

Original Article

Consumers Perception of Canned Agri-food Products in Sulaymanyah City, Kurdistan Regional Government Iraq

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Abstract

There are major changes in food consumption, dietary patterns and Consumers Percept throughout the world. These changes occur as a result of various factors. After the 2003, when the sanctions against Iraq were ended, which was imposed by the United Nations Security Council on Ba'athist Iraq, there was also a significant change in food consumption alongside economy development in Iraq. This change was more noticeably happened in Kurdistan region of Iraq which was initially enjoying an economic boom due to security in the region. Since then, the increase of job opportunity and the income level of residents in Kurdistan region has developed. Meanwhile, the route of marketing and shopping has significantly changed from local markets to supermarkets and hypermarkets. This development can be considered as an important factor which affect the influence on food demand and consumptions. Previously, Fresh food and traditionally preserved food were mostly consumed and canned food was mostly avoided by people of Kurdistan region. This paper focus on the development of canned food consumption and changes of the perception and attitudes toward canned food consumption in Sulaymaniyah City; and the reasons in changing their consumption pattern within the last 16 years. This research was conducted in Sulaymaniyah City, Kurdistan region of Iraq, during in 2019.

Keywords: *canned food, food consumption, consumer behavior, Sulaymaniyah City, Kurdistan Region.*

1. Introduction

The social and economic transformations occurred within the people in Kurdistan region of Iraq since the late 2003 have resulted in significant shifts in food purchase patterns for urban Kurdish households. After economic booming in Kurdistan region and start to build shopping malls super markets and hyper markets the types and number of retail venues, the variety of food products increased significantly.

Meanwhile spending power of consumers increased considerably [5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. Additionally, rural area in Kurdistan Region was facing many challenges, mainly from migration from rural to urban areas [3].

Recently, people have become busy with daily routine such as working, studying for longer hours than they used to do previously. Regarding these matters, communities will purchase something that gives convenient for their busy lifestyle.

In order to overcome the barriers, so they usually purchase groceries especially canned foods to cook because it is less time consuming. People identify their needs to purchase something. This decision making is determined by behavioral and economic factors [13].

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Generally, canned foods are considered unpopular foods in Kurdistan region, however canned foods are described as safe alternatives to fresh and frozen foods and help meet dietary needs and avoid preservatives by some researchers [15, 4, 1, 2].

The main objectives of this study are to investigate and analyze the consumer decision making on canned foods consumption in Sulaymaniyah city and determine the factors that can influence consumer decision making on purchases and consuming canned food.

2. Material and Method

Study Area and Sampling

This research was conducted in Sulaymaniyah city, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The term of “canned foods” in this study refer to ready foods canned in liquid. Focus group methodology was used in this research to understand consumer decision making toward canned foods and what has affected their decisions to consume canned food. The survey was carried out amongst consumers using simple random sampling (SRS) method.

Respondents were asked to fill-in a questionnaire indicating their perceptions towards canned foods and the reasons behind its consumption. The respondents were given three options to select one of them and also had choice to write any other reasons. The options were related to the reasons in changing their consumption pattern within the last 15 years.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS ver. 20.0). Descriptive analysis was used to test the significance of the consumers’ perceptions in relation to lifestyle and diet and Chi-square test of qualitative indicators’ dependency was applied to test the study hypothesis of this study.

3. Results and Discussions

Socio-demographic profile of respondents

The sample consisted of 350 respondents. Table 1 shows the distribution of socio-demographic and socio-economic variables among the study population.

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of respondents

Variables	Category	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender	Female	181	51.7
	Male	169	48.3
	Total	350	100
Age	16-25	105	30
	26-35	108	30.9
	36-45	68	19.4
	46-55	39	11.1
	56-65	19	5.4
	Over 65	11	3.1
	Total	350	100
Marital statues	Married	127	36.3
	Single	223	63.7
	Total	350	100
Educational Background	Illiterate	16	4.6
	Read and Write only	24	6.9
	Primary School	23	6.6
	Secondary school	27	7.7
	High school	44	12.6
	Bachelor Degree	199	56.9
	Postgraduate Degree	17	4.9

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of respondents - continued

Variables	Category	Frequencies	Percentage
Occupation	Students	97	27.7
	Teachers	55	15.7
	Public Service	83	23.7
	Military	13	3.7
	Self-employed	45	12.9
	Housewife	51	14.6
	Retired	6	1.7
	Total	350	100
Household income	Low	6	1.7
	Middle Low	31	8.9
	Middle	147	42
	Middle High	152	43.4
	High	14	4
	Total	350	100

The respondents' age were between 16 to over 65 years old in this study were women aged between 16 – 70 years old with the average mean 34.56 ± 1.33 . The most of the respondents were educated (56.9% had bachelor degree) and also most of them were students or employed either in public or private sector. The highest rates of the respondent households' income were upper middle (43.4%) and middle income (42%).

Canned food users

In this study the term of frequent can users is for the people who uses canned food more than once a week and the term of infrequent can users is for those who uses canned food less than once a week.

As it is illustrated in Fig. 1, most of the respondents were consuming canned food frequently and less respondents were frequently consuming canned 15.4%.

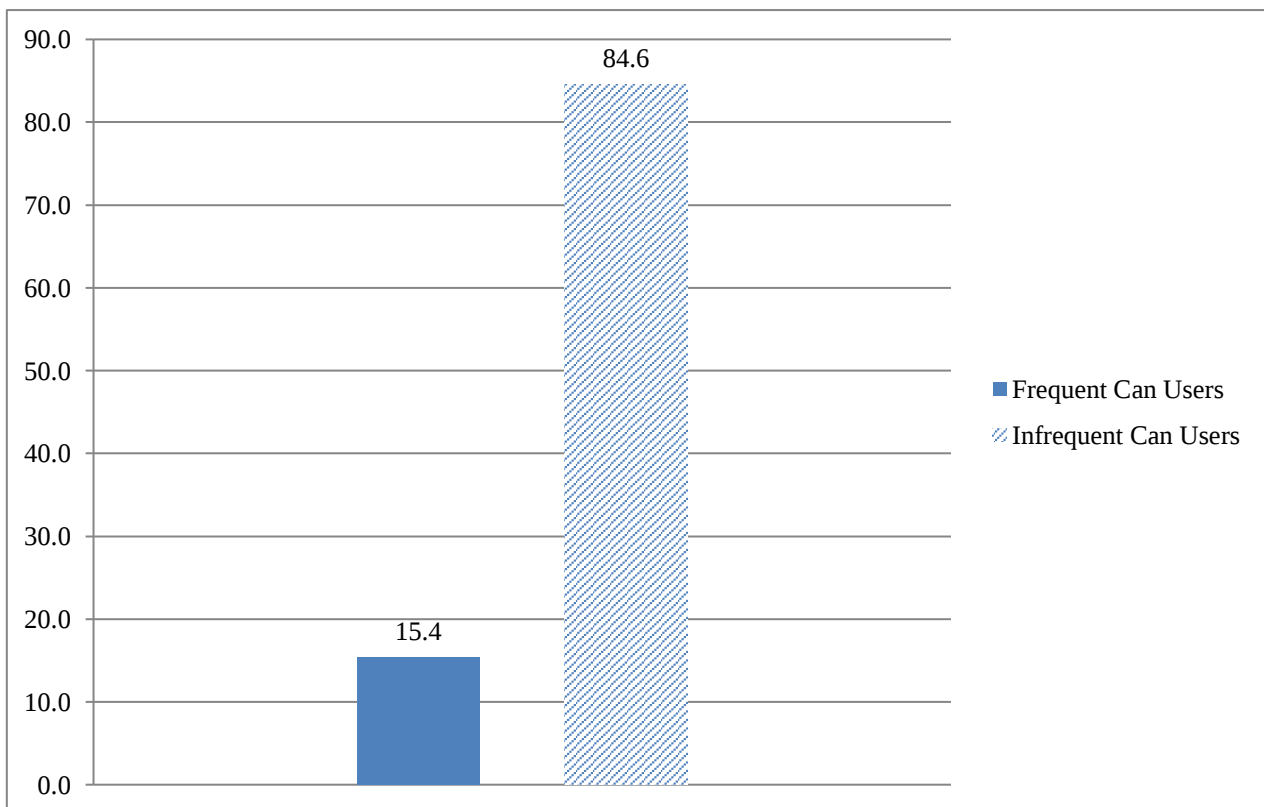


Figure 1. The percentages of frequent and infrequent can users

Fig. 2 shows a comparison between infrequent and frequent canned food consumers regarding the food categories they consume. The frequent can users had significantly higher average consumption of

protein-rich canned foods such as meat and fish (59.3%) and beans (29.6%) whereas infrequent can users had a higher average consumption in beans (40.5%) and vegetables (30.7%).

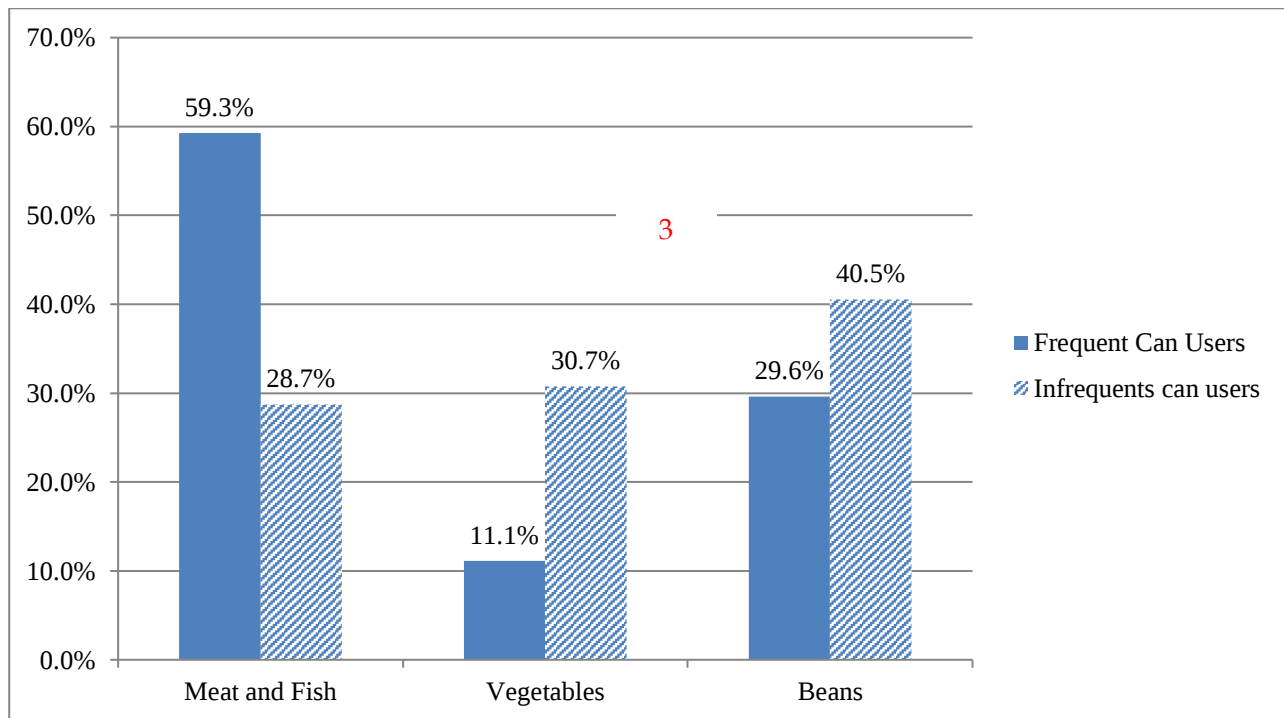


Figure 2. Infrequent and frequent canned food consumers' respondents regarding the canned food categories consumption

Respondents' attitude toward canned food

Frequencies and percentages of the respondents whose motive to purchase and use canned food were affected by their busyness, availability of fresh foods and convenience of its preparation. Fig. 3 provides the results that present the reason of change in the respondents' consumption pattern for all 350 respondents in total.

The result shows that people changed their consumption patterns of canned food products mainly due to their busyness and do not have time to cook. Similarly, it is found that the change in current trend of increase in the consumption of canned food, mainly preserved fruits and vegetables, purchased due to seasonality and the lack of time [1].

Table 2 shows that Not freshly available was reason was important among the group of retired people and other.

Generally, the results in presented in table (2) show that change in the consumption and perception of respondents were mostly influenced by busyness and not having enough time for preparing food. there were differences in attitudes of males and females to the purchase and use of canned food products.

Male respondents mentioned more often the busyness than female respondents. The reason of busyness (busy/I do not have time) was also important in the social group especially among employees and students.

The same reason was also important for people middle, upper, middle, and high-income.

Availability of fresh food (not freshly available) was another important reason for retired people and housewives.

Fresh and locally produced food were mostly preferable among these two groups due to their concern about food additives and their health. People's preference of locally produced fresh food and their concern about health were also found in previous studies [1, 2, 10, 11].

The most frequent reason for change in consumption patterns in all categories of canned food consumption was busyness (busy/I do not have time) followed by not availability of fresh food (not freshly available), and (convenient/easy to make) reason was mentioned on the last place. Thus, consumer's lifestyle has significant relationship with consumer's purchase decision toward canned food [12].

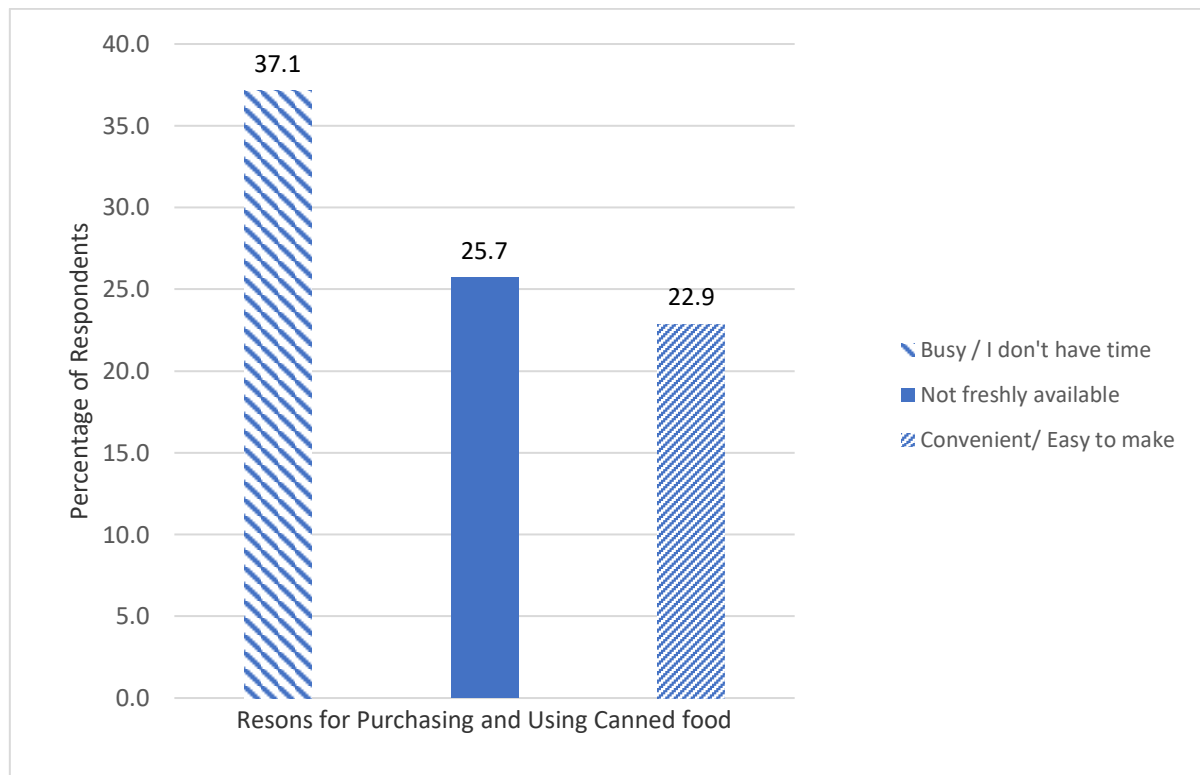


Figure 3. The percentages of respondents for their reasons of purchasing and using canned food

The X^2 – test was used to evaluate existing dependencies between individual groups on the one hand and the reasons of changes in consumption pattern on the other.

The results indicated that there was significant relationship between the variable categories and

reasons of change Sex ($X^2 = 9.805$; P-Value = 0.020), Social Groups ($X^2 = 22.060$; P-Value = 0.037), and income ($X^2 = 31.223$; P-Value = 0.020) except the categories of age ($X^2 = 16.739$; P-Value = 0.335) which showed insignificant relationship (at significance level $\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 2. The reasons of changes to the consumption of canned food

Variables	categories	% of respondents			Chi-Square Test	
		Busy / I don't have time	Not freshly available	Convenient/ Easy to make	Pearson Chi-Square Value	P-Value
Sex	Male	44.1	30.3	25.5	$X^2 = 9.805^+$	0.020
	Female	42.6	29.7	27.7		
Age	16-25	44.1	24.7	31.2	$X^2 = 16.739$	0.335
	26-35	46.3	29.5	24.2		
	36-45	31.0	39.7	29.3		
	46-55	46.9	31.3	21.9		
	56-65	66.7	20.0	13.3		
	Over 65	28.6	42.9	28.6		
Social groups	Students	47.7	21.6	30.7	$X^2 = 22.060^+$	0.037
	Employees	46.3	31.3	22.4		
	Entrepreneurs & Self-Employed	35.3	29.4	35.3		
	Retired	25.0	75.0	0.0		
	Others	32.5	40.0	27.5		
Income	Low income	0.0	50.0	50.0	$X^2 = 31.223^+$	0.020
	Lower middle income	39.1	43.5	17.4		
	Middle income	36.7	32.0	31.3		
	Upper Middle income	48.9	26.3	24.8		
	High income	70.0	20.0	10.0		

4. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that busyness or lifestyle is typical reason for canned food purchase and consumption among frequent and infrequent canned users. This represents the fact that when people get more busy their demand increases on canned food and ready food.

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