# CONSUMERS' NOODLE CONSUMPTION: EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICES IN NEPAL

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## ABSTRACT

Instant noodles' taste, usefulness, and satiation have become trendy among people of all ages. Quick noodles are not only delicious but also generally accessible everywhere. The research aimed to examine consumers' experiences and practices regarding noodle consumption. The study combined qualitative and quantitative research methods under an exploratory research approach. The study's data gathering procedure involved a preliminary interview and a second structured survey for primary data. The original interview aimed to learn how customers experiences and practices about noodle consumption. The first round interview conducted with several people of different district of Kathmandu valley to comprehend noodle consumption experiences and their practices. Based on the first rounds of interviews, a structural survey questionnaire was created and circulated to more customers of different brands of noodles again in various districts of Kathmandu Valley to collect quantitative related data. The research project used a purposeful sampling method to gather information on consumer behaviors and to eat patterns related to noodles. The study revealed that consumers usually focused on purchasing noodles in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur districts. The majority of consumers eat Quick noodles as their first choice. Noodle consumption satisfied customers. Consumers placed Waiwai third, RARA second, and Chaudhary Group Quick Noodle first. Therefore, Quick brand noodles were the most popular among consumers, followed by WaiWai, Rara, 2PM, Current Rumpum, and Preeti.

**Keywords:** experience of consumers, noodle consumption, qualitative study

## INTRODUCTION

In many Asian nations, noodles are one of the main dishes. The popularity of instant noodles is growing globally as a culinary item. The benefits of instant noodles include their taste, nutrition, convenience,

safety, longer shelf-life, and affordable price. Colour, flavor, mix, quality, rehydration rates prolonged storage are crucial for instant noodle quality criteria (Gulia *et al.,* 2014). Nepal is a country that consumes more noodles per person than Korea and Vietnam (Baral & Shrestha, 2021).

Chinese people have appreciated starch noodles as a cuisine for at least 1400 years. Before that, most grains containing a lot of starch were boiled whole, like cooked rice. The North Wei Dynasty was the first written reference to starch noodles (Tan *et al.,* 2009). Instant noodles have been a mainstay of most Far Eastern kitchens since their debut in 1958. China is where noodles were consumed initially more than 2000 years ago. They were afterward dispatched to Japan and Europe. The first instant, "Chicken Ramen," which could be served anywhere, was not released until 1958 by Nissin Foods of Japan (Natadjaja, 2003). Noodles are a common dish made from extruded dough made of wheat flour. The instant noodle, a well-known creator of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Japanese roots, was conceived in Japan in 1958 by Mr. Momofuku Ando. Nisshin products produced the revolutionary meal under the name Chicken Ramen.

Noodles are made with a dough sheet made from flour, common salt or an alkaline salt mixture, and water. The dough sheet is then cut into strips, strands, elbows, or other shapes (Tan *et al.,* 2009). It is often manufactured mainly from wheat but can also be created from the flour or starch of other cereals, root or tuber crops, legume flours or protein isolates, and other products like plantains. The famous instant noodle, apparently of Asian origin, is an older processed food still widely consumed in South East Asia, particularly in Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, China, Malaysia, and Nepal. Noodles have long played a significant role in the diets of many people groups worldwide (Baral and Shrestha, 2021; Liu *et al.,* 2013; Tan *et al.,* 2009).

People have consumed noodles as one of Nepal's most common food types, a recent trend. The only people who were knowledgeable about noodles on a business basis before to 2017 were individuals who had left the country. After 2017 B.S., the Nepalese market found the beginning of noodles, which began to supply the market fully commercially in 2032 B.S. Rara, an instant white noodle, was introduced in the early 1980s by Pokhara city's Gandaki noodles private limited. Wai-Wai by Chaudhary Group (CG) eventually entered the market sometime around 1985. Popular among the

public were "Wai-Wai," brown, peppery, precooked noodles (Amatya, 2019; Baral & Shrestha, 2021).

The national trading limited imported the equipment and machinery needed to make noodles in Nepal in 2032 B.S. Currently, several factories produce numerous brands of instant noodles, each with a particular flavor. The cuisine known as instant noodles is well prepared. So, it is also called instant noodles. There are currently more than twenty varieties of instant noodles available in Nepal (Amatya, 2019).

In recent years, several countries worldwide have seen a considerable decline in the amount of food prepared at home in the kitchen. Most of the time, metropolitan regions incorporated processed and ready meals into people's regular diets. Urban areas led the adoption of processed and ready-meal goods into people's daily diets in various nations. People are more likely to be seen "munching on" something during traveling. Also, more time is spent away from home today than in the 1990s and 2000s. A few time-consuming activities that contribute to this tendency include dropping off and picking up kids from extracurricular activities and school, as well as going to the gym, getting a fashion or beauty treatment, or other activities (Amatya, 2019; Baral & Shrestha, 2021; Gulia *et al.,* 2014; Nagy, 2018; Nigam & Jain, 2016).

In this regard, the current study aims to examine consumer behaviors and experiences related to noodles consumption in Nepal. So, the study concentrated on specific consumer experiences with eating noodles in Kathmandu valley by qualitative and quantitative study. This study explores how consumers habit of consuming noodles in everyday life? Consequently, the research questions concern the experiences of Nepalese customers with eating noodles. How are noodles consumed in Kathmandu Valley? Based on research issues, the research objectives are to examine consumers' habits of consuming noodles. It also determines the aim to identify the consumers eating practices of noodles.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumers considered instant noodles to have been a staple food for many years for consumption. Ramyon, an instant noodle famous in Korea, is a common food item found at cafeterias, restaurants, grocery stores, and retail establishments. Instant noodles are a well-known brand in Korea manufactured by produced by Nong Shim Co., Ltd. Many Indonesian consumers have been eating instant noodles for fast quality serving food,

ease of cooking, and other factors. The effectiveness of the packaging system influences consumer practice of instant noodles (Natadjaja, 2003).

Liu *et al.,* (2013) endeavored to gather data for enhancing product quality, creating new products, and positioning different items for noodle makers. A customer survey of dried noodles was conducted in Beijing in 2010 to examine consumer behavior, perceptions, and demand. The structured questionnaire was used to investigate 1200 consumers in eleven Beijing-controlled districts. The findings revealed that the most popular dried Chinese noodle varieties in order of choice were egg noodles, fine noodles, mixed grain noodles, vegetable noodles, and lamian.

Instant noodles are the most popular convenience meal in the world currently due to their excellent flavor, convenience, and ease of preparation. The primary determinants of the noodles' approval are their color, texture, cooking efficiency, and oil absorption. The dish's greater fat content is generally responsible for the health problems of eating fast noodles. Developing and implementing methods for consuming less oil and fat may be possible to avoid these issues and lessen the risks they pose. Also, to ensure that people get better nutrition, instant noodles can be enriched with essential micronutrients, including vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other flours that enhance their nutritional properties reported by Gulia *et al.,* (2014).

Begum (2016) focused on consumers' opinions of Maggi instant noodles following their recall and relaunch. Data for the study was gathered from 93 postgraduate students from various streams with a standardized questionnaire. The findings demonstrated that respondents prioritized unique flavor and taste while choosing quick noodles. Students considered noodles as tastier, faster and healthier food.

In the Hungarian market Nagy (2018) examined the factors influencing consumers' inclination to purchase instant noodle products. Five critical factors influenced customers' readiness to buy instant noodles, which was used to gauge consumers' purchase intentions for instant noodles. The research found four essential components promotion, packaging, price, and convenience, influencing customers' readiness to buy instant noodles.

A model analysis study of consumer attitudes and behavior toward instant noodle products" is required to identify consumer behavior toward instant noodle goods and its relationship to a company's marketing plan researched by Eduardsah and Wartaka (2018). The study aims to determine

consumer attitudes, behavior toward instant noodles and the relative important factors. Data were collected from 200 respondents in Jakarta's south. The Fishbein multi-attribute model of statistical tool used to examine research objectives. The research found marketing strategy is very important to increase purchase behaviour of customer.

Customers' satisfaction levels with the goods or services are significantly influenced by the level of cooperation among supply chain partners and the network's structure. The study used a descriptive survey design and a standardized Likert scale questionnaire. The structured questionnaire distributed to 381 noodle dealers in Ekiti. The supply chain management techniques are crucial elements for the manufacturing companies, particularly those in the noodles sector, must closely monitor to delight their customers reported by Ogunmola and Akeke, (2018)

In Nepal (Amatya, 2019) aimed to evaluate instant noodle preferences in Kathmandu City. The research design was descriptive and causal-comparative. Structured questionnaires were used to collect 100 samples. Descriptive and inferential analyses were carried out to examine the data and test hypothesis. According to the study, brand, price, quality, and availability are key factors of purchasing noodles in Kathmandu City.

The perceived value affects customers' intent to purchase from Wakaka Medan explained by Augustinus (2020). Customers' willingness to buy a product or service can be increased the perception of the value of the product or service. The coefficient of correlation and coefficient of determination tests revealed a modest association between perceived value and purchase intention. The result showed perceived value had a tenuous association with buy intention in Wakaka Medan.

The desirable quality of the noodles encourage the consumption of instant noodles. The process of raw materials and processing methods enhance quality of noodles observed by Adejuwon *et al.,* (2020). Noodles are often made by mixing durum wheat with water and salt. So, various products, including gluten-free noodles, have been produced using different raw materials and processing techniques. The research found instant noodles have become well-known due to their accessibility, pleasing flavor and texture, quick cooking times, minimal energy needs, and longer shelf lives.

Wartaka and Sumardjono (2020) comprehend consumer attitudes, behaviors that influence consumer purchase intention of instant noodles.

Data for the study were collected from 167 individuals in the Bogor City Area. The study followed Fishbein multi-attribute models for the analysis of data. According to the results of the Fishbein analysis, product, speed, and degree of taste and variety are the four most essential factors influence on purchase intension of noodles.

A person's spending life style habits and time management are considered economic point of view. The research work followed primary data for the analysis. Purposive sampling with a Rao analysis used to examine the objectives. 97 respondents considered for the analysis. The research reported by Handayani *et al.,* (2022) the lifestyle needs to pay more attention to those consumers who use quick noodles.

Behavior and level of understanding of instant noodles among elementary school pupils increase students' knowledge of instant noodles by exposing educational video content researched by Hardiyanti *et al.,* (2023). Pre- and post-tests were given using Google Forms to gather data for the study. The qualitative research techniques used to collect response from primary schools. The result revealed that students can increase their understanding power of instant noodles by watching videos.

A thorough evaluation of the literature in a variety of situations has been made possible by the study previously described, which has shed light on customer experiences and noodle consumption habits. Nevertheless, the studies described above are restricted to investigating the elements brand, and quality in particular that impact consumers' decisions to buy inside their own countries. Therefore, this study aims to determine the essential components of consumer purchasing habits and experiences with various noodles. It attempts to show the independence between consumer age and brand consciousness in support of the most current opinion survey. Therefore, the main objective of this study has been to investigate customer experiences and their activities in the context of Nepal.

## RESEARCH TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

The study employed an exploratory research design blending qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The use of an exploratory research design facilitates the development of a deep understanding of the phenomenon and conceptual implications (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The research study's data gathering from primary sources and analysis process consisted two steps. A first interview for qualitative nature and another second step structured survey to people located at Kathmandu

Valley for quantitative nature data. The initial consultation aimed to learn about consumers' experiences of consuming noodles. This method aids in creating questionnaires for structural surveys to examine the practices and preferences of consumers of noodles consumption in a later stage.

The research used purposeful sampling to gather information about the psychological aspect of consumer experiences and practices related to noodle consumption. The first section of the survey had an interview on general descriptions of noodles and consumers' experiences. In order to gather data, 50 respondents were called for interviews in the districts of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur. Interviews were conducted with 25 customers from Kathmandu, 15 from Bhaktapur, and 10 from the Lalitpur area.

The second section of the survey consisted structured questionnaire for the responder to analyze the experiences and practices of customers towards consuming noodles. Only 32 days, from December 30, 2022, to January 30, 2023, were allotted for the survey to be performed. The final section related data were collected from 407 noodles customers; however, 47 were insufficient, and 43 were ignored because they were outliers. A total of 317 questions were relevant for further analysis. Sample sizes were ideal for research work (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Cooper and Schindler, 2014; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Data were analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software to turn them into broad information and knowledge.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research data were analyzed in two stages. The first stages of information are related to personal interviews. Purposive sampling, a technique widely used for qualitative investigations, was utilized in the study to gather information about the psychological aspects of participants and examine their experiences. The research focused on consumers of Kathmandu Valley who consumed noodles regularly. These consumers could adequately express their experiences.

### First Phase of Analysis: Interview Analysis

The initial part of the survey included interviews with basic descriptions of noodles and consumer experiences. Interviews with 50 respondents were scheduled in the districts of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur to collect information. Interviews were conducted with 25

consumers from Kathmandu, 15 from Bhaktapur, and 10 from the Lalitpur district. During the interview, the subject was asked about their experiences with the noodle consumption. All the consumers of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur districts reacted to regularly consumed noodles as a convenient breakfast food.

In the Kathmandu district, 25 consumers were considered for an interview. In order to guarantee that the research findings could be applied generally, this was done to control the potential impact of known and unknown confounders. There were 25 consumers in the Katmandu district, including 10 men and 15 women. The age range of all consumers was 28 to 40. The subjects ate noodles regularly for six months before the study's start date. All the respondents responded that they were satisfied with the noodles' flavor, taste, packaging, quality, and price. Yet, they also thought of it as an unhealthy product. Few reported the decision regarding consuming noodles. "How frequently do you purchase instant noodles?" One of the female consumers age of 32 years old in the Baneshwor area, secondary level educated, replied:

> "I would want to order from a wholesaler 1 cartoon noodle that comes with 30 packets of fast chicken pizza flavor. I've had it every night in the morning. My kids and I can cook quickly and easily. Youngsters enjoy eating a lot. It is also convenient, which is why I enjoy it. Yet, I also noted that eating noodles is bad for our health. Nonetheless, I like to combine noodles with other seasonal vegetables. Maintaining nutritional elements is beneficial."

Several Lalitpur district consumers pondered participating in an interview to learn what they would do if their chosen brand were no longer accessible for repeat purchases. There were 15 consumers in all of Lalitpur district, including 9 men and 6 women. The age range of all consumers was 21 to 35. A few of them asked to go to another shop to search for their preferred brand. Few of them reported the decision regarding repeat purchase of noodles "If your preferred brand is not available for repeat purchase, then what will you do?" One of the female consumers age of 22 years old of Patan Dhoka, Bachelor level from humanities faculty educated, replied:

> "I want to visit another store to look for my favorite brand. I hold off on buying another if my preferred brand is not offered on the market. I'm not a fan of trying new brands of noodles. I might look at my favorite brand of noodles. I like noodles. But I don't want to mix up the flavors of normal

noodles. I wouldn't change to a different brand. I enjoy eating Wai Wai noodles since they are better than those from the previous brand in terms of quality, taste, flavor, quantity, and essence. The noodles that I enjoy the most are those from vintage brands."

At last interview in the Bhaktapur district considered taking part in a survey to identify what they would do if a new brand were available in the market. Throughout the entire Bhaktapur district, there were 10 consumers, including 6 men and 4 women. The consumers ranged in age from 28 to 48. A few of them inquired about visiting other stores to look for their favorite brand. Just a few of them spoke out in favor of the branded noodles. "If another brand of the same product appears in the market, will you prefer to stop buying this brand and buy the new brand?" One of the male consumers at Kamal Binayak, who is 30 years old a taxi driver, responded:

"I want to try a different brand of noodles. I might have a look at the fresh line of noodles. I enjoy noodles a lot. I regularly sample new noodle flavors. I would like to discontinue purchasing old brands of noodles if the new brand's quality, taste, flavor, quantity, and essence are superior to those of the previous brand. I just think about new brands such as Quick, 2pm, Current, Dynamite noodles."

Based on interviews with various consumers in the Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur districts, the study identified several problems with quantitative research and created structured questionnaires. It was determined from this interview that most surveys are necessary to comprehend consumer perspectives, behavior, attitudes, experiences, and practices related to the consumption of noodles. It is crucial to determine how much importance consumers put to buying instant noodles based on the literature search and a preliminary interview.

**Second Phase of Analysis: Structural Questionnaire Survey Analysis**

The interview was conducted using a standardized questionnaire that follows established interviewing procedures to collect data. The research work could ask structured questions using the interview protocol's. The interview process consisted of two steps. Could you give me some information about yourself and your noodle consumption experiences? It illustrated a question from the first series of demographic inquiries focused on the participant's gender, age, degree of education, and marital status.

Gathering information about consumption patterns and behavior in response to the second set of queries.

The demographic information in Table 1 is divided into two series, the first of which is connected to the respondent's sex, age, marital, and education status, and the second of which is tied to the consumers' consumption of noodles.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Information of Respondents Based on Consumption of Instant Noodles*

| Consumers Status | | Consumption of Instant Noodles Regularly | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | Yes | Total % |
| Gender | Male | 12 | 157 | 53 |
| | Female | 48 | 100 | 47 |
| | Total | 60 | 257 | 100 |
| Age | Below 20 | 24 | 63 | 27 |
| | 21 to 35 | 12 | 100 | 35 |
| | 36 to 51 | 5 | 39 | 14 |
| | Above 51 | 19 | 55 | 24 |
| | Total | 60 | 257 | 100 |
| Marital Status | Married | 24 | 63 | 28 |
| | Unmarried | 12 | 100 | 72 |
| | Total | 60 | 257 | 100 |
| Education | Formal Educated | 24 | 62 | 27 |
| | Informal Educated | 34 | 143 | 56 |
| | Non-formal Educated | 2 | 52 | 17 |
| | Total | 60 | 257 | 100 |

*Source: Survey, 2020*

Table 1 shows a demographic report of the consumers and their consumption of noodles. The majority of respondents were male, 53%. Both males and females consume instant noodles regularly. In terms of their age majority of respondents who consume instant noodles were of age 21 to 35, with 35%. As per marital status, most respondents were unmarried and regularly consumed 72%. According to the level of education majority of respondents, 56%, regularly consume instant noodles and were informally

educated. Hardiyanti *et al.,* (2023) also reported instant noodles are a very popular food among people of all ages.

A survey of customers in the districts of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur who routinely eat various noodles as a meal was done based on the first stage interview with representative consumers. The survey was conducted only for 32 days from December 30, 2022, to January 30, 2023, using purposeful sampling techniques. For the study, 317 customers who match the cross-sectional characteristics of the Kathmandu Valley were chosen using the purposive sampling techniques. The survey was completed by 116 respondents from the Kathmandu district, 109 from the Lalitpur district, and 92 from the Bhaktapur district. Figure 1 shows the respondents from various districts who participated in the research work.

**Figure 1**

*Percentage of Respondents from Different Districts in the Kathmandu Valley*
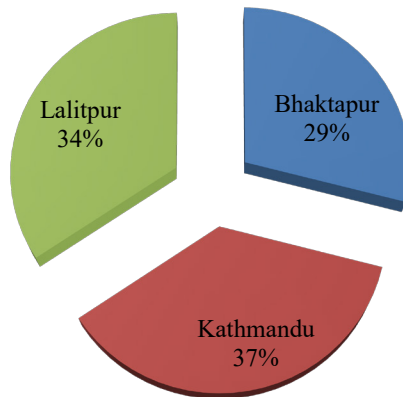


The figure 1 demonstrates majority of respondents, represented by 37% in Kathmandu district, 34% in Lalitpur district, and 29% in Bhaktapur district. Amatya (2019) also researched customer preference for instant noodles in Kathmandu valley. The research also reported Wai-Wai is the most popular brand.

It is significant to ascertain consumers' preference in purchasing instant noodles based on the preliminary interview. Figure 2 displays the emphasis that consumers place on different instant noodle varieties when making their purchasing decisions.
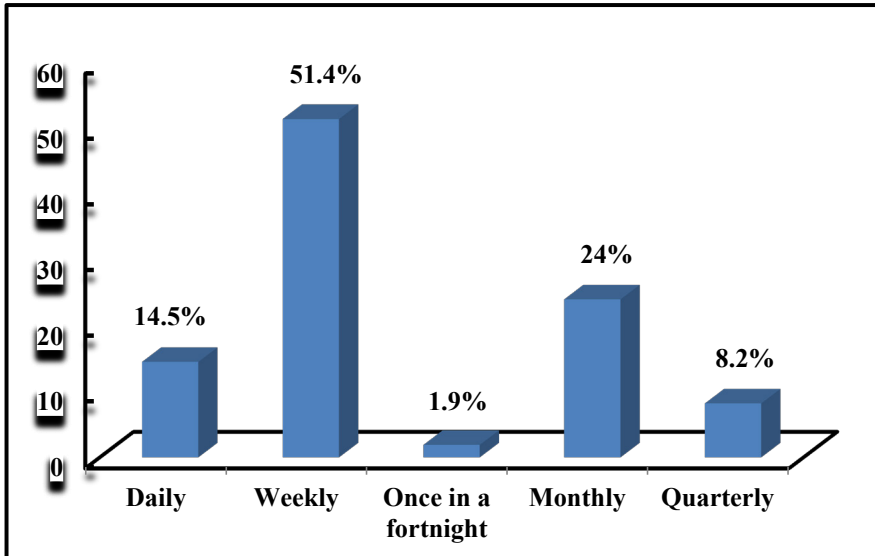
**Figure 2**

*Percentage of Customers that Prioritize Quality When Choosing an Instant Noodle*
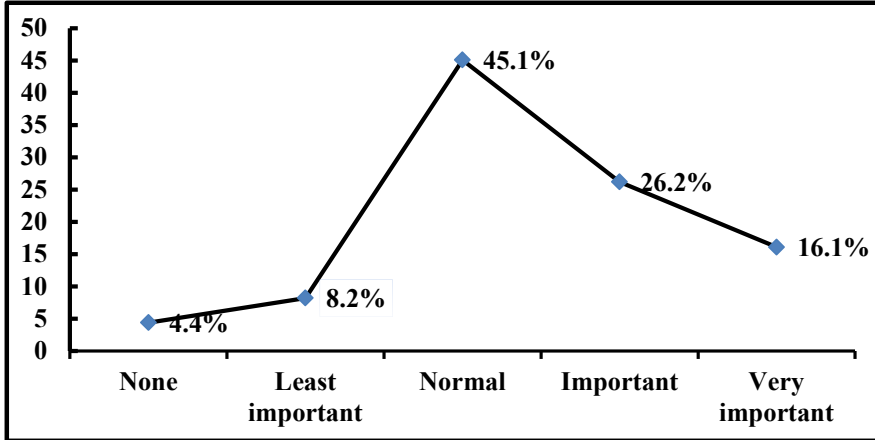


The value consumers place on purchasing an instant noodle is depicted in Figure 2. The majority of respondents, 45.1%, usually concentrated on buying noodles, with 26% of consumers paying particular attention, 16.1% paying very considerably, 8.2% paying least attention, and 4.4% were not focusing. Figure 3 shown the percentages of the point in time to purchase instant noodles.

**Figure 3**

*Percentage of the Time to Buy Instant Noodles*

The frequency of purchases of instant noodles is shown in Figure 3. Daily purchases average 14.5%, weekly purchases average 51.4%, every two weeks (1.9%), monthly purchases average 24%, and quarterly (8.2%). Majority of consumers of noodles purchase noodles weekly basis and least were of once in a fortnight. Figure 4 depicts consumer satisfaction with the consumption of noodles.

**Figure 4**

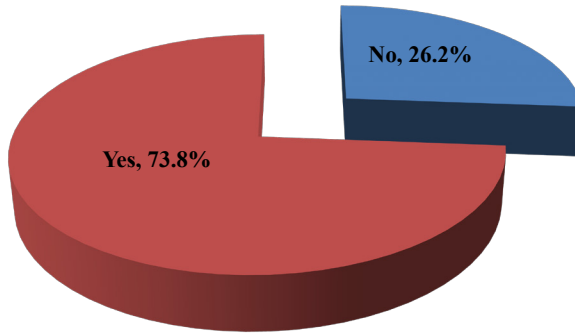*Percentage of Satisfied Consumers with Instant Noodles*



Figure 4 demonstrates that 73.8% of respondents were satisfied with the noodle. However, 26.2% of respondents said they were unhappy about eating noodles. So, most of respondents were happy to consume noodles. Furthermore shown in Figure 5 is the represented size for instant noodles: -

**Figure 5**

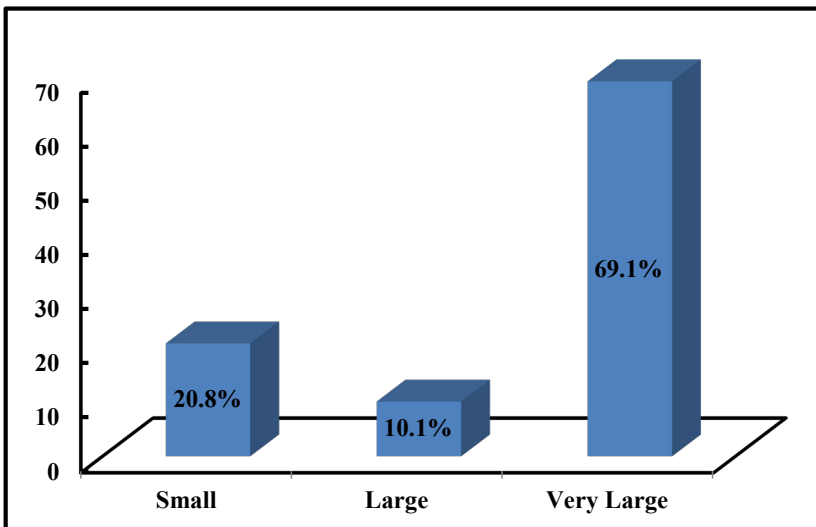*Percentage of Purchase Size of Instant Noodles*

Figure 5 demonstrates that 69.1% of respondents purchased huge-pack noodles, and 20.8% bought small ones. However, 10.1% of respondents said they purchased large size noodles. Cross tabulation between various brand of noodles and their rank shown in table 2.

**Table 2**

*Crosstab Study of Various Noodles and Their Ranking*

| Rank | 2PM | Current | Preeti | Quick | Rara | RumPum | Wai Wai | Total |
|------|-----|---------|--------|-------|------|--------|---------|-------|
| Rank 1 | 39 | 24 | 0 | 59 | 20 | 8 | 31 | 181 |
| Rank 2 | 9 | 17 | 8 | 9 | 31 | 2 | 3 | 79 |
| Rank 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 | **3** | 4 | 11 | 34 | 57 |
| Total | 48 | 41 | 13 | **71** | 55 | 21 | 68 | 317 |

*Source: Survey, 2020*

Table 2 explains the various brands of noodles along with consumer ratings. Most consumers explained Quick noodle rank 1, RARA rank 2, and Waiwai rank 3. However, Amatya (2019) found Wai-Wai is the most popular brand. Nonetheless, Quick brand noodles were the most popular choice among consumers, followed by WaiWai, Rara, 2 PM, Current Rumpum, and Preeti. Wartaka and Sumardjono (2020) reported customers had to focused on wide variety of brands of instant noodles to purchase.

**CONCLUSION**

Noodles are currently consumed worldwide as a easier and healthier food. Instant noodles are well known for their accessibility, flavor, texture, quick cooking, minimal energy needs, and extended shelf life. The emphasis among customers on quick noodles has now turned from convenience to health. The companies that make instant noodles have discovered untapped potential by enhancing product accessibility and distribution by extending urban to semi-urban and rural areas (Amatya, 2019; Gupta & Bisla, 2019).

The phenomena of global food security is growing despite consumers' lack of awareness of the problem of health concerns. Regarding this issue, consumers prioritize health and the environment as significant components of their lifestyles. The general public doesn't think it is safe for children (Patil *et al.,* 2015). Therefore, noodle producers should be aware of challenges with food security and build infrastructure that includes a food security system to address these problems.

Governments of Nepal are legally required to protect their citizens from circumstances that endanger their health, even if customers are unaware of the risk. Therefore, the government should aggressively control the ingredients and methods of making noodles (Eddyono and Subroto, 2014). The instant noodle market will experience substantial advancements in ingredient formulation and packaging methods in the upcoming years (Amatya, 2019; Baral & Shrestha, 2021; Gupta & Bisla, 2019).

The world's third-largest per capita consumer of instant noodles is Nepal. Although Nepalese noodles are consumed in more than 40 countries globally, instant noodles are growing in popularity both domestically and abroad. Nepal can produce 160 thousand of metric tonnes of instant noodles annually. However, at the moment, it only has about 103.6 thousand metric tones. It is essential to assess the practical strategies that can be used to meet the demand of consumers (Baral & Shrestha, 2021).

The research was conducted in the Kathmandu Valley to examine consumer eating habits and experiences. Both sexes routinely consume instant noodles. Most responders from Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur districts typically focused on purchasing noodles. The majority of consumers eat meals that include noodles. Instant noodles are purchased every week. Noodle consumption satisfied customers. Therefore, responders frequently bought giant bag noodles. There are many different brands of noodles available in Nepal. Customers ranked Chaudhary Group Quick Noodle first, RARA second, and Waiwai third. Yet, consumers preferred Quick brand noodles the most, followed by WaiWai, Rara, 2PM, Current Rumpum, and Preeti.

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