

A STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION AND CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR OF CONVENIENCE STORE FOOD

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INTRODUCTION

In East Asia, where convenience stores have developed, the importance of convenience stores is being emphasized as the number of people purchasing food at convenience stores increases and the production of convenience store foods is rapidly increasing (1, 2, 3). Compared to convenience stores in the West, those in Korea and Japan are located in areas with a large floating population and sell a wider range of food items (2). In fact, Korean and Japanese convenience store foods are very diverse, including triangular gimbap, sandwiches, lunch boxes, rice balls, high-quality desserts, individually packaged salads and side dishes. Recently, Korea convenience stores are recognized as a dining space for modern people as the consumption of convenience store foods, which are relatively cheap and convenient to buy and eat, has increased due to inflation and lack of time due to study (4, 5). The consumer base for convenience store foods is expanding across all age groups, with a particularly significant increase in consumption among younger generations (2, 6). There have been studies investigating the consumption patterns of younger generations separately in convenience stores, but there is a lack of research that compares and analyzes consumption behaviors and attitudes based on sex and age groups among the younger generations as a whole. Therefore, this study aimed to provide fundamental data for the development of convenience store foods that reflect consumer demand by investigating the usage status of convenience stores, and the consumption behavior

and perception of convenience store foods by sex and age for Korean consumers.

METHOD

Data used in the study comprise the results of a self-report survey completed by 627 Koreans in their 10s, 20s and 30s who have experience purchasing convenience store foods. The survey questions were composed of demographic characteristics, convenience store usage status, and the consumption behavior, perception, importance and satisfaction of convenience store foods attributes. The survey was conducted online through the research company from September 19 to 23, 2022, and all statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 22.0 (SPSS, Version 22.0 for windows, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA).

FINDINGS

1. Demographic characteristics

Among the participants in this study, 50.4% were men and 49.6% were women, and the age distribution was in their 10s (32.5%), 20s (33.7%), and 30s (33.8%).

2. Convenience store usage status

Participants usually visited convenience stores less than 2-3 times a week (49.9%), and mainly visited on weekdays (Monday to Thursday) (69.8%). The main time to visit convenience stores was in the evening (19:00-23:00) (39.2%), especially in the afternoon for 10s and in the evening

for 20s and 30s ($p < 0.001$). The most frequently purchased convenience store foods section were triangular gimbap/rice balls (63.0%), and the highest purchase rate was among those in their 10s ($p < 0.001$).

3. Consumption behavior and perception of convenience store foods

Convenience store foods consumed mainly for meals were triangular gimbap/rice balls (60.9%), which were frequently purchased by women and people in their 10s ($p < 0.001$), and the food mainly purchased with triangular gimbap/rice balls was instant noodles (59.5%). Many respondents in women and those in their 20s and 30s mentioned that the main reason for purchasing convenience store foods was 'ease of consumption (64.9%)', while men and people in their 10s were more likely to consider 'taste' as the main reason compared to women ($p < 0.01$) and those in their 20s and 30s ($p < 0.001$). The most common period for purchasing convenience store foods was during dinner time (42.1%).

4. Importance and satisfaction of frequently purchased convenience store foods (triangular gimbap/rice balls)

Among the attributes the most frequently purchased convenience store foods, the average

importance score of taste was the highest, and the score of advertising/promotion was lowest. The score for taste and total weight was highest among people in their 10s, while the score for appearance and package design was highest among those in their 30s ($p < 0.001$). In terms of satisfaction, taste received the highest scores, and the score of advertisement/promotion was lowest. Notably, the score for taste was higher among people in their 10s than those in their 20s and 30s ($p < 0.001$). As a result of comparing the average importance score and average satisfaction score for attributes of convenience store foods, taste, total weight, amount of toppings, satiety, price, hygiene, expiration date/manufactured date, and promotional event were rated as more important than satisfying ($p < 0.001$). Figure 1 shows the results of Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) of convenience store foods attributes. The first quadrant with high importance and satisfaction includes taste, total weight, amount of toppings, satiety, price, hygiene, expiration date/manufactured date, and promotional event. Meanwhile, the third quadrant, which has low importance and satisfaction, includes texture, appearance, package design, saltiness, addition of seasoning, food additives, nutritional ingredients, calories per unit, nutrition information display, brand and manufacturer, new products, advertisement/promotion properties.

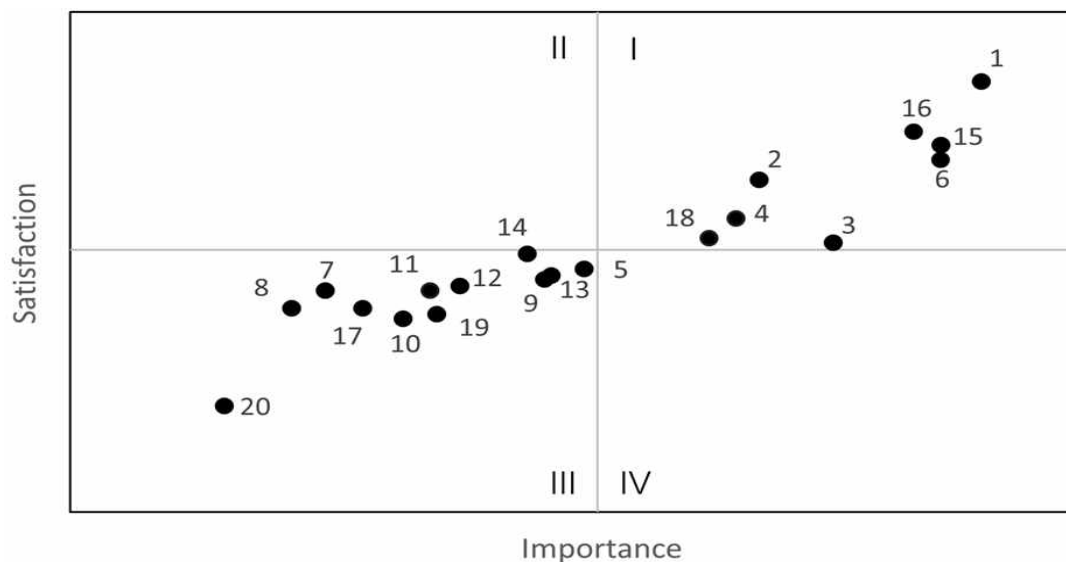


Figure 1. Importance-Performance Analysis of convenience store foods attributes

1: taste, 2: total weight, 3: amount of toppings, 4: satiety, 5: texture, 6: price, 7: appearance, 8: package design, 9: saltiness, 10: addition of seasoning, 11: food additives, 12: Nutritional Ingredients, 13: calories per unit, 14: Nutritional Information Display, 15: Hygiene, 16: Expiration Date and Manufactured Date, 17: Brand and Manufacturer, 18: promotional event, 19: New products, 20: advertisement/promotion

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the convenience store usage status, consumption behavior and perception of convenience store foods among 627 Korean consumers in their 10s, 20s and 30s. The study found that the most frequently purchased convenience store foods for meals were triangular gimbap/rice balls, and the primary reason for purchasing convenience store foods was 'ease of consumption'. As convenience stores in East Asia have made it easy to purchase products that are not only delicious and diverse, but also affordable, the number of convenience store users has been continuously increasing (7, 8). However, convenience store foods intake can have a harmful effect on health, such as causing obesity, and excessive sodium from convenience store foods can increase the risk of high blood pressure and stroke (9, 10, 11). Accordingly, there is an increasing demand for healthy convenience store foods among people of all ages, and in Japan specifically, both consumer demand and availability of healthy food options within convenience stores are on the rise (12, 13). To address this, our study suggests making triangular gimbap/rice balls healthier, as they are the most frequently purchased foods in convenience stores. The results of this study can be utilized as fundamental data for the development of healthy convenience store foods, and furthermore, it can contribute to the establishment of convenient stores that are accessible as a platform for a variety of healthy convenience foods. A limitation of this study is that it only surveyed people in their 10s, 20s and 30s, who are currently the most frequent users of convenience store foods, despite that the age range of users is becoming more diverse. Therefore, in future follow-up studies, it is recommended to expand the age range of participants to reflect the opinions of a more diverse range of consumers.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was supported by the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety.