



The essence of packed & unpacked edibles in urban areas

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Abstract

This research paper analyses the essence of Packed and Unpacked Edibles in urban areas. We took a survey in supermarkets in Hyderabad, to find out what people prefer more among Packed and Unpacked foods. Packed foods are food products that are processed, prepared & packaged for convenient consumption. Whereas, unpacked foods are food items that are sold without any packaging. In our survey we found out that, out of 175 subjects' majority of subjects preferred packed foods. We also found that many people have knowledge and are aware that unpacked foods are better than packed foods because, unpacked foods are preference among urban population is associated with freshness, higher quality and considered healthier choices as they are less likely to contain added preservatives and Artificial flavours. But due to reasons like convenience, longer shelf life, nutritional information, food safety and quality assurance of packed food, people chose packed foods over unpacked foods.

Keywords: Packed and unpacked, convenience, consumption, nutritional information, quality, freshness, preservatives, extended shelf life

Introduction

Packed foods are referred to any type of food product that are processed, prepared and packaged for convenient consumption. It is typically involving food items that have undergone various stages of cutting, cleaning, cooking, preserving, or adding ingredients before being sealed in a package for storage, distribution and sale. Unpacked foods also known as loose foods or bulk foods, refers to food items that are sold without any packaging or minimal packaging. These foods are typically purchased in larger quantities allowing customers to select the amount they need rather than buying pre-packed portions. Unpacked foods can include a wide range of items such as grains, cereals, nuts, seeds, dried fruits, spices, coffee beans, tea leaves, pulses and more.

Packed Foods: Packed foods are also known as processed or packaged foods, can provide certain nutritional benefits compared to unpacked or fresh foods. Here are some advantages of packed foods: Packed foods often undergo preservation methods, such as canning, freezing, or vacuum sealing, which can significantly extend their shelf life. This allows consumers to store and use these foods over a longer period, reducing food waste. Packed foods are often processed immediately after harvest or preparation, which helps retain their nutritional content. Certain preservation methods, such as freezing or canning, can help preserve vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients present in the food. Packed foods offer convenience and ease of use. They are often pre-cut, pre-cooked, or pre-portioned, saving time and effort in meal preparation. This convenience can be especially advantageous for those who are pressed for time or lack basic cooking skills. Packed foods are widely available throughout the year, regardless of seasonal variations. This ensures a constant supply of various foods, including fruits, vegetables, and meats, regardless of the time of year. Some packed foods are fortified or enriched with additional nutrients. For example, certain breakfast

cereals may be fortified with vitamins and minerals, and some dairy products may be enriched with vitamin D or omega-3 fatty acids. This can help individuals meet their daily nutrient requirements. Many packed foods come in pre-portioned packages, which can aid in portion control and calorie management. This function can be very beneficial for people who are trying to manage their weight or monitor their food intake. While packed foods have these advantages, it's important to note that not all packed foods are equally nutritious. Some packed foods may contain high levels of added sugars, unhealthy fats, sodium, or artificial additives. Therefore, it's essential to read food labels and choose packed foods that are minimally processed, low in unhealthy ingredients, and contain whole, natural ingredients whenever possible. Additionally, incorporating fresh, unpacked foods into your diet, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, remains crucial for overall health and well-being.

The shelf life of packed foods can vary depending on the type of food, packaging & storage conditions. Canned foods- if properly stored in a cool, dry place can typically be safely consumed for 2-5 years, although the quality may decline over time. Dried foods- such as pasta, rice, can have a long shelf life when stored in airtight containers; they can generally be stored for 1-2 years. Packaged snacks - snack items like chips, cookies, usually have shelf life of several months, the precise duration depends on the product & packaging. So, it's best to check the expiry date. Frozen foods- can be stored for extended periods, ranging from months to a year, it is recommended to consume them within the specific time for optimal taste & texture. Ready to eat meals- prepackaged meals, often have a shelf life of several months, refer to the product packaging for specific guidance.

Packaging is the protector of the product within. It protects the product from physical impacts such as bruising and wetting. Packaging facilitates easy storage and enables the product to be delivered to the customer in the most cost-

effective manner. Providing the user with ease of choice and usage through the information it contains—such as the weight, price, production date, use-by date, ingredients, manufacturer firm name, and usage guidelines stated on the packaging—is another crucial duty. Packaging protects the product, Packaging keeps the product from going bad, Packaging provides hygiene.

Unpacked Foods: Unpacked foods, also known as bulk or loose foods, refer to food items that are sold without any packaging or with minimal packaging. Here are some potential benefits of unpacked foods. One of the main advantages of unpacked foods is their positive impact on the environment. By eliminating or minimising packaging, less waste is generated, reducing the amount of plastic and other materials that end up in landfills or pollute the environment. Unpacked foods can contribute to a more sustainable and circular economy. Unpacked foods help reduce packaging waste, as they eliminate the need for individual packaging for each item. This reduces the overall amount of waste generated and can contribute to more efficient waste management systems. Buying unpacked foods can be cost-effective in the long run. In many cases, bulk foods are priced lower per unit compared to their pre-packaged counterparts. Additionally, by purchasing only the desired quantity, consumers can avoid paying for excess packaging and reduce food waste. Unpacked foods allow customers to buy the precise amount they need, which can be particularly advantageous when it comes to perishable goods or ingredients that are required in small quantities. This flexibility can help reduce food waste at the consumer level. When purchasing unpacked foods, consumers have the opportunity to inspect the items for freshness and quality before buying. This can be especially beneficial for fruits, vegetables, and other produce. Additionally, since bulk foods are restocked more frequently, there is a higher likelihood of purchasing fresher items. Some pre-packaged foods may contain chemicals or preservatives to extend their shelf life. By opting for unpacked foods, consumers can potentially reduce their exposure to such substances, promoting a more natural and healthy diet. Unpacked food sections often offer a wide range of products, including various grains, nuts, spices, and other ingredients that may not be as readily available in pre-packaged forms. This encourages culinary experimentation and allows individuals to explore different flavours and cuisines. It's worth noting that while unpacked foods offer several advantages, there may be certain considerations to keep in mind, such as proper storage and food safety practices. Additionally, some food items may still require packaging for safety and hygiene reasons, so a balanced approach is essential. Unpacked foods are often associated with freshness and higher quality. Consumers can personally select fruits, vegetables, and other perishable items, ensuring they are at their peak freshness. This is particularly appealing to those seeking fresh, minimally processed foods.

1. Reduced Packaging Waste: Unpacked foods contribute to a reduction in packaging waste. With growing concerns about environmental sustainability, many individuals are opting for unpacked foods to minimise their ecological footprint. By using reusable bags or containers and buying in bulk or from farmers' markets, consumers can significantly reduce the amount of packaging waste generated.

- 2. Health and Nutrition:** Unpacked foods, such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts, are often considered healthier choices. They are less likely to contain added preservatives, artificial flavours, or excessive amounts of salt, sugar, or unhealthy fats. Unpacked foods allow individuals to prioritise whole, unprocessed ingredients in their diets.
- 3. Reduced Costs:** Buying unpacked foods can sometimes be more cost-effective compared to pre-packaged options. By purchasing items in bulk or from local sources, consumers can potentially save money on packaging costs and avoid paying for branded packaging.

Importance of Nutritional Label of Packed Foods

1. Nutritional Information

The label provides detailed information about the nutritional content of the meal, including its caloric content and macronutrient composition (such as carbohydrates, proteins, and fats), vitamins, minerals, and other important nutrients. This information helps consumers make informed choices about their diet and allows them to compare different products to select healthier options.

2. Portion Control

The label often includes serving size information, which helps consumers recognise the portion size of the product that makes up one serving. This is crucial for managing portion control and ensuring that individuals are aware of how much they are consuming. It helps prevent overeating and assists in maintaining a balanced diet.

3. Health Claims

Some nutritional labels may include health claims or statements about the product, such as low fat, high in fibre, or good source of vitamin C. These claims are regulated by food authorities and are intended to provide additional information about the potential health benefits of the product. They allow consumers to assess whether a particular food aligns with their nutritional goals or dietary needs.

Increased availability of packed foods in the market compared to unpacked foods

- 1. Convenience and Shelf Life:** Packed foods are often processed, packaged, and sealed in a way that extends their shelf life. This allows for longer storage, distribution, and availability in the market. Packed foods are designed to be convenient, ready-to-eat, or require minimal preparation, which appeals to consumers seeking quick and easy meal options.
- 2. Market Demand and Consumer Preferences:** The demand for packed foods is influenced by consumer preferences and lifestyle changes. In today's fast-paced world, many individuals seek convenience, time-saving options, and on-the-go meals. Packed foods provide a solution for busy schedules and allow consumers to quickly access a wide variety of food choices.

Packed Foods are Preferred More Now-A-Days

- 1. Convenience:** Packed foods offer convenience and time-saving benefits. They are often ready-to-eat or

require minimal preparation, making them convenient for individuals with busy lifestyles or limited cooking skills. Packed foods can be easily stored, transported, and consumed on-the-go, providing a quick and hassle-free meal solution.

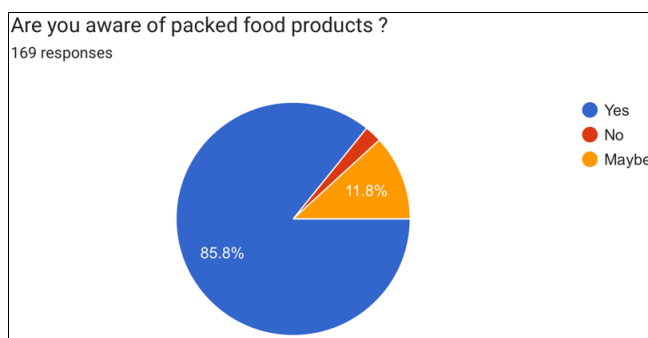
- 2. Longer Shelf Life:** Packed foods often have a longer shelf life compared to fresh or unpacked foods. They undergo various processing and preservation methods, such as canning, freezing, or drying, which help extend their expiration dates. This longer shelf life allows for easier stocking, reduced food waste, and the ability to maintain a supply of non-perishable items.
- 3. Food Safety and Quality Assurance:** Packed foods undergo quality control measures and adhere to food safety regulations, ensuring consistent standards in terms of hygiene, safety, and quality. The packaging acts as a protective barrier, preventing contamination and preserving the freshness and integrity of the product. This assurance of food safety and quality is a significant factor for consumers, particularly when it comes to perishable items.

Methodology

The survey was conducted in different places like, Kirana shops, D-Mart, Metro, etc. and also the survey link was shared through social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram aiming to reach more responses. Total 175 Participants were involved during data collection; they were selected randomly from urban areas of Hyderabad. The subjects were of different age groups. The purpose of the survey was to find out what people prefer more among packed food products & unpacked food products and also it aimed to bring awareness regarding Pros and Cons of packed food products and unpacked food products.

Results

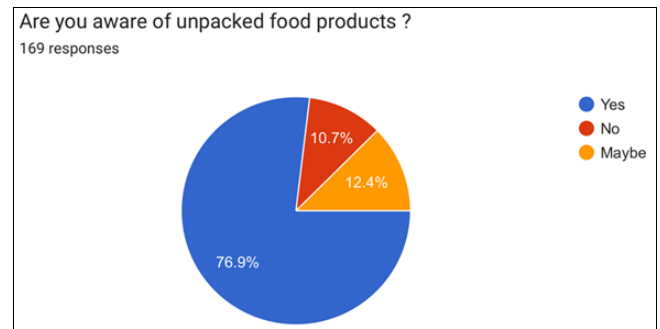
The prepared questionnaire targeted consumer preference regarding packed foods and unpacked foods, particularly focused on the factors which are influencing consumers decision to purchase certain packed or unpacked food, and the reason behind to choose etc.



Awareness of packed and unpacked food products

In the survey, the subjects were asked if they are aware of packed food products and unpacked food products, and their responses are noted in the above pie diagrams. We see that 85.8% of people are aware of packed food products, and 11.8% of people responded maybe when asked if they are aware of packed food products, And the below pie chart showing the results of unpacked food products awareness

among consumers, in this case 76.9% responded that they are aware of unpacked food products, 12.4% responded maybe and 10.7% responded that they are unaware of unpacked foods products.

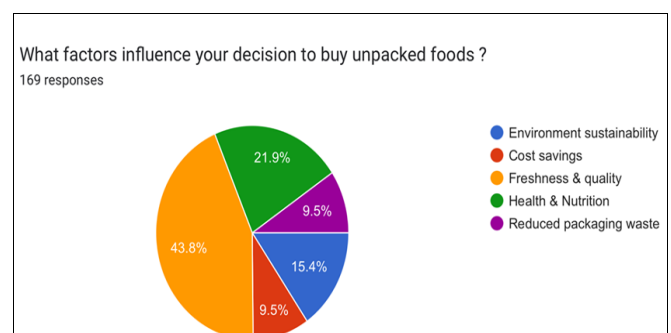


When we compare both the results, we understand that Majority of the people are familiar with both packed and unpacked food products and only few people are not familiar. We also see that many people are not familiar with significance of unpacked foods compared to packed food products.

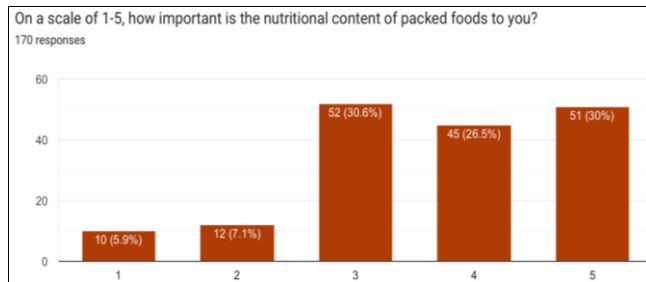
Factors that influence to purchase a certain packed and unpacked food product



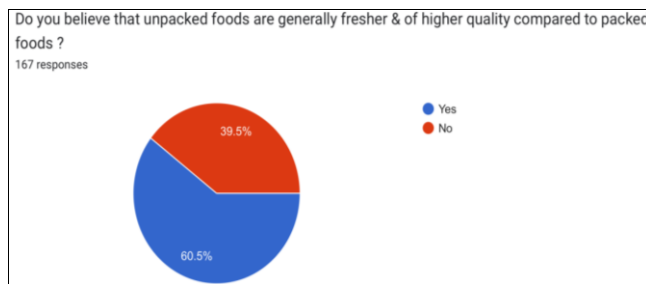
The survey revealed that, 53.8% of the people purchase packed foods due to the Taste, 21.3% due to Nutritional information of the packed foods and 14.2% purchase packed food due to the brand reputation. From the results we can understand that Taste, Nutritional information and Brand reputation are the three main factors that influence people to purchase a certain packed food.



The survey results revealed that, 43.8% of the people purchase unpacked food products due to it's freshness and quality, 21.9% due to Health and nutrition, 15.4% due to Environmental sustainability and 9.5% for each cost savings and reduced packaging waste. We observed that, Freshness, quality, Health & Nutrition are two important factors that influence majority of the people to purchase certain unpacked food product.



In the survey, when asked, on a scale of 1-5, how important is the nutritional content of packed foods to you? People who ranked three were 30.6%, thirty percent were 5, 26.5% were four, 7.1% were two, and 5.9% were one. This demonstrates that the majority of individuals read the nutritional labels on packaged foods and discover that the information is crucial for helping them make healthier decisions. The goal of the information on food labels is to empower customers to make informed food decisions. A package's front, back, and sides are crammed with information to tell us what's in the food and help us choose processed meals that are healthier. Making better decisions is facilitated by being aware of the Nutrition Facts label on food products. Each serving's calories, carbohydrates, fat, fibre, protein, and vitamins are listed on the label.



Our survey revealed that 60.5% believe that unpacked foods are generally fresher and of higher quality compared to packed foods and 39.5% do not believe that unpacked foods are generally fresher and of higher quality compared to packed foods. This shows that most of the people believe unpacked foods are fresher of high quality.

Conclusion

This study showed that many people are having knowledge about packed foods and unpacked foods. People preference packed product over un-packed product is significantly influenced by the type of food because most of the people are aware of packed foods and un packed foods in urban. The preference of packed food products mainly influenced by the brand, price, nutritional information, taste and ingredients list, in this case most of the people are relying on the taste to consume packed foods. Nutritional information also one of the strong concerns to choose the packed food among the consumers. Unpacked food preference is influencing by the price, environmental sustainability, health, nutrition and reducing packaging waste but high percentage of people are demanding the unpacked foods for freshness and quality. Significantly Urban population believing that unpacked foods are generally fresher and high quality compared to packed foods.

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