



<https://doi.org/10.58419/gbs.v11i1.1112507>

GLANCE AT TRANSFORMING MARKETING EFFORTS (SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE): A CASE STUDY ON MTR FOOD-JOURNEY

Shobitha Kumari K.

*Research Scholar, Institute of Management and Commerce
Srinivas University, Mangalore, India*

[laxmi0049@ gmail.com](mailto:laxmi0049@gmail.com)

Dr. Venkatesh Amin

*Research Guide, Institute of Management and Commerce
Srinivas University, Mangalore, India*

ABSTRACT

Purpose: MTR is the household name of most of south Indian houses. Objective of this study is to understand the new marketing strategies adopted by MTR to keep up the successful journey. This case study is all about the 100 years journey of MTR's unwavering obsession with quality and convenience. **Methodology:** a case study with descriptive research design. content analysis is carried over the literature from the various publications upon the literature published between 2019 to 2024. Information is collected through keyword-based search using MTR Website, google search engine and google scholar search engines. This case study specially examines the latest marketing strategy initiatives by MTR to establish itself as a market leader in the packaged food industry, aligning closely with current market trends.

Findings: The case study presents a comprehensive analysis of various aspects relating to MTR Food. It is found out that MTR also adopted all the new promotional strategies to survive for 100 years successfully social media presence is one of the strategies amongst them wherein micro influencers are part of promotional activities.

Outcome/Value: the article offers postulates of recommendations providing actionable recommendations to further enhance.

Keywords: Digital engagement, Ethnic food, food blogger, Consumer Engagement, Influencer Marketing, Indian food brands.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian Food culture: Indian food culture is a rich fabric woven with diverse flavors, traditions and rituals that reflects the country's deep history and cultural diversity. From the fiery spices of the south to the aromatic richness of Mughlai cuisines in north, India's culinary heritage is as varied as its landscape. Rooted in ancient practices and influenced by centuries of trade, India's cuisine is not just about sustenance but celebration of community, family and hospitality.



“‘Ethnic food’ is western context also is of important context when we talk about Indian food and immigrants in foreign nation” (Narayan, U. (1995). Indian cuisine is renowned for its extensive use of spices which are often blended to create complex and layered flavors. Indian meals are often elaborate and include several components like rice or bread, main course, side dishes, sweets and desserts etc.

In recent days there is huge increase in number of food bloggers or food influencers who give their views on local foods, restaurants which is considered to be one of the most reliable to choose an option. There are also options for consumers to either cook on their own or to go for options available in market in economical cost. Managing work life Busy schedule leaves us with limited time to cook. Prepackaged food like ready to cook, ready to eat are becoming part of many households in balancing the busy schedule. “Choices of ready to eat food products over traditional homemade food is crucial point here “(Vora, J. D., & Dubey, A. P. (2021). Amongst this MTR is one of the household names from decades which serves authentic traditional flavor especially south Indian food. It is much loved and revered brand which stood for authenticity and high adherence to quality (Sharma, R. W., & Kamath, R. (2022). MTR has successfully completed its 100 years journey and is always one of the brands which is ready to for any changes that is taking place. This study gives a picture of journey story of MTR. Tag line “hundred years young” brand combines time honored wisdom with innovation to remain relevant in today’s dynamic market.

1.1. Origin and Growth of MTR

Mavalli tiffin room was started by Parameshwara Mayya along with Ganapyya Mayya as a small restaurant in Lalbagh fort road, Bangalore named brahmins coffee bar which served coffees and idlies. 5 later after Parameshwara Maiyas demise Yagnanarayana Mayya joined the restaurant joined his brother in running restaurant.

In 1951, Yagnanarayana Mayya takes Europe tour to see how restaurants were run there. He was impressed with the cleanliness, hygiene’s, discipline and functioning of restaurants there and decided to introduce certain changes in the restaurant. it included raising the standard for hygiene, health and sanitization. It was when he introduced sterilization of utensils, crockery and cutlery. He renamed restaurant as Mavalli tiffin Room or in short MTR. Inspired by French puff pastry he introduced a new sweet ‘French sweet’- a fried biscuit dunked in milk - khoa- almond kheer. He renamed that as chandrahaara based on famous movie of that time. Till date this is the signature dish of MTR. In 1960 they shifted to larger location on Lalbagh Road.

During 70’s during emergency, according to Food control Act which was introduced then, it was mandated that food items be nominally priced and affordable to all. It was a difficult time for the restaurant especially to the employees who were working for MTR. MTR approached this crisis as an opportunity. They started a small store next door to sell prepackaged masala powder and rava idli mix which was named MTR foods Ltd. The products were well accepted in the market due to its name and fame which was already recorded in three minds of customers.



By 1983 MTR products were able to find place in shelves of Bengaluru's best-known chains of stores like Nilgiris and Vijaya Bakery. With rising popularity in 1984, MTR decided to explore markets outside city and tried to connect with retailers in major cities like Tamil Nadu, Hyderabad and Vijayawada.

It was when Maiyas realized that its package also matters along with quality of packaged food. Though they were market leaders in packaged products then it was not sufficient to continue. The company introduced polyester ploy standy pack, the first of its kind in India. this increased brands visibility and by 1990s company became more prominent in market. At this point it was not just one player in market in packaged food industry. There were two other players – Hindusthan Lever Ltd and Swiss Food Giant Nestle. the biggest plus point for MTR was “Indianness” in its product which other two lacked.

It was in 1991 MTR takes a step ahead and starts production for its packaged foods. MTR changed its structure in 1994 in order to accommodate future growth. Firm was Brocken into two divisions one for main food lines and other one to specialize in chips and snacks.

Journey did not stop there it was around in 2000 MTR introduced new range of ready to eat dishes for new generation food lovers. MTR's quality gets recognized with ISO 9002 certification and Hazard Analysis Critical Control point (HACCP)certification. Moving on with success journey company also started targeting particular category of people like one mode was targeting busy housewives with wide choice of frozen products.

Company also tries to capture foreign market and extends its business into Japan, China and Hongkong. In 2007 MTR was taken over by Norway Based company Orkla which became one of the most talked about acquisition of that time.

By the year 2010 MTR spread its market across the country relaunches itself as pan India Brand. Alongside it in vested 15 crores for capacity expansion of its spice plant. Studies conducted by MTR revealed that Indian customers are not ready for readymade items instead they were looking for mixes that can be customized. It was not just MTR idli ,rava idli or vada mix.. it was termed as breakfast mix where customers understood what is the occasion it is bought for. The brand was based on meal occasions with the products reaching out specific target audience. There was new addition to the group which was named as MTR- 3 minutes breakfast range.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since influencer marketing is the emerging field and it is buzzword in marketing field. It was studies from the perspective that emerging trends in market and its impact on survival of any company. The key results of systematic literature search using google scholar, data base for papers published between 2019 to 2024 with keywords “Influencer marketing”, “SMI and food Industry”



Aypar Satı, Ipek Kazancoglu (2020), has done a study on Usefulness of food influencers on Consumers buying intention and it was found out that Followers were affected by food influencers recommendation.

G. T Puspita, H. Hendrayati (2018) highlighted the importance of food bloggers review and found that Variable context and collaborations have significant effect on consumer purchasing decision. Adding to this Yeliz Demir, Serkan Bertan (2023) has surveyed the impact of bloggers on tasting local food and beverage resulted in Experiencing appeal has positive impact on intentions to taste local food.

Influencers and their impact on promotion of healthy v/s unhealthy food products was the focus are in the study conducted by Annika Abell, Dipayan Biswas (2022, resulted in Digital engagement is higher for person posting healthy food.

Palak Sinha, Mohd. Faisal, Krishna Rajput, Ms. Tanya Sharma (2024) added to the literature on consumer behaviour with respect to social media influencer, main area of study was culinary inspiration, culinary exploration. Pratik Hublikar (2020) studies role of nano influencers in promoting small scale restaurant resulted in Brand awareness is created. Instagram being most popular platform.

Luciana Santos Morais (2021) the findings reveled those reviews given by influencers has great impact on consumers. Influencer sentiment is what the major are of study in the paper. Cristina Miguel, Carl Clare, Catherine J. Ashworth & Dong Hoang (2023), process of content creation by micro influencers is the research area of the paper. Influencers passion for food is the backbone for content creation. Cristina Miguel, Carl Clare, Catherine J. Ashworth & Dong Hoang (2022) also focused on how two influencers are engaging themselves, resulted in the concept of learning for each other's and sharing good bond between each other.

Juntilla, Beatrice Regimae, Castillo, Manolo Jr, Subito, Mike Gabriel, Princess Joy Buenviaje (2022), area of study was customer engagement in fast food industry. Choice of platform is the key player here in the success of the same. Nadia Steils, Zakia Obaidalahe (2022), study was on Food literacy and co construction in social media, resulted in Consumers can contribute to construction of food literacy directly or indirectly. Tania Lewis (2018), studied Growing entanglement between digital and world of food.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

The main focus of this study to identify and analyze the journey of one of the famous and top-rated food industry company MTR

1. To understand ability to adopt emerging promotional strategies to survive in highly competitive world.
2. To Explore how MTR foods has transformed its marketing efforts over past 100 years.
3. To understand how MTR has leveraged social media platforms to build and enhance its brand image.



4. To analyze specific successful social media campaigns run by MTR Food focusing on their content strategy, and outcomes achieved such as increase brand image
5. To provide suggestions in the form of postulates of recommendations.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The case study is carried out with descriptive research design. content analysis is carried over the literature from the various publications upon the literature published between 2019 to 2024. For this study various data bases, google scholar, cross reference has been searched to establish relevant research scholarly articles, thesis and conference proceedings. Keywords like “Social media Influencer”, “MTR” were searched to find various articles that are written and published through various search engines like google scholar, research rabbit. In the review process criterion was set on what has to be included and what are excluded. Filtering of articles based on criterion

In this process followings steps were followed

1. Keywords were searched to find the articles that are written and published through various search engines like google scholar and websites like Taylor and fancies, IEEE etc.
2. Papers are sorted into very closely related, just related and not related based on criterion.
3. Filtering process

Grouping of finally collected published articles to build up a theoretical frame work vectors that affect consumer perception while buying decision based on Influencer marketing.

5. BUSINESS MODEL OF MTR

5.1. A multi category approach

One of the major advantages for MTR foods when compared to brands like Everest, Aachi was MTR was running as multi category company starting from breakfast, snacks, drinks etc. this is one of the major advantages for MTR to stand out in market competition. However, everything belongs to one category – staple diet.

5.2. Marketing and brand building through packaging

Marketing is all about promoting and presenting the brand in such a way that it stands out against competitors. By relating unique features of packaging with their products owners are able to attract the customers. MTR’s packaging strategy is one of the important features wherein it acts like a silent salesman. For the development of MTR’s 3 minutes breakfast range which is considered to be one of the most successful products of MTR they have done proper research on the same.

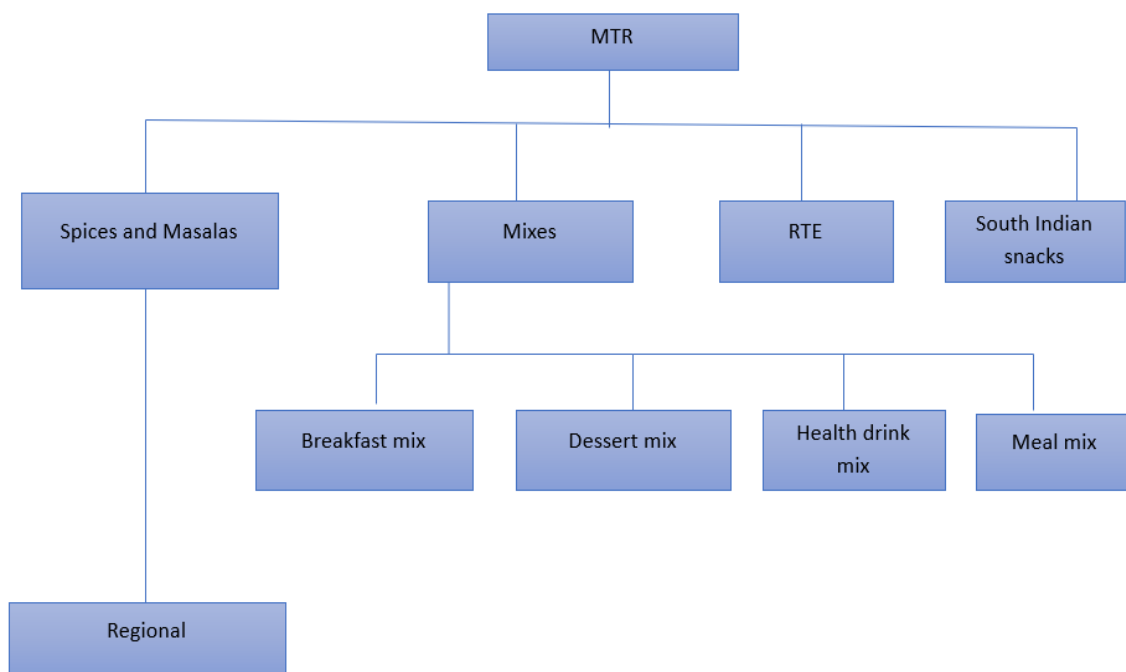
5.3. Taste of Indian Cuisine in a packet

Breakfast concept started changing slowly with globalization like from dosa to pasta, Kellogg's etc. but still aroma of Indian breakfast was still there which was refined by MTR where they made it easily available food items and which can be prepared easily amidst of busy life.

MTR grabbed first movers' advantage by offering Idli, Rava Idli, upma, popular snacks and drinks. MTR has a well-established team of chefs continuously working on recipes. For Introduction of Tamil Nadu sambar MTR spent 4 years and also visited approximately 3500 customers before they came up with the recipe.

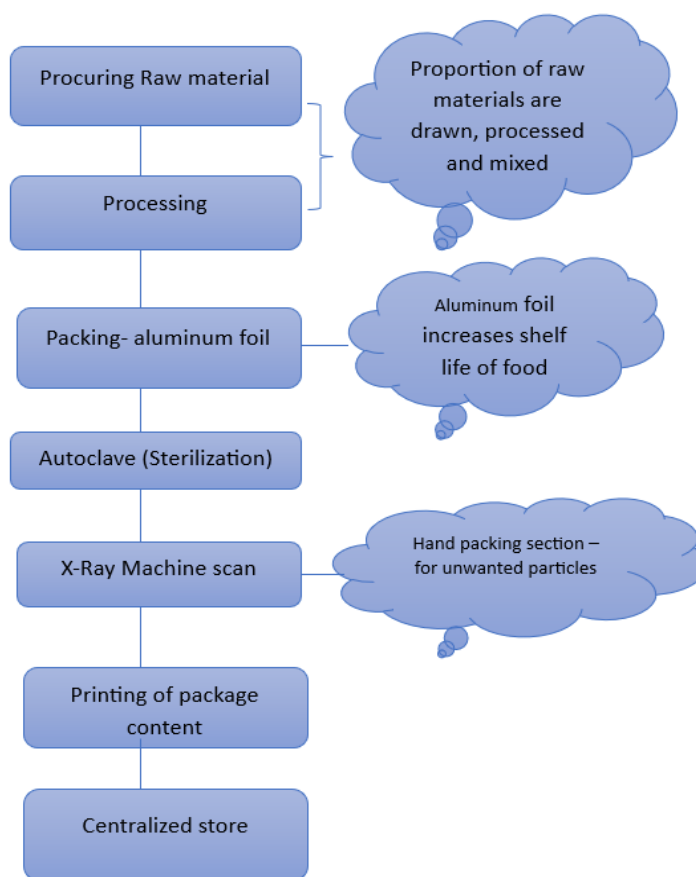
It is all about bringing new recipes according to the changing customer needs. Here are the signature items under the brand name of MTR.

Figure 1.1: Product Range of MTR



5.4. Production process

MTR's portfolio of products covers a wide range of processed foods as mentioned above. 22 varieties of ready to eat recipes are manufactured in ready to eat division. A well-appointed lab consisting of analytical, chemical and microbiology sections perform a variety of tasks for quality control and assurance. MTR's production process of ready to eat category is mentioned as follows



5.5. Marketing strategies of MTR- 4 p's

Product strategy: MTR uses authentic recipes, high quality raw materials and best ingredients to provide homemade taste and flavor. It includes items for breakfast meals and snacks. Few categories of products include frozen foods, sweets, masala pastes, vermicelli, ready to cook etc.

Price mix: MTR has adopted a market penetration pricing strategy, and has implemented reasonable rates for its products. Mts foods sets competitive prices within packaged food industry. Regular promotional offers discount, helps boost sales and brand visibility.

Place mix: MTR has spread its domestic presence across the country and head office at Bengaluru in Karnataka. MTR also exports its products to several countries like Singapore, Japan, Australia and united states etc. it also has very good distribution network including all the major E-Commerce platforms.

Promotion mix: MTR has used grocery stores, giving samples at popular places and many celebrities also were part of MTR's promotional strategy.

It has collaborated with Jiggs Kalrs, Celebrity Chef to increase its brand visibility. Recently it is seen that there are many social media influencers promoting MTR products which is clear indication that brand has decided to shift from traditional marketing strategy to current ones. Beginning of this was seen when they started a campaign where they decided to go with celebrity moms with target audience as south market.



5.6. MTR and Social Media Presence

MTR digital marketing campaign: MTR has initiated several campaigns in all these years few being the

1. **MTR's Mother's Day campaign (2023):** MTR foods Mother's Day campaign aimed at emotionally connecting with the viewers and to highlight the brands commitment to offer high quality food made with love. The digital film was amplified through Instagram led content stories which was supported by micro influencer engagement.
2. **#Handsofauthenticity (2021):** This campaign was tribute to women of byadagi, a small town in Haveri district of Karnataka. Through this campaign they wanted to bring real heroes who bring the best of these spices
3. **Quick to cook breakfast option- 3 minutes seviyaan upma (2024):** The campaign is based on simple insight that in the morning rush, the homemaker usually times her every task. and with this at least breakfast problem will be solved without compromising on taste and quality.
4. **Ready in Mmm. Minutes (2022):** The campaign is based on hyper convenience food that Gen-z is looking for. It was filmed and the objective was to raise awareness about entire range of MTR Minute Range products that offer the much-loved Indian taste in a hyper convenient format.
5. **MTR Batters: Because Idli and Dosa are not the same, why is your Batter same? (2021):** This campaign targeted ID fresh food which is known for 2 in 1 batter, where this campaign is to convey consumers that Idli and Dosa needs different batter.

MTR's Social media Channels: MTR has changed its marketing strategies according to the populations, expectations and lookout.

1. **MTR on YOUTUBE:** With 25.7 thousand subscribers YouTube is one of the popular social media platforms of MTR. MTR shares posts related to its new product, usage of its products, ongoing campaign etc.
2. **MTR on Facebook:** MTR has 41 thousand followers in Facebook which is considered to be one of the biggest channels of MTR. MTR shares posts on its famous ready to cook items, advertisements specially designed for special occasions, and promotion of its products.
3. **MTR on Instagram:** MTR has 24.7 thousand followers in Instagram which is considered to be most happening platform. Recently micro influencers started promoting MTR products through Instagram which is considered to be the new promotional strategy which even MTR started.

5.7. SWOT analysis

5.7.1 Strength

1. MTR foods offer a wide range of healthy, ready to eat and ready to cook food products that cater into the needs of modern consumers.



2. Quality of the MTR Food products is greatest strength which helped in surviving for 100 years and carrying customer's trust.
3. MTR company has established extensive distribution network making its products easily available to the customers at reasonable price.
4. Ability to identify opportunity from external environment and implement it in the products
5. MTR is certified with HACCP which is one of the rigorous standards of food safety and hygiene.
6. Pocket friendly and affordable rates is one of the factors which will help company reach further successfully.
7. MTR's ready to eat food products preferred by people who are travelling abroad.

5.7.2. Weakness

1. 100 percentage vegetarians. So non veg lovers may not consider this option.
2. Ready to cook items requires hot water which may not be convenient for those who are travelling
3. MTR's business model can be easily imitated by competitors.

5.7.3. Opportunity

1. 32% of the food market is captured by processed food is one of the greatest opportunities to capture the market.
2. Increased usage of ecommerce platforms by consumers. Online presence is one of the factors to capture the market.
3. Influencers, content creators promoting the products through social media is capturing a lot of people on social media platform especially their followers is

5.7.4. Threat

1. Raise of new competitors in packaged food industry with new strategy like example
2. Consumers preference keep changing in ever changing world. so, company should be flexible enough to implement these changes very often.
3. Changes in the political environment like trade restrictions and all will cause threat to business operations.

6. FINDINGS

MTR successfully completed a journey of 100 years. Surviving for this long year in highly competitive world is not easy for any of the company. It is the quality, authentic taste and adopting to changes are the key characteristics which created history of 100 years long journey. Marketing team needed to figure out the best for the brand.[16]. It is Evident from the data available that though they are in the top of Packaged food industry they are facing huge competition in Market Who are coming with new products with all the features. One of the main strengths of MTR is that its quality in the products offered.



Competitors of MTR are coming with exclusive strategies, new categories of products where in survival is the very critical with innovations. Companies like ID Resh has best social media presence with its innovative and attractive advertisements attracting huge number of social media users.

One of the major findings is that all the products which MTR is offering are available in market by competitors. Survival in this scenario is very critical task unless they keep updating according to requirement.

6.1. Suggestions based on analysis

1. MTR Should focus more on social media marketing to be on track with emerging promotional strategies.
2. Use biodegradable or recyclable materials which will appeal to eco conscious customers and align with sustainable practices.
3. Increase marketing campaigns that gives information about brand to customers.
4. Expand market in rural areas with most catchy promotional strategies.
5. Provide more discounts to increase sales.
6. MTR should also use mega influencers to reach large number of customers across the country.
7. Provide creative ways to use products through recipe cards, online videos or meal kits that combine various RTC products for a complete meal.

7. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our study was limited to the secondary sources of information. Results obtained cannot be generalized because of this limitation. Future studies should be conducted to bridge this gap and should concentrate on collecting first hand data for the same so that clear picture will be obtained. Researchers can carry out comparative study taking into consideration other RTC&RTE industries.

Second limitation is that it is just swot analysis is used for analyzing companies marketing strategy. Future studies can concentrate on ABCD Analysis, PERT analysis so that results obtained can be more accurate and to the point.

8. CONCLUSION

The ability to adjust and adopt new promotional tactics has become crucial for brand survival and expansion in the context of a market that is becoming more and more competitive and driven by digital technology. This study examined how MTR Foods, an established Indian company with more than a century of history, has effectively changed its marketing strategies to remain relevant in a changing consumer landscape.

MTR's transformation reflects a strategic blend of tradition and innovation. From its early roots in conventional advertising to its current digital-forward approach, MTR has demonstrated agility in leveraging modern marketing channels. A significant aspect of this



evolution has been the brand's use of social media platforms, which it has utilized not merely for product promotion but for storytelling, community engagement, and brand positioning.

The examination of certain social media ads showed that MTR has embraced a content strategy that emphasizes visual appeal, authenticity, and cultural nostalgia—elements that are highly appealing to modern customers. Measurable gains in market visibility, customer engagement, and brand image have resulted from these programs.

In the end, MTR's experience provides insightful information about how traditional food firms might embrace digital transformation to stay competitive. The brand is an example of how companies can strike a balance between tradition and contemporary as it keeps innovating. The report ends with a set of strategic recommendations meant to strengthen MTR's market leadership and improve its online presence in light of these results.

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