INTRODUCTION

India is second largest producer of food next to China, and has the potential of being the biggest in the food and agricultural sector across the globe. The size of global processed food industry is estimated to be valued around US $ 3.6 trillion and accounts for 3/4th of the global food sales. The Indian food industry is valued around US $ 200 Billion in present era which was about US $ 85 Billion according to 2007 figures.

India’s food processing sector covers fruits and vegetables, meat and poultry, milk and milk products, alcoholic beverages, fisheries, plantation, grain processing and other consumer product groups like confectionary, chocolates and cocoa products, soya based products, mineral water, high protein foods etc. Different sectors of Indian food industry are growing in a tremendous rate in last few years which are shown by following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Size of organized</th>
<th>Key segment products</th>
<th>Projected Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy Products</td>
<td>$ 375 million</td>
<td>Whole milk powder, skimmed milk powder, condensed milk, Ice cream, butter and ghee.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits and Vegetable</td>
<td>136.3 million tonnes</td>
<td>Beverages, juices, pulps, slices, concentrates, frozen and products, potato wafers/chips.</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meat and Poultry</td>
<td>$ 13 million</td>
<td>Frozen and packed - mainly in fresh form, Egg Powder</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td>6.4 million tonnes</td>
<td>Frozen and packed - mainly in fresh form, marine fisheries</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaged foods</td>
<td>$ 2 billion</td>
<td>Snack foods, other namkeens, biscuits, noodles</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverages</td>
<td>$ 155 million</td>
<td>Fruit based drinks, carbonated drinks</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: MFPI)

India accounts for 1.5 % of international food trade and 1.5% of the total GDP in the country, despite being the one of the world’s largest food producers, which shows huge potential for both investors and exporters. Indian food industry growth by leaps and bounds and can emerges as ‘food basket of the world’ (Shipra Singh 2011).
There are different initiatives and assistance to Indian food industry taken by MFPI for promoting and regulating the food processing sector. Under Mega food park scheme all facilities for food products ranging from cold storage, sorting, grading, food processing and packaging, quality control and research and development provided. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) increased in the last decade for food processing sector to 11,691 crore (from April 2000 to August 2011), which shows better investment options in food sector (MOFPI Report 2011-12). Maharashtra is the top runner for FDI inflow in India.

The processed food consumption increased in the developing world in present era. There has been gradual shift in consumer demand from the cereals to high value food items such as fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meat and fish according to NSSO (National Sample Survey Organization). Currently food grain constitute about one fifth of the total value of output from the agricultural and allied sector. The share of fruits and vegetables and livestock have shown an increasing trend in recent years implying that they have been growing at a much faster rate than the common traditional crops.

Foods are generally classified as processed food, semi-processed food, fast food, pet food. At the same time certain other classifications also made with concern to necessity are minimal processed food, space food, junk food, raw food, designer food, synthetic food, comfort food, health food etc. (R. H. Jaju, 2012).

Processed food constitutes meals which are ready for the direct consumption, no further processing requires for this type of food. It also saves time for preparation. It is further divided into two categories such as shelf stable packaged food and frozen storage packaged food. Semi-processed food requires further processing like cooking, frying etc, which increases time for preparation. It also includes RTC (Ready to Cook food), RTF (Ready to Fry food) and reconstituted food. Fast food requires less time to prepare and less time to consume which is generally rich in calories.

Economic development of a country is normally accompanied by improvement in an overall food supply and elimination of dietary deficiencies, which improves standard of living of population. It also brings certain qualitative and quantitative changes in production, processing, distribution and marketing of food products. There are different aspects which are responsible for
change in consumption pattern of processed food which includes income, food prices, taste and preferences, urbanization, nutrition transition, per capita consumption pattern and lifestyle etc. At the same time consumption patterns are also driven by factors like economic, geographical, environmental, social factors.

The analysis of food consumption in urban India is utmost important. It not only focuses towards the food consumption pattern of growing population which is associated with the particular region, but also predicts the future consumption habits and preferences (Michel Morisset and Pramod Kumar, 2011).

Maharashtra is one of the top producers of food products in India. Geographically Maharashtra is grouped into five distinct regions, which are mentioned below.

1. Marathwada (Aurangabad Division)
2. Vidarbha (Nagpur and Amravati Division)
3. Konkan (Mumbai Division)
4. Khandesh (Nashik Division)
5. Desh (Pune Division)

The study is focused towards the Marathwada region with concern to the Consumption patterns of processed food products. This study is extremely useful to the industry practitioners like investors, exporters for their investment. Study also helpful for service providers which include intermediaries are an integral part of the supply chain management and finally it is useful to the industry and academicians to identify the scope of processed food and consumer behavior in the particular region and may find more scope for the research.