

ASIAN TODDLER FOOD PRODUCT MARKET BOOM: REASONS AND FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

The toddler food market in Asian countries has witnessed significant growth due to increasing awareness about nutrition. Key players offer a range of products, including cereals, snacks, and beverages, tailored for toddlers. Factors such as urbanization and changing lifestyles contribute to the expanding market. Local and international brands compete in this segment, focusing on both taste and nutritional value to address the demands of discerning parents. The baby food market, valued at \$97.31 billion in 2022, is anticipated to witness growth, projected to increase from \$102.90 billion in 2022 to reach \$161.16 billion by 2030 (Food Processing and Processed Food, 2022). The present study attempts to identify the reasons of growth in baby food product market in Asian countries. How marketing strategies of companies are leading this market is an interest area of this study.

Keywords: Baby Food, Toddlers Food, Nutrition, Cross-culture, Growth, Marketing Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Baby food customs exhibit significant diversity across cultures. In numerous societies, the initial baby foods consist of grain pastes and liquids, reflecting locally preferred sources of nutrition. For example, rice-based or grain-based pastes may be common in certain regions. The introduction of food to babies is often a ceremonial event laden with cultural and religious significance. In Hindu tradition, the 'Annaprashan' ritual holds particular importance. During this ceremony, the baby is ceremoniously fed rice, porridge, khichadi, mashed banana commonly by the elder members of the family. This symbolic act not only marks the beginning of the child's journey into solid foods but also carries cultural and spiritual meaning within the community (Pradeepa , 2018). While the Annaprashan ceremony is specific to Hindu tradition in India, other cultures around the world have their own rituals and ceremonies associated with the introduction of solid foods to infants. For example; In Christian traditions, some denominations incorporate the introduction of solid foods into christening or baptismal ceremonies. The act of offering a symbolic first taste of solid food may accompany the religious rituals. In Korea, a celebration called Doljanchi is held on a child's first birthday. During this event, various items, such as a pencil, money, or rice, are placed in front of the child. It is believed that the item the child chooses predicts their future. A part of the celebration involves a ritual where the child is presented with different types of food to grab, symbolizing their future preferences. In Chinese culture, a celebration known as the Red Egg and Ginger Party is held to mark a baby's first month of life. Red eggs are given to symbolize good luck and happiness. During this celebration, the baby may be introduced to various foods, and relatives and friends offer gifts, including red-dyed eggs. These ceremonies highlight the cultural diversity in practices related to infant milestones, including the introduction of solid foods, emphasizing the significance of such moments in various societies around the world.

Similar rites of passage involving the introduction of solid foods are observed across various Asian cultures. These rituals underscore the cultural importance placed on the transition to solid foods, emphasizing the interconnectedness of nutrition, tradition, and familial bonds in the early stages of a child's life.

BABY FOOD

Baby food refers to specially prepared food products designed to meet the nutritional needs of infants and toddlers. It is typically introduced when babies transition from breast milk or formula to solid foods, usually around six months of age. Baby food comes in various types, catering to different stages of a child's development like Purees (Smooth and finely mashed foods, such as fruits,

vegetables, and meats, suitable for early stages of weaning); Cereals (Fortified rice, oatmeal, or wheat cereals are common first foods, providing essential nutrients like iron); Jarred Baby Food (Pre-packaged and commercially prepared baby food in jars, offering convenience and a wide variety of flavors); Baby Snacks (Finger foods and bite-sized snacks designed for older infants and toddlers, aiding in the development of self-feeding skills); Formula (For infants who are not breastfed, infant formula serves as a substitute providing essential nutrients required for growth and development); Teething Biscuits (Biscuits designed to soothe teething discomfort, often made from easily dissolvable ingredients); Organic Baby Food (Products made from organic ingredients, appealing to parents seeking natural and chemical-free options); Toddler Meals (Ready-to-eat meals with age-appropriate textures and flavors for older infants and toddlers)

Understanding the nutritional needs and developmental stages of babies is crucial in selecting the appropriate type of baby food. Introducing a variety of foods gradually helps babies develop a diverse and balanced palate.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. To gauge the reasons of growth in baby and toddler food products market in India
2. To identify the brands and their marketing strategies of baby and toddler food producer companies

REASONS OF GROWING BABY AND TODDLER FOOD PRODUCTS MARKETS IN ASIAN MARKET

A rapid growth in this market has been observed for baby food product market. Various reasons for the same have been identified in the present study. Augmented awareness among parents about the importance of early childhood nutrition has led to a higher demand for specialized baby food products. Increased level of Education, Busy lifestyles and dual-income families often opt for convenient and ready-to-eat toddler food products has added to market growth (Baby Food Market, 2022). Rapid urbanization has led to smaller families and increased nuclear families, where parents seek convenient and nutritionally balanced options for their babies. Growing concerns about child health and development prompt parents to choose products with specific nutritional benefits, contributing to the market expansion. Manufacturers are introducing innovative and diverse baby food options, including organic, gluten-free, and allergen-free choices, catering to different dietary preferences and requirements. Effective marketing strategies, including targeted advertising, packaging, and brand positioning, play a crucial role in influencing consumer choices in the baby food segment. Rising disposable income in many Asian countries allows parents to invest in premium and specialized baby food products for their children.



Figure 1: Asian Pacific Baby Food Market Size: 2019-2030 (USD Billion)

Source: (Food Processing and Processed Food, 2022)

The above graphical representation of growing baby food market reflects that there is a huge potential in this market.

MARKETING STRATEGIES OF BABY FOOD PRODUCER COMPANIES

Several well-known companies operate in the baby food product market, targeting parents seeking nutritious and convenient options for their young children. Some notable baby food product marketers include: Nestlé, a global giant, Nestlé offers a variety of toddler food products, including cereals, snacks, and beverages, under brands like Cerelac and Nestum; Gerber (owned by Nestlé) is renowned for its baby food products, Gerber provides a range of toddler-friendly options, emphasizing nutrition and taste. Plum Organics is known for its organic baby and toddler food pouches, Plum Organics aims to provide convenient and nutritious options for on-the-go parents. Heinz is recognized for its baby food products, Heinz offers a variety of toddler meals, snacks, and juices. Abbott Nutrition, known for its paediatric nutrition products, Abbott Nutrition produces toddler-friendly nutritional supplements and snacks. A multinational company offering dairy and nutrition products, Danone includes brands like Aptamil and Cow & Gate, catering to the toddler nutrition segment. Slurrp Farm an Indian company is a new entrant into this product category which is doing really well. There are various other companies catering this market segment and have potentials of growth. These companies employ various marketing strategies, such as emphasizing nutritional benefits, convenience and taste to appeal in the baby and toddler food product market. Infant food companies deploy diverse marketing strategies to reach and appeal to their customers. Some common strategies are:

- **Health and Nutrition Claims:** Emphasizing the nutritional content and health benefits of their products, companies often highlight essential vitamins, minerals, and developmental advantages to attract health-conscious parents.
- **Scientific Endorsements:** Utilizing endorsements from healthcare professionals, paediatricians, or nutritionists to establish credibility and assure parents of the safety and efficacy of their infant food products.
- **Emotional Marketing:** Creating emotionally resonant campaigns that focus on the care, love, and overall well-being of babies. This can include heartwarming visuals, testimonials, and relatable parenting narratives.
- **Convenience and Ease of Use:** Highlighting the convenience of their products, such as ready-to-feed formulas or easy-to-use packaging, to appeal to busy parents seeking hassle-free solutions.
- **Transparency and Trust:** Building trust by providing transparent information about ingredients, production processes, and quality standards. This is crucial to address concerns related to safety and authenticity.
- **Product Innovation:** Introducing new and innovative products that address emerging consumer trends, such as organic, non-GMO, or allergen-free options, to cater to a broader range of preferences.
- **Online Presence:** Leveraging digital platforms for marketing, including social media, blogs, and websites, to connect directly with parents, share educational content, and receive feedback.
- **Parental Education:** Offering educational resources and content on infant nutrition, child development, and parenting tips to position the brand as a reliable source of information.
- **Sponsorships and Partnerships:** Collaborating with healthcare institutions, parenting organizations, or influencers to expand reach and credibility within the parenting community.
- **Packaging and Branding:** Developing appealing packaging and branding that communicates a sense of safety, reliability, and quality. This includes recognizable logos, colors, and imagery.

CONCLUSION OF STUDY

On the basis of existing research and observations of current market scenario it is found that this market segment has promising profitable opportunities as the young parents mostly both of them working and earning having less time to prepare food for their babies and toddlers will demand instant

food for their babies. But increasing concern towards health, nutrition and education demand more transparency in the product ingredients and production which marketers need to understand and address this issue in more satisfying manner. Successful infant food companies need to combine these strategies to create comprehensive campaigns that resonate with their target audience and establish a strong presence in the competitive market.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has been carried out based on the existing literature and observational method of the research. It will be interesting to take into account the perceptions of the parents towards buying and offering these food items to their toddlers. Is there any gap between the expectations and experience? If yes, will direct the future scope of improvement in the marketing efforts of these companies.

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