

Emerging Fast Food Culture in India: A Study of Select Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

Food is one most vital component of human life as it satisfies the basic biological need of hunger. Food habits of any culture are dependent on various factors. With the growth of human civilisation and society food has become a loaded term carrying social, cultural and political dimensions besides the biological one. With the rapid social changes the Indian food culture is also changing. Fast food has increased its value in Indian food habits. The advertisement industry has played a major role in the change of food culture. The present paper seeks to explore how the select advertisement of three famous food brands-*Nestle's Maggi*, *Dominos' Pizza* and *McDonald's Burger* tries to influence the Indian audience through the use of Indian cultural elements. These advertisements were aired during 2022. These also reflect current Indian social realities.

Key Words: Advertisements, Cultural, Food, Habits, Indian.

Introduction

Hunger is the basic drive and need of human being. To fulfil this drive, food is required as it is source of energy which makes him or her capable for doing activities for survival. Biologically, food is basic and essential component of life on earth. If one puts food in the context of human civilisation, it has acquired cultural, social, economic and psychological dimensions as well. Hunting and gathering food was one of the first human activities. Later agriculture as developed for meeting the demand for food and it led to the stabilisation and creation of various social institutions. With the progress of human history food habits and culture developed across the world. If one analyses the food habits and culture across the world, that diversity can be easily noticed. Social, cultural, economic and geographical factors have played an important role in the determination of food culture and habits across the different regions of world. Take the example of India. Being a nation full of diversity, one can find different food culture and habits in the different parts of it. Social change is constant and universal feature of society. Along with social change, food habits also change. In Indian context, after the adoption of LPG policy in the early 90s, change is being notices in food culture along with other social institutions. The process of globalisation has exposed India to the different food cultures of the world. As a result, Indians have also adopted the food habits

which were not common in the earlier times. It is important to note that food culture of economically dominant nations have made presence in India during the last thirty years. The growing presence of fast foods such as Pizza, Burger, and Noodles in Indian food culture especially in urban areas strongly reflects the effect of globalisation in Indian habits. Mass media such as TV, Cinema and Internet have played a huge role on the spreading the fast food habits in India. Advertisement of foods on these mediums have touched, impressed and persuaded Indian minds to use them. The present paper is an attempt to explore the select advertisements of popular brands aired during the year 2022. Nestle's Maggi, Domino's Pizza and Mcdonald's Burger have been selected as popular fast food brands for the study to examine how they try to impact and persuade the audience. The YouTube channels of these brands are the primary sources of the study.

Discussion

During the year 2022, an advertisement to promote *Maggi* was aired in which a mother and son are the characters. The advertisement utilises the emotional bonding of mother son relationship for the promotion. The son is shown preparing in the late night for his examination. The mother is also shown worried and having sleepless night due to his exams. Later the boy prepares Maggi noodle in the late night and serves it to her mother for the pleasant surprise. The noodles become symbol of care, love and taste. The advertisement also depicts the pressure and burden of examination system on the young minds of Indian youth. lakhs of students go through this tremendous pressure of good performance in exams every year. Marks and rank determine the criterion of success these days in the highly competitive exams. The parents of the concerned students have also part of these rat race and they also participate in the mental burden of his or her child's examination performance. The advertisement shows Maggi as the companion of the boy in his mission examination in the late night session. The advertisement also deconstructs the gender roles and stereotypes. The entry of the male child in the kitchen for preparing the noodles for her mother displays how Maggi can play role in gender equality in the current society as it is fast and easy to cook even for a male who is usually not accustomed to kitchen work. Hence it can be said that advertisement effectively presents Maggi as a partner in sharing exam burden and care between mother and son.

In another advertisement having tagline *Samjhdari dikhao and Maggi hi Lao*, a common Indian woman asks audience to eat *Maggi* as it contains the element of Iron. As it is common fact that Iron is vital component for human body as it is related to Haemoglobin which plays important role in the blood circulation. Due to deficiency of Iron, the disease Anaemia may develop which affects body growth. Anaemia is a common disease found in many women in India. The advertisement also announces that the company also funds the education of poor students by providing scholarships to them. This advertisement associates Maggi with the health and humanity and creates its positive brand image. It tries to negate the popular notion that Maggi as a fast food is harmful for health and society as a whole. Linking of taste and

convenience with health and humanity is a common strategy for promoting the product. It is worth to mention here that some years ago the brand of Maggi was badly hit when a research agency published the report that it contains the element which is harmful for human health. After that fiasco, Nestle changed its strategy and made attempts to promote Maggie as healthy and tasty product. It also changed the ingredients of it and launched additional variants like *Atta Maggi* as *Maida* is associated with bad health. These days other popular healthy ingredient such as Oats has made entry in the Maggi . Consuming the Maggie has been presented as a medium to earn positive self dignity and healthy lifestyle for the audience. Hence the advertisement pushes the audience to assume responsibility for funding education for needy children as socially responsible children. Hence it can be underlined that the advertisement utilises the human emotions of empathy, responsibility, and care to promote the product.

McDonald has emerged as popular brand name for the eating product burger in the recent years. Earlier it was present in the metro big cities only but these days its presence in the smaller cities can easily be observed. During the year 2022, Mcdonald launched campaign named 'Meal makes families'. The institution of family is a social invention which separates human beings from other living beings. It is functional being a provider of security, care and love to its members. This institution is an integral part of Indian culture. The advertisement utilises the emotions associated with family in Indian psyche. Sharing and eating the food together has been prominent feature of family culture in India. Even officially common kitchen is considered to count family as a unit in Indian Census exercise. Food brings warmth and togetherness in Indian family. Capturing this cultural tradition of India the advertisement presents McDonald burger as a meal which unites family together. A number of short advertisements were aired in the series meal make family campaign. In some of these advertisements along with slogan, the popular surnames Mehta, Sharma, Wagle family have been used to convey the ideas that burger is consumed in the large number of families from different caste, community and regions. The used surnames are familiar ones since the last many years. These names are popular as they have been used in a number of serials, movies. The familiarity with these names creates a notion of common family in Indian audience mind. Interestingly no human being as a character is used in the series of such advertisements but the tag of Mehta family with the packed order of McDonald burger effectively creates picture of Indian family in audience imagination. Such advertisements convey the message that Indian families usually order the burger in their homes as meals. Hence the tag of family surname becomes an important character in forming the family identity in the minds of audience. In another advertisement, three members of family representing three generations-old, young and child have been shown in the McDonald restaurant near the order counter. The young man opens the McDonald app to see the available deal. The deal presents a combo offer before them with financial savings. The advertisement conveys the message that it is better to download and use the McDonald's app for ordering the burger rather than in offline mode. It reflects an ironical situation in which a customer gets better deal on online platform

standing on order counter physically. Clearly the advisements wants to encourage the use of online platform which reflects the postmodern idea that reality is being constructed virtually in the contemporary digital world and we are being forced to become citizen of virtual world. The choice of the characters from the three generations represents the idea that burger is suitable and popular across all the ages. It is not merely restricted to children and youth. The old age category is targeted for broadening the customer base of the product. It also symbolises the togetherness and unity in the family which promote celebration together. It also advises the old generation to get accustomed to new digital technologies for better and happier life. The question arises why the companies wants to promote their digital platforms for their products. One of most important reason behind this is that with the help of mobile app, the physical distance between the customer and the product disappears and the presence of the product in the mobile phone acts as a strong stimulus for creating desire for the product. When the option of fulfilment of the created desire is available in the phone, it enhances the chances of placing order of the product. Other economic and logistic reasons are also behind this.

Domino is one the most famous brands of Pizza in India. This brand is also expanding very fast in the recent years due to strong marketing strategies adopted by the company. During the start of the year 2022 Domino launched advertisement regarding celebration the presence of 1500 stores in India. The advertisement in 55 second duration covers the broad range of different regions of India along with the different reasons for celebrations across the wide range of persons belonging to different phases of life in terms of age. It mentions the places Kanpur, Asansol, Chandigarh, Bhopal, Kochi and Shillong. The choice of the cities reflects different corners of India and these cities are also the symbols of growing aspirations of India in tier II cities. An article published on the *Mint* website mentions about the trend:

India's quick-service restaurant(OSR) market is expected to clock a compound annual growth rate of 23% between no to fiscal year 2025 as large food services chains...deepen their reach in India's smaller cities, and benefit from a younger demographic. (Mint)

In the end the image of restaurants showing location on the map depicts the presence of Domino all over India creating the image that whole nation likes to eat Domino pizza. The reasons of celebrations-birthday celebration with friends, late night hunger buster, dating place for lovers, gossiping place, football championship celebration underlines the variety of activities in modern day lives. The association of the Pizza with the life activities conveys the impression that it is associated with the special moments of life. The laughing and celebrating faces creates positive vibes in the audience minds and the presence of pizza in the state of happiness creates likings for the associated product. Hence the advertisement instead of conveying direct message for using the product indirectly persuades the mind through psychological linking. It puts the audience in a situation where he/she shares the company of pizza lovers all across the nation while eating it. The characters used in the advertisement

belong to different age groups with the underlying message that fast food is not only for children and youth. Persons belonging to all age groups can relish this food item. The image of cheese acts a stimulus for taste buds and claims that the pizza is extremely tasty. Hence the advertisement showing the dominating presence of the product all across the regions of nation claims its universal acceptance and makes the audience feel that eating Domino pizza is sensible and intelligent choice.

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that the trend of fast food has increased in India since India adopted liberalised policies. Indian society has witness rapid changes in all its aspects. The growth of digital technologies and mass media has contributed in this rapid social change. The global food brands like Dominos and Nestle have made their presence in the food habits. The advertisement of these brands through satellite channels and social media platforms has played an immense role in the spread of image of these brands in the common masses. The elements of Indian culture such as brotherhood, sharing are used to influence and persuade the Indian psyche to consume the products. These advertisements also reflect the current social changes.

References

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