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Beyond Biryani: The Rise of Vegan and the Reinvention of Traditional Cafes in Hyderabad

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Abstract
Hyderabad, a city famed for its rich culinary heritage centered around meat-based dishes like biryani, is witnessing a surprising trend: the rise of vegan cafes and the reinvention of traditional cafes to cater to the growing demand for plant-based options. This study delves into this evolving cafe culture, exploring the factors driving the popularity of vegan cafes and how established cafes are adapting to this new market force. The research analyzes the strategies adopted by traditional cafes to incorporate vegan offerings and remain competitive. Additionally, it examines consumer motivations behind choosing vegan or traditional cafes, exploring factors like health consciousness, ethical concerns, and taste preferences. By understanding these dynamics, the study aims to shed light on the future of Hyderabad's cafe scene and how it is redefining itself to encompass a wider range of dietary choices.

Keywords: Veganism, Hyderabad, Cafés, Traditional, Plant- based

INTRODUCTION

Cafes have come a long way from simply being places to grab a coffee. Today, they offer a variety of drinks, snacks, and a welcoming atmosphere for everyone. There are different types of cafes catering to various preferences, including co-working spaces, themed cafes, specialty coffee shops, traditional cafes, and the growing trend of vegan cafes.

Vegan cafes are on the rise due to increased awareness of the benefits of veganism. People are choosing healthier and more ethical food options, leading to a growing demand for vegan cafes. World Vegan Day, celebrated on November 1st, recognizes those who avoid animal products.

Veganism is a lifestyle choice that excludes all animal products from the diet, including dairy and eggs. While the term "vegan" was coined in 1944, the concept of avoiding meat dates back to ancient times. Philosophers like Pythagoras advocated for kindness to animals, and some religions like Hinduism and Jainism promote vegetarianism for ethical reasons.

The vegan movement in India is unique. While many Western vegans choose this path for environmental reasons, a large portion of India's vegan population (around 9%) follows a plant-based diet due to cultural and religious traditions, particularly Hinduism. This long-standing tradition of delicious vegetarian cuisine has led to a thriving scene of vegetarian cafes in India (almost 1,000!).

In conclusion, cafes have evolved to cater to diverse needs and preferences. The rise of vegan cafes reflects a growing interest in healthy and ethical food choices, with India offering a unique perspective on vegani-

sm due to its cultural and religious influences.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research aims to comprehensively investigate the emergence and growth of vegan cafes in Hyderabad, along with the response of traditional cafes to this evolving trend. Hyderabad was declared India's 'Most Vegan-Friendly City' in 2019 by PETA, with The Weekend Café, a 100% vegan eatery in Secunderabad, garnering attention as a notable highlight. Despite its weekend-exclusive operation, which limits accessibility to plant-based dining options for residents, the city's growing vegan scene has garnered significant interest. With India's population reaching 1.4 billion in 2022, 9% identify as vegans, and an additional 8% as pescatarians, reflecting a substantial market opportunity. The research aims to delve into evolving consumer preferences, shedding light on dietary shifts in the urban landscape. Additionally, it seeks to provide crucial market analysis, aiding potential entrepreneurs and investors in identifying opportunities within the expanding vegan food sector. Moreover, the study intends to explore the cultural dynamics of veganism in Hyderabad, unravelling the intricate interplay between tradition and modernity. It also aims to scrutinize how traditional cafes are adapting to the competitive landscape shaped by the rise of vegan alternatives.

Furthermore, the research seeks to assess the sustainability and health ramifications of these culinary changes, contributing to discussions on conscious food choices. Lastly, it aims to evaluate the societal impact of vegan cafes, elucidating their role in promoting awareness about animal rights and environmental sustainability within the local community. This investigation thus offers a comprehensive examination of Hyderabad's evolving gastronomic scene, encompassing culinary, cultural, economic, and societal dimensions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the growth and consumer preferences of vegan cafés compared traditional cafés in Hyderabad.
2. To analyse the strategies adopted by traditional Hyderabad cafés to cater to the increasing demand for vegan options.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is a mix of qualitative and quantitative approach. A sample of 145 respondents was selected using purposeful sampling method wherein the sample consisted of respondents frequenting vegan and traditional cafés. Data collection was conducted through structured questionnaire represented via google forms and interview methods was used to understand the café's perspective. SPSS software was used for analysis and frequency tables. The data has been analysed using graphical and visual representations such as bar graphs, maps, pie charts, and smart arts. The relationships between the variables have been examined using the statistical method known as the chi square test. The accurate computation of the survey and the total number of respondents are obtained through the use of percentages.

Source of Data

Primary data was collected, quantitative data with the help of structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was circulated among café-going people who aged 16 years and above. Qualitative data was collected through interviews. The secondary data is collected from past studies ,articles and reports.

Period of the Study

The time taken for the present study is 2023-2024.

Scope of the Study

The industry chosen for the study in the Hospitality and Food Service Industry. The geographical area chosen for the study is Hyderabad, Telangana State. The intended responders are customers who visit cafes.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited only to respondents residing in Hyderabad covering consumers frequenting cafés within the city. The survey has been conducted among respondents who might or might not have knowledge of the concept of veganism.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shilpi Bhatia , Suyasha Gupta[1] (2016) in their study titled as "A Study on "Veganism" - A Challenge in Indian Hospitality Industry", the objectives of their study was to highlight the concept of veganism, to understand the challenges faced by vegans and to find out how veganism is being promoted in hospitality. The study is a descriptive research paper which is explorative in nature. The paper is conceptual paper based on literature review and secondary data. Primary data is very limited confined to interview of few eminent personalities from culinary sector. Their study identified interesting trends in Indian veganism. While veganism is linked to health benefits and avoiding animal products entirely, India's young population is embracing it at a growing rate. This extends beyond just food, influencing lifestyle choices. The hospitality industry is responding with vegan hotels and restaurants, particularly in India. However, challenges remain. Social pressures and adapting to new tastes, especially regarding dairy replacements, can be hurdles. Surprisingly, despite cultural connections to non-violence and reverence for cows, veganism faces limited acceptance. The study concludes that raising awareness, educating the public, and dispelling misconceptions are crucial to promote veganism and encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Aditya Shajwani[2](2022) in their study titled as "A Study on Attitudes towards Veganism in India", the objectives of his study was to explore the level of awareness about and attitudes towards veganism, its motivations and economic effects in Gujarat, India. The report used a descriptive research design and a questionnaire with close-ended questions .The findings were analysed using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, correlation and regression analysis.

The study finds that there is a reasonably positive attitude towards veganism among the people of the Indian state of Gujarat with a large majority showing current and future willingness to move to a plant based diet. Age was found to have a positive correlation with the proportion of meat in diet and there was a negative correlation between religion and proportion of meat in the diet. The regression analysis shows that religion of the respondent and willingness of the respondents to follow a plant-based diet are useful predictors of whether a respondent will follow plant-based or animal-based diet. Their study concluded that the level of awareness about veganism, the factors that shape willingness towards a plant-based diet, and the challenges associated with following a plant-based diet. The study also examines the effect of age, gender, religion, educational qualifications, income levels and willingness out of concern towards environment and/or animals on their attitudes towards veganism, and reveals a positive relationship between the age and religion and the adoption of a vegan diet.

Namratha Pai Kotebagilu , Shreya Bhatia, Senthilkumaran Piramanayagam[3](2023) in their study titled as "A qualitative investigation on Indian vegan food service providers' perspective of trends, challenges and

the future of vegan consumption", the objectives of their study were to understand service providers motivation to operate vegan food restaurants , their perspective about vegan food consumption trends, food preferences, changes in vegan food consumption over time and major challenges in operating vegan food restaurants in India and to examine vegan food service providers envisage future demand for vegan food services in India. The tools and techniques adopted for the study were based on primary and secondary data. Qualitative methodology was adopted in this study and data was collected by conducting interviews. Their study finds that Indian vegan food service providers' perspectives. They're motivated by personal beliefs and business opportunities. Providers face social media misinformation, online ordering preference, and sourcing challenges, but they innovate using local foods and promotional packages. They see a positive future with increased demand from tier 2 & 3 cities and celebrity influence, though it might take a decade. This research contributes to sustainable food consumption understanding and offers managerial implications for vegan food businesses.

This study concludes that restaurants catering to plant-based eaters are seeing rising demand, especially among young people who care about health and the environment. While running these restaurants can be tricky, providers are optimistic as they expect vegan food to go mainstream in about 10 years adapting dishes to local tastes and constantly trying new things will be key to reach everyone.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Growth of Vegan and Traditional Cafés

- **High Cafe Patronage**: A strong market exists for cafes overall, as seen by the regular visits made by both non-vegans (85.52%) and vegans (96.36%).
- **Accessibility Gap**: Despite the growing interest, traditional cafes (81.38% accessible) are currently much more accessible than vegan cafes (18.62% accessible). This presents a major opportunity for vegan cafes to expand their reach and bridge this gap.
- **Broad Awareness**: A significant portion of respondents (94.48%) are aware of the vegan lifestyle, with the 16–26 age group having the most awareness (62.07%). This suggests that people are becoming more accepting to veganism.
- **Adoption of the Vegan Lifestyle**: Although a lesser percentage (37.93%) presently consume vegan, there is a favourable tendency, particularly among younger age groups (62.07% of 16–26 year olds who are aware are not vegan). This implies prospective expansion in the future.
- **Recent Rise in Veganism**: There's a surge in new vegans, with the biggest group (38.18%) adopting a vegan diet within the last year. This indicates a growing market for vegan food options.

2. Consumer Perception and Motivation for choosing Vegan or Traditional Cafes.

Vegan Cafes:

- **Motivations for choosing vegan cafes:**
  - Ethics: A significant portion (63.6%) of vegans choose vegan cafes due to ethical concerns about animal welfare.
  - Health and Environment: Health (56.4%) and environmental (61.8%) benefits are also important factors influencing vegan cafe choices.
- **Important factors for vegans:**
  - Menu: Plant-based menu options are the top priority (78.3%).
  - Health & Innovation: Healthy and nutritious food (63.6%) and unique/innovative dishes (58.2%) are desired.

- **Main concerns about vegan cafes:**
- Limited options & Price: Limited menus (60%) and higher prices than traditional cafes (52.7%) are the biggest concerns.
- Taste & Knowledge: Uncertainty about taste/quality (40%) and lack of knowledge about vegan cuisine (9%) are also concerns.
- **Suggestions for improvement:**
- Variety & Quality: More variety (69.1%) and better taste/quality (52.7%) of vegan dishes are crucial.
- Affordability & Service: Competitive prices (63.6%) and improved customer service (30.9%) are important.

Traditional Cafes:

- **Motivations for choosing traditional cafes**:
- Socializing: Catching up with family/friends is the main reason (67.6%).
- Relaxation: Relaxation and unwinding is another major factor (54.5%).
- **Features appealing to traditional cafe customers**:
- Events & Loyalty Programs: Live music/events (63.4%) and loyalty programs (40.7%) are most appealing.
- Sustainability & Local Focus: Ethical sourcing/sustainability (39.3%) and collaboration with local businesses (35.2%) are of interest.
- Coffee Experience: Coffee tastings/workshops (25.5%) hold moderate interest.
- **Influence of Vegan Options**:
- Over 40% of respondents would be influenced to choose a traditional cafe offering high-quality vegan pastries/drinks.
- Another 30% are open to trying vegan options but may consider factors like taste and price.
- Nearly 28% wouldn't be swayed due to personal preferences or dietary needs

3. Strategies Adopted by Vegan Cafes in Hyderabad

Sourcing Ingredients:

- All cafes prioritize local vendors (80-100%), indicating a developing local supply chain for vegan ingredients.
- Terrassen Cafe uses additional national sourcing for specialty items, suggesting wider options.
- Weekend Cafe utilizes Zomato hyper pure, highlighting the role of online platforms in procurement.

Overcoming Customer Challenges:

- All cafes acknowledge the challenge of entrenched customer mindsets regarding vegan food.
- This emphasizes the importance of marketing, education, and offering delicious vegan options.

Menu Adaptation:

- Simi's World and Terrassen Cafe adapt menus based on customer demand.
- Weekend Cafe focuses on creating a demand through owner preference.
- This shows the evolving nature of vegan menus, catering to both established preferences and discovery.

Marketing Strategies:

- Simi's World uses traditional media (newspapers).
- Terrassen Cafe leverages digital marketing (YouTube) and social media.
- Weekend Cafe relies on social media (Instagram) and word-of-mouth.
- This highlights the diverse and effective marketing landscape for vegan cafes (traditional & online).

Future Growth Outlook:

- All cafes are optimistic about the future of vegan cafes in Hyderabad.
- Simi's World predicts a surge in demand within three years.
- Terrassen Cafe anticipates steady growth with increased awareness.
- Weekend Cafe highlights their expansion plans.
- This collective confidence indicates a growing market for vegan cafes.

Lessons Learned and Advice for Others:

- Simi's World: Focus on delicious, healthy food for a wider audience.
- Terrassen Cafe: Maintain a strong vision while being receptive to customer feedback.
- Weekend Cafe: Consistency is key.
- All cafes advise ethical practices, clear labeling, and delicious food to attract non-vegans.

4. Strategies Adopted by Traditional Cafes in Hyderabad to Adapt to Vegan Demand

- **Customer Demand Drives Innovation:** Churrolto's introduction of vegan options in 2019 highlights a growing market for vegan cafes.
- **Sourcing Vegan Ingredients is Feasible**: Local vendors and specific suppliers can provide suitable ingredients for vegan dishes.
- **Challenges**:
  - Labelling: Clear labelling is crucial to attract and inform vegans.
  - Recipe Development: Creating tasty vegan dishes requires skilled chefs who can adapt recipes.
  - Customer Feedback: Adapting menus based on customer feedback is key for success.
- **Marketing**: Word-of-mouth marketing is currently effective in Hyderabad.
- **Catering to Vegetarians**: Offering vegan options that vegetarians can also consume can increase customer base.

Customer Behavior:

- Over 90% of Vegans Visit Traditional Cafes with Vegan Options.This demonstrates a clear opportunity for traditional cafes.
- **Factors Influencing Choice**:
  - Availability of options for both vegans and non-vegans (friends/family) - 61.8%
  - Trying new vegan dishes - 50.9%
  - Convenience and familiarity - 40%
  - Trust in cafe's ability to prepare vegan food - 38.2%
- **Perception of Traditional Cafe Efforts**:
  - 40% of vegans rated efforts as "good"
  - 38.18% rated them as "fair"
  - Nearly 60% of vegans see room for improvement.

Suggestions for Improvement:

- **Top Suggestions from Vegans**:
  - Introduce more vegan menu options (29.1%)
  - Use clearer labelling for vegan ingredients (25.5%)
  - Train staff on vegan dietary requirements (25.5%)
- **Quality and Variety of Vegan Options**:
  - Most frequent rating was "average" (3 on a scale of 1-5)
  - Traditional cafes need to improve in this area.

CONCLUSION

As consumers now a days are becoming more aware and shifting to healthier and ethical alternatives for living a sustainable life. Consumers have adapted healthier lifestyle due to various reasons and expect the cafés to meet their dietary preferences and cater to them effectively. Overall, the study reveals a growing interest in veganism, particularly among younger generations. While traditional cafes currently dominate the market, offering vegan options can attract a broader customer base. For vegan cafes to thrive, addressing concerns about limited menu options, pricing, and taste/quality perception is crucial.

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