

Instant Foods - China - 2022

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This report looks at the following areas:

- Market outlook and product innovations within the instant food market.
- Consumers' consumption frequency and occasions of instant foods.
- Consumers' perceived health factors and flavour interest in instant noodles.
- Consumers' perception towards instant foods.
- Consumption barriers of self-heating foods.
- Strategies to sustain growth in both instant noodle and self-heating food segments.

51% of respondents who are heavy users of self-heating soup consume it during late-night occasions, indicating strong occasion-based marketing to be leveraged by self-heating soup brands.

COVID-19 has enhanced health awareness among consumers and boosted the percentage of 'minus' claims in launches of instant noodles, especially in the past two years. Furthermore, China has been hit by a massive resurgence of COVID-19 cases (due to the Omicron variant) in early 2022, which will further stimulate in-home consumption in 2022. Extended lockdown measures of up to 4-6 months may also spur consumers' interest in hoarding instant foods and therefore result in an increase in retail sales.

The biggest threat to the market is the competition from ready meals and delivery foods. Instant foods would need to highlight their advantage of convenience and value for money while continuing to improve the freshness of ingredients to avoid losing consumers to other categories.

Mintel has observed two growth opportunities within the instant food market: enhancing 'plus' attributes in instant noodle products to satisfy consumers' growing needs for healthiness; and utilising occasion-based marketing strategies to target multi-generation families at breakfast time and invest in self-heating soup during late-night occasions.



"The instant food market experienced a decline in the past year due to reduced in-home consumption compared to the pandemic period. Faced with competition from ready meals and delivery foods, instant food brands would need to further enhance 'plus' attributes in the products and leverage occasion-based marketing to sustain future growth."

– Joy Yin, Senior Research Analyst

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Table of Contents

OVERVIEW

- **What you need to know**
- **Key issues covered in this report**
- **Covered in this report**
- **Excluded**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **The market**
Figure 1: Retail market value of instant noodles, China, 2016-21
Figure 2: Retail market value of self-heating foods, China, 2019-21
- **The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2022**
Figure 3: Summary of Mintel’s scenario expectations and the impact on the instant noodle market, 2022
Figure 4: COVID-19 scenario value forecasts for instant noodles, 2016-26
- **Companies and brands**
- **Leading brands are challenged by emerging players**
Figure 5: Leading companies of instant noodles, by value share, 2020-21
- **An increasing level of healthiness and diversity in product launches**
- **The consumer**
- **Instant congee is rising while self-heating hotpot is losing steam**
Figure 6: Consumption frequency, 2022
- **Opportunities for late-night occasions**
Figure 7: Consumption occasion – Instant noodles, 2022
Figure 8: Consumption occasion – Non-noodle instant foods, 2022
- **‘Plus’ attributes are more likely to be associated with healthiness**
Figure 9: Health factors, 2022
- **Strong interest in regional flavours of instant noodles**
Figure 10: Flavour interest in noodles, 2022
- **Top consumption barrier to self-heating foods is the freshness of ingredients**
Figure 11: Barriers to self-heating foods consumption, 2022
- **Self-heating foods are less preferred while chilled instant noodles remain niche**
Figure 12: Perception towards instant foods, 2022
- **What we think**

What's included

- Executive Summary
- Full Report PDF
- Infographic Overview
- Powerpoint Presentation
- Interactive Databook

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ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

- **Enhance the 'plus' attributes in instant noodles**
- **The facts**
- **The implications**
Figure 13: Oat bran soba noodle by Wholly Moly, China, 2022
- **Target multi-generation families with instant breakfast solutions**
- **The facts**
- **The implications**
Figure 14: Kai Xiao Zao's instant wonton product, China, 2021
- **Leverage the late-night occasion for self-heating soup**
- **The facts**
- **The implications**
Figure 15: Self-heating soup products by Li Ziqi, China, 2020

MARKET SIZE AND SEGMENTATION

- **Growth drops in 2021**
Figure 16: Retail market value of instant noodles, China, 2016-21
- **Slower growth momentum of self-heating foods**
Figure 17: Retail market value of self-heating foods, China, 2019-21
Figure 18: Instant foods value market share, by segment, China, 2019-21

MARKET FACTORS

- **Growing concerns over safety issues**
- **Asking for healthy and quality foods**
- **Price rise of instant noodles**

COVID INFLUENCES (INCLUDING MARKET FORECAST)

- **COVID-19 China context**
- **COVID-19 impact on the market and consumer**
- **Drop in both financial status and spending confidence**
- **Accelerated spending on food and drink driven by stockpiling demand**
Figure 19: Change in spending nationwide – Spent more, 2020-22
Figure 20: Change in spending in Shanghai – Spent more, 2020-22
- **A trend of trading down in essential in-home food**
Figure 21: Trading up and down plans – Essential in-home food (a), 2021-22
- **Market forecast**

What's included

- Executive Summary
- Full Report PDF
- Infographic Overview
- Powerpoint Presentation
- Interactive Databook

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- **The growth is expected to rebound due to price rise under minimum impact**

Figure 22: COVID-19 scenario value forecasts for instant noodles, 2016-26

- **Consumption will be boosted by increased at-home time under medium-impact scenario**
- **High-impact scenario may further stimulate the sales through enhanced stockpiling behaviour and expanded consumer base**

Figure 23: Stockpiling preference during the pandemic, 2022

MARKET SHARE

- **Master Kong and Uni-President still dominate the instant noodle market**

Figure 24: Leading companies of instant noodles, by value share, 2020-21

Figure 25: Leading companies of instant noodles, by volume share, 2020-21

- **Baijia Akuan plans IPO**
- **Capital continues to flow into the instant foods market**

MARKETING ACTIVITIES

- **Cobrand with popular IPs to target young generation**

Figure 26: Baijia Akuan x Honor of Kings, China, 2021

Figure 27: Nissan x Demon Slayer, Japan, 2021

- **Innovative crossovers to enhance brand image**

Figure 28: Single Dog x Nissin Cup Noodle potato chips, China, 2021

Figure 29: Ramen Talk x PMPM combo set, China, 2021

Figure 30: Samyang x 2080 toothpaste, South Korea, 2020

- **Leverage virtual influencers to reach more consumers**

Figure 31: Baixiang’s virtual idol/spokespeople, China, 2022

- **Convey the Authenticity and Quality of Ingredients**

Figure 32: Kai Xiao Zao’s new rice product ‘Tian Jian Yu’, China, 2022

NEW PRODUCT TRENDS

- **The increasing health haloes of instant noodles**

Figure 33: Percentage of new instant noodle launches with ‘minus’ claims, China, 2017-22

Figure 34: Instant noodle product examples with ‘minus’ claims, China, 2021-22

Figure 35: Percentage of new instant noodle launches with “palm oil derived” claims, China, 2017-22

What's included

Executive Summary

Full Report PDF

Infographic Overview

Powerpoint Presentation

Interactive Databook

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- Diversified formats of instant rice products**
 Figure 36: Product examples of instant rice, China, 2021
 Figure 37: Instant congee products by Zi Hai Guo, China, 2021
 Figure 38: Instant congee products by Huang Xiao Zhu, China, 2022
- Instant foods designed for children**
 Figure 39: Qiu Tian Man Man's instant congee product for children, China, 2021
 Figure 40: Ramen Talk's new product 'Little Ramen Talk' for children, China, 2021
 Figure 41: Master Kong instant noodle for children, China, 2020
- Enhanced nutrients in the Japanese market shed light on equal need in China**
 Figure 42: Percentage of new instant foods' launches with 'plus' claims, Japan, 2017-22
 Figure 43: Instant noodle product examples with 'plus' claims, Japan, 2021-22

CONSUMPTION FREQUENCY

- Instant congee penetrates further**
 Figure 44: Consumption frequency – Penetration, 2021 vs 2022
 Figure 45: Consumption frequency, 2022
- Self-heating hotpot is losing steam**
 Figure 46: Consumption frequency – Consuming self-heating hotpot more than once a month, by age, 2021 vs 2022
- Frequency is the highest among nuclear and multi-generation families**
 Figure 47: Consumption frequency – More than once a month, by living situation, 2022

CONSUMPTION OCCASION

- Noodles are generally more versatile**
 Figure 48: Consumption occasion – Instant noodles, 2022
 Figure 49: Consumption occasion – Non-noodle instant foods, 2022
- Diverse options for late-night occasions**
 Figure 50: Consumption occasion – Top five categories as night snacks, by consumption frequency, 2022
- Multi-generation families have a preference for breakfast**
 Figure 51: Consumption occasion – Breakfast occasion, by living situation, 2022

What's included

- Executive Summary
- Full Report PDF
- Infographic Overview
- Powerpoint Presentation
- Interactive Databook

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HEALTH FACTORS

- **The quality of ingredients in sachets and noodles is equally important**

Figure 52: Health factors, 2022

Figure 53: Health factors – TURF Analysis, 2022

- **Gen Z cares the most about non-fried claims**

Figure 54: Health factors – Top five factors, by generation group

- **'Plus' attributes are more recognised than 'minus' ones**

Figure 55: Health factors – 'Plus' attributes, by living situation, 2022

FLAVOUR INTEREST IN NOODLES

- **Strong interest in regional flavours**

Figure 56: Flavour interest in noodles, 2022

Figure 57: Flavour interest in noodles – Repertoire analysis, 2022

- **Females and multi-generation families show greater preference**

Figure 58: Flavour interest in noodles, by gender, 2022

Figure 59: Flavour interest in noodles, by living situation, 2022

- **Traditional brands to invest in flavours**

Figure 60: Flavour interest in noodles, by perception towards restaurant and traditional brands, 2022

BARRIERS TO SELF-HEATING FOODS CONSUMPTION

- **Freshness of ingredients is the top concern**

Figure 61: Barriers to self-heating foods consumption, 2022

- **Multi-generation families ask for more flavour choices**

Figure 62: Barriers to self-heating foods consumption – Top five barriers, by living situation, 2022

- **Enhance the taste and portion size for eating alone**

Figure 63: Barriers to self-heating foods consumption, by preference between eating alone and sharing with family/friends, 2022

PERCEPTION TOWARDS INSTANT FOODS

- **Self-heating foods are less preferred, especially among post-60s**

Figure 64: Perception towards instant foods – Consumer preference, 2022

Figure 65: Perception towards instant foods – Consumer preference, by generation, 2022

- **Consumption format depends on living situation**

What's included

Executive Summary

Full Report PDF

Infographic Overview

Powerpoint Presentation

Interactive Databook

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Figure 66: Perception towards instant foods – Consumption formats, 2022

Figure 67: Perception towards instant foods – Consumption formats, by living situation, 2022

- **Traditional brands should provide more value-for-money options**

Figure 68: Perception towards instant foods – Flavour vs convenience, 2022

Figure 69: Perception towards instant foods – Preference between restaurant and traditional brands, by income group, 2022

- **Chilled instant noodles still have a long way to go**

Figure 70: Perception towards instant foods – Chilled vs ambient noodles, 2022

Figure 71: Perception towards instant foods – Chilled vs ambient noodles, by agreement with ‘I buy chilled instant noodles/vermicelli more often’, 2022

FOOD PERSONAS

- **Who are they?**

Figure 72: Food personas, 2022

Figure 73: Food personas, by generation, 2022

- **New trend explorers prefer new formats of instant food products**

Figure 74: Consumption frequency of instant noodles – Once a week or more, by food persona, 2022

Figure 75: Consumption frequency of non-noodle instant food products – Once a week or more, by food persona, 2022

- **Critical shoppers are more likely to resonate with health factors and have more interest in regional flavours**

Figure 76: Health factors, by food persona, 2022

Figure 77: Flavour interest in noodles, by food persona, 2022

APPENDIX – MARKET SIZE AND FORECAST

Figure 78: Total retail market value and forecast of instant noodles in minimum-impact scenario, China, 2016-26

APPENDIX – MARKET SEGMENTATION

Figure 79: Instant foods retail market value and share, by segment, China, 2019-21

What's included

Executive Summary

Full Report PDF

Infographic Overview

Powerpoint Presentation

Interactive Databook

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APPENDIX – COVID SCENARIO FORECAST METHODOLOGY AND ASSUMPTIONS

- **Minimum-impact, medium-impact and high-impact scenarios outline**
- **Scenario methodology**

APPENDIX – METHODOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS

- **Methodology**
- **Abbreviations**

What's included

- Executive Summary
- Full Report PDF
- Infographic Overview
- Powerpoint Presentation
- Interactive Databook

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