PREVALANCE AND ACCEPTABILITY OF MODERNIZATION OF INDIAN FOOD IN HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS OF DELHI AND NCR

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ABSTRACT

Background: *Delhi being the microcosm of innumerable cuisines spread over India, gives the face to the varying expressions of diverse states and cultures prevailing in it but culinary globalization has tremendously influenced Indian food by helping us explore the unexplored facets of ethnicity of our cuisines with an exotic twist comprising the array of magnificent food in the form of street food, staple diet as well as festival ethnic food. The mobility of people and ideas has seeded a steady yet dynamic change in the textures, presentation and flavors to the palette through the nourished approach of culinary modernization.* **Objective:** *To analyze prevalence of modernization of Indian ethnic food in hotels and restaurants of Delhi and NCR.* **Methodology:** *The survey was conducted with the sample size of 150 including the employees and the guests, Expert chefs, as well as food bloggers and food critics established in different Hotels and Restaurants situated in Delhi and NCR. Online Questionnaires were circulated in different hotels and restaurants, to the employees as well as to the guests.* **Results:** *The study was able to gauge and assess the widespread prevalence of modernized Indian food and the variegated responses of divergent clientele and the level of acceptability and non-acceptability of the concept/s of modernization of Indian (ethnic food) amongst the guests and employees in the Hotels and Restaurants of Delhi and NCR. Majority of the respondents (61.5%) were aware of the concepts of modernization of Indian Food and gave prominent examples as well. Majority of the respondents (73.1%) were aware about the fusion concepts of Indian food and could make the distinction between the two i.e. Modernization and fusion of Indian Cuisine with relevant examples.* **Conclusion:** *Modernization of Indian food is a new concept in Indian Hospitality Industry which is preserving the essence of traditional Indian food.*

Key Words: *Modernization, Indian food, Ethnicity, Hotels.*

INTRODUCTION

Indian cuisine is a multitude of variegated quintessential regional and traditional cuisines native to the Indian subcontinent created by locally available spices, herbs, vegetables and fruits. It has been greatly influenced by historical events like foreign invasions, trade relations, and colonialism (Zakaria,2017) as well as the religious influences which introduced the perception of vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism. When we talk about staple diet of Indian cuisine, it can include pearl millet, rice, whole wheat flour and a variety of lentils (Nusra,2013) such as masoor, toor, urad and moong and pulses such as chickpeas, red kidney beans and black-eyed peas conspicuous with the heterogeneity of spices, meat and seafood, proportions of which has changed largely in the last 50 years.

Change is inevitable, modernization is a change in itself but there have been a wide variety of views regarding understanding what actually modernization is, many people confuse modernization with fusion which is quite similar but has a fine line differentiating it from the former.

Modernization, by definition, means to enrich something using latest ideas, methods and equipments which in this case boldly applies to Indian food regarding the new and gallant techniques invented by chefs, to name a few, sous vide which is cooking the meat in a water bath for even cooking, dehydrating food, foamification like making foam of salmon, microsponge, spherification etc. (Priyadarshini,2012) all by far magic of science. There are new ingredients being used as well such as usage of liquid nitrogen to chill food faster for making ice creams, sorbet, usage of sodium alginate for spherification, usage of dry ice, malto-dextrin and much more.

Fusion on the other hand is pairing different flavours influenced by different cuisines to create a new combination altogether.

For example, pasta in makhni gravy is fusion but spinach pasta is modernization, infusing a different flavour is fusion such as orange and bay leaf ice cream but presenting a dish in a whole new different way with the aim of surprising the guest is modernization such as hot- ice creams.

Now, with a tangent, it would be suffice to say that this modernization in terms of Indian food (Rathod, 2016) came in subtle waves over a period of time, the first commencing with the notion of presenting traditional Indian food in a fine-dining format by Bukhara in 1977 and later by Dum Pukht.

The second wave initiated with Floyd Cardoz opening the restaurant Tabla in 1980s and Chef Vineet Bhatia in London. It emphasized on converting thick curries into French style sauces, insisting on plated dishes and including separate courses as well.

No one took this moment further than the great Chef Gaggan Anand and Chef Manish Mehrotra. Gaggan didn't just reinvent Indian dishes, he brought an element of creativity, fun and playfulness which brought out a whole new dimension to Indian food.

Chef Manish Mehrotra on the other hand started Indian Accent in India, a place of uncompromising vision and integrity with introduction of dishes such as potato sphere chaat and warm doda barfi treacle tart (Reed,2016). There was emphasis put on aweing the guest as well as pre-eminence of comfort and simplicity in presentation. Another example would be movement from the French fine dining format with several courses of hors d'oeuvres, main course and dessert to Spanish tapas style which are small plates of food consumed with alcohol imbuing a sense of warmth and comfort than a formal atmosphere.

Modern Indian food in its veracious sense has moved from its North Indian influences to become wholly Indian, with its roots in regional cuisine.

The pioneer of third wave is Manu Chandra, owner of Monkey Bar in Bangalore serving Bhoot Jolakia spare ribs and pickled bheja with killer cocktails. Local commitments such as Bohemian serving contemporary Bengali food, Potbelly café serving Bihari delicacies has only accentuated the sanctities of beauty of third wave.

If we go on to look at the statistics, the eating habits of an average Indian has changed drastically in the last 50 years. While in 1961, the calorie intake was 2,010 which (Plummer, 2017) spiked up to 2,458 in 2011. The average daily protein consumption has risen from 55g to 59g per day and consumption of cereals and roots has decreased from 69g to 59g. While the life expectancy and the choices offered for consumption and the knowledge of a person regarding food has increased, it is as much crucial to understand the importance of elevating traditional food to a healthier option by substitution of ingredients that only aims to improve and bring a sense of nouveau richness with awe by methods of modernization.

All the new methods and techniques involved in different facets of modernization go on to propel the passion for Indian food and predilection to creativity to the culmination of possibility of impossible.

When we talk about modernization of Indian cuisine, we shouldn't forget about the present and emerging outlets that make it possible and tangible to the population. Some famous places in Delhi are Farzi Café, Café Lota and Indian Accent, Masala Library and The Bombay Canteen in Mumbai, Pink Poppadom in Bengaluru. Candy floss paan (Wemischner, 2018) which uses reverse spherification and flambéed rasmalai baked Alaska are the indelible highlights.

Indian food going global is another feather on the hat, what was before known as too spicy or oily

to be palatable is being loved by millions in different parts of the world all because of humongous efforts of some great chefs to make mark the modernized Indian food on the historical food map. Indian- origin restaurants have been expanding, opening of Farzi café in Dubai, Mumbai based Inday is offering desi cuisine with a healthy twist in New York, Imli in Los Angeles and the Bar Stock Exchange (Ahuja,2015) has launched either branches or franchises in Dubai, Singapore, Mauritius and New Zealand, the specialty being that all of them have been seen applying molecular gastronomy techniques to traditional Indian food.

Gaggan, in Bangkok opened by Chef Gaggan Anand, considered Asia's best restaurant and the only Indian restaurant with two Michelin stars has been serving progressive Indian cuisine since 2010 is exemplary in itself.

There have been, are and will be iconic restaurants battling between traditional and modernized Indian cuisine foraying to make it global and loved by all but at the end healthy and delectable food for the soul wins the hearts of the century which Indian cuisine has and will continue to do so for eternity.

Being unique in itself, the topic doesn't provide us much of the past to look into instead it propels us to look into the future.

Globalization is melting of cultures and cuisines into one another with a lively step moving towards something new and exciting. That is what the soul of modernization, of aiming to create a difference, aiming to rejoice and baffle the crowd.

Looking at the gems from past, there's reference to modernization and ethnic festival food (universititeknologi MARA) which posits that ethnic food has long been recognized as the integrative force that enhances solidarity and alliances between individuals and kin groups. It becomes a bounding mechanism not only for the family but also among the communities. These foods were created by the older generations using natural resources or any consumable things in their era with different types of cooking methods, equipment and eating decorum. These food treasures in turn have contributed to the uniqueness of ethnic festival food for later generations. The vast ethnic festival food treasures however are believed to have some transformations and changes in all facets. These transformations are believed to be influenced by civilization process, socio-economic, social, the advancement of technology and education. This conceptual paper discusses how modernization implicates the transformation or changes in ethnic festival food and its impact on the sociological perceptive particularly to the young generation based on the previous empirical evidence but this leads to empirical investigation in the Malaysia context.

It is not wrong to say that a slight transformation or changes occur in every facet of the world.

According to Sloan (2000) the changes are brought out by many factors especially civilization processes, education and technology advancement.

Berry (2000) argued that as the world moves, a slight change occurs not only to the daily consumed food but also the festival customary food which involves ingredients, methods of preparation, cooking and eating decorum, such as polenta, one of the popular Italian bread for festival (Sagre festival) which traditionally used buckwheat and millets as main ingredients has slightly modified with addition of corn due to its ability to mix well with other ingredients and give a better taste. A lot of new equipment have been invented and used which consequently affect the daily preparation of food and festival food. With no exception a slight change in the eating decorum has also occurred. Baklava and ravani, the Greek desserts were traditionally served using forks and spoons made of wood replaced by metal now.

Despite this, many researchers have argues that modernization not only caused a direct impact to the physical components of food but also to the culture and social aspects which involve perceptions, attitudes of people or societies including the young generations (Dubois, 2002; Cusak, 2000; Avakian,1997). Therefore anecdotal evidence show that many young people in the country be it Malays or Indian are less able to make festival food but rather moving towards fusion and modernization.

Another research paper talks about Malaysian cuisine as a case of neglected culinary globalization which doesn't concern directly to our topic of modernization of Indian cuisine but rather intimates us with the role small businesses and government can play in forwarding globalization and modernization of a cuisine.

This study attempts to review and also the analyze the changing trends of Modernization of Indian Food in the Restaurants of Delhi and NCR and to highlight the various trends which are experienced by the Guests/Consumers, which are specially curated by the providers to woo them by making dynamic changes to the ethnic Indian Cuisine.

The Objective of the study was to analyze the prevalence of modernization of Indian ethnic food in Hotels and Restaurants of Delhi and NCR.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is an exploratory and quantitative research. The study was conducted on consumers,chefs, food influencers and food blogger. The locale was Restaurants of Delhi and NCR, selected on the basis of convenience. Simple random sampling was done to select the samples from Various Restaurants across Delhi and NCR. Total 150 respondents participated in the study.

Tools and Techniques: The research design used for the survey was exploratory in nature.

Primary data was collected through structured questionnaireflaoted through internet via google forms link address (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/14jiBIMbWl6cGQ5KQN-lDkXQ5yM5I3995oT219UUk71U/edit) and personal interview with the respondents of the selected Hotels and Restaurants in Delhi and NCR, about their special dishes and Guests expectations and perception from the food being served at their outlet. Questionnaire had 12 questions pertaining to concepts of Modernization and Fusion of Indian ethnic food, increase in average spending power to influence to dine out, unavailability of desired cooking time. Open ended and closed ended questions were framed based on the factors stated above. For assessment the collected data was tabulated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected through 150 questionnaires and some interviews with the respondents was subjected to tabulation, categorized and analyzed to interpret the findings of the study.

Majority of the respondents who filled the questionnaire were Consumers. Demographic profile of the respondents, outlining basic demographic characteristic. Most of the respondents i.e., 58% males and 42% females were majorly consumers. 4% were restaurateurs, 23% were chefs, 2% were food bloggers, 0.7% were food influencers. Rest of the respondents were consumers specifically students.

Modernization and fusion concepts are clear to the respondents as Majority of the respondents (61.5%) were aware of the concepts of modernization of Indian Food and gave prominent examples as well.Majority of the respondents (73.1%) were aware about the fusion concepts of Indian food and could make the distinction between the two with relevant examples.

Due to enhanced spending power and reduction in time to cook, 76% of the respondents agreed to the fact that the average spending power has increased and has led in the increase of dining out as well and 71% of the respondents think the unavailability of the desired time to cook at home in the present lifestyle invokes the chances of dining out.

Advertising and marketing has played a humongous role in creating awareness and likability to dine and try new cuisines, it is evident as 71% of the respondents feel that the brand or unique menu of the restaurant stimulates the urge to dine out.83% of the respondents admit that the advertisements or word of mouth has made them to try out modern Indian cuisine.

Mixed responses were recorded pertaining to likeability of consuming modernized Indian food over traditional Indian Food, where in majority of respondents 40.3% were apprehensive of trying

modernized Indian Cuisine over Traditional India Food, whereas 38.9% respondents agreed to try the same .Remaining respondents disagreed for the same.

Applied technology and techniques have changed the dynamics of Modernized Indian cuisine majority of the respondents 60% were not aware about the latest concepts of applied technology and techniques in modernized Indian Cuisine. Remaining 40% respondents were partially aware about such concepts as they stated examples of the same, Molecular gastronomy, use of liquid nitrogen, Sous vide etc.

Various restaurants and certain modernized and fusion dishes served as stated by respondents are as follows, Farzi Café,Indian Accent, masala library, Kheer, Indian Accent the tasting menu served by Manish Malhotra, Farzi cafe, littichokha, Farzi Café (dal chawal aranccini) and The Indian Accent (slow cooked duck with chutney over waffle cone) Changezi Restaurant, Masala Library Boondi Jalebi with rabri, Pluck From Pullman, Too Indian, FRIENDS CAFÉ, The Brewhouse, Indian Accent - MeethaAchar spare Ribs, Masala Library - Jalebi Caviar, Cafe Lota. Burger Singh-Biharigosht burger, Faasos, Oven story, Bombay Brasserie, Pluck (Paneer Makhni cheesecake), Farzi Cafe (Modernised Kadi Chawal), Omya- TOND, Baar Baar Delhi, Duck Kheema Kulcha, Prawn & Chorizo Pulao, Prankster, sector 29- Textures of jalebi, Dahigol gappe, Kulcha donuts, truffle kulcha, pepper paneer cornet, warm doda burfi treacle tart, Soda Bottle openerwala, Gurgaon,Tandoori tea, Tama, Faridabad, Prankster Gurugram Harayana, Varq by Taj, Cafe under the tree, Vikas Puri, Odeon social, butter chicken biryani, ratatouille gujiya, EK BAR restaurant.

The concept of trial menus has played a Major role in creating awareness about the changed concepts of Indian Cuisine, 40% of the respondents were also aware about the trial menus of Indian Modernized Cuisine offered by the stated restaurants.

Restaurateur and hoteliers are catching up with the concept of modernized Indian Cuisine, Out of the entire population of respondents 43% restaurateur/hoteliers had the concept of modernized Indian Cuisine already running at their workplace.78% of the respondent's i.e. Chefs and hoteliers were willing to introduce such a concept at their work area.

Opinion and Vision about the stated concepts of Modernized/modernization of Indian Food, based on the experience of all the respondents are of the different views summarized below

Indian food need to be modernized eventually and there is need to be played with Indian food by using new methods but the thing to be kept in mind that our roots of the food should be watered first.To some extent it is good. It means creative food which can suit the palate of customer

Still vague, self-consciously pretentious targeted at foreign tourist with one eye at Michelin Star in distant future when the guide comes to India or a television show of one's own. Less is more,

concept of serving a small portion with unusual flavor has brought change in serving style of Indian food. It facilitate Chef's to unwind the boundaries which were untouched in history and have revolutionized the Indian cuisine. The vision for concepts of modernization in Indian food to make it happen possible in large scale different preservation technique, with modern technology for cooking with the concept of traditional cooking, traditional food processing mechanism should be involved. It will definitely empower our Indian Cuisine to stand out of the box by imbibing new techniques and modern ways. It's quite visionary in the study that it is bringing about a lot of variety to the traditional Indian food. This trend will grow only for short time then we will be back to authentic food. It has a lot of scope for growth and popularity. Not only the vertical aspects of growth but also the horizontal one, i.e. taking in various regional cuisine and making it into a modern palate friendly. Concepts of modern Indian cuisine will work as long as the authenticity of the idea is behind it is kept intact for example - a chaat should always be a chaat, even if you use something expensive, it should taste like a chaat only. While it definitely intrigues the consumer to try the dishes, food is more eye-appealing, yet the true essence and the satiety factor gets lost while modernization of the Indian cuisine. Modernization of Indian food should definitely be implied but not regulated while hampering the authenticity. Modernization of Indian food has made people more aware and has made them curious about the contemporary styles of presenting, serving and pairing Indian food with western items creating a fusion.It is a good way to showcase the flexibility and diversity of Indian cuisine and not disturbing the authentic dish on the other hand.

Table 1: Views about modernization of Indian food

Statement	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	Maybe N (%)	Total Responses
Are you aware with the concept of modernization of Indian Food	91(62)	57(38)	-	148
Are you aware with the concept of Fusion of Indian Food	106(73)	39(27)	-	145
Do you think the increase in average spending power has influenced people to dine out	113(76)	5(3)	31(20)	149
Do you think the unavailability of the desired time to cook at home in the present lifestyle invokes the chances of dining out	106(71)	15(10)	28(19)	149
Do you think the brand or unique menu of the restaurant stimulates the urge to dine out	106(71)	10(7)	33(22)	149

Statement	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	Maybe N (%)	Total Responses
Do you think the advertisements or word of mouth has made people to try out modern Indian cuisine	124(83)	7(5)	18 (12)	149
Would you prefer to eat a modernized version of Indian cuisine over traditional version if, given an option	58(39)	31(21)	60 (40)	149
Are you aware of the concept of Applied Technology and Techniques being used in Modernized Indian Food	59(40)	87(60)	-	146
Are you aware about the trial menus of the modernized Indian Food	58(40)	86(60)	-	144
Does the concept of Modernization of Indian Food exists in your Hotel / Restaurant	54(43)	71(57)	-	125

CONCLUSION

Modernization and fusion go hand in hand but the difference between the two is quite easily misunderstood which is generally the case here. Many people are aware of what modernization and fusion is but when asked for the difference, the examples become cohesive. A lot of factors influence people to dine out which includes not having the desired time to cook at home due to today's lifestyle, increase in the average spending power as well as the unique menu and brand of the restaurant. When we talk about modern Indian cuisine, it would be suffice to say that advertisements and word of mouth has made it very popular and experiential but when given a choice between choosing modernized Indian food over traditional Indian food, a grave confusion subsists between people battling their desires between a traditional rasmalai with jalebi or that flambed rasmalai baked Alaska both representing the past and future of Indian cuisine and the choices hanging in the middle.

The techniques and applied technology used in modernizing Indian food aren't quite popular and continue to be the jargon amongst the experts but do have a future of becoming known noticing the substantially growing awareness and interest of people in the nouveau yet familiar Indian cuisine.

The amazing Farzi café and Indian accent continue to be the top places to get a flavor of the subtle and aweing modernization of traditional Indian food but the opinions regarding if it should be done hugely vary with the veritable variety of approaches of minds. Some insist on providing

the authentic taste even if changes in textures and flavors are brought out while some would love to have modern influenced food as it showcases the skills and creativity of the chefs as well as providing with a healthier option with loads of surprises to come.

The need of modernization hangs in the balance with the slight weighing towards it being inevitable but preserving the original flavor in the dish has been uncompromising overall as changing the entire personality of the traditional dish is the loss no one is ready to bear.

In a nutshell, there are very rare restaurants in India serving modernized Indian cuisine but with the growing inquisitiveness of people and interest in trying something new every day, modernization is set to metastasize and prevail in the form of undying creativity and boundless imagination bomb shelling our expectations yet preserving the essence of traditional Indian food.

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