attitudinal and perceived control factors influence the consumer's perception of a product in any given context. This is due to the beliefs that people have about the product and how they behave; they are both influenced by the socio-economic factors of the people who use them, such as their occupational structure and income (Ajzen, 1991). Psychological factors, such as emotions and environmental influences, will also affect a consumer's attitude as well as provide a level of control over their decisions (Hawkins et al., 2013). Consequently, RTE food has ceased being an emergency or occasional meal but is now a part of ordinary eating habits. This change is a part of a larger shift in food systems, with convenience, accessibility and product innovation being redefining consumption behaviour (Brunner et al., 2010; Traill, 2006). In the last few years, people have become more interested in ready-to-eat meals for reasons of convenience and time savings (Costa et al., 2007).

In this wider context, the metropolitan regions like Chennai would be a particularly useful context in the study of RTE food consumption behaviour. Chennai, being an urbanising city, has a complicated combination of traditional food habits and new consumption patterns. Differences in income, structure and availability of organised retail stores are some of the factors that make consumption heterogeneous between the different consumer groups. Socio-economic characteristics such as income and occupational structure are known to significantly influence food consumption behaviour. (Binkley, 2006). Meanwhile, the growing exposure to branded food products, better supply chains and the growth of supermarkets and online delivery services have improved the availability of RTE food products. (Minten et al., 2010). Urbanisation and

changing consumption patterns are factors that have increased the consumption of ready-to-eat food in developing countries. (Euromonitor International, 2026). These urban traits place Chennai in a good position to study the effect of lifestyle factors and market conditions in combination in shaping the buying behaviour in terms of purchasing frequency, brand loyalty and convenience orientation.

The consumer behaviour in the segment of the RTE food market is not homogeneous despite the rapid growth of the market. People are varied in their taste, packaging, shelf life, and ingredient make-up preferences, their health, safety and quality perceptions. Similar variations in consumer preferences and behavioural patterns in ready-to-eat food consumption have been observed in earlier empirical studies. (Sharma, 2012). In addition, behavioural variables like frequency of purchase, point of purchase and situational factors are important in influencing the purchasing decisions. These differences imply that the consumption of RTE food cannot be fully explained without a description of consumer profiles as well as the analysis of the determinants that underlie the behaviour of buying these foods. Specifically, one should consider the way in which the demographic factors can be combined with the behavioural and product-related factors to influence the chances of buying a product.

Although there is a body of literature available on the emergence of the convenience food markets and the evolving diet patterns, a lot of them provide an aggregate view of the behaviours, but do not study micro-level behavioural trends (Candel, 2001; Gofton, 1995). To date, the majority of the research conducted regarding food consumption has focused on aggregate food consumption data, and researchers are only recently starting to look at individual-level variables, particularly in urban/newly developed countries. Empirical studies that simultaneously map consumer demographics, analyse the consumer behaviour patterns, and model buying behaviour with individual level of data within the Indian metropolitan cities are relatively scarce. This disjuncture is particularly applicable in such cities as Chennai, where people live together and live in contact with their traditional and modern consumption practices. To fill this gap, there is a need to adopt an integrated method of analysis that incorporates both the descriptive and econometric methods to be able to capture both the structure and determinants of consumer behaviour.

It is on this background that the current study is informed by two main objectives. The former is the creation of the full profile of the consumers of RTE food based on their demographic factors and behavioural patterns. The second is to determine and estimate the determinants of buying behaviour with the help of a binary logit model, thus estimating the role of demographic, behavioural and product-related factors on the likelihood of buying the product. The combination of these two elements of analysis allows the study to add to a more complex view of consumer decision-making in the RTE food market. It is hoped that the findings will provide insights that are applicable in product positioning, marketing strategies, and policy aspects regarding the urban food systems.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Area

Empirical analysis is done in Chennai, which is a major city of India and one of the fastest-developing urban consumption centres. Chennai offers a suitable environment for studying the behaviour of ready-to-eat food consumption, given its heterogeneous population, changing lifestyle trends and the growing need for convenience-oriented food products. The combination of traditional food culture and modern consumption patterns in the city makes it especially applicable to understanding the changes in behavioural patterns in food consumption.

2.2 Nature and Source of Data

The research relies on first-hand data gathered by the use of a structured questionnaire/interview schedule that will be used to interview consumers. The questionnaire was to be used in order to measure the demographic features, behavioural patterns, and the product related perceptions related to the consumption of ready-to-eat foods. Following data collection, data cleaning, data validation, and data coding processes were carried out, and finally, a final dataset was obtained with usable respondent observations to be analysed.

2.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the individual consumer/ respondent. All the descriptive statistics and the econometric interpretations are thus carried out at the respondent level, such that the behavioural insights convey individual-level decision-making patterns.

2.4 Sampling Frame and Analytical Sample

The sample and analytical sample were described as follows. The analytical sample will comprise 120 respondents, which will be the cleaned and validated dataset to be used in the descriptive and regression analysis. This final respondent-level dataset is used throughout all the levels of analysis of the study, and it makes the descriptive profiling and econometric estimation comparable.

2.5 Variable Architecture

The study variables are classified into three large categories:

- **Demographic factors:** age, gender, education, occupation, and income.
- **Variables of behaviour:** status of purchase, diet pattern, purchase frequency, purchase nature, place of purchase, influence purchase decision, consumption period, storage behaviour and alternate action.
- **Variables to do with the products:** brand trust, taste, packaging, shelf life, ingredient base, convenience, quality, quantity, and health.

The structure enables a detailed study of consumer behaviour in the socio-economic, behavioural and product-perception perspectives.

2.6 Coding and Measurement Logic

All the variables were coded into forms of analysis with systematic codification. Binary variables were coded in the form of dichotomous indicators, and the multi-category and ordinal variables were transformed into numerical form that can be analysed statistically. This guarantees compatibility with both the descriptive methods and regression modelling. The elaborate coding scheme may be recorded separately in a supplementary document in the event of need. The income variable is reverse-coded, giving a higher number to the higher income category, which will facilitate interpretation in the upward direction of income.

2.7 Analytical Tools

The research is a mixture of descriptive and econometric approaches. Objective 1 is met with the help of descriptive statistics and percentage analysis, cross-tabulation to profile respondents and define patterns in their behaviour. The binary logit regression is used to explore objective 2, and the relationship between purchase behaviour and the explanatory variables is estimated.

2.8 Binary Logit Model: Conceptual and Functional Form

The binary logit model is applied to analyse situations where the dependent variable represents a dichotomous outcome, such as purchase behaviour. The model estimates the probability that a consumer engages in purchase behaviour as a function of explanatory variables:

$$P_i = f(X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k) \quad (1)$$

where $P_i$denotes the probability of purchase and $X_k$represents demographic, behavioural, and product-related variables.

2.9 Binary Logit Model: Log-Odds Specification

The model is expressed in log-odds form as:

$$log\left(\frac{P_i}{1-P_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_k X_k + u_i \quad (2)$$

where $\beta_k$are the coefficients and $u_i$is the error term. The coefficients indicate the direction and magnitude of influence, and their exponentiated values may be interpreted as odds ratios.

2.10 Interpretation and Reporting Strategy

Positive coefficients imply more likely to buy the product, and negative coefficients imply less likely to buy the product. The statistical significance and directional effects are taken into account in the analysis. The findings are also presented in a systematic format, with the initial section showing descriptive findings and the second section reporting regression estimates and interpretation of important determinants of buying behaviour.

3. data analysis and results

3.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic composition. The variables taken into consideration are age, gender, education, occupation and income. The mean values also show that the respondents are mainly clustering in the lower to middle categories in terms of coded values, with an age mean of 1.25, an education is 1.91, and an occupation is 2.34, whereas the income is 0.83, which shows that there is a majority of the lower and middle income groups.

This trend is also supported by the median values, with the average respondents aligning towards the middle distributions. There is a mild imbalance between the male and female respondents (mean = 0.54) in gender distribution. In general, the demographic portrait indicates a relatively diversified yet centrally located population as opposed to a high level of demographic stratification.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min	Max
Age	1.2500	0.9723	1.0000	0	3
Gender	0.5417	0.5004	1.0000	0	1
Education	1.9083	1.3157	1.5000	0	4
Occupation	2.3417	1.4523	2.0000	0	5
Income	0.8333	0.6901	1.0000	0	2

3.2 Behavioural Profile of Ready-to-Eat Food Consumers

The behavioural traits of the respondents are summarised in Table 2. There was a significant percentage of respondents who consumed ready-to-eat food products, with 65.83% indicating purchase behaviour and 72.50% falling under the positive category of the dependent variable (y). There is a strong focus on the predominant category in the dietary pattern (mean = 0.85), whereas the mean purchase frequency is 1.60, with the median being 2.00, which means that intake is

moderate (not infrequent). The character of purchase (mean = 0.65) indicates that planned or structured buying behaviour is more likely than impulsive buying.
Other behavioural variables like place of purchase, influence, time of consumption, storage behaviour and alternate action show moderate variation, indicating heterogeneous consumption behaviour. As a whole, the behavioural profile indicates that respondents are active players in the ready-to-eat food market, and there is recurrent involvement and well-organised consumption patterns.

Table 2. Behavioural profile of respondents

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min	Max
Purchase	0.6583	0.4763	1.0000	0	1
Dietary	0.8500	0.3586	1.0000	0	1
Frequency	1.6000	0.9992	2.0000	0	3
Nature of purchase	0.6500	0.4790	1.0000	0	1
Place	1.3583	1.0715	1.0000	0	3
Influence	2.2250	1.4655	2.0000	0	5
Time of consumption	2.1667	1.5343	2.0000	0	5
Storage	1.2417	1.0581	1.0000	0	3
Alternate	1.5833	1.1923	2.0000	0	4
y	0.7250	0.4484	1.0000	0	1

The descriptive results indicate that the consumer base of ready-to-eat food is moderate in terms of demographic variation but very consistent in terms of behaviour. The respondents are mainly middle-aged and middle-income, with a slight majority of men. The behavioural patterns of the high percentage of positive purchase and re-purchase frequency indicate that ready-to-eat food products are part of the daily consumption habits instead of occasional substitutes. This interpretation is supported by the distribution figures (Figure 1), which indicate a distinct concentration of the respondents on the outcome variable (y) in the category of Yes. Also, the skewness of main product-related variables, including taste, brand trust, and convenience, is positive, which reflects a positive attitude of consumers in general.

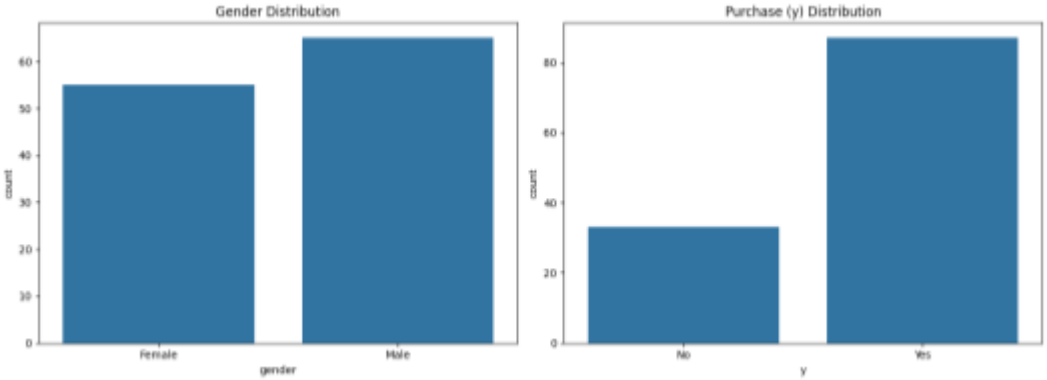

Figure 1. Distribution of categorical features

The correlation matrix (Figure 2) reveals that the pairwise correlation amongst the variables are on the whole, quite small, with some groups of variables product-related demonstrating a moderate correlation. This tendency indicates that individual variables might not be strongly correlated, but a collective multicollinearity could be present because of the overlapping perception constructs.

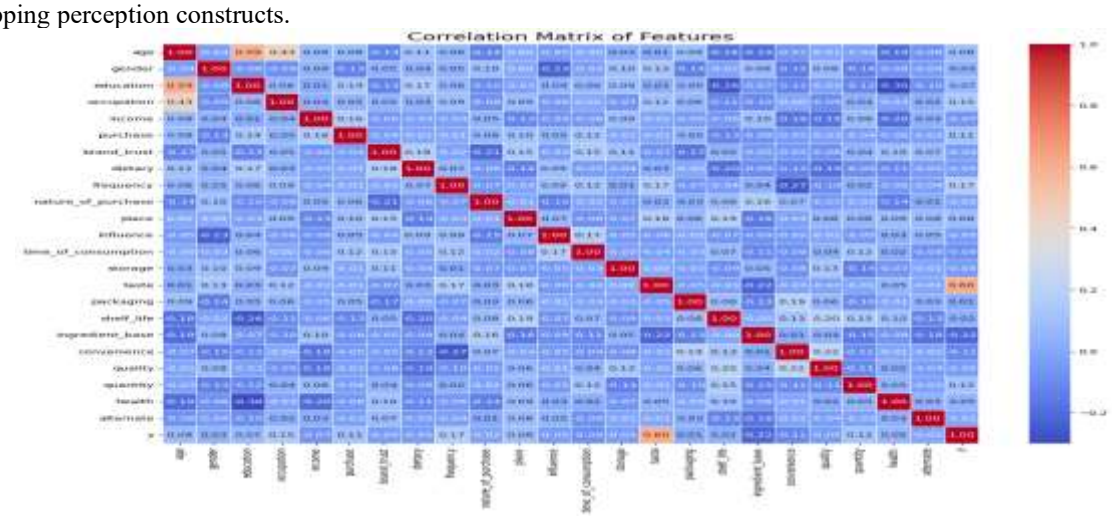

Figure 2. Correlation matrix of study variables

The correlation matrix shows that the majority of the pairwise correlations are weak to moderate, which implies that there is not much linear dependence between the variables. The highest correlation is found between taste and buying behaviour (y = 0.60), whereby better ratings in taste were highly correlated with positive purchase results. There are moderate positive correlations between age and education (0.59) and age and occupation (0.43), indicating demographic clustering. Frequencies (0.17) and purchase (0.11) are behaviour variables that have weak positive correlations with the outcome variable, whereas ingredient base (-0.22) and time of consumption (-0.09) are those with negative correlations with the buying behaviour. There are also light inter-correlations among product perception variables, with taste and ingredient base (-0.22) showing the greatest inter-correlations.

Overall, the matrix indicates that, although there are no too high correlations between individual variables, there is a tendency of clustering of related variables that lead to multicollinearity, especially when it comes to product-related variables, which explains why model refinement is necessary in the further analysis. Objective 1 is met through the fact that consumers are engaged, fairly homogeneous in demographic structure and highly sensitive to product perception variables.

3.3 Determinants of Buying Behaviour: Binary Logit Results

Binary logit models were estimated with y as the dependent variable. The entire model has a high explanatory power as indicated in Table 3. It was considered in two specifications:

- a complete model of all explanatory variables.
- a simplified model to solve multicollinearity.

Table 3. Full binary logit model

Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	p-value
Constant	-4.6741	4.12	-1.134	0.257
Income	0.8398	0.571	1.472	0.141
Purchase	1.2894	0.761	1.693	0.09
Dietary	-2.3812	1.285	-1.853	0.064
Place	-0.6131	0.366	-1.673	0.094
Time of consumption	-0.3847	0.186	-2.072	0.038
Taste	1.5984	0.32	4.993	0
Quantity	0.4698	0.279	1.684	0.092

Model summary: *Pseudo R^2 =* ***0.4655****, LLR p-value =* ***5.475e-06***

The overall binary logit model shows that taste is the most important determinant of buying behaviour and has a positive and statistically significant coefficient at 1% level of 1.5984. This indicates that among consumers, those who have a higher level of taste preference are more likely to demonstrate positive purchasing behaviours towards ready-to-eat food products. After reverse coding, higher numbers indicated higher income categories. The coefficient of the relationship of income was 0.8398. The effect is not significantly different from zero at the 5% level, as shown by the p-value of 0.141. This suggests that income is a significant predictor of the purchase behaviour when the effects of other variables are excluded, but is not a significant predictor when the effects of other variables are included.

The coefficient for time of consumption is negative and statistically significant (-0.3847), which means that there are certain times in which the consumers are less likely to have positive buying behaviour. The strength of the model is good, as evidenced by the value of Pseudo R^2 of 0.4655 and the value of LLR p-value of 5.475e-06 which shows that the overall model is statistically significant. However, the high value of VIF for some variables (> 10) suggests the presence of multicollinearity and thus a reduced model is used for a more stable interpretation.

Table 4. Reduced binary logit model (preferred specification)

Variable	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	p-value
Constant	1.6016	1.280	1.251	0.211
Frequency	0.4700	0.226	2.084	0.037
Time of consumption	-0.2169	0.123	-1.763	0.078
Ingredient base	-0.7526	0.296	-2.543	0.011

Model summary: *Pseudo R^2 =* ***0.1351****, LLR p-value =* ***0.2103***

The reduced model enhances stability (VIF < 6 between variables) and has less explanatory power. The findings show that behavioural and product-related factors have a stronger influence on buying behaviour than demographic factors. The full model indicates that taste is the most prevailing positive driver, showing that taste is the key factor in consumer decision-making. There is a steady negative correlation between time of consumption, indicating that some consumption situations can diminish purchase intentions. The odds ratios estimates suggest that the higher purchase frequency increases the probability of positive buying behaviour, which is around 60% more, but the higher the values of ingredient base are, the less the probability is, as shown in Table 5. Time of consumption is a small negative effect.

Table 5. Odds Ratio Interpretation of Key Determinants

Variable	Coefficient	Odds Ratio (e^β)	Interpretation

Frequency	0.4700	1.60	Increases likelihood
Ingredient Base	-0.7526	0.47	Decreases likelihood
Time of Consumption	-0.2169	0.81	Slight negative effect

Frequency is found to be a major positive determinant in the reduced model, which means that frequent involvement heightens the chances of positive buying behaviour. Ingredient base, on the other hand, has a strong negative correlation, meaning that any change in ingredient preferences can decrease the likelihood of purchase. Notably, demographic factors (age, gender, education, occupation, and income) are not statistically significant, which indicates that the buying behaviour is less influenced by socio-economic background and more predetermined by the involvement and perception of the products.

$$lo\,g\left(\frac{P_i}{1-P_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \sum_{k=1}^{n} \beta_k X_k \qquad 3$$

Model 3 was estimated to give the coefficients shown in Table 4, and the final specification using the values of the coefficients is displayed in the final model. Each coefficient is an indication of the impact of the corresponding explanatory variable that is in the regression.

$$\log\left(\frac{P_i}{1-P_i}\right) = 1.6016 + 0.4700(\text{ Frequency }) - 0.7526(\text{ Ingredient Base }) - 0.2169(\text{ Time of Consumption }) + \varepsilon_i \qquad 4$$

P_i is the probability of positive buying behaviour. The approximated coefficients show the direction of the effect, whereby frequency has a positive impact on purchase behaviour, and ingredient base and time of consumption have a negative impact.

Figure 2 shows that the ROC curve is above the diagonal reference line; it indicates that the model is more effective than the random classification.

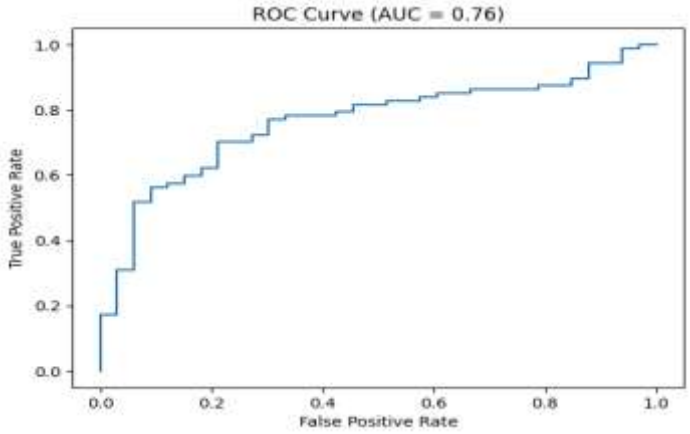

Figure 3. ROC Curve for Binary Logit Model

The Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve was used to calculate the predictive performance of the binary logit model. A value of 0.76 was obtained in the model Area Under the Curve (AUC), which showed a moderate level of discriminative power in predicting positive and negative outcomes of buying behaviour. The results of Objective 1 suggest that the consumer base of ready-to-eat food products is associated with moderate demographic diversity but high behavioural involvement. Although the respondents are spread in terms of age, education, occupation, and income, there is a distinct inclination towards active engagement in the consumption of ready-to-eat food, which is supported by the high rates of purchases and frequent usage. Also, there is an overall positive rating of the product category as consumers hold largely positive perceptions towards product attributes, especially in taste and convenience.

In reference to Objective 2, the binary logit analysis shows that the behavioural and product-related factors have a greater impact on buying behaviour than the demographic characteristics do. In the complete model, taste is recognised as a positive determinant with high importance, and sensory appeal is very important in influencing purchase decisions. The reduced model, however, has a more stable and reliable interpretation because of multicollinearity between product variables. Frequency of purchase in this specification comes out as a strong positive determinant, meaning that the repeated involvement increases the probability of having positive buying behaviour, and ingredient base is a strong negative determinant, implying the sensitivity to product composition. On the whole, the findings indicate that consumer experience, habitual consumption behaviour, and perceived product characteristics are the main factors influencing the ready-to-eat food market, but not demographic segmentation. This means that strategies that emphasise the quality, taste, and user experience of the products will most likely work better than strategies that use demographic targeting only.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the current research give valuable information about the design of ready-to-eat (RTE) food demand in an urban area like Chennai. According to the descriptive findings, the consumer base is demographically middle-aged, where the majority of the respondents are in the middle age, education, occupation and income brackets. Nevertheless, regardless of this demographic diversity, there is a high level of behavioural engagement in RTE products. This implies that the

demand for ready-to-eat food is not much about demographic segmentation but the changing urban lifestyles (Euromonitor International, 2026). The identified trend can be explained by the current body of literature, which focuses on the influence of time scarcity, nuclear family formation, and shifting work patterns on shaping food consumption behaviour in metropolitan communities (Pingali, 2007; Venn et al., 2018). Consumer choice in these situations is also influenced by behavioural intentions and attitudes influenced by perceived control and situational influences (Ajzen, 1991; Hawkins et al., 2013).

The behavioural profile also indicates that most of the respondents are actively involved in the consumption of RTE with moderate purchase frequency and organised patterns of buying. This helps substantiate the idea that RTE food is no longer something that people consume as a luxury product on a rare basis, but as a staple of urban eating. It can be compared with the research that has shown that convenience foods are becoming more and more normalised in urban India due to the growing incomes, dual-income families, and exposure to retail formats. (Kearney, 2010; Reardon et al., 2003). Similarly in the present model, the recoded income variable is also in positive direction indicating that an increase in income may increase the probability of purchasing of RTE food, but this is not statistically significant. Food consumption patterns are also affected by factors related to socioeconomic status, such as income and occupation. (Binkley, 2006). The regression findings can give more information on the determinants of buying behaviour. In the full model, taste becomes the most important and dominating predictor, a fact that supports the role of sensory attributes in food choice decisions. This aligns with the theory of consumer behaviour, which recognises taste as a major factor that induces food preference, and in most cases, overrides other factors like price or health. (Sheth et al., 1999; Steptoe, 1995).

Meanwhile, the negative effect of time of consumption implies that the context of consumption (when and how products are consumed) can influence the likelihood to buy a product, which may be inclined to indicate a difference between routine and situational consumption. The reduced model is more consistent in its interpretation of the results because the variables about the products are multicollinear. Frequency of purchase comes out as a strong positive determinant in this specification, which reflects that frequent consumption strengthens the purchasing behaviour. This is congruent with the idea of habit making in consumer decision making, where the more one is exposed to it, the more familiar the decision maker becomes, and the less perceived risk. (Verplanken & Aarts, 1999).

On the other hand, the adverse and high impact of ingredient base implies that consumers might be sensitised to the product composition, potentially due to health, genuineness, or dietary considerations (Sasmal, 2022). This observation is in line with recent research that revealed that there is an increasing concern about the quality of ingredients and the nutritional value of the ingredients among urban consumers. Demographic variables (age, gender, education, occupation and income) are not statistically significant in the final model, but the recoded income shows a positive but not statistically significant association with buying behaviour. This indicates that the consumption of RTE food is gradually democratising among socio-economic groups, and behavioural and perceptual aspects are becoming a more determinant factor. This trend underscores the increased role of consumer experience, product analysis, and consumption patterns in the urban food markets as compared to the conventional demographic segmentation. These findings have a number of implications as far as the management is concerned. Marketers and food companies need to focus on the optimisation of tastes and quality of products since they are at the core of consumer acceptance. Simultaneously, the strategies must be aimed at promoting repeat consumption since the frequency directly positively affects the purchasing behaviour. The product development should also cover the issues regarding the ingredient composition, and more focus should be given to the transparency, health positioning and alternative ingredient bases like organic or millet-based products.

Retailers and marketers ought to use positioning that is context-specific, where using various consumption situations like quick meals, snacks, or travelling could be used to increase the relevance of the product. The study has some limitations in spite of its contributions. Chennai is the only city analysed, which can limit the extrapolation of the results to other areas. Another limitation is that a cross-sectional dataset also limits the possibility of tracing dynamic changes in consumer behaviour over time. Moreover, the variables used are confined to those that were measured in the survey and will not necessarily be comprehensive enough to capture attitudinal or psychological factors of purchase decision. Future studies can further the analysis to various urban and semi-urban areas to provide a comparison of the study across various market conditions. Attitudinal variables, lifestyle indicators, and longitudinal data could also be included in future research to help capture the changing consumption patterns. The extension of the scope of the RTE segment of consideration to other product categories can also give a more detailed picture of the preferences of consumers.

5. CONCLUSION

The current paper has looked at the consumption of ready-to-eat food in Chennai using a two-objective empirical design, which involves descriptive profiling of consumers and econometric modelling of the purchase behaviour. The results reveal that the respondent sample is fairly balanced in terms of demographics, with the middle age, education, occupation, and income groups taking a central position. Nevertheless, regardless of this difference, consumers are highly behaviourally involved in ready-to-eat food products, manifested through a high level of purchase involvement and habitual consumption behaviours. This implies that prepared food has been a regular and commonplace urbanised consumption and is not an alternative that is taken infrequently. The analysis also indicates that behavioural and product-based factors affect the buying behaviour more than the demographic characteristics do. Although the entire model emphasises the significance of product attributes like taste, the refined model shows that frequency of purchase has a positive impact on buying behaviour, ingredient-related considerations, and time of consumption have negative correlations. These findings reveal that experience of repeated use and product experience are pertinent in influencing consumer decisions, but product composition sensitivity is also a significant moderating factor. Practically, the research highlights the need to focus on the product quality, taste, and constant consumer experience of the ready-to-eat food

market. The strategies that should be emphasised in food businesses and retailers are those that promote repeat consumption, product reliability and concerns by consumers on ingredients and health factors. Comprehensively, the results indicate that proper market positioning in such an industry does not necessarily rely on demographic positioning, but rather it relies on the relevance of product positioning to the changing urban consumption trends.

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