

ROLE OF CHILDREN IN RETAIL FOOD PURCHASES

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ABSTRACT

Women have been the primary grocery shoppers in retail stores. But due to emergence of nuclear families, children also accompany them while going out for shopping. Children either purchase foods themselves or assist mothers while purchasing foods. They also help mothers in family food shopping decisions. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to investigate the frequency of mothers visiting retail stores to buy foods, frequency of children accompanying mothers on shopping trips, children's role in buying foods in retail stores, seeking opinion of children while buying foods and foods mostly requested by children in retail stores across gender and age groups. A structured and pre-tested questionnaire has been used for collecting data from 473 mothers of children in age category 4-11 years from Punjab (India). Data have been analysed using descriptive statistics through SPSS 19. The findings reveal that majority of mothers visit retail stores 'according to need'. Sometimes, their children accompany them in retail stores and mothers ask for their opinion while buying foods. Children also request salty snacks, ready-to-cook foods, beverages and fruit juices, biscuits, ice-creams and sugared snacks. Retailers can benefit from the findings in order to retain existing women shoppers and to target potential consumers such as children.

KEYWORDS: Children, food, retail stores, India.

INTRODUCTION

Indian retail industry has emerged as one of the most dynamic and fast paced industries. It presently contributes to over 10 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and generates around 8 per cent of the employment. India is the world's fifth largest global destination in the retail space (<http://www.ibef.org/industry/retail-india.aspx>). The expected CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) for retail is 13 per cent during 2013-2019. Food and grocery segment constitutes an important segment of organized retailing. In order to encourage investment in this segment, 100 per cent Foreign Direct Investment has been allowed in trading

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of food products manufactured or produced in India in 2016. During April 2012 to December 2015, the amount of FDI in food processing sector was USD 5286 (approximately) and it is expected to increase to more than USD 1 billion till 2018 (The Economic Times, 2016). Modern grocery retailing accounted for 17 per cent growth in 2015 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 11 per cent during 2015-2020 (<http://www.euromonitor.com/grocery-retailers-in-india/report>). The key factors which are responsible for this growth are growing youth segment, emergence of working women, dual income families, rising disposable income, increasing purchasing power and consumption, comfortable shopping experience, wide variety of brands under a single roof, higher brand consciousness, changing consumer preferences, growth in urbanization, attractive prices and rising internet penetration. Besides changing life style and tastes of people (increasing popularity of convenience and western foods) are other reasons of growth of food retail sector in India.

Women have been the primary grocery shoppers in retail stores. Majority of women especially working women go for grocery shopping on weekends. But due to emergence of nuclear families, children also accompany them while going out for shopping. Children enjoy helping mothers in grocery shopping. They either purchase foods directly or request parents to buy foods of their choice. Most of the time, purchase requests are initiated by children in retail stores and only one third parents ask opinion of children while purchasing foods (Buijzen and Valkenberg, 2008). Almost three-fourth of parents purchase a food for the first time on the request of children (<http://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2012/12/ftc-releases-follow-study-detailing-promotional-activities>). Thus, children may make subtle as well as active influence attempts on parents to buy products in retail stores.

Moreover, purchase requests of children in retail stores are also influenced by television advertisements. Number of television sets has been increasing in every household. Hence, television advertisements wield long-lasting effects on purchase behaviour of children. More so, television also acts as an 'electronic baby-sitter' for children. While mothers are busy in their regular household chores, children tend to watch favourite programs/cartoons and advertisements on television for longer hours. They gain information about new products, brands, prices and features of products etc. which are shown on television and help parents in family purchase decisions. As food advertisements are frequently aired on television, children's food preferences are strongly influenced by them (Kaur and Singh, 2011).

More so, children like to watch food advertisements with lot of interest (Khanna, 2012). Hence, most of the time they request those foods in retail stores which are frequently advertised on television. In a recent study, it has been found that majority of children (87.91%) and parents (75%) also accept that most of time, children request advertised foods (Khanna, 2012). Further, the foods which are frequently requested by children in retail stores comprise sweets (chewing gums, candies chocolates), ice creams, soft drinks, fruit drinks, fast foods (noodles, pasta) and health drinks.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A brief review of work done with regard to frequency of mothers visiting retail stores to buy foods, frequency of children accompanying mothers on shopping trips, children's role in buying foods in retail stores, seeking opinion of children while buying foods and foods mostly requested by children in retail stores is presented here.

Frequency of mothers visiting retail stores to buy foods: Majority of mothers, especially working women visit retail stores during weekends (Pettersson *et al.*, 2004). These findings were corroborated by Goodman (2008, 2016) who found that women comprise two-third of all grocery shoppers in retail stores. Most of the women shoppers go on Saturday followed by Sunday for grocery shopping. Gutierrez and Jegasothy (2010) have reported that majority of mothers (59.2%) go for grocery shopping about once a week or 2 to 3 times a week. Nearly eight per cent mothers visit stores about once a month for grocery shopping.

Frequency of children accompanying mothers on shopping trips: Pettersson *et al.* (2004) have observed that majority of parents go on shopping with children at weekends and do 'weekly shopping'. However, parents have different opinions with regard to shopping with children. Some parents think that shopping with children is an opportunity for them to spend time with them and enjoy their company. But at the same time, some parents opine that shopping becomes difficult and time consuming because children demand too many things in grocery stores. Therefore, some parents avoid grocery shopping with children. However, younger children prefer to go to a grocery store for purchasing foods with family. Oyewole *et al.* (2010) have found that seventy four per cent mothers take children on shopping trips once a week followed by twelve per cent mothers whose children accompany them twice a week. Soni and Arora (2010) and Vohra and Soni (2015) have found that if parents and children go to retail stores frequently for grocery shopping, children show more interest in purchasing foods.

Children's role in buying foods in retail stores: Children represent potential buyers for marketers. Their buying behaviour varies according to their age and types of products in grocery stores (Pettersson *et al.*, 2004). Younger children seem to enjoy collecting fruits and vegetables together with the adult while older children are seen to discuss about candy and other non-food products found in supermarkets such as candles, toys and magazines. In comparison to boys, girls help parents in shopping especially in buying breakfast cereals or fruits. Some children also express a desire for buying cereals themselves (Atkin, 1978). Norgaard *et al.* (2007) have highlighted that decision making is a joint process of children and parents while shopping foods. As grocery shoppers, children play different roles in retail stores. They act as initiators and participate in the initiation stage of the family food buying process. They act as idea generators, thereby making active and direct influence attempts in the family food shopping decisions. In their health influencer role, children try to influence family members to buy healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables. Ebster *et al.* (2009) have investigated that children who are at perceptual stage (ages 3-7 years) make more purchase requests than children who are at analytical (ages 8-10 years) and reflective stages (11 years and above). However, if their view is restricted through

sitting in a shopping cart, the probability of their purchase requests also decline. Further in a recent study conducted in India by Vohra and Soni (2015), it has been found that children who frequently accompany parents on food shopping trips to retail stores show more active behaviour in retail stores. They often recall food advertisements and request foods which are advertised on television; pull mothers to show foods that they want to buy in the store; make frequent requests for those foods which have a game on its package and select the foods according to tastes and preferences. More so, if they spend more time in retail stores, they tend to make more purchase requests. Younger children behave more actively in retail stores than older children.

Seeking opinion of children while buying foods: As tremendous changes have occurred in dietary habits of children in India (Kaushik et al., 2011), mothers also seek opinion of children about the food that they wish to buy in retail stores. Atkin (1978) found that nearly thirty four per cent parents either initiate children for selecting breakfast cereals or children select cereals themselves. However in two third cases, children take the initiative and express desire for a cereal themselves. Moreover, if parents seek children's opinion regarding food shopping, they also provide greater support in shopping (Soni and Arora, 2010). The frequency of initiating requests is high in case of younger children in comparison to older children (Atkin, 1978).

Foods mostly requested by children in retail stores: Galst and White (1976) have found that children prefer those foods which are displayed in TV commercials. Whenever children go to supermarket along with parents, they request meats, fruits, vegetables, dairy products and foods which are frequently advertised on television. Cereals and candies, however, are the most heavily requested items by children. Atkin (1978) has observed that majority of children prefer a particular brand of breakfast cereal because of premiums and incentives. Very few children seem to consider nutritive merits in distinguishing among various brands. They show much interest in the choice of sweets and least interest in the choice of fish and meat (Norgaard et al., 2007). O'Dougherty et al. (2006) have found that majority of children request parents to buy sweets and snacks followed by fruits and vegetables, dairy and prepackaged meals in a supermarket. Nearly half of the time, a request is initiated by a child. Moreover, children's buying decisions in supermarkets are affected by previous knowledge of brands and/or marketing techniques. From the above discussion, it can be seen that hardly any study has been conducted in India that investigates frequency of mothers visiting retail stores to buy foods, frequency of children accompanying mothers on shopping trips, children's role in buying foods in retail stores, seeking opinion of children while buying foods and foods mostly requested by children in retail stores across gender and age groups. So the present study has been planned to understand this phenomenon.

DATA BASE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data have been collected from three cities of Punjab state of India—Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana. Mothers were chosen as the basic sampling unit for the present study as they are seen to be primary caregivers for children and have participated in majority of studies related to

children (Wardle et al., 2005; Scaglioni et al., 2008). The mothers were approached through the schools. Two schools were selected from each district. For the aforesaid purpose, a list of affiliated CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) schools in Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana was procured from the CBSE website (www.cbse.nic.in). This website revealed that 63 schools in Amritsar, 74 schools in Jalandhar and 82 schools in Ludhiana were listed with CBSE. Two schools were selected using judgmental sampling out of the listed schools in each district. Only those schools were selected that enrolled students with various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. With the permission of Principal of each school, teachers were requested to distribute envelopes seeking informed consent of parents to participate in the survey amongst students from Kindergarten to class V. The next day teachers distributed questionnaires to those students whose parents agreed to participate in the survey. The children were then asked to take the questionnaire home and get it filled by the mother. In case two children were studying in the same school, the mother was requested to fill the questionnaire keeping in mind the child who had brought it. Of the 525 questionnaires that were distributed to children, 473 (90.1%) usable questionnaires were returned. Thus, a total sample of 473 mothers of children in the age category 4-11 years was obtained. Children in this age category have been selected because they are neither too young (to lack understanding of advertisements) nor too old (to make independent purchases) (John, 1999). They are also seen to influence food purchase decisions of the family in retail stores (Norgaard et al., 2007). In the present sample, 216 (45.7%) are female and 257 (54.3%) are male children. Majority of parents, mothers (82.5%) and fathers (80.5%) fall in the age group 30-40 years. The respondents belong to four income categories with household income: less than INR 20,000 (\$299) (33.6%), between INR 20,000 and 30,000 (\$299-\$448) (24.9%), between INR 30,000 and 40,000 (\$448-\$597) (16.3%) and more than INR 40,000 (\$597) (25.2%).

Measures used

Data have been collected through a structured, pre-tested and non-disguised questionnaire. It is generally seen that young children accompany mothers on food shopping trips to retail stores and their food purchase requests are influenced by the frequency of visiting retail stores. Therefore, responses of mothers have been sought regarding frequency of mothers visiting retail stores to buy foods, frequency of children accompanying them on shopping trips, children's behaviour while shopping in retail stores, foods mostly requested by children in retail stores and frequency of seeking opinion of children while buying foods in retail stores. In order to develop a comprehensive questionnaire for mothers, previous literature has been reviewed exhaustively. The foods which are mostly requested by children in retail stores have been chosen from a recent study conducted in India by Soni and Vohra (2014). It has been generally seen that majority of children request advertised foods in retail stores (Borzekowski and Robinson, 2001; Arnas, 2006). Thus, these food items have been selected by keeping into account the advertisements which are frequently broadcasted on children's television networks in India. According to a study conducted by Soni and Vohra (2014), it has been found that foods which are frequently advertised on children's television networks mainly fall into eleven food categories. Out of these,

seven most frequently advertised food categories have been chosen. These food categories comprise beverages and fruit juices (such as Amul flavoured milk and juices); sugared snacks (such as Kellogg's Chocos, Britannia fruit cakes, Prime Time fruit muffin); salty snacks (such as chips, Kurkure, Haldiram namkeens, Lehar namkeens); confectionery (such as candies, chewing gums); ready-to-cook foods (such as Maggi, pasta, soups); ice-creams and biscuits.

Further, in order to make the questionnaire more comprehensive and concrete, face-to-face meetings with mothers have been undertaken. Apart from this, in the process of preparing the skeleton of questionnaire, online discussions and telephonic deliberations with researchers, academicians and experts in this field on this topic have also been taken up. A pilot test of approximately 80 respondents has been conducted and their view points on various segments of questionnaire have been sought. This helped to make improvements in some portions of the questionnaire. With a few deletions and additions, the final questionnaire was developed. Descriptive analysis (frequencies and percentages) have been used to analyze the data using SPSS 19.0 version.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

At the first step, the mothers were asked to specify the frequency of visiting retail stores to buy foods. Their responses in this regard are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 depicts that overall majority of respondents (61.5%) visit retail stores 'according to need' to buy foods. Similar trends have been observed in responses of mothers of younger and older children. Mothers of older children respond that more than two third of them visit retail stores 'according to need' to buy foods. Contrary to this, nearly fifty seven per cent mothers of younger children visit retail stores 'according to need' to buy foods. Overall mothers of male children visit retail stores 'according to need' more frequently in comparison to mothers of female children as percentage is high in case of male children than percentage of female children (63.4% than 59.3%).

Overall nearly twenty two per cent respondents visit retail stores either once a week or once in two weeks. However, 25.6 per cent mothers of younger children respond that they visit retail stores either once a week or once in two weeks. This percentage is low in case of mothers of older children (17.9%). Further high percentage of mothers of female children (23.1%) are reported to visit retail stores either once a week or once in two weeks than mothers of male children (21.4%). Similar trends have been seen in responses of mothers of younger children. Whereas in case of older children, mothers respond that frequency of visiting retail stores either once a week or once in two weeks is high for male children (19.2%) in comparison to female children (16.3%).

The mothers were further asked to report the frequency with which children accompany them on shopping trips on five point scale from always to never. Their responses on this dimension are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 1: Visiting retail stores to buy foods

Frequency of Visiting Retail Stores	Younger Children (Age 4-7 Years)						Older Children (Age 8-11 Years)						Overall					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	N	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent
Once a week	22	15.5	17	13.7	39	14.7	11	9.6	7	7.6	18	8.7	33	12.8	24	11.1	57	12.1
Once in two weeks	11	7.7	18	14.5	29	10.9	11	9.6	8	8.7	19	9.2	22	8.6	26	12.0	48	10.1
Once in a month	21	14.8	25	20.2	46	17.3	18	15.6	13	14.1	31	15.0	39	15.2	38	17.6	77	16.3
According to need	88	62.0	64	51.6	152	57.1	75	65.2	64	69.6	139	67.1	163	63.4	128	59.3	291	61.5
Total	142	100.0	124	100.0	266	100.0	115	100.0	92	100.0	207	100.0	257	100.0	216	100.0	473	100.0

Source : (Author's own calculation)

Table 2: Frequency of children accompanying mothers on shopping trips

Frequency of children accompanying mothers	Younger Children (Age 4-7 Years)						Older Children (Age 8-11 Years)						Overall					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	N	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent
Always	30	21.1	22	17.7	52	19.5	13	11.3	5	5.4	18	8.7	43	16.7	27	12.5	70	14.8
Frequently	26	18.3	16	12.9	42	15.8	13	11.3	16	17.4	29	14.0	39	15.2	32	14.8	71	15.0
Sometimes	68	47.9	78	62.9	146	54.9	78	67.8	60	65.2	138	66.7	146	56.8	138	63.9	284	60.0
Rarely	15	10.6	7	5.7	22	8.3	10	8.7	9	9.8	19	9.2	25	9.7	16	7.4	41	8.7
Never	3	2.1	1	0.8	4	1.5	1	0.9	2	2.2	3	1.4	4	1.6	3	1.4	7	1.5
Total	142	100.0	124	100.0	266	100.0	115	100.0	92	100.0	207	100.0	257	100.0	216	100.0	473	100.0

Source : (Author's own calculation)

Table 2 reveals that nearly sixty per cent children 'sometimes' accompany mothers on shopping trips. This percentage is low in case of younger children (54.9%) and high in case of older children (66.7%). Overall more than one fourth respondents (29.8%) also report that children 'always' or 'frequently' accompany them on shopping trips. The percentage of accompanying children on shopping trips 'always' or 'frequently' is higher for younger children than older children. The table shows that 35.3 per cent mothers of younger children opine that children 'always' or 'frequently' accompany them on food shopping trips in retail stores. Contrary to this, percentage of accompanying older children 'always' or 'frequently' on shopping trips is low (22.7%). Only few respondents (1.5%) report that children 'never' accompany them for shopping to retail stores. Similar findings have been revealed from responses of mothers of younger and older children. Thus, the table reveals that majority of children accompany mothers on shopping trips.

Overall nearly sixty four per cent mothers of female children respond that children 'sometimes' accompany them in retail stores. This percentage is higher than male children (56.8%) who 'sometimes' accompany mothers on food shopping trips. However, reverse trend has been found for mothers of older children as percentage of male children accompanying mothers (67.8%) 'sometimes' is more than percentage of female children (65.2%) accompanying mothers in retail stores. Further, overall as well as for younger children, percentage of male children who 'always' or 'frequently' accompany mothers in retail stores is high in comparison to mothers of female children. However, this percentage is similar for younger male and female children as nearly twenty three per cent mothers of younger children report that their children (male and female) accompany them on shopping trips.

Further it is seen that some children assist parents in food purchases while others act as initiators and buy foods themselves. Therefore, the mothers were further questioned about child's role while shopping for foods in retail stores. Their responses in this regard are revealed in Table 3.

Table 3: Children's role in buying foods in retail stores

Children's Role in buying foods	Younger Children (Age 4-7 Years)						Older Children (Age 8-11 Years)						Overall					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	N	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent
No Interest	6	4.2	3	2.4	9	3.4	1	0.9	3	3.3	4	1.9	7	2.7	6	2.8	13	2.7
Assist in food purchases	104	73.3	96	77.4	200	75.1	81	70.4	70	76.0	151	72.9	185	72.0	166	76.8	351	74.3
Buy foods themselves	31	21.8	24	19.4	55	20.7	33	28.7	17	18.5	50	24.2	64	24.9	41	19.0	105	22.2
Both Assist and Buy	1	0.7	1	0.8	2	0.8	0	0.0	2	2.2	2	1.0	1	0.4	3	1.4	4	0.8
Total	142	100.0	124	100.0	266	100.0	115	100.0	92	100.0	207	100.0	257	100.0	216	100.0	473	100.0

Source : (Author's own calculation)

Table 4: Seeking opinion of children while buying foods in retail stores

Seeking Opinion of children	Younger Children (Age 4-7 Years)						Older Children (Age 8-11 Years)						Overall					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	N	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent
Always	21	14.8	23	18.5	44	16.5	21	18.3	13	14.1	34	16.4	42	16.3	36	16.7	78	16.5
Frequently	17	12.0	18	14.5	35	13.2	22	19.1	16	17.4	38	18.4	39	15.2	34	15.7	73	15.4
Sometimes	84	59.2	75	60.5	159	59.8	55	47.8	55	59.8	110	53.1	139	54.1	130	60.2	269	56.9
Rarely	14	9.8	6	4.9	20	7.5	14	12.2	7	7.6	21	10.2	28	10.9	13	6.0	41	8.7
Never	6	4.2	2	1.6	8	3.0	3	2.6	1	1.1	4	1.9	9	3.5	3	1.4	12	2.5
Total	142	100.0	124	100.0	266	100.0	115	100.0	92	100.0	207	100.0	257	100.0	216	100.0	473	100.0

Source : (Author's own calculation)

As seen from the Table 3, more than seventy per cent respondents affirm that children assist them in food purchases in retail stores. Similar percentages have been observed in responses of mothers of younger (75.2%) and older children (72.9%). Overall nearly twenty two per cent respondents state that children take initiative in buying foods themselves in retail stores. Older children more actively participate in food shopping than younger children. Therefore, twenty four per cent mothers of older children respond that their children buy foods themselves. Whereas nearly twenty one per cent mothers of younger children respond that children buy foods themselves.

Further, by comparing responses of mothers of male and female children, it has been found that the percentage of female children (76.9%) who assist in food purchases is more than percentage of male children (72%). On the other hand, male children buy foods themselves in higher percentage than female children (24.9% than 19%). Similar findings have been extracted from responses of mothers of younger and older children. This shows that children actively participate in food shopping in retail stores.

Sometimes, mothers also ask children to specify their opinion while buying foods. Therefore, mothers were asked to state the frequency of asking children's opinion while buying foods on five point scale from always to never. The responses of mothers in this regard are given in Table 4. Table 4 reveals that more than half respondents (56.9%) ask children to express their opinion 'sometimes' while buying foods in retail stores. Mothers of younger children and older children also agreed with this statement. Overall more than one fourth respondents (31.9%) also report that they ask their children's opinion 'always' or 'frequently' with regard to grocery shopping. The percentage of seeking children's opinion 'always' or 'frequently' while buying foods in retail stores is higher for older children than younger children. Table 4 shows that 34.8 per cent mothers of older children 'always' or 'frequently' seek opinion of children on food shopping trips. Contrary to this, percentage of seeking opinion of younger children 'always' or 'frequently' in retail stores is low (29.7%). Very few respondents (2.5%) 'never' ask for children's opinion while purchasing foods. Similar findings have been revealed from responses of mothers of younger and older children. Thus, the table reveals that majority of mothers ask opinion of children while shopping foods in retail stores.

Overall percentage of mothers of female children who 'sometimes' seek their children's opinion while buying foods in retail stores (60.2%) is more than percentage of mothers of male children (54.1%). Similar responses have been reported for mothers of younger children as well as mothers of older children. This shows that mothers frequently discuss about shopping of grocery items with girls than boys. This may be attributed to the reason that females are mainly

responsible for food shopping and preparation (McHugh et al., 1993; Lake et al., 2006). Therefore, mothers wish to guide them regarding grocery shopping in retail stores.

Not only, mothers seek children's opinion while buying foods in retail stores, children also request parents to buy foods in retail stores. Hence, the mothers were asked to specify the foods most frequently requested by children in retail stores out of the listed foods—beverages and fruit juices (such as Amul flavoured milk and juices); sugared snacks (such as Kellogg's Chocos, Britannia fruit cakes, Prime Time fruit muffin); salty snacks (such as chips, Kurkure, Haldiram namkeens, Lehar namkeens); confectionery (such as candies, chewing gums); ready-to-cook foods (such as Maggi, pasta, soups); ice-creams and biscuits.

Table 5: Food mostly requested by children in retail stores

Foods mostly requested by children	Younger Children (Age 4-7 Years)						Older Children (Age 8-11 Years)						Overall					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	N	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent	n	Per cent
Beverages and fruit juices (e.g. Amul flavoured milk and fruit juices)	99	69.7	69	55.6	168	63.2	72	62.6	58	63.0	130	62.8	171	66.5	127	58.5	298	63.0
Sugared snacks (e.g. Kellogg's Chocos, Britannia fruit cakes, Prime Time fruit muffin)	57	40.1	49	39.5	106	39.8	53	46.1	44	47.8	97	46.9	110	42.8	93	43.1	203	42.9
Salty snacks (e.g. Chips, Kurkure, Haldiram namkeens, Lehar namkeens)	111	78.2	95	76.6	206	77.4	80	69.6	74	80.4	154	74.4	191	74.3	169	78.2	360	76.1
Confectionery (e.g. Candies, Chewing gums)	65	45.8	60	48.4	125	47.0	41	35.7	31	33.7	72	34.8	106	41.2	91	42.1	197	41.6
Ready-to-cook foods (e.g. Maggi, Pasta, Soups etc.)	87	61.3	78	62.9	165	62.0	74	64.3	65	70.7	139	67.1	161	62.6	143	66.2	304	64.3
Ice-creams	75	52.8	70	56.5	145	54.5	54	47.0	62	67.4	116	56.0	129	50.2	132	61.1	261	55.2
Biscuits	81	57.0	72	58.1	153	57.5	68	59.1	54	58.7	122	58.9	149	58.0	126	58.3	275	58.1

Source : (Author's own calculation)

Table 5 reveals that overall as well as younger and older children request 'salty snacks'. The percentage of requesting salty snacks is more than seventy per cent in each case. Other foods which are mostly requested by children (overall) are 'ready-to-cook foods', 'beverages and fruit juices', 'biscuits' and 'ice-creams'. Their respective percentages are—64.3 per cent, 63.0 per cent, 58.1 per cent and 55.2 per cent. Similar findings have been revealed from responses of mothers of older children. Older children request 'ready-to-cook foods' (67.1%), 'beverages and fruit juices' (62.8%), 'biscuits' (58.9%) and 'ice-creams' (56%). Whereas younger children request 'beverages and fruit juices' (63.2%), 'ready-to-cook foods' (62%), 'biscuits' (57.5%) and 'ice-creams' (54.5%).

Further, by comparing responses of mothers of male and female children, it has been found that overall salty snacks are the most frequently requested foods by male and female children in retail stores. However, the percentage of requesting salty snacks is higher in case of female children (78.2%) than male children (74.3%). Other foods which are requested by male children are 'beverages and fruit juices' (66.5%), 'ready-to-cook foods' (62.6%), 'biscuits' (58.0%), 'ice-creams' (50.2%) 'sugared snacks' (42.8%) and 'confectionery' (41.2%). Girl children request 'ready-to-cook foods' (66.2%), 'ice-creams' (61.1%), 'beverages and fruit juices' (58.5%), 'biscuits' (58.3%), 'sugared snacks' (43.1%) and confectionery (42.1%).

In case of younger children, majority of male and female children request salty snacks (78.2% and 76.6%). Other foods which are requested by male children include 'beverages and fruit juices' (69.7%), 'ready-to-cook foods' (61.3%), 'biscuits' (57.0%) and 'ice-creams' (52.8%). Whereas female children request 'ready-to-cook foods' (62.9%), 'biscuits' (58.1%), 'ice-creams' (56.5%) and 'beverages and fruit juices' (55.6%). Thus, the analysis reveals that male children request foods in high proportion than female children in retail stores.

Further, a reverse trend has been revealed from responses of mothers of older children. This trend shows that female children request salty snacks in higher proportion (80.4%) than male children (69.6%). Other foods which female children request are – 'ready-to-cook foods' (70.7%), 'ice-creams' (67.4%), 'beverages and fruit juices' (63.0%) and 'biscuits' (58.7%). Whereas 'ready-to-cook foods', 'beverages and fruit juices', 'biscuits', 'ice-creams', and 'sugared snacks' are mostly requested by male children. Their respective percentages are—64.3%, 62.6%, 59.1%, 47.0% and 46.1%.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The study points to the fact that majority of mothers visit retail stores 'according to need'. Only twelve per cent mothers visit retail stores 'once a week'. The reason attributed to this can be dearth of time with mothers especially with working women (McHugh et al., 1993). More so, the findings of Pettersson et al. (2004) also reveal that working women do not have time and energy to go for shopping with children after work during weekdays. Hence, they prefer to go for grocery shopping on weekends. Most of children accompany mothers 'sometimes' on food shopping trips in retail stores. Nearly twenty nine per cent children accompany mothers 'always' and 'frequently' in retail stores. This may be so because mothers think that shopping with children is a cumbersome process as children demand too many things during shopping in retail stores (Pettersson et al., 2004). More so, younger children more frequently accompany mothers on shopping trips than older children. This is due to the reason that younger children are seen to be more interested in visiting a grocery store for purchasing foods with family (Pettersson et al., 2004).

The study further depicts that nearly three fourth children assist mothers in food purchases and twenty two per cent children buy foods themselves. The interesting finding is that percentage of younger children assisting mothers in food shopping is higher than older children. More so, girls are more helpful while grocery shopping. These findings correspond with the finding of Pettersson et al. (2004) which reveal that younger children especially girls assist parents in grocery shopping. Further, the findings of Atkin (1978) who revealed that one third mothers initiate purchase requests are also corroborated as respondents in present study report that nearly thirty two per cent mothers 'always or frequently' seek opinion of children regarding grocery shopping in retail stores. This may be so because by asking opinion of children regarding foods to be purchased, mothers wish to develop their interest towards healthy eating habits as most of the time, children request unhealthy foods in retail stores. Also involving children in food shopping is a part of 'involvement' feeding practices which is used by mothers to inculcate healthy dietary habits among children (Musher-Eizenman and Holub, 2007).

Majority of foods that children request in retail stores are – salty snacks, ready-to-cook foods, beverages and fruit juices, biscuits, ice-creams and sugared snacks. These findings are in line with the findings of O'Dougherty et al. (2006) and Ogba and Johnson (2010) who found that children request snack foods in retail stores. However, mothers report that nearly forty two per cent children request confectionery items in retail stores. This finding contradicts previous research which concludes that majority of children request confectionery in retail stores (Galst and White 1976; Norgaard et al., 2007; Ogba and Johnson, 2010).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

As majority of women visit retail stores ‘according to need’ because of paucity of time, retailers may make such arrangements in retail stores which may reduce their shopping time and make shopping an easy process. Retailers may focus on convenience of store location, keep grocery items at reachable shelves, focus on availability of quality convenience/ ready-to-cook foods, appoint well-trained sales personnel and use informative boards to guide women shoppers. The study highlights that younger children more frequently accompany mothers on shopping trips than older children. Most of children infuriate mothers and make continuous requests for foods in retail stores, retailers may appoint female attendants so that they may keep children busy and mothers can easily shop grocery items. Further increasing trends of online grocery shopping is a big challenge for physical grocery retailers. Hence, retailers may innovate some interesting methods to retain women shoppers. As part of the study, it has been reported that most of children request salty snacks, ready-to-cook foods, beverages and fruit juices, biscuits, ice-creams and sugared snacks. Retailers may keep these foods at reachable shelf locations or near billing counters to target children.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to Punjab state only and the sample size is small owing to time and resource limitations. This may somewhat limit the generalizability of the findings. The present study has been conducted through a questionnaire and survey based techniques are known to be associated with their own limitations. In this study, data have been collected from mothers of children of age group 4-11 years. These findings may be different if responses have been sought directly from children.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study investigates types of foods requested by children of age categories 4-11 years in retail stores. Further, this study can also be conducted on other age group children (more than 11 years). Responses from children can also be directly sought about this issue. As growth of organized retail stores is tremendous in metro cities, this study can be done in metro cities.

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