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Visiting pattern of consumers of American foods at quick service restaurants

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Abstract

The restaurant industry in India is mainly driven by the youth segment. With greater awareness of global cuisines, the desire to have a heightened dining experience followed by the popular mall culture, Quick Service Restaurants with their quick service, value for money pricing and casual atmosphere, made inroads into Indian hearts. The present study earnestly aims to evaluate the consumers behaviour and change in their visiting pattern when a new product of American food is introduced and the major factors influencing them to eat out. Findings have indicated that majority of the consumers were happy and showed a positive response when a new product of American food was introduced. Also, one third of the consumers stated that their visits had increased on the introduction of a new item in the menu while they attached the highest degree of importance to the opinion of family members followed by restaurant experience.

Keywords: American foods, expert ratings, impulse, mall culture, quick service

Introduction

Food plays an immense role in the Indian culture as it is an elaborate and an expensive affair that Indians have always used for bonding over. Be it an everyday typical Indian meal prepared at home or a special celebratory culinary treat, Indians take an exceptionally prolonged period of time in the preparation as well as in relishing the prepared item. Indians take pride in eating home-cooked meals, traditionally and ethnically loved by them from years, so the restaurant culture took some time to find a foothold in the country.

Indians, who had limited exposure to American food until 1996, accepted the entry of American fast food chain McDonalds into India which happened to be a game changer and gave rise to a huge upsurge in the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR)/ American Food Restaurant (AFR) industry which slowly paved way for the establishments of several other international chains such as Dominos, Pizza Hut, KFC, etc. thereby making the QSR industry thrive. The joy of experiential eating was first-hand to the Indian consumer, who was previously hesitant to spend enormous amounts of money on dining out. The restaurant industry in India is mainly driven by the youth segment in the age bracket of 15-44 years. With a population of 1.2 billion and the largest number of youth on the planet and with greater awareness of global cuisines as well as the desire to have a heightened dining experience followed by the popular mall culture, Food courts with their quick service, value for money pricing, and casual atmosphere, made inroads into Indian hearts. Besides, with the concept of online food ordering service and fusion cuisines, eating out for leisure is no more an unusual phenomenon for majority of the Indians. Also, Western influences transformed the lifestyles and food habits of Indians, and with more and more youngsters leaving home to work in other cities/towns/countries, increase in disposable incomes, a general willingness to spend on the experience of dining out, shift in eating out patterns, a need for the takeaways and dining out became necessary along with the need to develop a cooking style that was a blend of both Indian and foreign authentic specialty cuisines. Dining out is no longer earmarked for celebrating special occasions. People in the contemporary world tend to eat out more and try international cuisines as against the older generations that are comparatively less experimental in their tastes and not very trusting of the food quality and hygiene level maintained in these restaurants. A large number of these restaurants are mostly located in tier 1 and 2 cities in India. The present study earnestly aims to evaluate the consumers behaviour when a new product of American food is introduced, change or increase in the visiting pattern of consumers when a new item in the menu of AFR's is introduced (Eg., Happy meal in McDonald's) and the major factors influencing consumers for eating out of homes.

Methodology

Around 90 consumers of American foods were interviewed using a structured and pre-tested schedule in Bengaluru city. Also data was collected from the employees of American Food Restaurants like McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Domino's, KFC, Papa Johns, Subway and Taco Bell and the collected data was analysed using Percentage analysis for drawing significant understandings.

Results and Discussion

The outcomes obtained after analysing the data is accentuated beneath.

Consumer's behaviour when a new product of American food is introduced

The consumer's behaviour when a new product of American food is introduced is furnished in Table 1. It can be inferred from the Table that a large majority accounting for 93.33 per cent of the consumers were happy and showed a positive response when a new product of American food was introduced by any AFR while there was a relatively lesser per cent of consumers (6.67%) who were unhappy or who showed a negative response. Consumers patronizing these restaurants always looked forward to fresh and latest products as they always want to try out something new and more than anything else, were fond of the products of these AFR's as it had become habitual for them given their strong loyalty to these restaurants.

Table 1: Consumers behaviour when a new product of American food is introduced (n=90)

S. No.	Consumers behaviour	Number of consumers	Percentage to the total
1.	Positive	84	93.33
2.	Negative	6	6.67
Total		90	100.00

Change or increase in the visiting pattern of consumers when a new item in the menu of the AFR's is introduced (Eg., Happy meal in McDonald's)

The consumers were asked to indicate if there were any changes or increase in their visiting pattern when a new item in the menu of AFR's was introduced, the results of which are indicated in Table 2. The results clearly reveal that 36.67 per cent of the consumers expressed that it didn't matter followed by 32.22 per cent of the consumers who stated that their visits had increased. Further, only 31.11 per cent of the consumers said that their visits had not increased when a new item in the menu of AFR's was introduced. There was not much significant difference in the number of consumers who expressed that their visits had increased or visits had not increased. This indicates the strong loyalty of the consumers towards these restaurants and also the fact that it had become habitual or some kind of a custom for many of the consumers to consume foods from these restaurants as they have been accustomed to eating out from these restaurants from a relatively longer period of time.

Table 2: Change or increase in the visiting pattern of consumers when a new item in the menu of AFR's is introduced (Eg. Happy meal in McDonald's) (n=90)

Sl. No.	Change in the visiting pattern	Number of consumers	Percentage to the total
1.	Visits have increased	29	32.22
2.	Visits have not increased	28	31.11
3.	Doesn't matter	33	36.67
Total		90	100.00

Major factors influencing consumers for eating out

The major factors influencing consumers for eating out is presented in Table 3. Nearly one third of the consumers (36.66%) of American foods attached highest degree of importance to the opinion of their family members followed by restaurant experience (33.33%). This indicates that consumers have high regards for the opinion of the family members while deciding on or choosing a suitable restaurant for eating out. Also, their past and memorable experiences

influence them to dine out at these restaurants repeatedly thereby indicating an increase in the number of their visits to these restaurants. The other influences for eating out were personal recommendations (25.55%) and impulse (17.77%). Consumers were least influenced by expert ratings/recommendations (6.66%), print articles and reviews and advertisements/promotions (3.33%) each.

Table 3: Major factors influencing consumers for eating out (n=90)

S. No.	Attributes	Number of consumers	Percentage
1.	Opinion of family members	33	36.66
2.	Restaurant experience	30	33.33
3.	Personal recommendations	23	25.55
4.	Impulse	16	17.77
5.	Expert ratings / recommendations	6	6.66
6.	Print articles and reviews	3	3.33
7.	Advertisements / promotions	3	3.33

Note: Multiple responses were given by the respondent/ consumer

Conclusion

A large majority accounting for 93.33 per cent of the consumers were happy and showed a positive response when a new product of American food was introduced by any AFR while there was a relatively lesser per cent of consumers (6.67%) who were unhappy or who showed a negative response. The consumers were asked to indicate if there were

any changes or increase in their visiting pattern when a new item in the menu of AFR's was introduced, and the results revealed that 36.67 per cent of the consumers expressed that it didn't matter followed by 32.22 per cent of the consumers who stated that their visits had increased. Nearly one third of the consumers (36.66%) of American foods attached highest

degree of importance to the opinion of their family members followed by restaurant experience (33.33%).

Recommendations and suggestions

American foods and eating out has become a lifestyle activity for both the genders of the younger segment. Hence, it is essential for existing AFR's to make their brand image and advertisements appealing as a lifestyle product, rather than as a routine product. This study has also highlighted that restaurant patrons associated their dining out with social status and esteem. Restaurant management can opt for a trendy and classy image to attract consumers who are more concerned about their personal image when dining out. For example, a restaurant that has stylish furnishing and interior design, professional-looking staff and quality tableware may attract diners who are looking for a fine dining environment that can boost their self-esteem.

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