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A Study on Consumers Food Culture and Adoption of Food Delivery

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Abstract

The study on consumers food culture and adoption of food delivery has been studied in both anthropological perspective of food consumption and the consumers behavioural perspective of need for food delivery. The study had referred the food practices in three broad sections; Eating-in, Eating-out and Eating-in. The food consumption in Chennai had been through lots of transformation. Each transformation had a push or drive from the society or the technology. The culture of eating-in or getting food delivered to the consumer place is predominantly driven by the technology and change in lifestyle. To understand the consumers adoptions of new practice of food consumption and delivery, this study was embarked. The survey was conducted to identify adoption of eating- in practices among 397 respondents who had been using mobile food delivery aggregator application for food delivery. The study had exempted the stand-alone application of individual brand for ordering and delivering. It was observed from the study that the Eating-in practice of food by the consumers were compelling due Covid, the change inlifestyle and comfort of the online food delivery app (Technology).

Key words: Eating in, Eating out, Online food delivery, Consumer food culture

1. INTRODUCTION

The study attempt to add knowledge in the food consumption practices and need for food delivery service in Chennai, India. The food consumption had seen a huge change in terms of consumption and usage of third-party delivery of food. The consumers of Chennai are the reflection of multicultural society, tech savvies and diverse demographic population. The study ensemble the information on food consumption and the adoption of the food delivery in Chennai. The study covers from early food practices to the current shift in consumption of food and need for delivery.

Food is part of everyone's life. According to the Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Need, food takes the first position of all the needs of the human being. Food is not only having the importance of being a basic need but it is also having many significances in the culture and social life.

The cultural anthropologist views the foods as substance and a symbol of social life. "It is means by people communicate with each other, and, an embodiment of that

communication itself" [1]. It is a unique identity of a culture, because the consumption of the food varies from society to society and also different geographical condition.

2. THE EARLIER CONSUMPTION OF FOOD

Ever since the formation of the world and human being, food habit had been existing. According to the earlier literature known, sources like Bible say that food had been part of the human life. Even God indulges in providing food for the human being. It was quoted in the book of Genesis of the Bible, "Then the Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it". And the Lord God commanded him, "You may eat freely from every tree of the garden [2]. As stated, in the beginning the food was neither bought for price nor served on the table like restaurants and delivered. Food was not commercialized as it was a family activity.

As the time passed by, Lim Chan Ing says that "Food, in the first instance, is what grows on farms, comes from the sea, is gathered from the jungle, sold in the market, and appears on our tables at mealtimes" [3]. In the earlier days, the ingredients required to make a good meal for the family were alone sold in the market. The people bought from the market the raw foods if required to make their meal. The complete cooked food or instantly made food were never made or sold in the market. Food was completely a family activity, preferred activity and prime activity of everyday lives. If a family buys food from outside for their meal, then the women in the family were considered to be irresponsible. So, food preparation is also moral responsibility of the women of the family. It is by practice in the culture in India that man of the house has to get the money for the family to make food and it is the responsibility of the women to make the food from the given money for the day or month. These behaviours were monitored and mentored by the elderly member of the family. So, there was a never a need for a food delivery or requirement for the purchase in the Indian context.

Cooked Food were available outside the home for the travellers and sojourners of the Inn. Predominantly when a family moves from one place to another for reasons like visiting the temple, relatives, for wedding or other ceremonies, they carried the sufficient food for the journey. The food was also offered on the way of their journey as hospitality by the families of the town and given in temples and other places as charity and good will deed. It was shared by the elders of the family about the food practice in early 2000. Cooked Food were never seen as commercial food. Offering of food to others was considered as a culture, act of good will and of highest value or service to the people and god in India. Also, homes were making delicious food and exchanging of food among the neighbours and relatives were mere exchange of love and courtesy.

3. CONSUMER'S LIFESTYLE OF EATING OUT

The eating of food outside homes was in practice only when the families had gone out for special occasion like wedding, religious and family customary celebrations but not in restaurants or inns. It was learnt from the stories and elders that even when children were taken out for picnics and other travel, the foods were made from home and eaten as family in the park or picnic places or on the way in a natural shelter or at a built shelter. These were due to lifestyle, need of the people and the customary practice of having home food. The

emergence of modern lifestyle in India due to urbanization, globalized culture and increase in the disposable income have sown the seed for eating out in restaurants and buying food from restaurants.

Eating out, emergence as social activity and stress buster in the modern urban society in India along with going out to cinema and other gathering [4] The Technopak Research and Analysis, says that the modern couple tend to spend about 9 days in a year on eating out. Which is 216 hours (24 (hrs) x 9 (days)) spent outside in restaurant for eating. It states urban couple do spent lot of time in office (109 days) and followed by sleeping and taking rest (104 days). The busy life schedule has changed their food consumption. Cooking meal (25 days) and Eating out (9 days) is almost one third of the cooking. It can be stated that of the overall time spent on food (eating out and cooking), is 34 days.

This increase in time for eating out, has increased the consumer increase in spending and the food industry attracted lots of small, mid and large size restaurants and café to increase. The increase in families and friends eating out had got increased from mid-1990's and till recently. The people in India had not been like the people of the western who were caught up with the modernization in the early 70's and 80's. Indian food market was traditional in nature until the changes occurred in their social life. Table 1 is the survey report of the Food Service Industry in India, reports that Indian metros spend higher money on eating out compares to the mini metros and tier 1 and 2 town and cities. They visit 7 to 8 times a month to the Quick Service Restaurants (QSR) and Casual Dining Restaurants (CDR). On an average of household spending 6,500 – 7,000 INR a month that is converted to year comes to 78,000 – 84,000 INR. Chennai being a metropolitan city, having the similar market potential and consumer behaviour is an attractive place for the study to explore the consumers behaviour towards the eating in.

4. CONSUMERS SHIFTING FROM EATING OUT TO EATING IN

Similar to how the consumers shifted from the traditional eating habit of eating only the home food to eating-out in India and globally, the consumers have been changing from eating- out to eating - in. Eating- in is a practice of consumers getting the food delivered to their place or get it on their own to their place and having it at home with their family, friends or individually. Due to change in lifestyle, people's preference of having meals outside has been changing. The change is not in the variety of the cuisine but on the change in place and time. Indians, especially the people of Chennai, adopted the eating out food habit less than a two decades ago. Because of the change in habit, the restaurants had to bring in lots of changes in their setting up of restaurants. The space had taken importance place in the restaurant along the taste of the food. Aesthetic and concept restaurants were built to attract the consumers. Now, the emergence of food techies and change in lifestyle are majorly driving the consumers to shift to the eating-in habit.

The eating-in is driven by so many factors like technology in the food industry, lack of time due to change in lifestyle, dependence on prepared food, increase in the efficiency of the delivery business due to foreign players like Dominos, Pizza hut, convenience shopping through online channel, change in role of women, and offers, increase in disposable income [5]

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted among the 397 respondents lived in Chennai for more than a year. These respondents engaged with getting food delivery using technology that was using mobile applications. These respondents had used at least one food delivery aggregator app in Chennai for minimum of three months. These respondents have adopted the use of technology for delivery and have been moving away from traditional food delivery practice.

Table 2: Demographic Variable				
S. No	Demographic Variable		Frequency	Percent
	Living in Chennai	1 - 5 Yrs.	183	46.1
		6 -10 Yrs.	27	6.8
		Above 10 Yrs.	187	47.1
2	Gender	Female	124	31.2
		Male	273	68.8
3	Age	15 -20	83	20.9
		21 – 30	225	56.7
		31 – 40	55	13.9
		41 – 50	2-1	5.3
		Above 50	13	3.3
4	Marital Status	Single	279	70.3
		Married	112	28.2
		Living Together	6	1.5
5	Family Type	Joint Family	91	22.9
		Nuclear Family	182	45.8
		Alone (Away from the family)	124	31.2
6	Family Members	2	27	6.8
		3	79	19.9
		4	172	43.3
		5 and Above	119	30
7	Current Status	Student	197	49.6
		Working	168	42.3
		Non-Working	32	8.1

These respondents have expressed their food culture and	8	Monthly Family Income	Below 40	91	22.9
			40,001 - 60,000	76	19.1
			60,001 - 80,000	60	15.1
			80,001 - 1,00, 000	55	13.9
			Above 1,00,000	115	29
	9	Food Consumption Culture	Vegetarian	77	19.4
Non-Vegetarian			320	80.6	

These have their food

The study had balanced number of people who lived in Chennai for 1- 5 years, who can be mentioned as recent migrants to the city. That is, they had come to Chennai for various purpose like, education, job, business and marriage. So, the experience of life in Chennai of the respondents who lived in here for less than 5 years and the respondents who lived in Chennai for more than 10 years were different in so many aspects. The female were about 31.2 percent and male 68.8 percent. Women population was less in number because, in many houses, women had just been the decision makers and influencer of the decisions but not the user of the applications. During the data collection, about 10% – 15% of women had declined to fill in the questionnaire because they had not installed MFDA in their phone but they had been a part of ordering food in their family.

The study could identify (Table 2) the most users coming from the age group of 21 - 30 years (56.7%), followed by 15 – 20 years (20.9) and 31 -40 years (13.9). The observation is that - teenagers and college students get actively involved in buying by installing the app and ordering for their family to get food delivered. As the life style, roles and responsibilities of the individual changes in marriage, there evolves a distinct change in choice and preference after the marriage of the consumers. The study had considered single, married and living together partners. Living together is self-styled family. The study had 70 % of single, 28.2 % were married and 1.5% were living together.

The high earning consumers cover about 29% of the sales. Again, there is a chance of them spending more money and being frequent users. Also, the low-income people of below Rs.40,000 also were in need of the service. By and large, the logic could be, earning is not an eminent determiner of the intention to continuous use, as the users belong to low, medium and high-income group. The family's food culture was also taken into the study. The majority of them were Non-Vegetarians (80.6) who consume both vegetarian and non- vegetarian food. Followed by Pure Vegetarian who consume only Vegetarian food were 19.4%. Market has more who identify themselves as vegetarian. More revenue comes from the non-vegetarians.

Table 3 PRIMARY NEED/ REASON OF USING MFDA APP		
Need/Reason	Frequency	Percent
Offers	115	29.0
Easy Delivery	155	39.0
Variety of Foods	74	18.6
Supports my lifestyle	53	13.4

6. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Of the respondents adopted the online food delivery, 39% had been using it because it offers them a better delivery of food (Table 3). Followed by Offers 29%, Variety of food and supports lifestyle. It reflects that consumers have changed the consumption practice that they prefer to eat in than dinning out. Use of online delivery and eating in was boasted by the offers, and need for variety of food and supports the lifestyle. It affirms that there is a change in consumption of the food and the role of food in the family had changed.

Table 4 PREFERRED OCCASION OF USE OF MFDA APP						
		Week Days	Sick Day	Lazy Day	Family Occasion	Office Time/ Overstay
Rank 1	87	49	41	123	31	52
Rank 2	40	84	77	60	69	47
Rank 3	33	87	98	57	55	54
Rank 4	49	53	67	82	71	60
Rank 5	44	70	63	37	105	59
Rank 6	143	54	51	37	64	123

The users of online food delivery had preference of use of food delivery. It was observed from the analysis, that most of the respondent had used the food delivery on the lazy day, followed by week days – busy days of the week, sick days – most preferred way of getting food to the family and finally the family occasion and festivals (Table 4). Most preferred alternative for the home food is getting food from outside and eating-in.

Table 5 DURATION OF USING MFDA APP		
Months	Frequency	Percent
6	92	23.2
7 – 9	40	10.1
10 -12	47	11.8
Above 12	218	54.9

Table 6 HAS MFDA APP INCREASED THE SPENDING ON FOOD		
Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	189	47.6
No	97	24.4
Maybe	111	28.0

There were 397 respondents of them 55% of the had been using it for more than year (table 5). This reveals that most of them have adopted and been shifting towards the online food ordering and delivery. Also, the consumers are comfortable in eating in than eating out for various reasons mentioned in the table 6.

Table 7 - Crosstabulation – Age & Frequency of Usage					
		Frequency of ordering			Total
		Weekly	Occasionally	Rarely	
Age	15 -20	16	11	56	83
	21 - 30	60	23	142	225
	31 - 40	18	5	32	55
	41 - 50	5	2	14	21
	Above 50	4	0	9	13
Total		103	41	253	397

As there were increase in adoption of online food delivery and eating in, there were also increase in their spending on outside food. According to table 6 of the findings, 47.6% had clearly stated that they increased their spending and 28% had partially felt that they were increase in their spending. Yes, there are visible increase in consumers spending on online food delivery.

The consumers who used online food delivery on a weekly routine were 103 of 397 which about 26% (Table 7). Rare users were about 63.7%. In that age group of 21 -30 were more frequent users. It was observed most young generation were catching with the habit of adopting the online food delivery and eating in Chennai. It can also mention that even the

consumers above 40 also picking up with the technology and online food practices.

Table 8 Crosstabulation – Marital Status & Meal of the day got delivered the most					
		Meal of the day got food delivered the most			Total
		Lunch	Evening Snack	Dinner	
Marital Status	Single	71	30	178	279
	Married	31	10	71	112
	Living Together	1	1	4	6
Total		103	41	253	397

An interesting inference from the table 8 was unmarried consumers have more need for the evening snacks than the married and living together. It was the dinner which was in more demand than breakfast, snacks and lunch. Dinner was the prime time of business and the time where the need for the food delivery. The reasons for preference of online food ordering and delivery at night could be for reasons mentioned in the Table 3 &4.

7. CONCLUSION

The meal was considered as very important traditionally and it was part of the family. But from the study we observed that there was visible shift in consumers habit of eating out to eating in. The technopack reports informed that couple in Indian urban society had been spending 9 days of year for eating out and 25 days on cooking. According to the study, it was observed that there was a trim in the number of days cooked meals at home and also number of days spending on eating-outside. It has influenced the market size as well; Indian online food market was up by 3,35,000 Crore in 2017 and it was projected to grow 5,49,400 Crore in 2022 [7]. Forecasting a growth of 8% and 2.6% contribution to the GDP. Online food delivery is in the transition curve to be dominant market practice as eating-in sooner or later will be the order of the day. Also, there are lots of business have jumped into it with huge investments [8].

It is concluded that there is technology influenced changes that is taking place in the food industry. The consumers prefer to have food to Eat-in on lazy and busy days of the week. The importance of the meal and home cooked food is getting shifted to the restaurants made food. So, the emergence of restaurants connected with the food delivery have scope for more business as the consumers preference for online food delivery and ordering is visible. The study emphasises on segmenting the consumers based on the demography and lifestyle to identify the potential market gaps and delivery the need-based service of each segments.

The study states that the consumers preferences had shifted from eating-in to eating-out and eating-in (trending). The consumers eating-in is driven by the change in lifestyle and technology adoption in Chennai. There is more scope for restaurants attached with the food

ordering and aggregator delivery app than restaurant doesn't delivery and not attached with any of these food delivery aggregators.

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