

Er Baldeep Singh
Research Scholar
Supervisor: Dr. Jyotsana Pahuja
Department of Management
RIMT University

A Study of Branding and Fast Food Industry Consumption Culture in India

Food is an essential thing that is consumed by all people. Food is something that essentially provides bodily nutrients such as carbohydrates, fats and vitamins, etc. that preserves life and maintains it. For human survival, the family budget is considered the first element of the allocation, be it the people with whom it relates, people use the food on a daily basis. The regular nature of its use and consumption leads to an increase in food and beverages. The eating habits of people are different in different places. It changes according to various factors such as age, gender, religion, culture, education and income.

In general, the patterns of food use are determined by a complex set of socio-economic, psychological, physical and environmental factors. In India, most of the food is still prepared at home. However, due to the increase in urbanization, the increase in the number of working women, the increase in income per capita, the change in the life style and the change in food habits and preferences of the customers has led to rapid increase in the consumption of fast food in the past decade.

Food can be divided into different categories—branded and unbranded products. All foods are available in these two categories. Some people always use branded foods and others prefer products that do not have a brand. Customers have different options and preferences for food products. International, national and local brands compete in the food market. A large number of companies are engaged in the production of various food products in India.

The impressive economic growth of India and the growth of the most recent development in recent decades has not only been in terms of income, but has also changed the social set up entirely. Globalization and the growing urbanization in have contributed enormously to the standard of living of Indian people. This is evident with the emerging culture of fast food in all sectors of Indian society, mainly due to its immediate availability, easy access, taste, marketing

strategies and culture of the cafeteria. There is a lot of scientific evidence in India that shows that fast food has become an integral part of the diet in all parts of society.

In today's competitive environment, the success of a product or business is determined by its customers. Customer's needs are the basis of modern marketing. Customers will be satisfied only if the product or company fulfills their needs and wants. Thus arise needs for customer behaviour studies. Such studies help companies to understand the changing and emerging tastes and preferences of customers. Company's growth, profitability, survival and success depends up on their ability to identify and satisfy customers' unfulfilled needs at a better and faster way than the competitors in the market. There exist a number of factors that influence the behaviour of customers. Marketers need to identify the important factors influencing customer behaviour and by adopting appropriate strategies they can capture major portion of the market by positioning their products in customers' minds.

Customer behaviour changes over a period of time, because of the change in income, occupation, residence, education, age and so forth. Their likes and dislikes change in no time. More over the modern customer is so resourceful to take a crucial decision of buying a particular brand of product among so many offered to him. Customers differ widely in their tastes, preferences and they buy different brands of food items for their consumption. To match the varying customer tastes and preferences, marketers have adopted innovative strategies. Branding of products help in building or projecting a product image, quality, company image and also brand loyalty among the users.

Previous studies show that branding has a vital role in determining customer behaviour. It is very important for companies to analyze what is the influence of branding factor on customer's decisions in relation to food products. Companies are spending huge amount of time and money on brand building and brand promotion. Like other products, in the case of food products also, a number of brands are available in the market and customer has to choose from among them. Generally costumers are influenced by a number of factors while making purchase decisions of food products. Companies need to get a clear picture about these factors. Moreover, they have to know what is the importance given by customers to brand names. The marketers of food products need to know whether the customers are aware of their brands, what is the attitude of customers towards their brands, whether the customers are satisfied with the brand and are they loyal to their brands. Moreover it is very important to find out why customers are changing

their brands. The study is intended to find out the penetration of branded food products among customers and the degree of brand awareness among them.

According to Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong, a brand “is a name, term, sign, symbol or combination of these that identifies the manufacturer or the seller of the product” (21). A brand name helps an organization to separate itself from its competitors in the eyes of the customer. Today, in the competitive world, some products can be successful without a brand also, or in lay man terms, we can call them local brands. Customers look at a brand as an important part of a product, and brands can add value to a product. Sometimes, brands are defined as a promise, the promise to customers to provide the quality they wish for. However, now a days, even local brands are getting into competition by providing quality products on economic prices.

Branding is the marketing practice of creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers. A brand can tie a customer to the firm or to the products by rational and emotional hooks by creating loyalty among its customers. Brands are the major enduring assets of a company. These are the powerful assets that must be carefully developed and managed. By successfully branding its product or services, a company makes its offerings stand apart from the competition in ways that matters to the buyers. In this manner, there is a tough competition between international and national brands in today’s era and both are doing their best to sustain and flourish.

According to the survey Indian fast food industry is growing by 40% every year and generates huge sales. India has become one of the biggest hubs for global fast food chains to grow due to the availability of raw materials, population size etc.

Major global fast food players and its size:

According to a 2019 survey, Mc Donald’s – 300 outlets and according to the plan it can 500 by the year 2020.

Dominoes – in 2008 there were 227 outlets in Indian and by the year 2017 the number of outlets has increased to 1126.

Pizza hut – 360 outlets currently in India and according to the plan the number can go to 700 by the year 2020.

Subways – there are currently 600 outlets over all India which might even increase by 2020 (“A Study on Scenario of Fast-Food Industry in India” 88).

Per capita spending figures on fast food :

Indian fast food industry statistically stands on the 10th position in per capita spending figures on fast food, with 2.1% expenditure of total annual spending, according to July 2022 survey published in *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research* . By 2020 the Indian fast food is expected grow at 18% focusing on changing behavior of consumer and demographic factors. The worth of Indian fast food market is expected to be US \$27.57 billion by 2020 . By 2019-20, the fast food casual dining restaurants in organized fast-food sector in India are projected to grow at 27%. According to the survey, India is the top third country in spending capacity of people in age 25-49 years.

Also in coming future, 400 shopping malls, fast food restaurants, multiplexes etc are in construction or in planning stage. In Indian fast-food market different demographic segments in market are being focused. It is not just focusing on a single group but it is trying caters every segment in the market on the basis of age, sex, income group, family, region etc. In India the major consumers are considered to be the kids, the fast food brands introduce variety of things to attract the children and hence also target their parents indirectly as the children’s are always accompanied by their parents. Unlike older days people in India now a day prefer eating out food items are perishable and it is very essential for an up gradation of technology especially in the food industry.

There is continuous improvement observed in the fast food technology in India. Due to variety of fast-food brands and outlets the consumer is often observed hopping from one brand to another, which lowers the level of commitment of a consumer to a particular brand. The reasons for arrival of fast-food industry in India Unlike earlier days now men and women both equally head out for work. Also due to the increasing expenditures and for up gradation of lifestyle it is essential that each member of family is occupied. In such case fast food works as an easy way out in this rush schedules. The women in present generation do not want to stick to traditional gender roles of cooking and upbringing of children. Hence this modernization brings about increase in consumption of fast food. The consumers now do not want to spend their time and energy on preparation of food. They are building their confidence more on the available fast-food brands in the market and hence being more sophisticated

In the current scenario both male and female equally are career oriented. Due to which there is double income and so the spending capacity increases in return it increases the consumption of ready to eat food on larger scale. In today situation the days are falling short for work. So when people get free time from their hectic work life they want to spend it on entertainment and relaxation. Due to paucity of and engagement in the recreational activities a lot of them do not intend to cook and opt for fast food products.

Large numbers of global players have entered the Indian market due to India being the second largest country having large population. Also several MNC's are easily entering Indian markets as a result of liberalization of 1991, due to which many tariff and non-tariff barriers from Indian boundaries are removed or at least minimized. Challenges faced by fast-food industry in India Various MNC's enter the Indian markets to establish their brand and hence increase the hope of the government as well as the people for increasing employment rate, GDP and GNP but, in reality neither the employment rate increases nor the GDP and GNP, all the profits are repatriated back to their home country by the MNC's. There are various food items which are prohibited from consumption due to social and cultural implications.

Food items like beef and alcohol are restricted from consumption by most of the Indian crowd. Also certain segments of people who follow ahimsa avoid eating non-vegetarian food, while some others avoid onion and garlic in their food products. All these practices create barriers for the fast food brands entering Indian markets. In this way social and cultural implications are also one of the challenges faced by fast- food industry in India. Another challenge arises by not using glassware, metal ware or cloth napkins while serving fast- food. In most cases paper napkins, cups, polyurethane containers and plates are used for serving fast-food which are often tossed in garbage and not recycled hence there is emphasis on using of biodegradable products.

Also Indian government is making strict laws regarding usage of bio-degradable products, but these products being high in cost is a challenge for the fast food industry. Also meeting the balance between societal expectation and companies economic objectives is a huge challenge for the fast-food industry. One of it tries to raise the standard and the other tries to compress it

In this modern marketing scenario, the focus of companies and manufacturers has shifted from products to customers and special attention has been paid to customer behavior. Thus, this

research project is highly valid and relevant in today's scenario. Marketing programs and policies depend on the behavior of the client. The real problem is to understand that when a customer selects a particular brand, what is the basis of his or her decision. It is to be found if International brands still the key to attracting customers in the world of modern marketing. A successful brand can create an emotional bond between the customer and itself. Companies must be able to understand what is the attitude of their customers, their conscience, the degree of emphasis of the brand on the client, the budget and the product preferences of their clients. Successful brand management is essential to the success of a brand.

For example, majority of the consumers wants to use or to gift his/her friends a best quality and expensive product. If one customer likes one product, first they look on the product brand and the price level. If the seller change the quality of the same product but the price level is same the customer doesn't understand this matter, because customer always looks on the product brand, price and the packaging style, not the inside quality of product. According to Kotler & Armstrong (2008):

...manufacturers often find it easier and less expensive to simply make the product and let others do the branding building. Taiwanese manufacturers took this course. They make a large amount of the world's clothing, consumer electronics, and computers, but these products are sold under non-Taiwanese brand names. (n.p.)

According to Wentz and Suchard:

Organizations are using branding as a strategy tool in today's business environment with increasing regularity. Although brands and branding are not new ideas, firms are applying them to more diverse settings where the role of branding is becoming increasingly important. (Wentz and Suchard, 1993)

The traditional role for brands is also experiencing rejuvenated interest. Market analysts generally agree that this trend will continue and be part of a formula for successful firms in the future (Norris, 1992).

Customer satisfaction, on the other hand, is the vital aspect to evaluate a products quality and attached attributes in a product (Fornell et al., 1997).

To conclude, a number of study proved that customer satisfaction has a significant relationship with customer satisfaction or loyalty thus regarded key component for profitability

and the absent of satisfying ingredients certainly are the reason for firms' failure (Boulding et al., 1993).

As India is heading towards modernization the fast-food industry will keep expanding. The changes in the living condition of the country bring about progress in the fastfood business. There are various reasons like men and women simultaneously working, increased number of singleparent households, long distance to school and work, short lunch times etc for growth of this sector in India. There is definitely growth in the business of the fast-food industry in India which is positively affecting the economy but s every coin has two sides, there are certain drawbacks as well. It is negatively affecting the human health resulting in serious health disorders.

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