

# A STUDY OF CONSUMER ACCEPTABILITY FOR NOODLES IN SILIGURI MARKET

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## ABSTRACT

*For at least 2000 years the noodles have been a staple food in many parts of the world. The knowledge of early noodles came into being from the records which appeared in book written between A.D. 25 and 220 during China's East Han dynasty. However, there are other theories which suggest that Arabs were the first to introduce noodles in Italy henceforth it has its origin in the Middle East. After the modern day appearance of noodles which is being dominated by the brands, the spread and consumption of noodles is growing day in and day out. The noodles market is growing at 20% annually in India. North Bengal is no exception to those trends. Here in this study North Bengal's business centre Siliguri has been taken into consideration as an area of study. The reason for selecting this place can be summed up by understanding the fact that Siliguri has a cosmopolitan culture in its backdrop. The research methodology to be used is an empirical study which is tentatively planned for a definite sample size. The results show that a little aggressive marketing push ups for noodles by the branding companies can make a steady headway for them to bring in noodles into the plates of the Siliguri citizens to a large extent and can replace the other snacks too.*

**Keywords:** Noodles, Siliguri Citizens, North Bengal, Snacks

## INTRODUCTION

Many fast food items have flooded the markets but noodles remained as the most popular item of all of them, as it is cheaper, very easy to make and nutritious. Urban and semi-urban markets are controlled by Maggi and other players are Top Ramen and other brands. Maggi has revolutionized the concept and this product has gone to majority of the urban households. As an off-shoot of this development, noodles have become very popular in India. Good quality and cheaper product can be pushed in the market with systematic strategy and network (mpstateagro.nic.in). The noodle is a type of staple food made from some type of unleavened dough which is rolled flat and cut into one of a variety of shapes. While long thin strips may be the most common, many varieties of noodles are cut into waves, helices, tubes, strings, and shells, folded over, or cut into other shapes. Noodles are usually cooked in boiling water, sometimes with cooking oil or salt added, but are often pan fried or deep fried. Noodles can be refrigerated for short-term storage, or dried and stored for future use. In English usage, the word "noodle" is an inclusive term that denotes texture and

culinary use, and to a lesser extent, shape, as many people may associate it with the more common string varieties, such as spaghetti or ramen. Material composition or geo-cultural origin must usually be specified. However, the actual word derives from the German Nudel.

The current version of noodles has been around for over half a century on the global menu card. They are believed to have been invented by Momofuku Ando, the founder of Nissin Food Products in 1958 in Japan. Packaged under the brand name Chikin Ramen, they were priced around six times that of traditional Japanese noodles and were considered a luxury item (The Economic Times, 2011). However, in 2005 an evidence of the oldest noodles is believed to be found, which were discovered inside an overturned sealed bowl buried under three meters of sediment in Qinghai, northwest China. Scientists determined the 4,000 year old, long, thin yellow noodles were made from broomcorn millet and foxtail millet and show a fairly high level of food processing and culinary sophistication. A noodle includes all varieties from all origins, but wherever they originated, noodles have maintained their popularity over the centuries and owe their longevity to a combination of being relatively cheap yet nutritious and filling, quick to prepare, can be eaten hot or cold, can be stored for years and can be transported easily. The Traditional Japanese diet included huge amounts of rice. Even today a small bowl of rice is served with almost every meal, including breakfast. Originally from China, noodles have become an essential part of Japanese cuisine, usually as an alternative to a rice-based meal. Soba, thin brown noodles made from buckwheat, and udon, thick wheat noodles, are the traditional noodles, served hot or cold with soy-dashi flavorings. Another popular Chinese wheat noodle, Ramen, is served hot in a meat stock broth (hakubaku.com).

### **The Growing Global Market of Noodles**

With the overwhelming pace of modern man's busy lifestyles, set by increased working time, heavier traffic, growing importance given to workouts and healthy existence, people have an ever dwindling free time at their disposal and thereby demand more convenience foods and ready meals. Hurried lifestyles brought upon by the growing number of women working, has triggered a shift in cooking habits away from conventional time consuming preparation of fresh foods to easy precooked, easy to prepare meals. With consumers having less time to cook meals at home and with the contemporary mom no longer cooking, the task of preparing foods is transferred to the food processor. Increasing number of nuclear families, rise in disposable incomes, young singles with little or no cooking skills, enhanced awareness of healthful diets and increased interest in ethnic and international foods, represent additional factors that are expected to have a bearing on eating and food preparation habits. As the next generation of convenient ready and easy to prepare foods hit the market, noodles, as a product category, banking on its strength of convenience are poised to encounter days of plenty in the upcoming years. Noodles are finely tuned to fit into the consumers' ever-dwindling cooking time schedules. The trend of cooking meals in just a few minutes is gaining momentum not only among individual consumers but also among institutions and public food outlets. Even restaurants and fast food joints are turning to convenience food to meet the ever-busy consumers demand for quick service and quality food (GIA, 2011).

Asia-Pacific represents the largest regional market for noodles worldwide, as stated by the new market research report on Noodles. The region is portended to continue its dominance

over the coming years. The United States trails Asia-Pacific in terms of sales of noodles. Growth-wise, Middle East/Africa is projected to be the fastest growing regional market for noodles, with a CAGR of more than 13% over the analysis period. The research report titled “Noodles: A Global Strategic Business Report” announced by Global Industry Analysts Inc., provides a comprehensive review of the noodles markets, impact of recession on the markets, current market trends, key growth drivers, recent product introductions, recent industry activity, and profiles of major/niche global as well as regional market participants (GIA, 2011).

Asia currently propels the global instant noodle market - estimated to be worth some US\$25 billion - with an 80 per cent share. The continent's history of eating noodles is part of the reason why it is more popular here. The world today chomps through some 92 billion servings of noodles (led by China, who contribute to about half of that) a year. World Noodles Association (WINA), chairman Mr. Koki Ando reckons it won't be long before they break the 100 billion mark (Cheng, 2012).

Unlike in other parts of the world, noodles are a mainstream food category in Asia-Pacific, making it the single largest producer and consumer in the world, as stated by the new market research report. The region, led by relentless demand from the Chinese and Hong Kong markets, is portended to continue its dominance over the coming years. Emerging over the Asian horizon is China that is recording massive production and consumption figures. With relatively low annual per capita consumption levels compared to other Asian counterparts, China represents a potential market for noodles. Noodles in Middle East/Africa are experiencing a growth in the demand, with the introduction of newer products into the market and are poised to grow at a strong compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) over the long-term (GIA, 2012).

### **Noodles Market in India**

In the early 80s, the conservative and typical food consumption era, the concept of ‘ready-to-cook’ food was alien to the Indian market. People were doubtful to experiment with food especially food meant for their children. Despite the unfavorable circumstances, Swiss giant Nestle with its brand Maggi took the challenge and launched itself in 1983. The brand’s appropriate realization of target segment, effective positioning and effective promotion and sales made Maggi the most-loved noodle brand in India. Maggi enjoys a market share of over 70% today, despite the presence of a number of other brands. In 2005, the Maggi brand was worth USD 3.7 billion in comparison to USD 1.7 billion recorded in 2003. In 2005, Maggi was the highest Indian spender in the Sales Promotion department in the Noodles Category. However, in recent times Maggi has been seeing a flurry of activity with new entrants stocking the shelves in recent months. Be it GlaxoSmithKline's Horlicks Foodles, Hindustan Unilever’s Knorr Soupy Noodles, or ITC's Sunfeast Yippee, each is out to grab a share of the consumer’s palate and wallet. It may not reach the levels of the Pepsi vs. Coke “Cola Wars” of the 1980s, but the signs of a major skirmish in the making are clearly visible in India’s food sector. In India, they were made popular by Nestle, which introduced its product here under the brand name “Maggi” in 1984. Market estimates put the noodles sector in the country currently at around Rs. 1,300 crore (US\$288 million) and growing at around 15% to 20% annually. According to reports of market research firm Nielsen, on an all-India basis across urban markets, Maggi has been steadily losing market share to the new entrants

(The Economic Times, 2011). However, Maggi still controls a lion's share of instant noodles market and it will not be an easy task for new entrants to throw this giant off the pedestal so soon. The only serious competition Maggi had until now was from the Japan-based Nissin Group's Top Ramen, but it failed to make any major impact in the market. Also, Nestle has been continuously adding new categories and successful brand extensions to retain its numero uno status. Thus, the newly launched whole-wheat based flavour is an attempt to capture the palette of health aficionado and the introduction of cuppa-noodles is a move to upscale itself from the snack food of children to provide varied options to the younger audience to have noodles while on the move (Sharma, 2011).

From the days of a fringe dish targeted at children the noodles as a food has come a long way. Today, it has evolved as a mainstay meal even for grown-ups. The noodles market players as competitor's now have deep pockets and they are in for long drag of noodles market share battle. GSK, Unilever, and ITC are players who have got well-oiled supply chain networks, vast distribution reach and intricate marketing network in both urban and rural areas (Sharma, 2011). With changing social ethos and the rise of demographic profile the fast food category is witnessing feat after feat in recent times. The noodles market will is currently experiencing a great battle in recent times.

### **Siliguri and Its Noodles Market**

Siliguri is described as the gateway to the North East of India, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The strategic location of the city in North Bengal (in the state of West Bengal) makes it a base for essential supplies to the above regions. Siliguri has gradually developed as a profitable centre for a variety of businesses in this part of West Bengal. As a central hub, many national companies and organizations have set up their offices in this city. The local market place is known as a chief hub for buying low cost foreign goods and imported goods. Apart from this the nearby markets of Siliguri are also considered to be the prominent places of the city to buy daily use goods, and is very popular among people from nearby areas of Siliguri. The four "T"s - Tea, Timber, Tourism and Transport - are the main businesses of Siliguri. Although, the economy of the North Bengal region is largely dependent upon the tea and tourism industry, it is not the same with Siliguri. The business machinery in the city mainly consists of retailers, wholesalers, dealers, distributors and small scale entrepreneurs. Siliguri, being a centre of trade and commerce in the region, has great prospects for the FMCG and consumer goods industry as well. Industries like bakery and confectionary, biscuits, sports goods, incense sticks, mineral water, soaps, chalk and pencils, digital clocks etc., can have a huge market and even small entrepreneurs can take advantage of this opportunity. There is also a good market for steel utensils, leather shoes, ready-made garments, tin containers, plastic articles, kitchen wares, electrical accessories etc (www.siligurionline.com).

However, with the flurry in the rise of nature tourism destinations in the outskirts of Siliguri has lead to the development of hospitality business in this city in recent times. Now, the hospitality sector and tourism sector constitutes an important part of Siliguri's economy. Of late, there is the rise of retail chains in the city with the inauguration of 'Cosmos', 'Orbit' and Ambuja Realities' 'City Centre, Siliguri'. The city recently also witnessed the arrival of multiplexes. With the growing economic transactions of the city it has increased the chances of various opportunities of FMCG companies to increase its operations in Siliguri as major

marketing hub of North Bengal. Siliguri has experienced a huge surge in population in recent times. Based on Census data of 2011, the city agglomeration had a population of 701,489. Males constitute 51% of the population and females 49%. In Siliguri, 10% of the population is under six years of age. Siliguri has a majority Bengali population. Other minority communities include Gorkhas, Marwaris and Biharis. Bengali, Hindi, English, Nepali, Marwari, Bihari, Bhojpuri, Assamese, Punjabi, Gujrati, and Tibetan languages are spoken by the local people of Siliguri. Siliguri has seen waves of enormous migration over the years, most prominent being the migrants from the erstwhile East Bengal during the Partition of India, Nepal and Bihar. In addition, people from Jharkhand and other parts of India have also come to the city in search of livelihood (Times of India, 2001).

This growth of population especially in the middleclass sections of this Siliguri region has presented an opportunity for the FMCG sectors (especially for the food manufacturers like noodles and instant fast foods) to have their pie from the cake. Mushrooming Indian population, particularly the middle class and the rural segments, presents the huge opportunity to FMCG players in a situation where there is a change in the food habits due to several reasons like India's young demographic profile, increasing family income, accelerating urbanization, the cosmopolitization of major urban centers, unprecedented interstate migrations, increasing number of working couples, time constraints, shortage of household help, global travel, and increasing exposure to global cuisine and so on. According to Harminder Sahni, managing director of Wazir Consultants, a firm that focuses on brands and the retail space, the localization of cuisines to match customer tastes regionally has played a major role in the acceptability of different cuisines in this country (The Economic Times, 2011). Growth is also likely to come from consumer 'upgrading' in the matured product categories like processed and packaged food, mouth wash etc (Vora, 2011). The scenario of noodles Market of North Bengal is also not much different from other parts of the country. Wai Wai commands the highest market share in North Bengal and North eastern states combined (Mukul, 1999). Next are Maggie and Top Ramen, which are the national branded instant noodles available in most of the retail shops. Unbranded locally manufactured noodles also available and bulkily purchased by the Restaurants and fast-food centers.

Siliguri is also being considered in this category of developing cities of India. As a matter of fact, the study carried out in Siliguri region is arguably having a great importance in the days to come for the manufacturers of noodles operating in this region or are planning to invest in this sector presuming growth in the noodles markets especially from this region.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Here in this study of the consumer's acceptability of noodles is being considered from the consumer's point of view about their perception purchasing noodles for consumptions. This has been taken into consideration because noodles have been considered as a convenience food ([www.hubpages.com](http://www.hubpages.com)). Convenience has an immense impact on the food choices of today's consumers (Wales, 2009). The other convenient food stuff available had a very little impact unlike that of noodles (due to its instant cooking and ready-to-eat attribute). However, analyzing the noodles as a food of the masses can enable us get an overall viewpoint about the market trends of the customer's acceptance of noodles as an important food in this region of Siliguri. Various factors were being considered while framing the

objectives of the study which may be stated as the consumer's perception about the consumer's behaviour towards noodles as a food, the consumer's brand parity perception about noodles, consumer styles while purchasing noodles as a food item etc.

From the study some of the important research questions which are addressed and are related to the consumer's acceptability of noodles as an important food in Siliguri region. These questions are as follows:

1. Does the favourable consumer behaviour in noodles purchase by the consumers have any impact on the consumer's brand parity perception about noodles?
2. Does the favourable consumer behaviour in noodles purchase by the consumers have any impact on the consumer's style of purchasing noodles?
3. Does the consumer's brand parity perception about noodles have any impact on the consumer's style of purchasing noodles?

These research questions are being addressed through the statistical analysis carried out by processing the data obtained during the course of study.

## **METHOD**

### **Plan of the Study**

The planning of the study involved the initial study and the development of blueprint of the entire market and the clients and customers. Strategies have been taken to go along with the study. As already stated and also in being evident from the title of the study that the research work basically dealt with consumer acceptability of noodles in Siliguri region. A pilot study was being carried out for gaining a clear picture about the tentative questions to be asked to the probable respondents (who happens to be the consumers of noodles). Based on the initial pilot survey a final questionnaire was being developed which was later administered to the respondents to get the feedbacks about noodles and their perceptions about noodles and their acceptance of noodles as an important food preference. The main plan was to do the pilot survey, develop the questionnaire, respondent selection, collecting the responses from the respondents, data compilation and finally the analysis of the same.

The scales that were used in developing the questionnaire for getting the data from the consumer respondents are as follows:

- Exploratory Tendencies in Consumer Behaviour (ETCB) Scale: This scale basically was developed by P. S. Raju in his research work titled "Optimum Stimulation Level: Its Relationship in Personality, Demographics, and Exploratory Behavior" which was published in the Journal of Consumer Research in the year 1980. Here in this study this scale is used as a variable related towards Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase.
- Perceived Brand Parity (PBP) Scale: This scale basically was developed by James. A. Muncy in his research work titled "Measuring Perceived Brand Parity" which was published in the journal titled Advances in Consumer Research in the year 1996. Here in this study this scale is used as a variable related towards Brand Parity perception about Noodles.

- Consumer Styles Inventory (CSI) Scale: This scale basically was developed by George B. and Elizabeth Kendall in their research work titled “A Methodology for Profiling Consumers Decision Making Styles” which was published in the journal titled Journal of Consumer Affairs in the year 1986. Here in this study this scale is used as a variable related towards Consumer’s Style of Purchasing Noodles.

### **Sample Methodology**

The nature of the sample principally is the respondents of the study who also happen to be the end consumers of noodles (or the probable end-consumers of noodles). A random selection of the sample is being considered for the study. The respondents of the study is spread among the class of consumers based on the gender, age group, educational qualifications, income status etc. It is to be noted that the efforts were made to execute the criteria spread on the total respondents uniformly so as to have full depiction of the population within the whole sample size. Initially, the total sample was thought to be approximately around 250. However, eventually the total sample size in the study became 244 effectively. This is because the questionnaire which was circulated among the respondents for receiving responses, however, when the responses were collected it was just 244 only. Further, when a methodical analysis was done based on the responses, it was found that a total of 6 numbers of responses were found to be either erroneous or unfinished. Henceforth, there were no alternative left and those responses were discarded. So, ultimately in the study we received total effective responses of 244.

### **Data Collection**

The responses were collected from the total sample size which was pre-identified during the plan of the study. Initially, the questionnaire was given to the probable respondents and the detailing was done about the process of filling up of the questionnaire. The questionnaire, which was selected for the study contained 15 close ended questions about noodles and the perception of the respondents about noodles. The respondents were supposed to answer those questions by ticking the option which they feel it right. The answer choices were made according to Likert scale with 5 options, starting from fully agree in one side and fully disagree in the continuum. As far as the scoring is concerned it was done in a reverse order i.e. 5 for fully agree, 4 for partially agree, 3 for can’t say and likewise. Further, the questionnaire also contained a second part related to the demographic profile detailing about the respondents. The respondents were also supposed to rightly answer those options too. During the course of study a total 10 days was initially planned for the response collection. In accordance to that after 10 days of the questionnaire distribution the responses were collected from the respondents. However, it was found that 70 percent of the responses remained unattended. Henceforth, the response collection time was extended to more 7 days from the initial 10 days decided earlier. During the next 7 days extra effort were given to ensure that maximum of the respondent fills the questionnaire appropriately. No, further extension of the cutoff date was entertained for collection of the responses.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The statistical tools used in the study are the descriptive statistics, the paired sample statistics of the responses and reliability analysis. After applying those statistical analyses we came to certain conclusions of the study. The descriptive statistics are presented in the table where

we have reported the measures of central tendencies and the measures of dispersion by standard deviation. On the whole, it is observed that the mean, median, and modes are very closure to each other, suggesting a normal distribution and the dispersion is quiet low.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics

|  | N   | Mean    | Median  | Mode  | Std. Deviation |
|--|-----|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase | 244 | 39.7213 | 43.0000 | 43.00 | 7.71537        |
| Brand Parity perception about Noodles            | 244 | 7.0451  | 7.0000  | 7.00  | 2.04125        |
| Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles           | 244 | 12.6803 | 13.0000 | 13.00 | 3.58843        |
| Valid N (list wise)                              | 244 |         |         |       |                |

In the next table the results of the descriptive statistics are shown where the mean, median and the mode of the variables of the scales are highlighted.

**Table 2.** Paired Samples Statistics

|               |  | Mean    | N   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------------|--|---------|-----|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Pair 1</b> | Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase | 39.7213 | 244 | 7.71537        | .49393          |
|               | Brand Parity perception about Noodles            | 7.0451  | 244 | 2.04125        | .13068          |
| <b>Pair 2</b> | Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase | 39.7213 | 244 | 7.71537        | .49393          |
|               | Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles           | 12.6803 | 244 | 3.58843        | .22973          |
| <b>Pair 3</b> | Brand Parity perception about Noodles            | 7.0451  | 244 | 2.04125        | .13068          |
|               | Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles           | 12.6803 | 244 | 3.58843        | .22973          |

In this study a sample size of 244 respondents were taken into consideration for interviewing regarding the consumer behaviour of purchasing noodles in an around Siliguri city. It has been found for the case of pair 1, the favorable consumer behaviour of purchasing noodles scores in an average of 39.72 with a standard deviation of 7.71 with the behavior of the consumers. Furthermore, according to the same respondents the brand parity perception about noodles scores in an average of 7.04 with a standard deviation of 2.04 from their point of understanding the brand parity about noodles by the consumers of Siliguri. For the case of pair 2 it has been found that the favorable consumer behaviour of purchasing noodles scores in an average of 39.72 with a standard deviation of 7.71 with the behavior of the consumers. Furthermore, according to the same respondents the consumer's style of purchasing noodle scores in an average of 12.68 with a standard deviation of 3.58 from the style of purchasing noodles by the consumers of Siliguri. Lastly for the case of pair 3, the brand parity perception of the consumers about noodles scores in an average of 7.04 with a standard deviation of 2.04 their point of understanding the brand parity about noodles by the consumers of Siliguri. Furthermore, according to the same respondents the consumer's style of purchasing noodle scores in an average of 12.68 with a standard deviation of 3.58 from the style of purchasing noodles by the consumers of Siliguri.



**Table 3. Paired Samples Correlations**

|               |   | N   | Correlation | Sig. |
|---------------|---|-----|-------------|------|
| <b>Pair 1</b> | Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase & Brand Parity perception about Noodles  | 244 | .677        | .000 |
| <b>Pair 2</b> | Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase & Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles | 244 | .427        | .000 |
| <b>Pair 3</b> | Brand Parity perception about Noodles & Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles            | 244 | .370        | .000 |

From the above table for the case of pair 1, the  $r = .67$  so we can reject the null hypothesis. Henceforth, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that population correlation is different from 0. Secondly, for the case of pair 2, the  $r = .42$  so we can reject the null hypothesis. Henceforth, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that population correlation is different from 0. Lastly, for the case of pair 3, the  $r = .37$  so we can reject the null hypothesis. Henceforth, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that population correlation is different from 0.

**Table 4. Paired Samples Test**

|               |   | Paired Differences |                |                 |   | t        | df     | Sig. (2-tailed) |       |
|---------------|---|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|----------|--------|-----------------|-------|
|               |   | Mean               | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |          |        |                 |       |
|               |   |                    |                |                 | Lower                                     |          |        |                 | Upper |
| <b>Pair 1</b> | Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase - Brand Parity perception about Noodles  | 32.676             | 6.50970        | .41674          | 31.85534                                  | 33.49712 | 78.40  | 243             | .000  |
| <b>Pair 2</b> | Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase - Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles | 27.040             | 6.98251        | .44701          | 26.16048                                  | 27.92149 | 60.49  | 243             | .000  |
| <b>Pair 3</b> | Brand Parity perception about Noodles - Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles            | -5.635             | 3.40934        | .21826          | -6.06517                                  | -5.20532 | -25.81 | 243             | .000  |

From the above table for the case of pair 1, since  $\alpha$  value is .000 is less than .05, so we reject the null hypothesis. That implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the favourable consumer behaviour in noodles purchase by the consumers do have an impact on the consumer's brand parity perception about noodles. Secondly, for the case of pair 2, since  $\alpha$  value is .000 is less than .05, so we reject the null hypothesis. That implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the favourable consumer behaviour in noodles purchase

by the consumers do have an impact on the consumer’s style of purchasing noodles. Lastly, for the case of pair 3, since  $\alpha$  value is .000 is less than .05, so we reject the null hypothesis. That implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the consumer’s brand parity perception about noodles do have an impact on the consumer’s style of purchasing noodles.

In the reliability analysis of the customer responses we have conducted a reliability analysis in finding out the alpha value of the responses in the different scales adopted within the questionnaire. It is being found that the alpha value of the scales is more than 0.6733 for all the variables which is acceptable but however, not very high. Regarding the Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase scale that included 10 items generated an alpha value of 0.8916 and subsequently the Brand Parity perception about Noodles, and Consumer’s Style of Purchasing Noodles scales generated a value of 0.8049 and 0.6733 respectively. Furthermore it is also to be noted that the items included in the above scales are 2 and 3 respectively. In view of the number of the items included in the later scales of the questionnaire we can say that the alpha value is towards the higher end. As a matter of factly, the co-efficient in general show a good degree of internal consistency. The reliability statistics of the scales are given in the following table.

**Table 5. Reliability Statistics**

| Variables  | Cronbach’s Alpha | Number of Items |
|--|------------------|-----------------|
| Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase | 0.8916           | 10              |
| Brand Parity perception about Noodles            | 0.6733           | 2               |
| Consumer’s Style of Purchasing Noodles           | 0.8049           | 3               |

The regression analysis of the data is also being carried out with a motive of finding the significant relationships between the variables used in the study. We have entered the following variables shown in the following table.

**Table 6. Model Summary**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .703 <sup>a</sup> | .494     | .490              | 5.50980                    |

**Note:** a. Predictors: (Constant), Consumer’s Style of Purchasing Noodles, Brand Parity perception about Noodles

**Table 7. ANOVA<sup>b</sup>**

|   | Model      | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
|---|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 7148.800       | 2   | 3574.400    | 117.742 | .000 <sup>a</sup> |
|   | Residual   | 7316.249       | 241 | 30.358      |         |                   |
|   | Total      | 14465.049      | 243 |             |         |                   |

**Note:** a. Predictors: (Constant), Consumer’s Style of Purchasing Noodles, Brand Parity perception about Noodles

b. Dependent Variable: Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase

**Table 8.** Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

|   | Model                                  | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|---|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|   |  | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1 | (Constant)                             | 18.135                      | 1.533      |                           | 11.831 | .000 |
|   | Brand Parity perception about Noodles  | 2.272                       | .186       | .601                      | 12.189 | .000 |
|   | Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles | .440                        | .106       | .205                      | 4.151  | .000 |

**Note:** a. Dependent Variable: Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase

The findings of the regression analysis amply demonstrate that there exists a significant relationship between the Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase, Brand Parity perception about Noodles and Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles. The value of adjusted R square is found to be highly significant considering the F value given in the ANOVA table. Both Brand Parity perception about Noodles and Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles significantly influence the Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase. However, the Brand Parity perception about Noodles influence on Favorable Consumer Behaviour in Noodles purchase is higher than the Consumer's Style of Purchasing Noodles. The t values are quiet high and both are significant beyond  $P < .000$ . The results of the regression analysis also reveal the fact that there exists significant difference between the competing food items available in the market; also it is observed that the consumers prefer to buy the leading food items in the market and have a tendency not to switch their food item preferences available in the market.

### **Managerial Implications**

The propositions of the study have direct managerial implications. First, this research suggests that favourable consumer behaviour in noodles purchase by the consumers do have an impact on the consumer's brand parity perception about noodles. Secondly, the research clearly indicates that the favourable consumer behaviour in noodles purchase by the consumers also have a strong influence on the consumer's style of purchasing noodles. Again, when we consider the research findings we can see that the consumer's brand parity perception about noodles do have an impact on the consumer's style of purchasing noodles. These results are largely controllable by managers and therefore can be utilized by them to improve the situations on favorable ground in the process of selling noodles especially in Siliguri market. Overall, this research gives managers a comprehensive view of bring in some comprehensive alterations in their strategies of selling noodles in Siliguri market.

### **Advocating Noodles over Other Products**

The study indicates to the noodles sales managers to try to find a balance between sharing information about noodles as an important food and socializing with customers in the marketplace. Sales personnel may insists in talking about the nutritional qualities of noodles or how to store, preserve, and use your products is a great way to promote them towards the future consumers. It has to be noted that while most probable consumers or existing consumers are interested in receiving some information about noodles, they don't necessarily have the time to sit through a lecture at the market or in the restaurant. Henceforth, it's

advisable to keep the conversation light and friendly. Passing out informational fliers about noodles as an important food stuff is an additional way to share information.

### **Distributing Printed Materials about Noodles and the Manufacturing Units**

Sales managers especially from the local production companies can try in for some innovative techniques like combining the name of the production unit with the type of noodles manufactured in it. This can be associated with a unique type style and color scheme to for creating unique logos for the purpose. Once those have been created this design and identity, it can be used consistently on all printed and online materials related to the noodles brands. Customers are more likely to remember those products which have a strong and consistent identity.

### **Addressing Post Sales Dissatisfaction**

Managers may take an important initiative of addressing any post-sale dissatisfaction politely and promptly related to the noodles sales. This can be done in collaboration with the distributing networks of the product. It is very important to acknowledge all complaints, apologize and take appropriate steps to remedy the complaint associated with the noodles brand. It is sometimes helpful to ask customers how they would like the product to be. Thanking the customer/respondents for bringing the complaint to your attention and make a note of the issue for future reference is also important. It can be said that it takes more energy and effort to gain new customers than it does to keep existing ones. Even when a customer has a negative experience, they will likely return to purchase the product again if they feel their complaint was resolved in an appropriate and timely way.

### **Customized Service Offerings from Noodles Brands**

Noodles sales managers can ensure the providence good service is particularly essential for restaurant customers. Noodles samples can introduce the product to a chef, but they have to be packaged well and contain enough of your product so that the chef can experiment. Good packaging of noodles will allow it to show visibly if possible, will be consistent from package to package, and will be standardized by weight or count, so a chef can confidently order the necessary amount. For the local made noodles brand it's easier to deliver customized packages however, for the national brands innovations can be ensured by the managers.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

From the study an attempt has been made to put forward the factors associated with noodles selling and the perception of the consumers towards noodles (considering it as a basic food) especially from Siliguri. Further, in the study some areas unique to the selling of noodles in Siliguri region were highlighted in relations to the FMCG market nature prevailing in Siliguri region. Additionally, efforts are also being made to highlight those areas where the current and future sales managers of noodles (of this Siliguri market) identify areas of importance to focus on for the purpose of selling noodles in Siliguri region. In the study a well developed technique were given importance for the purpose of deriving conclusions from the research questions. It has been found that the speculations which were drawn before the study proved to be in accordance to the thoughts. For example, the favorable consumer behaviors showed by the consumers became the main factor of most of the sales happening

from the retail outlets. This buying behaviour ultimately was responsible for the consumer's knowledge about noodles as a mainstay food item for today's consumers. The study also revealed that the favorable became a factor which enabled the consumers gain knowledge about the brand parity perception of them towards noodle which was also responsible for the styles adopted by the consumers to purchase noodles in their full awareness of the product for consuming it as a mainstay food item. We see that the growing interest and action in the noodles market is not an isolated phenomenon, but is in fact reflective of a deeper change in the India social ethos. Powdered soups (estimated market size: US\$55 million), cooking pastes and purees (US\$33 million), instant pasta (US\$22 million) and ready-to-eat meals (US\$17 million) are other recent examples. What's more, it's not just food habits within Indian homes that are changing (The Economic Times, 2011). However, much less attention has focused on this aspect of the food habit changes in parts of the country. Such studies enable a long way phenomenon for the future marketers to sell their food stuff to the consumers as well as the consumers is going to get a variety in their food plate.

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