

Digital Marketing of Food Products - Trends, Challenges and Strategies

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to propose a structural model to measure attributes of a tourism destination competitiveness. Although many destination measurement models have been developed by tourism researchers, there is not a scale that fits all destinations as well as their differences or lack of consistency. In addition, due to the diversity and abundance of destinations, a model applied at a tourist destination cannot promise an appropriate outcome when applied it to another tourist destination. This article is intended to provide an appropriate conceptual framework related to the tourism destination measurement indicators before the actual survey is conducted. The structural model for measuring destination competitiveness of Mũi Né – Bình Thuận tourism destination was developed by inheriting documents on theoretical models and empirical studies. This is the case study applied to the Mũi Né-Bình Thuận, Việt Nam tourism destination.

Keywords: Competitiveness Capacity, Travel Destination, Model of Competitive Capacity Structure, Mui Ne

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization, in general, is use of digital systems and technologies for data management. Digital technology has shrunk the globe and connected the entire world in mobile handsets. One can book a travel ticket, do shopping, chat with loved ones across the globe, and even share views with the external world more freely and easily as a result of digitalisation.

Digital India is a dream project of Government of India for connecting the dots of various past and present

projects, an initiative that covers many important projects like National e-Governance Plan, National Knowledge Network, National Optical Fibre Network, digital cities, etc. This is expected to help in digital inclusion in the country, empower the citizens and create a positive impact in the lives of people - rural and urban, young and old.

The explosion of digital culture has transformed the way food and beverage companies market their products. With high penetration of mobile devices among all age groups, marketing is no longer limited to advertising to deliver the message but now engages kids, teens, young persons and elders in a highly personalised dialogue 24/7. The goal of marketers is not just to sell products but it is to bond people with brands at personal and emotional levels.

India is a food-loving country with each state offering different cuisine to match the preferences of its people. Though dining out has not been a tradition in India gradually it is picking up and spreading from metros and larger cities to smaller cities and towns. However, the food retail industry is crowded and demanding with pop-ups, chains and boutique restaurants dominating every street corner, so marketing is becoming more important. Besides hotels and restaurants serving food, stall offering ready to eat food, takeaways, table reservation platforms and home delivery startups have come up to meet the changing needs of food connoisseurs. To make sure that the food retail businesses are one step ahead of the game, it's time to get around these trends. With digitalisation restaurants and food, businesses are adopting digital marketing practices and even harnessing social media for this purpose. Food Brands are increasingly using new technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), chatbots and other digital technologies.

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Food and beverage companies use innovative practices to integrate their promotions into social relationships. Food marketers leverage location-based technology to send ads straight to cell phones. They infiltrate conversations on Facebook and Twitter and invite their clients to create branded content and share it with their friends, collect online data and use it to analyse behaviour patterns, create immersive environments to blur the line between marketing and entertainment and adjust their targeting strategies accordingly. Food marketers are using the technological advances of the digital age, deliver messages in ways that make it increasingly difficult to detect and resist, focus on choices and preferences of their customers such as taste, convenience, health, sustainability, etc. Given young people's vulnerabilities, they appeal to their taste buds, explaining what they should eat and why, and so on. The goal is to delight their valuable food consumers with highly personalised and engaging content.

OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

In the above background, the objective of this study was to explore the status of digital marketing and trends in digital marketing of food, identify challenges in the change and to suggest appropriate strategies to harness digital technology for effective marketing of food in the contemporary dynamic market situation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Contemporary research provides a detailed insight into the role of digitalisation and the implications. Rani

(2016) from her research concluded that 'the digital India project' provided a huge opportunity to use latest technology to redefine paradigms of the service industry. It also pointed out that many projects may require some transformational process, reengineering and refinements to achieve the desired service objectives. Midha (2016) concluded that though digital India initiative was a great idea to develop India for the emerging knowledge economy, and if properly implemented it can make the lives of citizens more comfortable. However, it was facing a number of challenges. Gupta and Arora (2015) in their study on impacts of digital India project on India's rural sector observed that many schemes have been launched to boost the agriculture sector and entrepreneurship development in rural areas and this has set the stage for the empowerment of rural women. Ochsner (2010) in her study on 'enhanced food marketing to children on the internet' illustrated the stealth advertising via the internet by food marketers and suggested for promoting of awareness among nutrition and health professionals and policymakers in this respect.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was based on a field survey covering ten food marketers and 20 food consumers using digital technology for marketing their services in Udaipur. The sample of both the segments was selected by random sampling method. The profile of respondent food marketers and food consumers using digital marketing services from two groups is given in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively.

Table 1: Profile of Respondent Food Marketers - Restaurants and Food Retail Outlets

Gender	Number	Age (Years)	Number	% of Total	Type of Outlet	Number	% of Total
Male	10	< 18	2	20 %	Restaurant	9	90 %
Female	Nil	18 - 25	2	20 %	Takeaway	2	20 %
Total	10	25 - 50	6	60 %	Food Processing	1	10 %
		> 50	Nil				
		Total	10				

Table 2: Profile of Respondent Food Consumers

Gender	Number	Age (Years)	Number	% of Total	Profession	Number	% of Total
Male	11	< 18	Nil		Student	1	5 %
Female	9	19 - 25	5	25 %	Professionals	4	20 %
Total	20	25 - 40	14	70%	Service	4	20 %
		> 50	1	5 %	Business	5	25 %
		Total	20		House Makers	3	15 %
					Others	3	15 %

It may be observed from Table 1 and 2 that both respondent groups represented a wider spectrum of entities gender-wise, age group-wise and profession wise and were capable of providing information useful for the study.

Each participant was served a questionnaire after obtaining his consent. The questionnaires contained questions on the status of digital technology use of digital technology for marketing, for sourcing orders and delivery of food, use and preference for social media, challenges in digital marketing and strategies for effective digital marketing. The data collected from the respondents were analysed and the finding of this study is based on the information provided by the two groups.

Digital Marketing for Restaurants and Food Businesses

With a change from sellers’ market to buyers’ market, information on needs and preferences of buyers and evaluation of the customers is considered necessary by marketers to offer the right product, to right person, at right place and at the right price. For this, it becomes necessary to get feedback from the customers on whether they were getting optimum satisfaction from the product and service, so that they may continue to make changes in the product, and in the marketing mix, and the consumers remain loyal. Thus, marketing research is done for systematic and objective collection, analysis and evaluation of information about specific aspects of marketing problems in order to help management make effective decisions. In the view of Kotler and Keller (2005), the objective is “problem analysis, model building and fact-finding for improved decision making and control in the marketing of goods and services.”

Use of Digital Technology

Throughout the history of humankind, technologies and innovations have served as instruments of change and shaped the cultural landscape. Besides landline telephones, desktops, laptops, smart mobile phones and internet are influencing and shaping human behaviour and promoting engagement with the world around. As per The Economic Times report (March 28, 2019) in the total global population of 7.676 billion, there were 4.388 billion (57.16%) global internet users. This opens up a potential for the use of digital technology in the business,

including for the restaurants and food retail outlets and food consumers.

Table 3: Use of Technology by Food Marketers at Restaurants and Food Retail Outlets

<i>Technology</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Landline Telephones	2	20
Smart Mobile Phones	8	80
Television	Nil	Nil
Internet-based Desktops/Laptops	1	10

It may be observed from Table 3 that among food marketers 20% used landline telephones, 80% used smart mobile phones and 10% used internet-based desktops/laptops for supporting their businesses including for marketing their brands, products and services, harnessing digital technology to their advantage.

Table 4: Use of Technology for Knowledge on Food and Its Availability by Food Customers

<i>Technology</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Television	4	20
Smart Mobile Phones	15	75
Web Pages	2	10

Among the food customers, as shown by Table 4, 20% used television, 75% used smart mobile phones and 10% used web pages for obtaining knowledge on food and its availability. Thus, the use of digital technology for obtaining knowledge on food and its availability was widespread among food marketers and the food consumers of both the genders, all age groups and all professions. In this respect, it may be noted that due to wider availability and growing usage smart mobile phones were more prominent technology in use among both the groups.

Use of Digital Technology for Marketing and Advertisements

Advertisement of brands, products and services is done by marketers to inform, persuade and remind the customers of the products and services. It makes consumers aware of the product, creates interest and develops demand for the product and service. Advertising is also used as a sales promotion activity. While advertising contributes

to sales promotion, advertisement research develops an information base required to undertake product promotion and sales promotion. The process of advertisement starts with setting advertisement objectives, and progressing through media planning, media selection, content research, development of advertisement copy and media buying culminates with the launch of the advertisement to create effective demand. Variety of digital technologies is used in the process, including the websites, messenger bots, live videos, etc.

Websites: A website designed to account for all different screen sizes and load times is crucial to the digital marketing of content. In this respect features like site design, optimised titles, Meta descriptions, page speed, etc., are important to ensure that all images and video content is visible on all fixed and mobile devices and the text is readable without zooming.

Messenger Bots: Consumers look for a more personalized journey when it comes to digital content. Messenger bots though still in their infancy, have become a crucial tool for personalization at scale. Messenger bots (or chatbots) are computer programs designed to simulate conversations with users and make brands available to consumers at all times. With the advent of the on-demand economy, people are now less willing to sit on landline telephones or wait for an email response from customer service. For answers to simple questions, chatbots are the way out. Chatbots are tools to generate leads, provide consumers with the latest news, suggestions based on past activity and even take payments.

Live Videos: Live videos, an emerging trend open up the floor for consumers to interact directly with brands, get answers to their inquiries in real-time, provide a human element to brands and make the consumer feel closer to the brand through immersive live content.

Table 5: Technology Used for Advertisements by Restaurants and Food Retail Outlets

<i>Medium For Advertisements</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Print Media		
1. Newspapers	Nil	Nil
2. Journals	Nil	Nil
3. Billboards	Nil	Nil
4. Pamphlets	2	20
Electronic Media		
1. Websites	5	50
2. Web Mails	2	20
3. Videos	3	30
4. Messenger bots	2	20

Earlier the print media in the form of newspapers, journals and magazines, billboards and pamphlets were commonly used for advertisements. But now gradually the place is being taken by new technology that includes internet-driven websites, webmails, messenger bots and live videos. It may be observed from Table 5 that food marketers have shifted from print media to electronic media. Except for the pamphlets, which were used by 20% respondents, marketing of food products was driven by new digital technology which included websites (50%), webmails (20%), videos (30%) and messenger bots (20%).

Use and Preference for Social Media

One can not avoid social media anymore. As per The Economic Times (March 28, 2019) report, there were 3.484 billion active social media users in the world, and among these, 3.256 billion (93.46%) were mobile social media users. People use social media to define their brand, achieve a sense of self-fulfilment, to become part of the contemporary culture and to further the causes that resonate deeply with them. As the world is increasingly becoming digital smart algorithms, bots and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have become normal.

A unique feature of social media is pace it provides for rich media content. Rich media content specifies multiple product images, 360^o videos and images, interactive graphics and virtual reality. The goal is to give the consumer valuable shopping experiences online as they would get in a store. Rich media can create a 'try before you buy' experience, helping the consumer to get a sense of the product before it is purchased. Product demos, recipe videos, and info-graphics are all rich media content ideas that provide consumers with a more immersive shopping experience.

Since all sections of people use social media the restaurants and food businesses also have created their personal space on Twitter, Facebook and Insta gram, and keep these updated by posting relevant business information regularly for keeping their brands and products fresh in the minds of their patron customers.

Table 6: Preference for Social Media Among Food Customers

Social Media	Number	% of Total
Facebook	13	65
Instagram	6	30
Twitter	2	10
Linked In	1	5

As per Table 6, among the food customers, 65% of respondents were active users on Facebook, 30% used Instagram, 10% used Twitter, and 5% used Linked In.

Table 7: Use of Social Media for Promotion by Restaurants and Food Retail Outlets

Social Media	Number	% of Total
Facebook	9	45
Instagram	6	30
Twitter	2	10
Linked In	Nil	Nil

Among the food marketers, as per Table 7, 45% of respondents were active users on Facebook, 30% used Instagram, and 10% used Twitter for product promotion activities.

Thus, with growing activity on social media, its utility as a marketing tool has increased rapidly, and it is growing into a powerful weapon in the armoury of marketers for influencing opinions and behaviours of people.

Use of Social Media Features for Marketing

Marketers use a variety of features on social media to establish and maintain a close relationship with their clients. Apart from writing Blogs, maintaining websites and maintaining pages on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and posting videos, messages and emails they use active bloggers and celebrities to push up their products. Recommendations and word-of-mouth publicity are powerful forms of marketing for restaurants and food businesses. Strong referrals on social media by influential people in the niche are considered necessary. Bloggers and restaurant critics are invited to dine, shown the latest innovations and dishes, and are asked to post/write about these. The paid channels invite people with big social media following to talk about the product.

Table 8: Usage of Social Media Features by Restaurants and Food Retail Outlets

Features	Numbers	% of Total
Writing Blogs	2	20
Maintaining Facebook Pages	6	60
Posting Contents	1	10
Posting Videos	4	40
Posting Messages	1	10
Sending Mails	1	10
Using Bloggers	2	20
Using Celebrity	1	10

As per Table 8, among the food marketers 20% were writing blogs, 60% were maintaining Facebook pages, 10% were posting contents, 40% were posting videos, 10% were posting messages, 10% were sending mails, 20% were using bloggers and 10% were using celebrity for endorsement of their products. Thus, the value of social media was well recognised, and the restaurants and food businesses considered social media crucial to their success in business.

Use of Technology for Sourcing Supply Orders and for Ordering Food

Besides, as a marketing tool technology was also considered useful for ordering food by consumers and sourcing supply orders for food by marketers. According to research by App Annie (Table 9), consumers around the world placed 130% more meal orders on mobile devices in 2018 than in 2016. This rise was driven in part by quick-service restaurants eager for a slice from the mobile-driven market.

Table 9: Growth of App Sessions for Android Food and Drink Apps in Select Countries, 2018

Country	Change in 2018 Over 2016 (%)
France	325
South Korea	230
Canada	215
The UK	180
The US	140
India	120
Japan	45
Brazil	45
Germany	45

Note: The number includes restaurant Apps and food delivery Apps and represents Android activity on In Mobi's network.

Source: Economic Times, February 18, 2019.

Menu-based spot ordering for food has been a unique feature of restaurants and food retail outlets for a long time. But now it is gradually being replaced by technology-based ordering for the supply of food. Multiple devices such as landline telephones, smart mobile phones and internet-based desktops and laptops have emerged as channels for placing orders for food and reserving space during specific time slots at restaurants.

Table 10: Use of Technology for Ordering Food by Food Customers

<i>Technology</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Landline Telephones	Nil	Nil
Smart Mobile phones	18	90
Apps	2	10
Internet Based Desktop/Laptop	Nil	Nil

As per Table 10 among the food consumers 90% of respondents used smart mobile phones and 10% of respondents used Apps for ordering food at restaurants.

Table 11: Use of Technology for Sourcing Food Orders by Restaurants and Food Retail Outlets

<i>Technology</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Landline Telephones	2	20
Smart Mobile phones	9	90
Internet Based Desktop/Laptop	3	30
Any other	Nil	Nil

Likewise, as per Table 11 among the food marketers 90% respondents stated that they received orders for food on smart mobile phones, 30% on internet-based desktops and Laptops and 20% received orders on landline telephones. Thus, technology is proving to be an important facilitator for ordering food for consumers as well as for food marketers for receiving supply orders for food.

Use of Technology for Order Delivery of Food

Earlier, the customers moved to restaurants and food retail outlets for food. But with the availability of order delivery services and vehicles now the supply chain is moving in the reverse direction, and the restaurants deliver food to their clients at their home as per their requirement and supply orders.

Table 12: Use of Technology for Food Delivery by Restaurants and Food Retail Outlets

<i>Delivery Vehicle</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Bicycles	2	10
Motor Cycles	6	30
Delivery Vans	1	5
Food Aggregators	10	100

It may be observed from Table 12 that among the food marketers 30% of respondents used motorcycles for delivery, 10% used bicycles, 5% used delivery vans and 100% used food aggregators.

Food aggregators are a unique new feature in the management of the supply chain for grocery, pharma products, fruits, vegetables, ready to eat food and other consumption items. Swiggy, Zomato and Uber Eats have emerged as popular aggregators for order delivery. Taking advantage of their presence, restaurants and food businesses have entered into agreements with one or more among these aggregators to ensure speedy and timely supply of food to their clients.

Table 13: Choice and Preference for Aggregator by Restaurants and Food Retail Outlets

<i>Order Delivery Aggregators</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Swiggy	8	40
Zomato	10	50
Uber Eats	2	10
Others	1	5

It may be observed from Table 13 that from among the food aggregators, 50% respondents made choice of Zomato, 40% made the choice of Swiggy, 10% made the choice of Uber Eats and 5% made choice of others. Thus, though food aggregators are still new to Indian environment the preference for them is growing and expanding fast from the metros and large cities to smaller cities. They are expected to play an important role in time to come with the changing environment and lifestyles of young persons.

CHALLENGES IN DIGITAL MARKETING OF FOOD

With pop-ups, chains and boutique restaurants dominating every street corner, the restaurant and food retail business

is becoming crowded and demanding. Besides with the changing face of marketing and new trends and developments, it is necessary for food retail businesses to remain one step ahead of the change. Accordingly, the food businesses are experimenting and leveraging new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), voice control, chatbots, video and social media to remain contemporary. But the real challenge for these businesses in changing choice and preference for food among people. Major challenges faced by the food businesses in the changing global environment are as under:

- *Heritage Food - Back to Roots:* Consumers often show concern about what is their heritage food and where from their food comes in the present. Sometimes customers come from long distances looking for heritage food items. Accordingly, emphasis on local heritage food is becoming widely prevalent in food marketing. Food retailers explore, identify and develop exotic and heritage food items and highlight on the sources of the food ingredients and heritage-based menu items to attract and retain their valuable clients and visitors.
- *Eco-Friendly:* With growing concern for environment change the world over food consumers are now more environmentally concerned than ever before. The awareness of environmental needs is gradually building up in every walk of life including food. The requirements in food supply are changing accordingly to eco-friendly systems from packaging to reduced food wastage, hybrid delivery vehicles, sustainable delivery methods, etc., to attract environmentally conscious customers. This positive change in policy is also creating new marketing challenge and also creating opportunities.
- *Nutrition:* Health has always been a concern for food customers. People felt secure with home food. But with food supply coming from market people are gradually becoming more conscious about nutrition and health. Accordingly, now the food retailers have to steer away from the calorie counting and making positive affirmations to supply of holistic healthy food and show how they care for the health and well being of their customers.
- *New Recipes and New Flavours:* With change, customers are moving away from the routine food menu and look for new recipes and new flavours. Now more and more people are exploring plant-based food, want to break away from meat, avoid higher-protein and

prefer lower-carb diets, seek ways to add savoury unique flavours into their meals, etc. To meet this changing need food marketers have to come up with new ideas in food and develop new food recipes and new flavours.

- *Hands-on Experience:* As the technology takes over food, customers are increasingly looking to combine eating with entertainment. This is percolating down and getting reflected in food marketing also. With live videos and Instagram stories, food marketers are offering their audiences opportunities for hands-on experience in cooking besides experiencing the taste of food while eating. Restaurants and delivery services that create such genuinely unique customer experiences are flourishing and building strong clients bases.

Digital Marketing Strategies for Food

In the changing global environment, to meet the challenge of diversity in culture and taste, the growing concern for health, nutrition and environment and also to take care of the evolving needs of young people effective marketing strategies for food businesses are needed. Drawing upon the experiences of the respondents, some such strategies are suggested here.

- *Listing on Google 'My Business':* Many consumers conduct research online prior to choosing a restaurant at a new place. Thus, it is important that all restaurant details are online and up-to-date, including the address, phone numbers, hours of work and current menu. Local search marketing consists of claiming and optimizing online listings of business so that it shows up in relevant local searches. This puts business on the map for not only local consumers but also visitors to find when they need food. Thus, enrolling business on "Google my business page" has become almost mandatory for food businesses.
- *Blog for Business:* Having a Blog for business is the best way to convert strangers into visitors and visitors into customers. A Blog provides online visibility to the food business. Adding a Blog page to website and publishing posts on a regular basis helps in showing up on the search engine results pages and drive traffic to the website and on to the restaurant.

Content is king everywhere and consumers demand the best in products and services from their favourite brands. Also want access to all the information they

need to make a purchase and enjoy a top-quality, personalised experience whether shopping online or in person. Producing informative content and engaging and offering customers a highly targeted, personalised experience is necessary. Food brands often have desirable products with great stories and talking points. Food marketers should develop such high-quality content, particularly visually interesting and personalised videos as per consumers' needs and interests and put them on the Blog.

The Blog should also developed creatively adding a list of main ingredients of food products and their health benefits, vitamins and minerals included in the food products, and how these vitamins and minerals can improve health, etc. A creatively developed Blog for food products is expected to create interest in the target audience to visit the Blog, read the content and experience it at the restaurant.

- *Creativity in Marketing:* The food retail industry has shifted its trajectory upwards, mainly during the last few years, as has the art of marketing. Moving away from the days of television and radio advertisements it is now interactive marketing, targeted advertising and content creation. Embracing emerging new technologies and keeping the focus on unique experiences for consumers, they should not only serve but also empower their customers remaining attentive to the particular needs and desires of their audiences.
- *Use New Age Technology for Marketing:* Food retailers should gradually shift to new-age technologies like geofencing, chatbots, artificial intelligence, etc.

Geofencing is a form of targeted digital marketing which assigns a retailer to a particular geographical area and targets potential clients as they enter this area through Apps, which allow location tracking. Using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology geofencing creates a virtual geographic boundary or "fence" around an area, which can be programmed to trigger a response like a text, email or push notification when a user enters or exits the specified area. The App on the mobile device sends a welcome or thank you notification and invites the potential guest to a particular spot for food.

Telephone has been the popular chat tool that gave customers a direct line for questions and support issues, a great way to provide immediate, top quality service to customers coming for food. But now

new-age technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered Chatbots automate and personalise marketing generating leads from addressing customers queries to gather and analyse customer feedback. Using Facebook Messenger platform also one can develop a Chatbot App with ease for feedback.

Another big change has been the Alexa and Google Home. This opens up a whole new field of marketing for food retailers. Amazon Alexa skill talks users through recipes step-by-step. This allows homemakers to cook meal hands-free without continuously consulting a recipe card or webpage making the meal-time easier and more convenient for busy families. A cookbook can be designed and put on Alexa's lips. Alexa can then give consumers multiple ways to discover recipes including browsing based on the ingredients available.

- *Effective Use of Social Media:* Social media as a marketing strategy has important role in food marketing. However, only a handful of companies have learnt to leverage the power of social media successfully. Some of the ideas that may be worth a try are suggested here.

Sharing Posts: Sharing posts on Facebook creates audiences that can be moved for food products. Deciding upon the platform, analyse what to post, how to grow the audience to boost sales and establish a solid fan following for the restaurant and food business to dominate the social landscape. Live videos, in particular, are very useful in this respect. A survey of live video watchers found that 80% prefer to watch a live video than read a Blog and businesses should produce creative, relevant and compelling videos and share.

User-Generated Content: User-generated content is another way to develop personal bonding with users. Photo contests may be hosted by asking customers to share their favourite meal at the restaurant and share it on the social network. Some random lucky contestants may be awarded a free meal or other exciting offers. Posting and promoting user-generated content turns customers from occasional visitors into hardcore fans. Besides audience feedbacks customers may be requested to identify their favourite dishes and desserts and send comments to keep them engaged thereby; pleasant employees, happy workers, cooks, stewards and management may be introduced; and the audience may be given interesting food tips, nutritional facts, asked their favourite combo or mix.

Advertisements for Distributorship: For offering franchise opportunities Facebook advertisement for distributorship may be given. This creates awareness about the brand and products and offers prospective partners willing to distribute your products.

Hosting Event: Another way to build presence, boost traffic and gain high-quality leads for a food business is hosting an event and promotes it on Facebook ensuring that the event matches with the expectations of the people who click on it.

Running Contest: A contest can be a good marketing strategy for a food business. For contest post a high-quality picture of one of the best food products and ask the audience to tell why they love it and then offer the product to the one who gives the best answer.

Visual Stories on Instagram: Visual story on Instagram can be a powerful digital marketing strategy for the food industry. Many brands create attractive images on Instagram to create awareness about their products among the younger generation.

- *Food Bloggers for Promotion:* Another successful digital marketing strategy for food products is recommendations from food bloggers. There are many food bloggers who have already established excellent rapport with their audiences that restaurants target. For this identify the appropriate food bloggers and select one or two relevant to the product, write a personalized email to the blogger, introduce yourself, be helpful and respectful to the blogger, offer some publicity to attract his attention and create his interest in the product and then request one or two of these bloggers to write a blog.
- *Partnering with Delivery Services:* In a present online-driven environment, convenience is a necessity for young persons who take advantage of online delivery services that streamline the ordering and delivery process. Partner with food order delivery services like Zomato, Swiggy, Uber eats, etc., to push your sale. India's food delivery segment is dominated by Zomato and Swiggy with 75-80% of the estimated 70-75 million orders per month marketed through these platforms. Global research has valued Zomato worth US\$3.6 billion (₹2,500 crores) and Swiggy is worth US\$3.3 billion. Enter into an order delivery contract with anyone or two aggregators and support them to serve your clients better.

- *Offers and Giveaways:* Providing coupons and discounts for food products served at restaurants is always a sure way to bring customers to the doorsteps. Make use of celebratory occasions, holidays, weekends to run social media campaigns framed around them, combined with promotional offers like 'Buy one get one', 'Flat 20% discount' etc. This is expected to draw new customers and boost sales.
- *Packaging:* Foods brands should switch to more reusable packaging. Many glossaries and fresh food vendors already emphasize on bringing own vegetable bags. Instead of traditional single-use packaging, multi-use packaging with food wraps made from beeswax and waxed canvas or silicone can be a better alternative to usual plastic or paper storage bags commonly used.

CONCLUSIONS

The explosion of digital culture is transforming food marketing. With high penetration of smart mobile phones among all age groups, marketing is no longer limited to advertising to deliver the message but now it is to engage kids, teens, young persons and elders in a highly personalized dialogue and integrate the promotion activities into a social relationship.

In such a background the objective of this study was to explore the status and the trends in digital marketing of food, identify challenges in the change and suggest appropriate strategies to harness digital technology for effective marketing of food in the contemporary dynamic market situation. A field survey covering 10 food marketers and 20 food consumers using digital marketing services in Udaipur was conducted for this purpose.

The study revealed that the use of technology was widespread among food marketers and food consumers of all genders, age groups and profession. In this usage of smart mobile phones was more prominent. Food marketers have shifted from print media to electronic media for advertisement and promotion of food, and with the growing activity on social media, its utility as a marketing tool has increased rapidly for influencing opinions and behaviours. Menu-based spot orders for food, a unique feature of restaurants and retail food outlets for a long time, is now gradually being replaced by technology-based ordering for the supply of food. Multiple devices such as landline telephones, smart mobile phones and internet-

based desktops and laptops are new modes for placing orders for food and reserving space during specific time slots at restaurants. Though food aggregators are still new to Indian environment, they are growing and expanding fast from metros and large cities to smaller cities and are expected to play an important role in time to come with changing environment and lifestyles of young persons.

However, the shift of emphasis in food on heritage foods, back to roots, eco friendly food, nutrition and health, new recipes and new flavours, the combination of food and entertainment remain important challenges for food marketers. To take care of the challenges in the changing global environment and to meet the needs and expectations of their clients listing on Google My Business, creation of Blogs for business, creativity in marketing, use of new-age technology, effective use of social media, use of food bloggers for promotion, partnering with order delivery services, floating offers and give a ways and ecofriendly packaging strategies should be adopted by food businesses for success.

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