

**ASPECTS AND PROSPECTS OF TIFFIN SERVICES: A CASE STUDY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Ever since the mid-twentieth century consumers have faced major changes in their lifestyles and consumption habits due to different cultural, social, economic and technical influences, the increasing mobility of the population and innovative products and services. In this hustle and bustle of life, people tend to compromise majorly on the kind, quality and amount of food they eat, which in turn causes a number of health issues like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, etc. Most of the time, people away from home tend to skip meals or eat any kind of fat loaded junk food that they can find easily around them. This is what made Tiffin service providers realize that there is a growing need for Tiffin services. The present study is an attempt to examine the aspects and prospects of Tiffin services by collecting information through a well-structured questionnaire from the Tiffin service users regarding different parameters like prevailing services in the markets, the satisfaction level of Tiffin service users, problems and their expectations. The study was carried out in the NCR (national capital region) of India. Such a study has been conducted for the first time in an emerging market. The research explored the important issues as nutritious value, adequate quantity, consumer requirements and advertisements to be focused by Tiffin service providers in designing policies regarding their services to ease the busy life of people and expanding their business.*

**Key words:** *Tiffin services, Tiffin Services Providers, Tiffin Users, Nutritious value, Healthy meal.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Food and health is the matter of interest for most of the people today. As a machine needs fuel to function smoothly, similarly, food is the prime component of energy for survival. Good food not only makes us healthier, but also changes our mood and improves our performance in our daily life. In order to withstand the daily stress, adequate proportions of food must be consumed. Traditional food is liked by one and all. It is not just wholesome, but also tasty and nutritious. By eating homemade food, people become less dependent on junk food or fast food.

"Tiffin" is an Anglo-Indian word, derived from obsolete English slang "Tiffing" (to sip) for a light lunch or afternoon snack and sometimes, by extension, for the box it is carried in. As the tiffin service providers prepare food at home in the residential kitchen, the level of hygiene is far superior as compared to restaurants. Tiffin services are popular as most people who work in offices prefer eating homemade food as it is not just nutritious but also served to them hot and fresh, being cooked and delivered within a few hours. Many students of schools, colleges and university--living in hostels and paying guest homes also depend on Tiffin service providers. Most of the Tiffin service providers have a wide range of dishes and preparations so individuals can choose a unique dish for each day of the week. Many individuals rely on these Tiffin as they want to avoid eating at hotels or canteens due to hygiene and nutritional issues. For such people, Tiffin services are a sigh of relief. One of the main reasons why people subscribe to these daily Tiffin services is that not only do they get good healthy and nutritious food, but also they get it at an affordable price and this in turn greatly helps in maintaining a good physical and mental health. The service is a win-win situation for both the parties, while the Tiffin service providers earn handsome income; the subscribers get to enjoy good food.

Over the past few years, the Tiffin service business has attracted the attention of innumerable men and women who are engaging in running this business to earn valuable income. Usually, the Tiffin service is a family based business in India and the women usually takes responsibility for cooking food, whereas the men take up the responsibility of packaging and delivering the food to the customers. The women have also been focusing on providing better services like improved packaging and prompt delivery. For any Tiffin service provider to be successful, it is essential that they cater to the individual needs of the consumer and also be punctual with their delivery schedules.

## **RATIONALE, PRACTICAL UTILITY AND NEED OF THE STUDY:**

Tiffin services have become important for those whose lives are busier. The two income households can mean that neither partner has the time and energy to cook every day. The rate at which people are

relocating is increasing tremendously. Some people relocate for work, while other for education. Once one is lost in the busy life, he has little or no time to have healthy food. The **ghar-ka-khana** that he uses to savour is now replaced with take away, junk food or else ready to make packets. Fresh fruits are replaced with fruit juices that have preservatives and so on. To help people maintain a balanced and nutritious diet, there are numerous Tiffin service providers that supply meals to different parts of a city. Many individuals rely on these Tiffin as they want to avoid eating at hotels or canteens. Tiffin service is a developing sector, which is very well-paid and extremely in demand. On the basis of literature review it can safely be said that there is no evidence of any comprehensive research on this phenomenon. There is not much literature available regarding this in the Indian subject. The field remains largely unexplored and hardly any study has been conducted on this phenomenon by using primary data. Hence, the present study could help in giving an idea about the actual prevailing system of Tiffin services, consumers' perceptions and their expectations from the Tiffin service providers which can be useful for making strategies regarding Tiffin services.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of the study are:

- To analyse the socio economic profile of the users of Tiffin services in the study area.
- To study the satisfaction level of respondents on different parameters regarding Tiffin services considered in the study.
- To know the perception of consumers regarding various factors while choosing Tiffin services.
- To measure the respondents' degree of agreement over various issues of Tiffin services.
- To compare the ranks given by respondents on the satisfaction level and importance level to different features of Tiffin services.
- To identify the problems being faced by the Tiffin service users.
- To find out the actions being taken by respondents in case of problems or complaints.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology is the way to systematically solve a problem. A research methodology consists of various steps. The research design of the present study is the descriptive and explanatory study. In order to accomplish the research objectives and to conduct this study the primary data source was used. A well-structured and closed ended questionnaire was used for data collection from the

respondents. A five-point Likert scale and ranking questions were designed to collect information from Tiffin service users in Indian scenario.

**Sampling method:** Judgement and convenience sampling method was used to select the respondents for the survey.

**Sample size:** The sample size of the study is 80 respondents. The study was conducted from Nov, 2013 to March, 2014. The respondents were carefully selected and the study was conducted in NCR (National Capital Region) of INDIA. Hence, it is assumed that the respondents represent the population perfectly and the study is preliminary in nature and can be taken up for further research.

### **TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

The data collected was analysed by using quantitative and qualitative techniques. The primary data collected from respondents was analysed by using the percentage, weighted average score methods and Spearman's correlation method by using SPSS Diagrams have been used for better pictorial understanding.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:**

- The study is limited to the attitude and perception of the selected sample respondents, and may not be universally applicable.
- The geographical area of the study was limited to NCR.
- The study was conducted for the period from November 2013 to March 2014.
- There might be a possibility of bias in the perception of the individuals in the survey.
- The study is 'micro' in nature as the sample size is of 80 respondents. Hence it is not necessary that it truly represents the population universe.

### **Results, Analysis and Discussion**

The table 1 shows that out of the total 80 respondents, 60 percent of respondents were males and the remaining 40 percent were females. The majority of respondents (51.2 percent) belonged to age group 19 to 25 years. 42.5% and 46.5% of respondents were graduates and post graduates respectively.

Majority of sample respondents (55%) were office goers who were using Tiffin services. It can be inferred from the table 1 that 55 percent of respondents were regular users and 45 percent were casual users. The majority of the users availed lunch and dinner services from Tiffin service providers. Generally, most of the respondents were availing these services from last 1 year. It can be concluded that the Tiffin services are generally availed by male and female office goers regularly belonging to 19 to 25 years for their lunch and dinner for last one year.

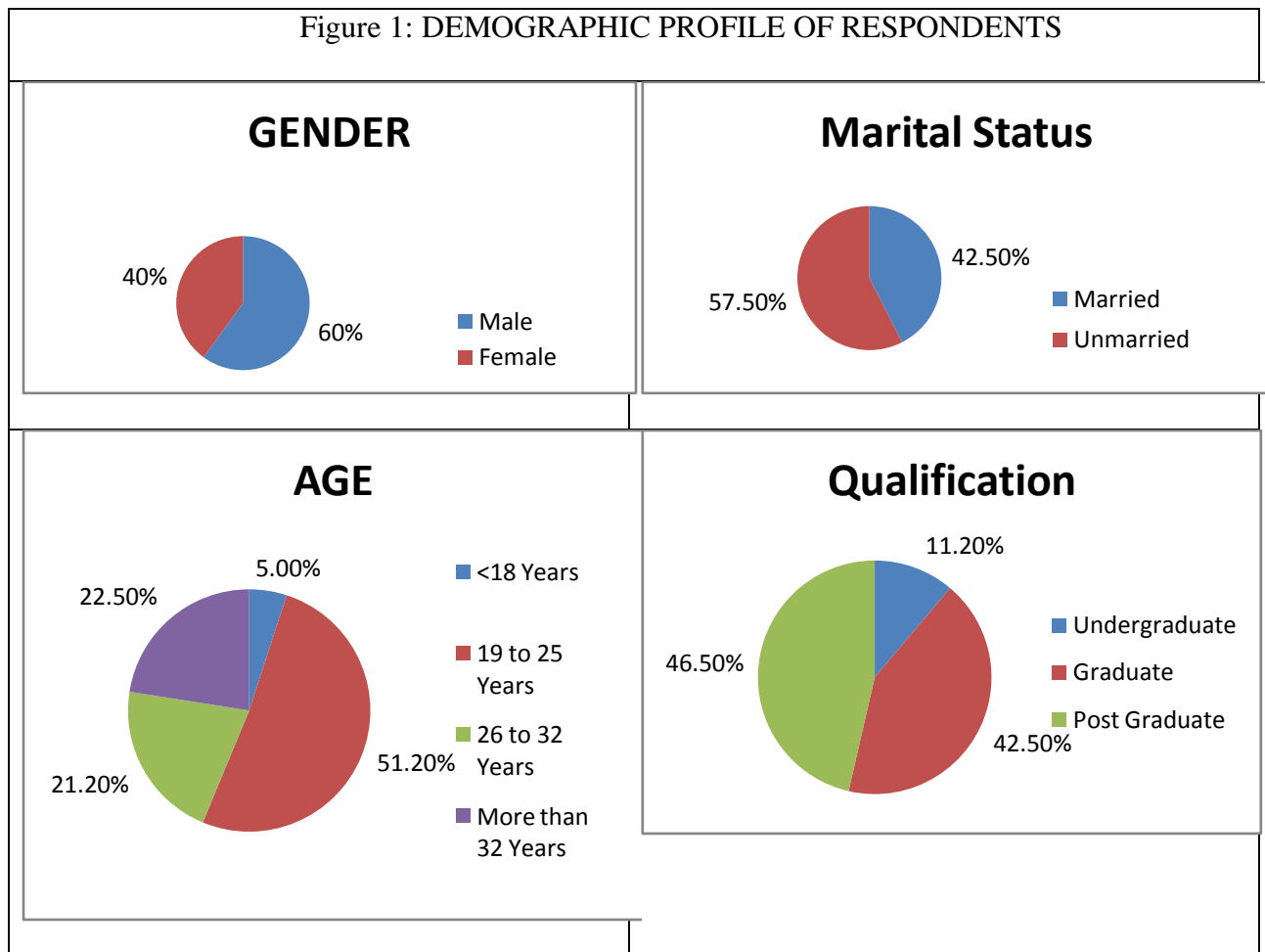
**Table 1: Personal Profile of the Respondents**

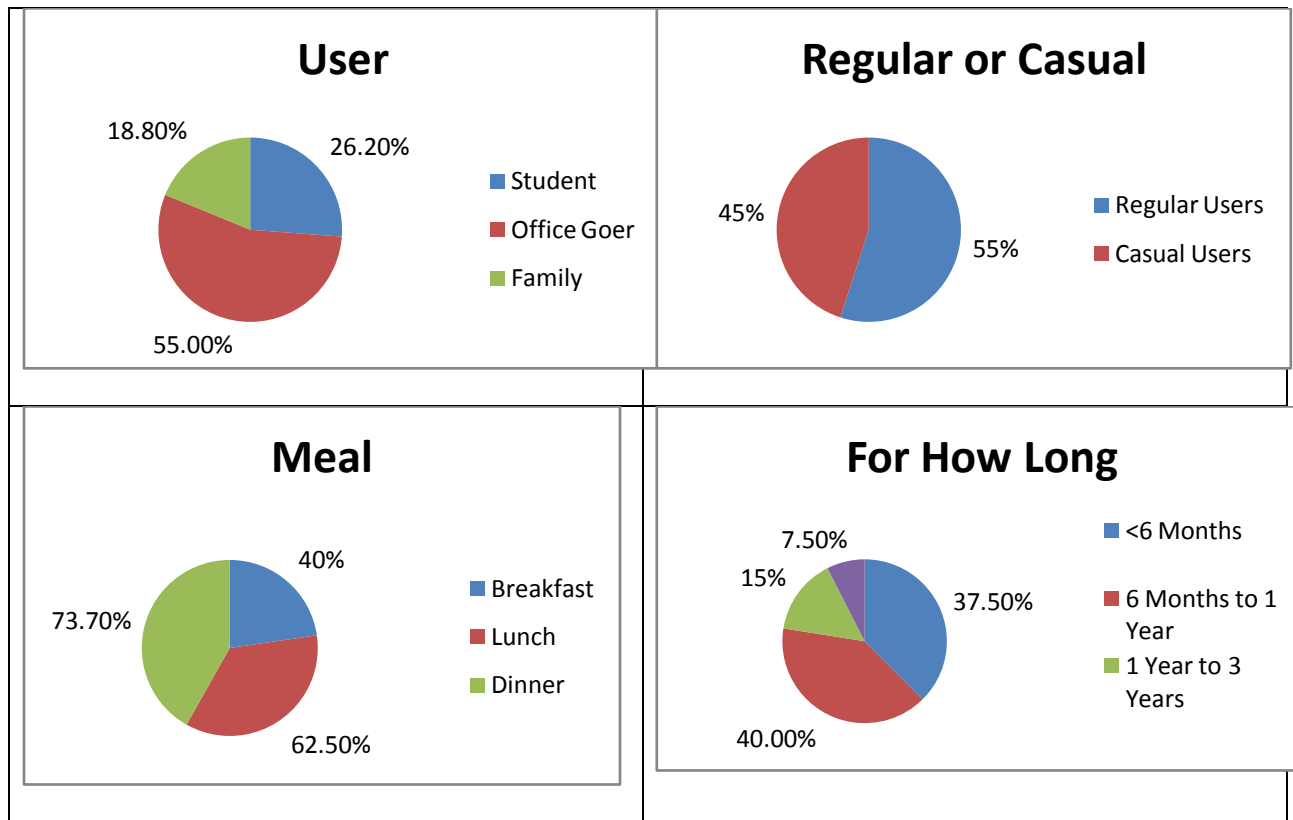
<b>Gender</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	48	60
Female	32	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Married	34	42.5
Unmarried	46	57.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
< 18 Years	4	5.0
19 to 25 Years	41	51.2
26 to 32 years	17	21.2
More than 32 years	18	22.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Qualification</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Undergraduate	9	11.2
Graduate	34	42.5
Post Graduate	37	46.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>User</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Student	21	26.2
Office Goer	44	55.0
Family	13	18.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Regular or Casual</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Regular Users	44	55
Casual Users	36	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Meal</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage*</b>
Breakfast	32	40
Lunch	50	62.5
Dinner	59	73.7

For How Long	No. of Respondents	Percentage
< 6 Months	30	37.5
6 Months to 1 Year	32	40.0
1 Year to 3 Years	12	15.0
More than 3 Years	6	7.5
Total	80	100

Source: Primary Data

\*Total exceeds 100% because of the multiplicity of answers.





**Table 2: Respondents Satisfaction Level towards Various Factors of Tiffin Services**

Factors	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Extremely Dissatisfied	WAS	RANK
1. Menu item Variety	11 (13.8)	45 (56.2)	16 (20)	8 (10)	—	3.74	IV
2. Quantity of Food	13 (16.2)	48 (60.0)	14 (17.5)	5 (6.2)	—	3.86	II

3. Nutritious Value	7 (8.8)	29 (36.2)	27 (33.8)	17 (21.2)	1 (1.2)	3.23	VI
4. Packaging	9 (11.2)	56 (70.0)	10 (12.5)	4 (5.0)	—	3.85	III
5. Delivery time	14 (17.5)	53 (66.2)	4 (5.0)	9 (11.2)	—	3.90	I
6. Price	15 (18.8)	39 (48.8)	6 (7.5)	18 (22.5)	2 (2.5)	3.58	V

**Source: Primary Data**

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.

Table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents were satisfied with various factors related to Tiffin services like menu item variety (70 percent), quantity of food (76.2 percent), packaging (81.2 percent), delivery time (83.7 percent) and price (57.7 percent). Very few respondents were dissatisfied with these factors. As far as nutritional value of Tiffin food is concerned, 45 percent of respondents were satisfied while 33.8 percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. As far as the average consumer satisfaction is concerned, average respondent has given the average weighted score more than 3 to each factor in case of Tiffin services. In this way all factors have been rated in the range of ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied to satisfied’ regarding Tiffin services. From the satisfaction point of view, the delivery time of Tiffin had been ranked I (being maximum average weighted scores), quantity of food II, packaging III, menu item variety IV and price V. Nutritious value in Tiffin had got 6<sup>th</sup> rank from the satisfaction point view.

**Table 3: Respondents Ranking To Various Factors of Tiffin Services**

Factors	RANK I	RANK II	RANK III	RANK IV	RANK V	RANK VI	Total Weighted Score	Overall Ranking
1. Menu item Variety	11 (13.8)	14 (17.5)	25 (31.2)	17 (21.2)	6 (7.5)	7 (8.8)	3.83	II
2. Quantity of Food	8 (10.0)	19 (23.8)	11 (13.8)	16 (20.0)	14 (17.5)	12 (15.0)	3.44	IV
3. Nutritious Value	36 (45.0)	12 (15.0)	11 (13.8)	5 (6.2)	6 (7.5)	10 (12.5)	4.21	I



4. Packaging	5 (6.2)	13 (16.2)	6 (7.5)	7 (8.8)	20 (24.5)	29 (36.2)	2.61	VI
5. Delivery time	6 (7.5)	8 (10.0)	8 (10.0)	22 (27.5)	26 (32.5)	10 (12.5)	3.20	V
6. Price	14 (17.5)	14 (17.5)	19 (23.8)	13 (16.2)	8 (10.0)	12 (15.0)	3.71	III

**Source: Primary Data**

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.

Tiffin services are a combination of different features/factors which make services suitable or satisfactory for the Tiffin service users. An attempt was made to check the importance level of different factors while choosing Tiffin services. The table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents (45 percent) considered nutritious value as very important factor in case of Tiffin services. As far as average weighted scores are concerned, nutritious value had got rank I, menu item variety II and price, quantity of food and delivery time had got III, IV, V ranks respectively. Packaging factor has been given VI rank from the important point of view while choosing Tiffin services.

**Table 4: Ranking of Satisfaction and Importance Level of Different Features**

Factors	Ranks	Ranks
	According to Satisfaction Level	According to Importance level
1. Menu item variety	IV	II
2. Quantity of food	II	IV
3. Nutritious value	VI	I
4. Packaging	III	VI
5. Delivery time	I	V
6. Price	V	III

Spearman Rank Correlation  $R = (-.937)$ , table value=0.82 significant at 95% level of significance

An attempt was made to find out the relationship between the ranking of different factors, according to satisfaction level and according to importance level. Table 4 reveals that different factors relating to Tiffin services had got different ranks as far as satisfaction level is concerned and as far as importance level given to these factors. Statistically, Spearman rank correlation was calculated on the ranks of different factors of Tiffin services. It is evident from the result that there exists a high degree of negative correlation between satisfaction level and importance level. As indicated in table 4, there exists a significant difference in ranking given to different factors at 95 percent level of importance. It can be inferred that Tiffin service providers are not providing Tiffin services to the Tiffin users at their expectation level. They need to keep note that to keep consumer satisfied and to gain competitive advantage, they must cater for the needs of Tiffin service users.

To know the views of Tiffin service users about this facility, some statements were framed for this study. Table 5 depicts that on an average respondent (average weighted score 3.52) was agreed that Tiffin meals have adequate nutritional values and generally Tiffin users were ready to pay extra for quality food in Tiffin. The table reveals that Tiffin services had made their life easier as Tiffin services are easily available, whenever they are in need of Tiffin for meals. When respondents were asked to respond about Tiffin meal as a perfect option, on an average respondent (average weighted score 3.53) was of the view that Tiffin meal is a perfect option when he is in need of it. As far as the price factor in Tiffin services is concerned, the average weighted score (3.75) showed that the majority of respondents was agreed that Tiffin services are reasonably priced often and Tiffin meal gives them feel of homemade food. On the basis of the responses of the respondent's table reveals that the neglected parameters of Tiffin services which were: "Tiffin service providers never bother for consumer requirements" and "Tiffin services are not advertised much". Results show that majority of respondents were agreed that future of the Tiffin service business is very bright. It can be inferred that Tiffin services are the need of the hour and best option due to busier life when people have little time or no time to have homemade healthy food.

**Table 5: Satisfaction level of respondents of different issues with Tiffin services**

S. No.	ISSUES	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	WAS
1.	Tiffin meals have adequate nutritional values.	13 (16.2)	35 (43.8)	15 (18.8)	15 (18.8)	2 (2.5)	3.52
2.	Tiffin meal gives you feel of homemade food.	16 (20.0)	26 (32.5)	7 (8.8)	23 (28.8)	8 (10)	3.24

3.	Generally, consumers are ready to pay extra for quality food in Tiffin.	22 (27.5)	35 (43.8)	18 (22.5)	5 (6.2)	—	3.93
4.	Tiffin service providers never bother for the consumer requirement.	15 (18.8)	31 (38.8)	22 (27.5)	12 (15.0)	—	2.39
5.	Tiffin service makes our life easy.	16 (20.0)	52 (65.0)	5 (6.2)	2 (2.5)	5 (6.2)	3.90
6.	Tiffin services are easily available, whenever I need it.	16 (20.0)	32 (40.0)	13 (16.2)	18 (22.5)	1 (1.2)	3.55
7.	Tiffin services are reasonably priced often.	13 (6.2)	46 (57.5)	10 (12.5)	10 (12.5)	1 (1.2)	3.75
8.	Tiffin meal is a perfect option.	10 (12.5)	34 (42.5)	25 (31.2)	10 (12.5)	1 (1.2)	3.53
9.	The future of the Tiffin service business is very bright.	21 (26.2)	32 (40.0)	19 (23.8)	5 (6.2)	3 (3.8)	3.79
10.	Tiffin services are not advertised much.	15 (18.8)	39 (48.8)	18 (22.5)	8 (10.0)	—	2.24
Total Weighted Average Score: 3.38							

**Source: Primary Data**

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.

An attempt was made to know how often a Tiffin service user has to face problems regarding Tiffin services. It had been observed that the majority of respondents didn't have any problem like spill over (48.8 percent of respondents), awful smell in the Tiffin bag (50 percent of respondents) and inadequate quantity (46.8 percent of respondents) regarding Tiffin services. But sometimes, the majority of respondents had to face the problems of unhygienic food and of late delivery of Tiffin. It has been noted that very few respondents had to face the problems most of the times regarding spill over, awful smell in the bag, unhygienic food, inadequate quantity and late delivery of Tiffin.

**Table 6: Problems regarding different aspects of Tiffin Services**

	Problems	Most of times	Sometimes	Never
1.	Spill over	6	35	39

		(7.5)	(43.8)	(48.8)
2.	Tiffin bag smells awful	9 (11.2)	31 (38.8)	40 (50.0)
3.	Unhygienic food	8 (10.0)	39 (48.8)	33 (41.2)
4.	Inadequate quantity	14 (17.5)	29 (36.2)	37 (46.8)
5.	Late delivery	4 (5.0)	39 (48.2)	37 (46.8)

**Source: Primary data.**

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.

Availed services may lead either to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. To know the reactions of respondents in case of problems or complaints regarding Tiffin services, what would you like to do, responses were collected and analysed. The table reveals that the majority of respondents (76.2 percent) stated that they will ask the Tiffin service provider to take care, 47.5 percent of respondents were of the view that they will decide to change the Tiffin service provider. Few respondents were of the view that they will decide not to take Tiffin services in the future or forget and leave it and tell others not to take services from this service provider.

**Table 7: Actions to be taken by respondents in case of problems**

S. no.	Actions to be taken	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Ask Tiffin service provider to take care.	61	76.2
2.	Tell others not to take services from another provider.	9	11.2
3.	Decide not to take Tiffin services in future.	10	12.5
4.	Decide to change the Tiffin service provider.	38	47.5
5.	Forget and leave it.	11	13.8

## Findings

- Tiffin services are generally availed by unmarried males and females office goers regularly belonging to 19 to 25 years age group for their lunch and dinner for last one year.
- Different features of Tiffin services had got different ranks as far as satisfaction level is concerned and as far as importance level is concerned.

- A majority of respondents was satisfied with the menu item variety, quantity of food, packaging, delivery time and price of Tiffin services. Nutritious value in Tiffin's had got 6<sup>th</sup> rank from the satisfaction point of view.
- On an average, every respondent considered nutritious value of the meal in Tiffin as most important while choosing Tiffin services followed by menu item variety, quantity and delivery time.
- A large number of respondents were of the view that Tiffin service had made their life easy and gives them feel of homemade food.
- Tiffin service providers never bother for consumer requirements and not advertise their services much.
- A majority of respondents was of view that future of Tiffin service business is very bright.
- A majority of respondents had to face problems sometimes regarding awful smell in the bag, unhygienic food, and spill over and late delivery of Tiffin.
- A majority of dissatisfied respondents will ask Tiffin service providers to take care of problems or complaints if they have to face problems or complaints regarding Tiffin services.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

It is quite evident from the results that Tiffin service industry is one of the emerging sectors and is playing an important role in the present scenario. Many farsighted people are entering into this sector understanding the needs of consumers due to their busier life. This is especially true in the case of individuals who live far from their home otherwise they have to depend for their meals on restaurants, dhabas or available junk foods forcefully with which they are not comfortable as resulting in bad effects on their health. In this case, Tiffin meals are the

best options which give them a feel of homemade food. The increasing number of the double income group in a family with their hurried lifestyles, increasing rate of relocation of people for work or study are positive indicators

of the need of Tiffin service industry. The success of Tiffin service providers could be achieved only if they can provide Tiffin services having more nutritional values at reasonable price and they must evaluate the expectations and perceptions of consumers to serve them better. They must put more efforts to advertise their services which are being neglected. It can be very fruitful for them by providing the maximum degree of satisfaction to the Tiffin service users. Thus Tiffin service providers as well as marketing intellectuals should consider the needs and requirements of the consumers in today

scenario and should always be prepared to adapt to changing trends of lifestyles as there is ample scope in the Tiffin service industry.

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