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Digital marketing strategies for promoting millet-based ready-to-eat products: Insights for emerging food startups

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Abstract

Ready-to-Eat (RTE) products made from millet have grown faster in India due to consumers' growing need for convenient and nutritious food. Alongside this expansion, food businesses have found that digital marketing is a useful tool for product promotion and customer engagement. With particular reference to Ancient Foods India Private Limited, the current study analyzed the digital marketing tactics used by millet-based startups and investigated consumer perception of social media promotion of millet-based RTE goods. 120 customers from the Hyderabad localities of Gachibowli, Sainikpuri, Chengincherla, Nampally, and Uppal were chosen at random to provide primary data. Supermarkets, merchants, and online platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube provided secondary data about rival businesses and social media activity. Descriptive statistics, percentages, rating scales, the Henry Garrett Ranking Method, and SWOT analysis were used to analyze the data. The results showed that among millet startups, Facebook and Instagram were the most popular venues for promotion. Consumer impression was greatly impacted by user evaluations and educational content, and millet cookies were found to be the most popular RTE product. Amazon was shown to be the most popular platform for purchases. In order to boost the market presence of up-and-coming millet-based food entrepreneurs, the study emphasizes the significance of constant content, consumer engagement, and strategic digital marketing.

Keywords: Ready-to-eat foods, digital marketing, millet-based products, social media marketing, food startups, consumer perception, and e-commerce

Introduction

Millets are nutrient-dense cereals known for their climatic resilience and health advantages, and they are gaining popularity in India as health awareness and government promotion programs grow (Oswal, 2023) ^[5]. The creation of millet-based Ready-to-Eat (RTE) goods including cookies, laddus, and snacks has been aided by the rising demand for quick and wholesome foods (Dayakar *et al.*, 2017) ^[3]. Concurrently, digital marketing has become a potent marketing instrument for food companies, allowing businesses to connect with customers via social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. These platforms provide focused communication, consumer involvement, and brand awareness at comparatively low costs (Putter, 2017) ^[8]. However, very little study has been conducted on digital marketing methods for millet-based enterprises. In order to promote millet-based products, the current study examines consumer perceptions, rival strategies, and digital marketing techniques. In order to promote millet-based RTE

goods, the current study examines customer perceptions, competitor strategies, and digital marketing techniques.

Materials and methods

The study was carried out in a few Hyderabad areas where millet-based Ready-to-Eat (RTE) items are available for purchase, including Gachibowli, Sainikpuri, Chengincherla, Nampally, and Uppal. There was use of both primary and secondary data. To learn how consumers felt about digital marketing and millet-based RTE goods, primary data was gathered from 120 randomly chosen customers from Ancient Foods India Private Limited's customer database. Ten retail locations and six supermarkets provided information about competitors. Companies' websites and social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Threads provided secondary data. Simple averages, ranking techniques, and percentages were among the descriptive statistical tools used to assess the gathered data. SWOT analysis was used to assess the chosen company's advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, and

difficulties in order to create effective digital marketing plans.

Results and discussion

In order to advertise Ready-to-Eat (RTE) millet products, the study examined the digital marketing tactics used by millet-based food entrepreneurs. The results demonstrate

how social media and digital platforms are increasingly influencing customer awareness and purchasing decisions. To increase their market visibility and enhance customer communication, the majority of millet startups actively exploited digital media. Due to their visual and interactive features, social media sites like Facebook and Instagram were widely used.

Table 1: Adoption of Digital Platforms by Millet Startups

S.No	Platforms	No.of Firms using	Percentage (%)
1	Instagram	5	100
2	Facebook	5	100
3	Youtube	4	80
4	LinkedIn	2	40
5	Threads/Twitter	3	60

Millet startups used diverse content formats to attract and engage audiences.

Table 2: Types of Digital Content Used for Promotion

Content Type	Firms Using
Product promotion posts	5
Recipe and Usage content	3
Festival greeting posts	3
Customer testimonials / Reviews	2
Discount and Offer posts	3
Awareness and Health benefit posts	3

Depending on customer interaction, partnerships, and posting frequency, different businesses have different levels of success with digital marketing.

Table 3: Comparative Digital Engagement for Millet Startups

S.No	Firm	Posting Frequency	Influencer Collaboration	Customer Interaction
1	Ancient Foods India	Occasional	No	Low
2	Hektapy	Frequent	No	Low
3	Troo Good	Frequent	Yes	Moderate
4	Millet Amma	Regular	Yes	High
5	Health Sutra	Rare	Yes	Moderate

All of the chosen millet companies used Instagram and Facebook, as seen in Table 1, emphasizing their significance as key digital marketing channels. Strong visual appeal, a vast consumer base, and interactive communication elements could all contribute to their increased use. While LinkedIn and Threads/Twitter were less frequently used, mostly for professional networking and selective communication, YouTube was utilized by the majority of businesses for video-based promotion and awareness generation. This implies that in order to increase awareness and brand engagement, companies should give priority to consumer-oriented platforms.

Product promotion postings were the most popular content strategy across rival companies, as Table 2 demonstrates. To inform and engage customers, recipe articles, festival greetings, and awareness-related content were used sparingly. Businesses rely more on direct promotion than customer-driven communication, as evidenced by the relatively low usage of testimonials and review-based content. This demonstrates how startups may use customer experiences to increase their credibility.

Different digital interaction strategies used by millet startups are shown in Table 3. Businesses with consistent posting schedules and influencer partnerships showed improved

online presence and customer engagement. Ancient Foods India and Hektapy demonstrated much lower interaction levels, but Millet Amma shown stronger involvement practices. According to the findings, maintaining a consistent online presence and maintaining connections with customers are crucial.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, millet-based Ready-to-Eat (RTE) products receive significant advertising by digital marketing among emerging food entrepreneurs. Social media sites, especially Facebook and Instagram, are crucial resources for raising product awareness, consumer involvement, and brand visibility. Competing businesses use a variety of digital tactics, such as consistent posting, varied content, and partnerships, all of which strengthen their online profile. Customers demonstrated a stronger preference for reliable and educational material, underscoring the need of user-oriented communication. The results also imply that successful digital marketing tactics can help startups broaden their market reach and improve customer connections. To increase competitiveness and promote broader acceptance of millet-based RTE goods, millet-based food companies should concentrate on regular

interaction, high-quality content, and platform-specific marketing strategies.

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